

**VISUAL ARTS**

# Unearthing the slurs we'd sooner forget

ROSENBERG

These days, racism is once more becoming an issue that cannot be under the carpet. Have you to those grim shovels but withers levelled at Jewish phrases we'd rather were in literature or embedded seldom told in polite

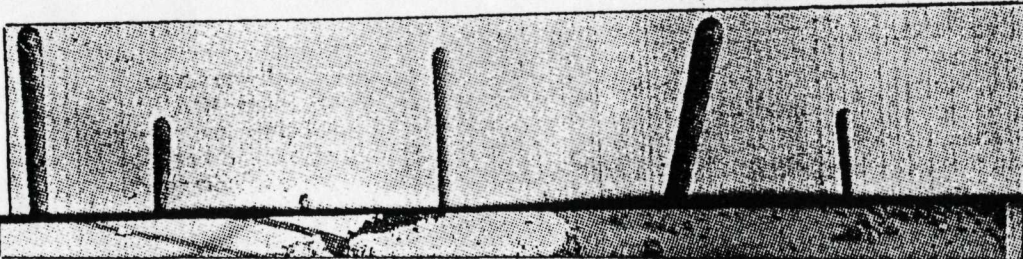
atory words and phrases ired into the wooden and metal blades of the

like the verb "to jew" (to ard bargain, to haggle or me from the Oxford dic- Others, like "kike," echo w York street jargon.

their source, they have r to wound. Even the cent-seeming of them — "I look Jewish" — is a

hing should ideally be mewhere like Jericho r the offending bench ot in a small public gal- e few will see this tement.

e's new show, Excerpts ary, exudes nostalgia ss. iece, two women over- arden of what appears athcona house. The "I have the window and I am listening to of China."



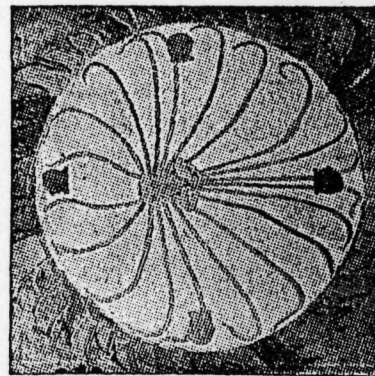
and vegetables. The phrase that accompanies the image includes the words: "No headstone here, only a wound overgrown with grass."

These sensitive disclosures refer obliquely and poetically to the particulars of Yee's family situation. But they strike a chord in the hearts of all who've been strangers in a strange land or yearn to touch base with their forebears.

The show (at the Front Gallery, 303 East Eighth, to May 8) is a chance to discover further aspects of this Chinese-Canadian artist's roots — a past partially revealed in earlier photo-based art in *Self Not Whole*, *Memory and Desire* and at the Diane Farris Gallery.

Like the previous shows, this installation also contains black-and-white photos taken from family albums and words of personal observation set into wooden frames.

In the current suite, however, heavily knotted plywood is visible through the clear portions of the photographic transparencies that



backings. This marriage of materials lends an aura of permanence to visuals and words that are as subtle as whispers.

Self-parody is not something many artists are given to — particularly if they're schooled in historic Northwest Coast modes.

I have in the past seen references to helicopters and cars among the ravens and whales in silkscreens, and native artists have occasionally poked fun at (and had fun with) traditional imagery and forms.

But few artists have taken on

lie), a Northwest Coast native whose current display at the Grunt Gallery (209 East Sixth to April 18) overturns time-honored traditions.

In the *Best of Koochie*, the Lil'wat style is colored by his own distinctive viewpoint — art that signals the artist is finally (in his words) "entering the bronze age in the 1990s."

A wooden totem crowned by the red lips of the Rolling Stones logo is the bit of cheek that sets the tone for an irreverent and clever show in which virtually every piece is a send-up.

Among my favorite Koochie spoofs are: a wall-carving of a salmon with a real fish hook dangling from its lips, a pastiche of an ancient pre-contact stone head, and a wall-piece that features a giant feather made from bits of recycled Hudson Bay blanket.

At the same time, the show includes work demonstrating Koochie's familiarity with museum treasures and his willingness to learn from their

It will be interesting to see what Koochie, who's still a student at Capilano College, gets up to next.

You'll have to hurry to catch the two-person show at Richmond Gateway Theatre (6500 Culbertson) Nielsen's mixed-media-on-board paintings at Catriona Jeffries Gallery (550 Burrard to April 25) have an up-to-date style that parallels certain aspects of Graham Gillmore's and Joe Average's work.

It is none the less a very personal blend of symbolic, decorative and figurative elements.

The wheel in *In Motion*, for example, alludes simultaneously to a mandala, a fortress and a Celtic brooch. The headless torso at its centre adds a touch of menace that's in keeping with the artful crudeness of Nielsen's technique. Two energy forces (the spokes within the wheel and the flames around the rim) vie with each other for permission to spin in the cosmic space the artist provides.

**RICHARD OVERFIELD OPENS TODAY**

