

The Entertainers

Bernie Poulin's world of enigma and allegory

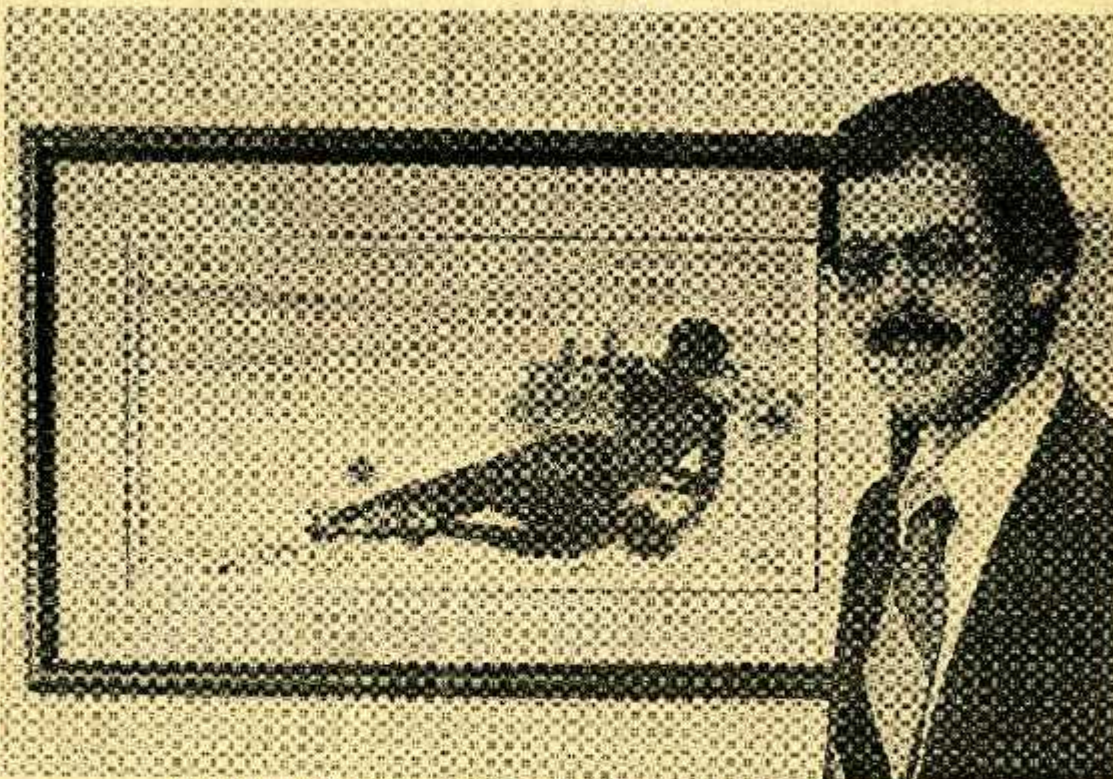
By Carolyn Fouriez

In Bernard Aime Poulin's world, the "things" are vibrant, the "places" are vivid and the "people," memorable. The people are mostly children - children sleeping, stretching, removing slivers, posturing, pondering or playing. Their faces mirror the mischief, defiance, resignation and, at times, the bewilderment of the young in an adult world. Poulin's exhibition, entitled "People, Places and Things" is currently on view at the Museum and Arts Centre.

The colours in Poulin's paintings range from the dark, earth tones reminiscent of the Flemish school to the brighter, lighter shades of nature reflected in strong sunlight. For example, "Cedars Green" is from

the deepest moss to the most brilliant emerald. The sky is a cloudy blue and sheep graze on the verdant grass. A miniature, "Cedars", captures the whiteness of heavy snow between black tree trunks, under a pale blue sky. In "Green Apples," the fruit glows incandescently in a dark ceramic bowl, resting on a rich burgundy and pink table cloth.

"Blueberries" reveals the dusky blue fruit, almost tangible in a silver can, dropped beside a piece of silver birch bark. The leaves in the background explode with colour - greens, pinks, yellows and golds. "Clapboard House" is exquisitely rendered in highly realistic style - white slats contrast with the bleakness of the windows' interior. In



Artist Bernie Poulin: vibrant, vivid "People, Places and Things"

ambivalence in the pen and ink, "Mother and Child." The child looks out with frightened curiosity at the world while the mother's glance is somewhat cryptic - an insight perhaps into the dilemma of parenting today. In "The Dirty Look," the boy's expression is defiant, as he holds onto the ball, taunting the unseen referee. In "Grafitti," a child, naked to the waist, sticks out his tongue as he leans against a red-brick wall. The wall is covered with chalked epithets denouncing the school system, parents and life in general. Yet the boy in "Artist's Model" is darkly handsome, his gaze clear and guileless.

These are but a few of the enigmas in Poulin's vision of humanity. There are many more because, as the brochure states, his studies are "allegorical in nature." This is true, because the work is imaginative, perceptive and on each viewing, different levels of meaning emerge. For a trip into Bernie Poulin's world, I'd advise you to see the exhibition which remains at MUSAC until December 2.

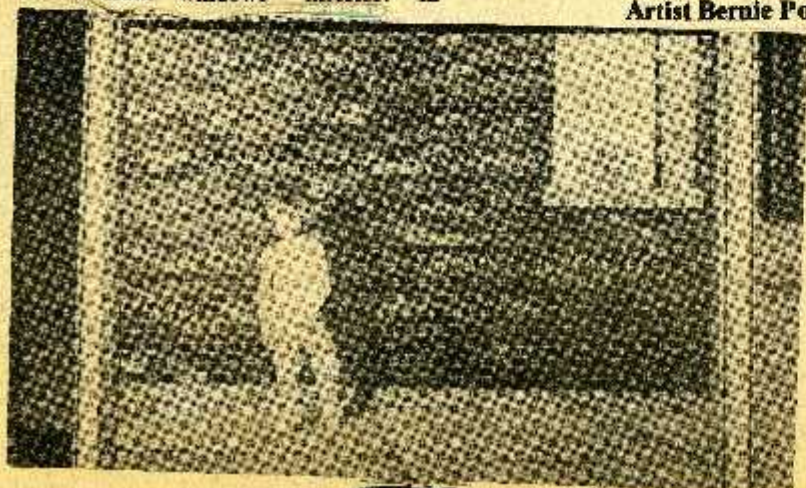
If you can't afford an original Poulin, the artist publishes beautifully produced limited editions of his work.

"Mother's Bell Collection," the crystal bells sparkle blue and gold in the light from the window.

Of the people, "Bermuda Sandcastle" shows a reclining figure silhouetted against sand and sky at sunset. Here, the sand and sea shimmer, pink and mauve under a startling streak of green sky. And then there are the remarkable children. Poulin's modern "Blue Boy" perches confident-

ly on a stool. His midnight blue cap, and jacket tucked into faded overalls, stand out in sharp relief against a murky background. "The light coming out of the dark," as Poulin describes it, is found in "Yesterday's Dream." The bright, golden flesh tones and striped bronze bed sheet gleam and achieve a third dimension in the darkened room.

There is a feeling of



"Grafitti" by Bernie Poulin