"Instant" portraiture at Hayden Gallery

By Leigh J. Passman

If you can remember the anxious pleasure of peeling apart the negative and positive faces of old Polaroid type 4 by 5 inch prints you will get a tremendous kick out of what is going on this month in MIT's Hayden Gallery. A 20 by 24 inch format camera with Polaroid's conventional instant development process is being publicly demonstrated for the first time.

Focusing on Faces (IAP activity #41), an artist-in-residency program, brings together contemporary artists who are primarily painters with today's most modern and impressive large scale photographic technique. Using two of only four enormous hand-made prototype 20 by 24 inch format cameras in existence, the artists are creating startlingly vivid and incredibly resolute contact prints on a scale few artists have ever known off a camera. Although it takes only approx. 90 seconds, depending on exposure and temperature parameters, for a photograph to be created, the installation demonstrates for the first time.

The Hayden Gallery has been transformed into an artist's studio. It has been segmented into an exhibition area and two sets - complete with scaffolds for cameras and lights. Each artist chooses his own models, designs his own sets, and, with the assistance of a Polaroid technical staff, creates the lighting and determines the camera's exposure parameters.

Joel Janowitz, a Boston area artist, completed his week-long residency yesterday. Today Jim Dine begins his five day residency, and he will be followed by Chuck Close from January 17 to 20. Students from the Visible Language Workshop and the Creative Photography Laboratory will experiment with the equipment January 16 and 22 respectively.

The gallery is open to the public from noon to 2pm. During this time the artists and Polaroid's staff will be available to discuss both the technological and aesthetic nuances and implications of this new science and art form. In addition, selected examples of the artist's work will be on display in the exhibition area of the gallery.

According to CVA Projects Director Kathy Halbreich, who worked with Polaroid to bring the program to MIT, response to the exhibition has been excellent. During the two hour exhibition period an average of over one hundred visitors have viewed the work-in-progress. Among these visitors have been Dr. Edwin Land, founder and Chairman of Polaroid Corporation and a delegation of students and professors from Rochester University.

The program is sponsored by the Committee on the Visual Arts with grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the generous support of Polaroid Corporation. For further information call the Committee on the Visual Arts at 6-4400.

Brinsley Schwarz: an intriguing retrospective

Brinsley Schwarz Anthology (EMI Capital SWBC-1186)

By Claudia Perry

Brinsley Schwarz could be the unsung leader of the Seventies. From its ranks emerged Nick Lowe, the English New Wave's Phil Spector. Brinsley Schwarz and Bob Andrews make up twinning triumvirate, Graham Parker's back-up group.

With the current surge of interest in Nick Lowe and the Rumour, it comes as no surprise that Capitol released a compilation of Brinsley Schwarz' first two albums just in time for the holidays. Brinsley Schwarz, as the twococktail set is cleverly entitled, is worthwhile to own if you're curious about Nick Lowe's past.

Since none of the songs have instrumental credits, it is hard to judge the competency of Brinsley Schwarz' members. The musicianship is consistently good but few personal touches can be heard. This faceteness works to the group's advantage. Their music flows from country and western to English traditional with no lapse in proficiency.

One reason for the band's unified approach is Nick Lowe. Penning all but two of the songs, his songwriting is on the mark most of the time. Lowe's lead for the traditional that opens the album, gives no indication of Brinsley Schwarz' talent for synthesizing pop styles. The song is dirge-like. Only dabblers will be able to listen to it more than once.

Fortunately the album picks up immeasurably with "Shining Brightly" which is lyrically a country and western parody. Many English groups have fielded entries in this race. "Brightly" compares favorably with both the Kinks' "Muswell Hillbillies" and the Stones' "Deaf Doctor".

"Shining Brightly" is a perfect example of the early Seventies. The lyrics suggest that the song should be given a straight country and western treatment, complete with wussy pedal steel guitar and faked Tennessee twang. Instead the band chooses the same traditional arrangement, which makes the song more intriguing.

"Lady Constant," the closing cut on the first side, shows another failing on the compiler's part. Since there are no individual vocal credits given, one cannot be sure who is responsible for the sharp four-part harmonies, but blame for the plodding arrangement can be placed entirely on Nick Lowe, who wrote the tune.

Describing each of the fifteen songs on Brinsley Schwarz' would be pointless. Besides leaving nothing for one to discover, the band's influences would read like a laundry list of the great and near-great. The band's eclecticism is subdued but evident. At first listen, they sound like a combination of The Hollies, The St Rumors and The Byrds.

Unfortunately this combination was unleashed on the world at a time that could have best been considered inappropriate. Most of the music coming from Great Britain in the early seventies was more forceful than Brinsley's efforts. Competing with bands like Cream and Led Zeppelin, it is no wonder that Brinsley Schwarz was sort of lost in the shuffle. With Capitol's release of Brinsley Schwarz, perhaps the band will be remembered for what it produced, not who.

The Student Center Committee and The Undergraduate Association present The Second Annual Pre-Spring Fling Couples Only Saturday, February 24, 1979 Ticket Information Only January 8, 1979 Semi-formal Dress Required MDS Students and Guests