

Art/Rosalind Constable

THE LONGEST-RUNNING ONE-MAN SHOW IN TOWN

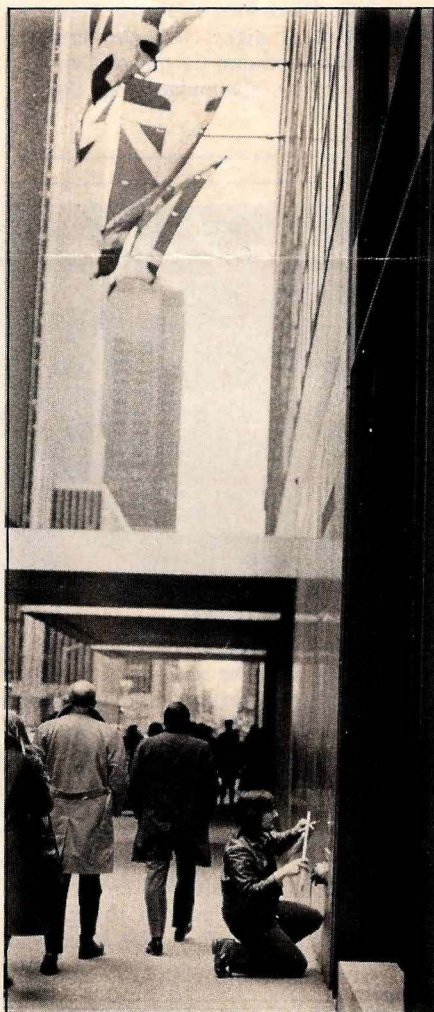
OTO

"...With the help of a friend but with no assistance from MOMA, Harvey Stromberg put on his one-man exhibition himself..."

When Harvey Stromberg's exhibition went up at the Museum of Modern Art two years ago it contained around 300 pieces. Although somewhat depleted today, it is still on, making it the longest-running one-man exhibition that the museum has ever housed. I say "housed" because I cannot say "that the museum has put on" because the museum didn't put it on. In fact, it doesn't even know it is there.

With the help of a friend, but with no assistance from the museum, Harvey Stromberg put on his exhibition himself. A New York artist, he describes his work as "photo-sculpture." To prepare the exhibition, he spent some weeks in the museum, disguised as a student with a notebook under his arm, peering nearsightedly at pictures while at the same time measuring and photographing museum equipment: light switches, locks, air vents, buzzers, segments of the floor and bricks in the garden wall. These photographs he printed actual size, covered the backs with adhesive, and one day he sauntered through the museum adding 300 trompe l'oeil photographs ("photo-sculpture") of museum equipment to its walls and floors. (The floor pieces were a mistake: "I didn't realize that when they buffed the floors they would buff them right off," says Stromberg.)

Museum personnel are not blind, and in due course most of the pieces have been discovered and peeled off. "I keep going back and sticking up more," he says. It would be easy, he claims, to put his pieces where the museum could never find them. His false bricks, for example, pasted on the garden wall two years ago, are still there, and Stromberg himself has difficulty in locating them. But it is not his objective to remain undetected. He deliberately places light switches, for instance, where they are bound to be discovered. "I like the museum to find them," he insists. "Then they realize there's a game going on. I also hope people steal them, and claim they've stolen art from the Museum of Modern Art." As an artist, however, he is pleased when a piece that should be easily found fools the guards and the cleaners and remains in place for a con-



Mounting an art show: Harvey Stromberg hangs one on the Museum of Modern Art.

siderable length of time.

On our recent visit to the museum, Stromberg proudly pointed out to me a false air vent alongside the fire hydrants at the entrance to the museum which, he said, had been there for three weeks. In the course of our tour of the museum he deftly pasted a light switch on the wall of a main gallery, and added a keyhole to a door. An hour later the keyhole was still in place, but the light switch had gone. The museum clearly knows some unauthorized person is putting "art" on its walls.

Is it art? As we have frequently been

told lately, it's art if the artist says it's art. And Stromberg says it's art. Furthermore, critic Harold Rosenberg has said (sardonically) that it's art if it's in a museum. And it's in a museum. But even Rosenberg, who takes a dim view of everything that's happening in the art world today, did not envisage the possibility that the artist might have placed it in the museum himself.

It is also a political act. Stromberg, while sympathetic to the Art Workers Coalition, is not a member, preferring to carry on his own guerrilla warfare against the autonomy of museums. "This is a people's revolution, in a sense," he says. "I feel it is saying to the museum: you can't always control the individual artist. I'm saying what and—more important—when I'll exhibit. It shows that museums and galleries are not as powerful as they appear. How can they ever stop me? They can stop me personally, but not the show. If they ban me from the museum I'll send my brother—or my mother. In the end they'll have to ban everybody."

What does the museum do with Stromberg's handiwork when they take it down? Do the guards throw it in the trash can or hand it over to higher-ups? Does the museum regard it as a harmless prank not worth serious consideration, or is it building up a dossier against the perpetrator, eventually to charge him with—what? "I haven't done anything but install an art show—without their permission, of course," says Stromberg.

Asked why he had decided to abandon anonymity Stromberg replied: "Because it's important that people be aware there are conflicts between museums and artists. I think it would be fantastic if other artists would go in and hang their own work—illegal art." I began to talk about that phony air vent adorning the façade of the august Museum of Modern Art, and I couldn't help laughing. Stromberg looked at me quizzically, then his face broke into a broad grin. "I really have fun doing it," he said. "When I install a piece, my adrenalin is racing. In fact, it's very hard for me to come up with serious reasons why I do it."

Movies/Judith Crist

MANN'S MAN UNMANNED

"... *Death in Venice* is essentially a triumph of ambiance, and of the viewers' willingness to settle for exquisite face value ..."

"The time left us is like hourglass sand. To our eyes it appears to run out only in the end."

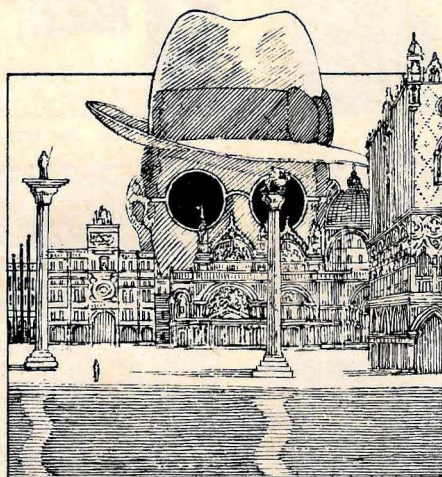
"Time . . . it's not a thief. It's much sneakier. It's an embezzler up nights juggling the books so you don't notice the difference."

By sheer booking coincidence, two of the more interesting movies to arrive on the scene are concerned with that *malaise du temps passé*, one in the "classic" terms of Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*, the other in the contemporary terms of Herb Gardner's *Who is Harry Kellerman and Why Is He Saying Those Terrible Things About Me?* Both are remarkable films in construction, in content and in performance, yet both, for all their perfections, are ultimately unsatisfying.

Luchino Visconti's *Death in Venice* was the controversial "top" film at Cannes, in that the Golden Palm was awarded to Joseph Losey's *The Go-Between* but in response to advocacy of the Visconti film the festival decided to give a Special Super Festival Prize to the 65-year-old director himself for his over-all work. I can see the hesitations on the part of the Cannes jurors. The Visconti film is essentially a triumph of ambiance, a Dirk Bogarde performance and the viewer's willingness to settle for face value, an exquisite one.

Written when he was 38, in 1913, Mann's novella was the first of his many works concerned with the psychology of the artist, in its story of the distinguished aging writer who, on a visit to Venice, encounters a classically beautiful 14-year-old boy, falls in love with this symbol of unattainable perfection and chooses to remain to die in the plague-ridden city rather than desert his ideal. Mann's Gustav von Aschenbach was a narrow and inhibited widower, a man who had driven himself intellectually since boyhood and was dedicated to ascetic disciplines; his enslavement, an intellectual and emotional and, in fact, asexual one, is as much by a passion for youth as by his love of beauty.

In lesser hands a dramatization of the novella might well have become a story of latent homosexuality. Indeed, Visconti suggests this. For his Aschen-



bach, made to look very much like Gustav Mahler (whose music provides the score), brings up shades of the Tchaikovsky of *The Music Lovers*; flashbacks provide him with a wife and a daughter, who died in childbirth (Mann had the daughter alive and married), and a young man "pupil" with whom he had heated discussions about the need for the artist to be emotionally uninvolved. Thus, where Mann's hero was a solitary intellectual in the throes of a physical as well as emotional fever, Visconti's is a sophisticated composer and conductor, a one-time devoted family man whose sudden passion for the boy is not easy to accept.

On the surface, however, thanks to the stunning visual recreation of a cosmopolitan Edwardian resort, to the depths of personal restriction that Bogarde provides and to the dazzling beauty of young Bjorn Andresen, we are lulled into acceptance. Recovering from a heart attack (rather than suffering the spiritual malaise of Mann's creature), Bogarde's Aschenbach is a slow-moving, short-tempered, self-contained man of dignity, brought to chaos by a realization of his enthrallment and to pathos by his fight against the time that is running out. Bogarde's final moments, soaking in the plague-infested atmosphere under a broiling sun that makes his hair-dye streak his face, already a cosmetic clown mask, are the quintessence of human despair.

Much as in *The Leopard*, Visconti maintains a slow and solemn pace,

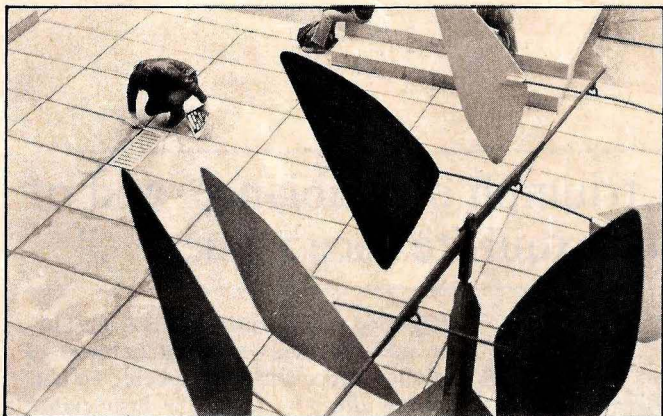
weighting each doom-destined encounter with an overwhelming richness of detailed decor and atmosphere. To harrowing effect he turns the insouciance and indifference of youth into a flirtatious taunt and the easy confidence of beauty into an instrument of torture. His ultimate feat is in the sense of decay that ultimately permeates even the level sands and the calm sea; the last grains in the hourglass simply putrefy.

Bogarde's is almost a solo performance; Andresen's is a series of postures and romps, his dialogue restricted to the Polish of his family, with Sylvana Mangano equally laconic as the elegant mother. But ultimately, the power of Bogarde's performance lasts only through the film, the final impact only duration-deep.

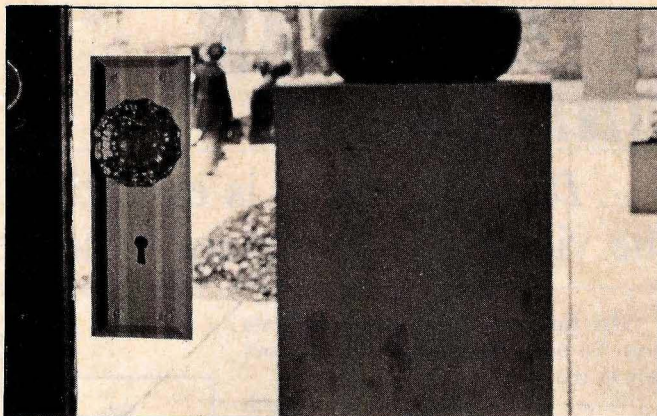
In contrast there's carry-over power in Dustin Hoffman's *Georgie*, the 40-plus hero of *Harry Kellerman* who is a top songwriter, rich, divorced, miserable—and as ready for the "cookie jar" as any of our contemporaries who have devoted "\$52,560-plus-cab-fares" and seven years to analysis. We go through one of *Georgie's* sleepless nights with him, filled with panic calls to and/or visits with his psychiatrist (Jack Warden in a marvelous series of impersonations), his accountant (Dom De Luise, beautifully puzzled by having to like the man whose books he fixes), his father (David Burns in an eloquent memorial performance as a loving man facing the end of living) and various buddies, and bulging with flashback bits of biography that present us with his first love, his wife, his parents and the girl (Barbara Harris at her poignant perfect) who might be his salvation if only Kellerman (and we can guess where paranoia begins and ends) doesn't bad-mouth him to her.

Herb Gardner's original screenplay—and his first movie work since *A Thousand Clowns* in 1965—has echoes of *The Goodbye People*, his 1960 Broadway play of several seasons back, in its concern with life and death, with the guess-who-died-today syndrome of the old, the sudden realization of time passing by the not-so-young. *Georgie* has come to see his children as "goddam clocks,"

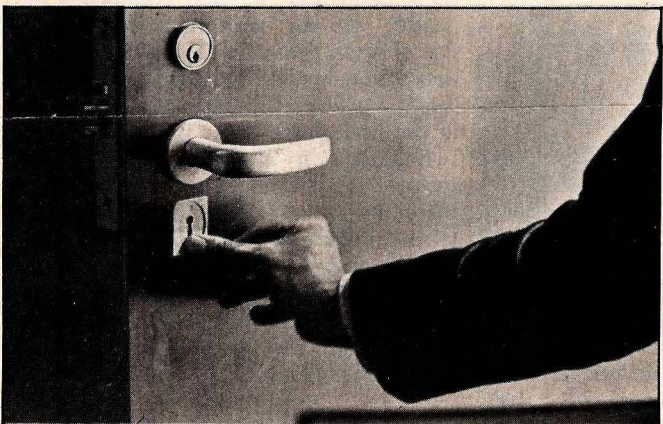
Catalogue: Stromberg Photo-Sculpture, Museum of Modern Art



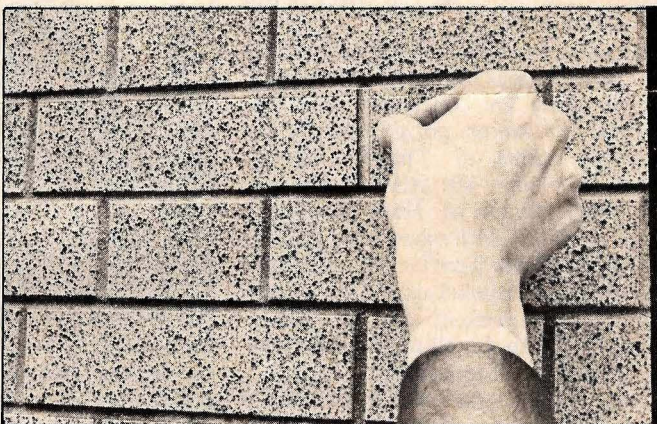
"Drain," b/w, 8" x 1"



"Doorknob to Garden," b/w, 8" x 3"



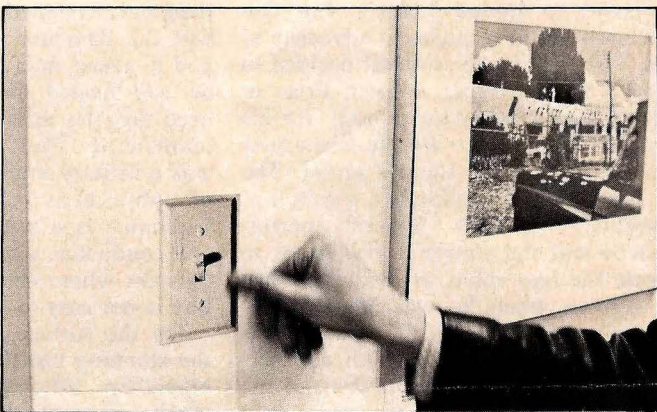
"Keyhole," b/w, 2" x 1"



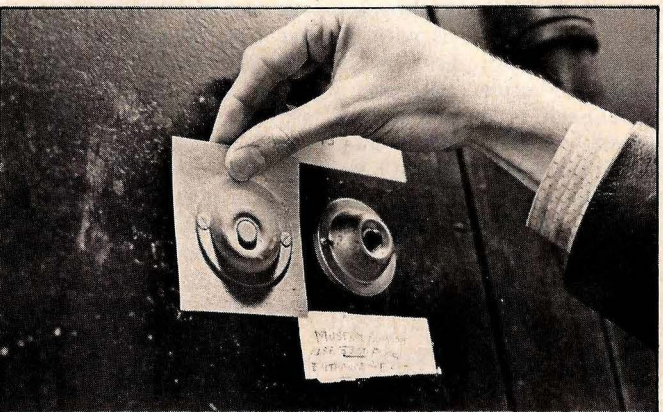
"Bricks," b/w, 3" x 6"



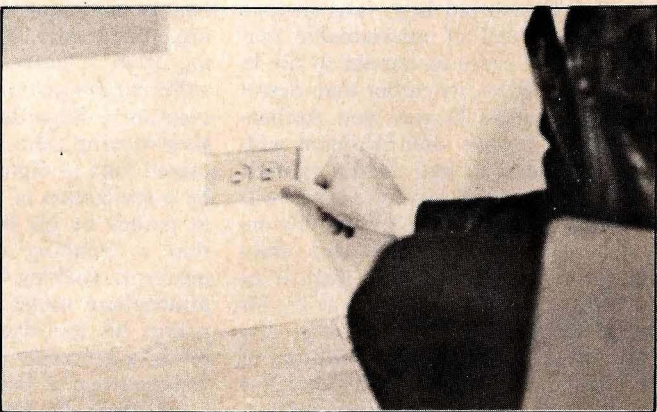
"Air Vent," b/w, 10" x 10"



"Light Switch," b/w, 4 1/2" x 2 3/4"



"Buzzer," b/w, 3" x 3"



"Electric Outlet," b/w, 4 1/2" x 2 3/4"