

The VANCOUVER SUN :
April 11, 1969

"Putting It Across in A New Way— That's It..." That's what Intermedia is all about

By CHARLOTTE TOWNSEND

"How to put it across in a new way that's really what we are trying to do."

Werner Aellen, its director, was talking about Intermedia on Monday morning while the Vancouver Art Gallery was in turmoil as Intermedia members put his words into action in preparation for their week-long program titled **Electrical Connection**.

Aellen makes the claim that Intermedia is "unique in the world." Obviously, there are many organizations bridging the gap between the arts and technology; but that is just the point, they are 'organized', often with clearly defined aims and membership. Intermedia is open.

It operates as a kind of umbrella. Artists and scientists of all sorts can come and go and exchange ideas and information under it in the freest way. This sounds too good to be true, but it is true, according to Aellen, who defines his job — which began last fall— as "an attempt to find exhibition places for work from Intermedia wherever possible and sponsorship...."

"Although," he adds, "as a film maker I find it very tempting to get involved myself in two hundred different things that are going on around me.

"We have been attracting some very serious and committed people. The casualness of the whole thing is deceptive. A lot of them are living on practically nothing, but they make this choice and the amount of work that goes on would stagger any 9–5 employee.

Intermedia, at its place on Beatty Street, is in a constant state of "inquiry and experiment," says Aellen and one doesn't feel like doubting his serious optimism.

"When some outside stimulus comes along, like having the Art Gallery to do as we like with for a week then things crystallize," he said.

"The enthusiasm generated as opening night approached was enormous and infectious, As late as last Thursday three new things were thought up and included in our ever-flexible plans."

About that time various drawbacks were discovered, and dealt with. Ron Wattier 's concrete poetry sculpture was intended to fly from the Granville and Burrard Street bridges. But it was discovered that inflated fluorescent vinyl, although filled with helium didn't fly. Too bad , because the giant orange letters would have looked marvelous outside; they are a bit cramped in the gallery, but at least the experiment has been made.

Naomi Promislow Designed a maze, to be constructed in wire mesh. As sometimes happens with an Intermedia project, the raw material was donated — in this case by R. R. C. Weldmesh — and she got people to help her set it up. And then they all learned that while wiremesh behaves predictably at a height of three feet, by the time a seven foot wall is needed it is not so amiable, and special reinforcing measures had to be taken!

This is the inside story. According to Aellen a lot of cross fertilization, (much-abused cliché as that may be) has gone on in the production of Electrical Connection at the Gallery.

Intermedia poets, experiment with printing techniques and sound technicians experiment with photographers; film makers with engineers.

"I do believe that artists would be part of the mainstream of life; this begins to happen when they become involved with engineers' scientists, industry in general. These people are working in areas that are very interesting to artists today, who want to use plastic and neon and technology, but don't know how."

Co-operation and materials come from various downtown stores Canadian industry and big firms in (B.C. Tell, Sony Corporation, Neon Products of Canada Ltd., Crown Zellerbach etc.)

More is needed if Intermedia is to expand productively. "So far, grants from the Canada Council have provided a sound investment, given at first with great foresight, expose their opinions to others."

This is why although there are plans to participate in the University of Victoria's Art Festival and a Midsummer Night's Feast, at the Burnaby Art Gallery, and although Intermedia will be getting more exposure than ever before as part of Electrical Connection travels to art galleries in Western Canada and down the west coast of the states, Aellen is perhaps more interested in a project that will be part of the P.N.E This is the direction he really wants to see followed; but he feels encouraged by all the plans.

Recently Werner Aellen was at a conference at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick, dealing with Canada-wide experiments in arts and technology, and the position of artists vis a vis industry. He reports that a huge interest was shown in what is happening in Vancouver. Similar experiments in the East have neither been so open nor so productive.

"Several well established artists were saying " why don't we all move to Vancouver?" That is a very good sign, "Werner commented, and then: "This is an age of ideas, but ideas aren't so easy to come by".

With the assortment of experiment and success of Electrical Connection being picked up on the mass of closed circuit TV screens in the Gallery behind him as he spoke, it seemed fair to conclude that Intermedia has some.