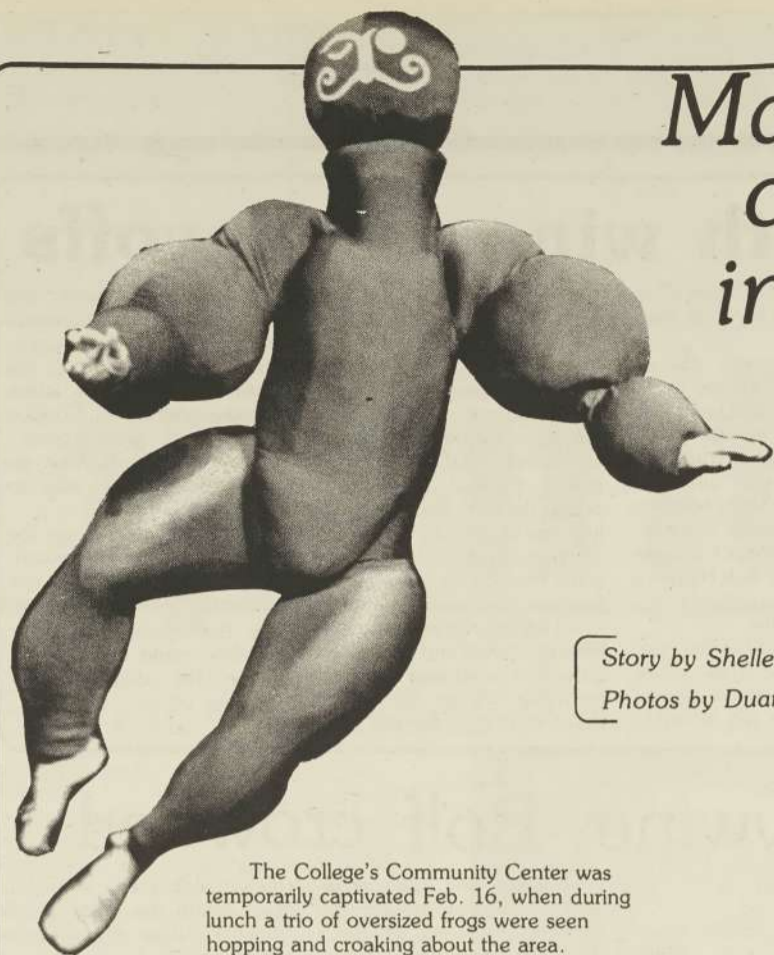
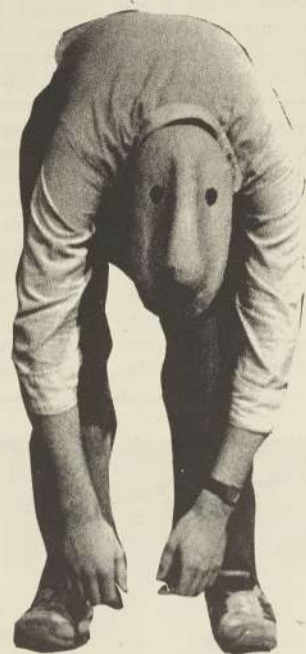


# Masque Ensemble changes College into Wonderland



Story by Shelley Ball

Photos by Duane Hiersche



The College's Community Center was temporarily captivated Feb. 16, when during lunch a trio of oversized frogs were seen hopping and croaking about the area.

The frogs were one of several pieces that were put on by the Theater Masque Ensemble, a mime group that specializes in using various masks, costumes and props in conjunction with their performances.

The three ensemble players included Theater Masque Ensemble Director Jerry Monawad, Carol Uselman and Mark Opshinsky. The four-year-old group is Portland based, and tour through the Western United States from Arizona to Alaska.

The group is unique in that they combine masks with the art of mime, a mixture that Monawad says "presents an image, but allows the audience to look at an illusion and play along with it."

The masks used in the College's performance included original works by Monawad, as well as copies of masks originally made in Switzerland.

The masks are divided into three main types: familiar characters, such as the frog mask (see photo, bottom right) and costume piece presented at the start of the ensemble; human caricatures, or cartoon-like masks, which were displayed in a piece titled "The Flower;" and abstract masks, masks that Monawad said are more movement oriented than the other masks. A ceremonial mask of the Kwakwaka'wakw Indians was also displayed during the ensemble.

A piece titled "Metamorphosis" featured the abstract masks. Monawad said that by placing these masks on top of the players' heads, and then bending their bodies over, helped them resemble images of "insects, anteaters, or things from another world," he said. Blake French, a student at the College, volunteered to demonstrate this procedure (see photo, upper right).

In addition to the mime pieces, dances were performed and time was set aside for audience participation, in which members of the audience volunteered to go on stage and learn how to perform as mimes. Volunteer mimes were given white, "doughy" masks, which Monawad said are used for beginners because of the simple, "pure state" emotions that the masks are used to convey. Monawad said that a mime achieving a pure state of emotion is going back to the time when he was a baby, because it was a time when things were first experienced, which creates a new and fresh outlook towards something as opposed to the learned experiences and expectations of adults.

