

# The 100,000 Names of Art

Cliff Eyland

Introduction by John Murchie

Saint Mary's University Art Gallery

3 cards entered under **Vuillard**, behind "Vuillard, Edourd, 1868-1940"  
11 cards entered under **Braque**, behind "Braque: the great years"  
2 cards entered under **Seurat**, behind "Seurat's Les Poseuses (small version) 1888-1975"  
2 cards entered under **Whistler**, behind "Whistler themes and variations: an exhibition"  
1 card entered under **Rembrandt**, behind "Rembrandt's Aristotle, and other Rembrandt studies"  
2 cards entered under **Kollwitz**, behind "Kollwitz, Kathe (Sshmidt)1867-1945"  
5 cards entered under **Ensor**, behind "New York (City) Museum of Modern Art. James Ensor. Card 2"  
1 card entered under **Morris**, behind "Morris, William, 1834-1896"  
4 cards entered under **Munch**, behind "Munch und Ibsen"  
4 cards entered under **Vlaminck**, behind "Vlaminck, Maurice de, 1876-1958"  
1 card entered under **Tiepolo**, behind "Tiepolo: Banquet of Cleopatra"  
8 cards entered under **Stella**, behind "Stella since 1970"  
2 cards entered under **Rosso**, behind "Rosso, Medaro"  
2 cards entered under **Samaras**, behind "Samaras, Lucas"  
1 card entered under **Buren**, behind "Buren, Daniel, 1938-"  
2 cards entered under **Tiffany**, behind "Tiffany, Louis Comfort"  
3 cards entered under **Noland**, behind "Noland, Kenneth"  
6 cards entered under **Brancusi**, behind "Brancusi's birds"  
3 cards entered under **Redon**, behind "Redon, Olidon"  
1 card entered under **Kosuth**, behind "Kosuth, Joseph"  
1 card entered under **Darboven**, behind "Darboven, Hanne, 1941-"  
17 cards entered under **Mondrian**, behind "Mondrian, the process works"  
6 cards entered under **Rouault**, behind "Rouault, Georges, 1871-1958"  
10 cards entered under **Kandinsky**, behind "Kandinsky: watercolours"  
5 cards entered under **Gris**, behind "Gris, Juan, 1887-1927"  
8 cards entered under **Leger**, behind "Leger and the avant-garde"  
8 cards entered under **Klee**, behind "Klee, Paul, 1879-1940"  
6 cards entered under **Chagall**, behind "Chagall: watercolours and gouaches"  
5 cards entered under **Schiele**, behind "Schiele in prison"  
1 card entered under **Pearlstein**, behind "Pearlstein, Phillip"  
1 card entered under **Dufy**, behind "Dufy, Raoul, 1877-1953"  
5 cards entered under **Rousseau**, behind "Rousseau, Redon and fantasy"  
3 cards entered under **Malevich**, behind "Malevich, Kazimer Severinovich, 1878-1935, Suprematism"  
15 cards entered under **Miro**, behind "Miro, sculptures"  
5 cards entered under **De Chirico**, behind "De Chirico, Giorgio"  
3 cards entered under **Fontana**, behind "Fontana, Lucio, 1899-1968"  
6 cards entered under **Motherwell**, behind "Motherwell, Robert, 1915- "

# The 100,000 Names of Art

Selected essays and reviews 1981-1991  
with illustrations by the author

Cliff Eyland

With an introduction by John Murchie

PLEASE MARK IN THIS BOOK.

This book accompanies an exhibition of paintings by  
Eyland at Saint Mary's University Art Gallery,  
13 February to 22 March 1992

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*Towards a Letter of Appreciation* © 1992 John Murchie  
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NS ART

Signed  
20 CD  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The artists, *ArtsAtlantic*, The Canada Council, Dalhousie Art Gallery, Ken Aucoin, Dr. Essy Baniassad, Leighton Davis, Russell Keziere, John Murchie, Mount Allison University, The Nova Scotia Department of Tourism and Culture, *Parachute*, *Paralleogramme*, Dr. Pam Perkins, Saint Mary's University Art Gallery, Joseph Sherman, Mary Sparling, Technical University of Nova Scotia Faculty of Architecture, Charlotte Townsend-Gault, Kim Truchan, *Vanguard*, XEROX Canada Ltd.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Cliff Eyland attended Holland College, Mount Allison University and the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design. In addition to being a painter and a writer, since 1985 he has been curator of Exhibitions & Resource Centre at the Technical University of Nova Scotia.

John Murchie was a librarian at the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design for almost twenty years. He lives with his wife Gemey Kelly in Upper Sackville, New Brunswick where he is a practicing artist and writer as well as proprietor of Yellow Hill Enterprise, a farm. He has two grown children, Ethan and Isaac Murchie.

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## FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure that we present Cliff Eyland's exhibition *The 100,000 Names of Art* at Saint Mary's University Art Gallery. Cliff Eyland has been an extraordinary and unique addition to the Maritime arts community for more than a decade. He has made a special contribution and given us fresh insights, not only as an artist but also as a writer, as this catalogue will attest. He also works as a curator at the Technical University of Nova Scotia.

This is not our first opportunity to work with Cliff Eyland at Saint Mary's University. In 1990 he wrote an essay for the *Chris Woods: Afflictions and Cures* exhibition and performed at the opening as a member of the band The Babbies Upstairs.

The creation of the works on the wall and the writings in the catalogue are the first two features of this exhibition. The third is a symposium entitled *Artist / Writer?* which Cliff has organized as part of the exhibition. The symposium will bring together several artists who write and have been written about. The members of the panel will be the artist/writers Marlene Creates, Dennis Gill, Barbara Louder, Michael Lawlor, Andrea Ward and John Murchie who will also act as moderator.

I would particularly like to thank Cliff Eyland for the time he has spent on the production of this exhibition. As well, I would like to thank Ken Aucoin and Kim Truchan for organizing the exhibition, John Murchie for his insightful essay, and Horst Deppe for his design assistance. I would also like to give a special thanks to Greg Jones and XEROX Canada Ltd. for their assistance and generous sponsorship of this exhibition, as well as The Nova Scotia Department of Tourism and Culture and the Canada Council for their financial support.

Leighton Davis  
Director/ Curator



## TOWARDS A LETTER OF APPRECIATION

by John Murchie

We<sup>1</sup> met, as I recall, when you entered the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design's elevator. We were going up. You wanted to go down. Well, it has always been one of your endearing qualities to go in different directions. Now, more than ten years later, you are, among other roles, an alert curator and writer, a productive artist, and an activist in the ongoing convolution of our culture(s). That someone wishes to publish your writings and exhibit your art comes as little surprise. That you have convinced a jury of your peers to give a dollar and a private sponsor to help as well comes, perhaps, as a bit of a surprise, all things considered today. But good for all of them. Good for you.

*You were solitary before you became famous. And Fame, when it came, made you if anything still more solitary. For Fame, after all, is but the sum of all the misunderstandings which gather about a new name. There are a great many about you and it would be a long and difficult task to elucidate them. Nor is it necessary. They surround your name, not the work which has far outgrown the sounding greatness of the name and is now nameless, as a plain is nameless or an ocean, the name of which is found only on maps, in books or in the mouths of men, but which, in reality, is only vastness, movement, and depth. The work of which we are to speak here has been growing for years and grows every day like a forest, losing no hour of time. Passing amongst its thousand manifestations, one is overwhelmed by the wealth of discoveries and inventions it embraces, and instinctively one looks for the two hands from which this world has come.<sup>2</sup>*

Before you became famous you were a student at the College of Art & Design where I was a librarian. One day you asked me, somewhat ambiguously, if you could use the public card catalogue in an art work/exhibition you were planning. One of my very first experiences at the library some ten years earlier -- eg. twenty years ago now -- had been Robin Peck's rearrangement by size of a portion of the book collection. We had discovered this sculpture one morning. I was, obviously, appreciative of your collaborative etiquette.<sup>3</sup> I agreed.

In retrospect, it was one of those decisions from which there is no regret.<sup>4</sup>

You proceeded to standardize the art reproductions in Arnason's *History of Modern Art* into library-sized 3x5" slices and filed them in the card catalogue in the appropriate<sup>5</sup> places. Thus, for some time the normally strictly utilitarian source of information, the card catalogue, took on local colour as the oddly

<sup>1</sup>It has been a puzzle, more than writing almost always is, trying to provide some justice for you. Then, perambulating around on another matter I read your essay on Charlie Murphy in which you begin by quoting from Tobias Smollett's *Humphry Clinker* which, of course, reminded me of Laurence Sterne and *his* perambulations and, as well, of the whole 18th Century British novel and the early attempts at realistic fictive prose renditions of culture and society. An early realistic strategy had been to present the action of the novel in the form of a series of letters. Like autobiography, presumed and faked in *Robinson Crusoe*, a distinct air of reality was gained to the enterprise. Perhaps it will work here.

<sup>2</sup>This seems somewhat more rhetorical, Cliff, than I care to have it and not really sounding like my voice. It comes no doubt from your suggestion that I read Rainer Maria Rilke on Rodin. I did. It's useless in its oldworldness.

<sup>3</sup>In honesty, Cliff, I was also aware of the horrific art library confrontation in England which resulted in a chewed *Art and Culture* by Clement Greenberg. I was not prepared to run the risk of being one day a scandalous art historical footnote. I didn't know you well enough.

<sup>4</sup>This may be presumptuous, as are so many curatorial assertions about contemporary artmaking. There is no regret from *my* point of view. You may have some as, for instance, you continue to be confined and defined by the spatial and dimensional potentials of a 3 x 5" format.

<sup>5</sup>"Appropriate" by your standard, not necessarily the Library's, since we never went through the normal "revision" process which, technically, would be required in catalogue filing to reduce to a minimum the odds of an error. As you might imagine, if you thought about it, one filing error could mean a book intellectually "lost" to the public with the possibility of compounding further error as other cards are "correctly" filed incorrectly around the card in question. Without wanting to create a labyrinth here, you might well understand, as well as know, that Borges was a librarian.



cropped images of Modern Art peeked out unexpectedly. Your reductive logic scrambled Arnason's myopia and ours as well; at the same time you put the scissors to a Kafkian bureaucracy insofar as a library represents such in the minds of many. We controlled more of the cards, however, and were then in the process of "closing" the catalogue<sup>6</sup> in favour, ultimately, of a state of the art electronic catalogue. It seemed to me then that your art -- as wily and funny, as pointed as it was -- no matter, it was the work of a luddite more than anything else.<sup>7</sup> One sensed more the presence of a Ned Lud than of a Jacques Derrida, more British working class than French bourgeois.<sup>8</sup> The work now resides in the basement of 5163 Duke Street along with the thousands of cards from the old catalogue, the basement of what was once a prosperous commercial bank and is now the catacomb of an art college library. All of this may be but an example, Cliff, of the ancient adage *ars est celare artem?* -- one of the tremendous strengths of your work -- your art, that is.<sup>9</sup>

*"Representation" is a term whose stock rises and falls in company with the term "bourgeois." Representation is seen as the ideological means by which the nineteenth century bourgeois declared its social constructions a natural order and thus legitimized its class rule which continues today. Art's own formal reductions, as part of a general critique of representation, were seen as allied to the struggle against the bourgeois appropriation of presence in the conventional, and the material in the ideological. Today, only work that registers representation in a critical way, that presents it in the form of a critique, is allowed. Even the name "work" displays itself opposed to the mere immateriality and non-productivity of representation. To make use of representation without these scare quotes is suspect.<sup>10</sup>*

Yours must be among the most sustained and reduced reductions of the modernist critique; or, perhaps, rather a critique of the critique. I suspect actually that your reductionism has its real origins more in practicality as I look at the cruddy, little, Duchampian-like black attaché case which you gave me with *all* of the paintings -- a hundred plus -- you intend for the exhibition.<sup>11</sup> For you there were to be no truck loads of art and major crates to disseminate your paintings. That practicality in an ecologically fragile world must have been one source, as well as the other realities which confront the wish to make intelligent, non-utilitarian things, not the least of which reality is the tradition and burden of past production. How does anyone make anything intelligent, or intelligible, today?

Looking through your major paintings I am struck by what always strikes me in your art -- your virtuosity. In no small measure I mean your drawing and painting skill, but mostly I mean the breadth of your interests and investigations. Your usual presentation of your work as seemingly smaller parts of a

<sup>6</sup>That is library argot for discontinuing the catalogue as a current source of bibliographical information which, in this instance, meant throwing it out altogether.

<sup>7</sup>See your 1984 review "Artists Talk About Technology" for some support of this view.

<sup>8</sup>Although granted you are, and were, as acquainted with and open to *the* issues as any practicing artist, and more so than most.

<sup>9</sup>I have subsequently found that Robin Metcalfe describes his sense that one of your exhibitions was "calculated to avoid detection"[*ArtsAtlantic* Spring 1986]. Two years later he changed his mind somewhat about the propriety of this when he notes that "Rick Salutin has commented, in *Marginal Notes*, that one can become too fond of acting on the periphery. As clever and insightful as Eyland's marginalia undoubtedly are, one wonders what he might achieve were he to turn his hand to writing the book" [*ArtsAtlantic* Fall 1988]. My guess is that this observation would not make sense to you as it does not to me if for no better reason than that we know G. K. Hall can take 3x5" cards and make a book.

<sup>10</sup>Again, Cliff, I am sorry but I seem to lose my true voice momentarily here. It isn't your fault this time but probably mine from too many hours pouring over YYZ's collection of Philip Monk's writings *Struggles with the Image: essays in art criticism* (1988) in an attempt to hoe a straight critical line of thought.

<sup>11</sup>One of the small ironies, of course, is the extreme uneasiness I felt walking around Halifax with this case full of art. Someone might assert that it is ephemeral because it doesn't look like real art which is really just a reflection of our loss of any sense of genre. An Elizabethan sonnet may have been small but not without meaning and value.



larger whole often distracts a viewer from approaching each individually, and sometimes from seeing the extent of your representation. Yet in whatever presentation, the wondrously exhilarating strength of your work lies in your assertion that every part of the world is as accessible to aesthetic perception as any other part -- a strength which is not mitigated by any manner of heart-on-the-sleeve sensibility of I'm o.k./you're o.k. or some tortive mutation thereof. Like a good library, your art is full of representations far too numerous to be wholly explored, of curious intelligence overflowing.<sup>12</sup>

I am tempted to say, Cliff, that *like every painter worthy of the name, you paint the truth about history and the world as it is. That history includes the universal rejection of abstract art -- and the post-modernist failure to create an art as sheerly authoritative as what they have renounced. It includes the abandonment by artists of the old avant-garde's anti-bourgeois ethical stance -- and the absence(so far) of a cogent post-modern response to the insatiable consumerism of North American society.*

Tempted, yet I am uncertain of its truth.<sup>13</sup> To speak of "painting the truth" might mean something if you were a war artist or an illustrator. The painter *qua* artist does something else and something quite simple -- creates value; and the values you create arise not from rejections but from selections -- the selections of what interests you in the world -- libraries, abstract art, portraits, landscapes, architecture, other art, and, of course, miscellaneous.<sup>14</sup> Not very selective, really, but then I have argued that your strength is in your virtuous openness to the world. And your seriousness. If asked to simply characterize you, most people would centre on your humour, your willingness to joke and laugh.<sup>15</sup> Yet I am always taken aback by your sudden withdrawal from our conversation as you centre your thoughts seriously on a matter.<sup>16</sup>

Only today have I looked through the reviews of your work which you sent me.<sup>17</sup> They are supportive without exception. But none of them, I think, really tries to grips with the question of what your art is, although there is an inappropriate tendency to view it as "idiosyncratic." There are long histories of miniature painting, for one. There is the long history, albeit only recently acclaimed, of appropriation by one artist of other artists' art. There is the tradition of cumulative art practice in artists as diverse as Arman and Spoerri in one respect and Richard Long in quite another. And so on. What you do is so clearly not *naive* although perhaps more fortuitous than not. Your fortune is having discovered, by whatever means, a field upon which to play. Your strength of character has been to continue sustained play. Your art is to play and the strength of your art is nothing other than the breadth of your interests. I mean by *play*, of course, the sense of amusing oneself but also the sense of freedom. I do not mean play as horsing around or indulgence, although those

<sup>12</sup>It does seem to me that some such description of your art and activity is more to the point than, say, Charlotte Townsend-Gault's suggestions about your "musing on the organization of knowledge" [*Vanguard* March 1984]; a suggestion based on a misunderstanding of library's epistemology.

<sup>13</sup>It sounds as though I have slipped again into another voice in all likelihood from re-reading my collected writings of John Bentley Mays.

<sup>14</sup>The organizational categories which you sent along with the paintings. Are there others? And, are these stable or on another day might they be different? Does it matter either way? You have stated in private correspondence that any suggestion of "some overarching scheme" to your production is "non-existent."

<sup>15</sup>This is another one of those authorial/curatorial presumptive constructs to help tell the story which I am making up.

<sup>16</sup>Certainly, I do not mean to allude to some "laughing on the outside/crying..." cliché but rather more to roughly agree with Susan Gibson-Garvey's observation that "the endearing naughtiness with which [you carry] out [your] project often masks the seriousness of [your] intent" [*Tenth Dalhousie Drawing Exhibition* (1990)]. Although the notion of "endearing naughtiness" may be cloying - it is to me - it nevertheless does direct attention to that element in your work which makes it move beyond a delimiting specialized peer audience. The element, of course, is humour: an element too seldom encountered in our high and official culture as you note yourself, for instance, in your 1987 review "Sean McQuay."

<sup>17</sup>And here perhaps is the best empirical evidence I have about your art, at least insofar as one's art is connected to one's personality, genetic structure, soul, psyche, something. Not only did you possess and send a full and ample c.v. but also copies of all your writings, cartoons (back to the 70s and from Alberta and P.E.I.), photocopies of articles on libraries, reviews, notices, flyers -- several large manila envelopes worth of stuff but giving no evidence of organization. It is the content, the accumulation of intellectual property, not its organization which interests you in the library.



are the slight semantic shifts which are potential in both the word and the art. With the word we usually figure it out by the limited context of its use. The art is a little more difficult and finally will likely have to await the cumulative and complete *Oeuvres* and, god help us, a *catalogue raisonné*.

My guess, Cliff, is that the issue of *audience* is the most profound contemporary art issue. Who looks and who reads? Our friends and loved ones,<sup>18</sup> of course. Perhaps not even our friends always. Who would read this or your collected writings? While reading/proofing your writings for *The 100,000 Names of Art*, I came to recognize that what I liked generally about them was *your* voice even though at times it was irritating and that *your* reflections on the work in question invariably were peppered with insights about all kinds of art and art-related issues. There was the deliberate creation of a parenthetical persona who found the really important things to be aside from that which was the centre of focus. The insights may or may not fit a cogent, or even coherent, pattern. There is a quality to your writing of listening to you speak out loud in a room which might only have you present. I mean here to emphasise the quality of the *personal* and the *possessive* all the while knowing that there is indeed an audience out there.<sup>19</sup>

Whoever the audience is, it seems to me that the form of our art and of our writing "had better be prepared to commit piracy on any technique that will float and carry content" as Brian Fawcett argues.<sup>20</sup> In your manner, I trust that you are leading the way, Cliff.

Good for you ■

Halifax, Nova Scotia/Upper Sackville, New Brunswick  
June 1991/January 1992

<sup>18</sup>I will take this opportunity to thank my audience for her patience and help with all my work, Gemey Kelly.

<sup>19</sup>"One images himself addressing his peers I suppose. Surely that might be the definition of 'seriousness?' I would like, as you see, to convince myself that my pleasure in your response is not plain vanity but the pleasure of being heard, the pleasure of companionship, which seems more honorable." Those words, Cliff, were originally in a letter from the British poet Charles Tomlinson to his friend the American poet George Oppen who suggested a division in to lines of verse for a collaborative poem titled "To C.T."

<sup>20</sup>*Cambodia: a book for people who find television too slow* (New York, 1989), p.61.



## ART GALLERY/LIBRARY/ART GALLERY, 1981-

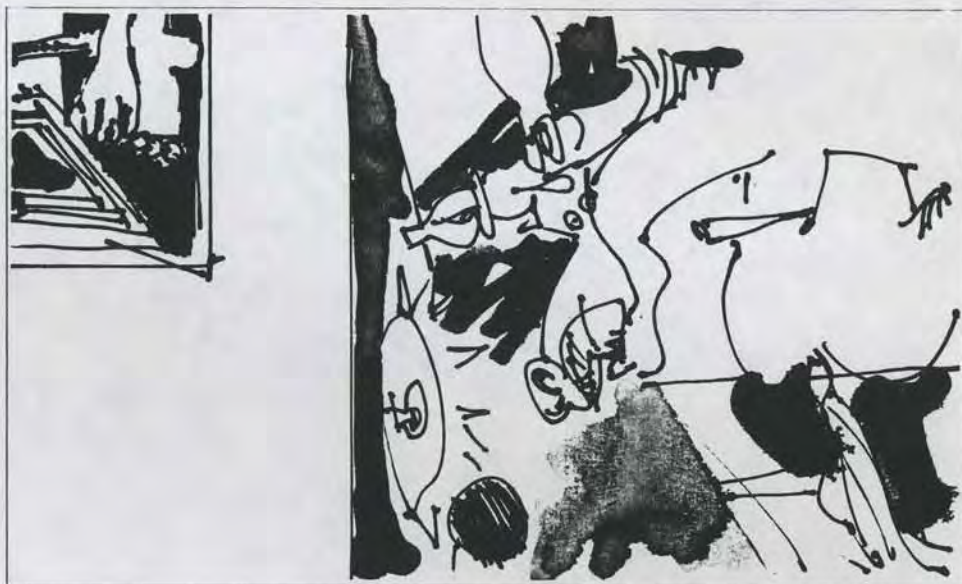
1) I have been making 3"x5" paintings - the size of the (disappearing) library file card, and the proportions (3:5) of Fibonacci numbers - since 1981.

2) *Nova Scotia College of Art & Design Library File Card Intervention*, 1981:

H.H. Arneson's *History of Modern Art* was cut into file card size fragments. These "file cards" were entered into the library's Author/Title catalogue, according to an improvised scheme which could be deduced from an inspection of the catalogue. To avoid confusion with catalogue cards, those "Arneson" cards which contained a great deal of type were not entered into the card catalogue.

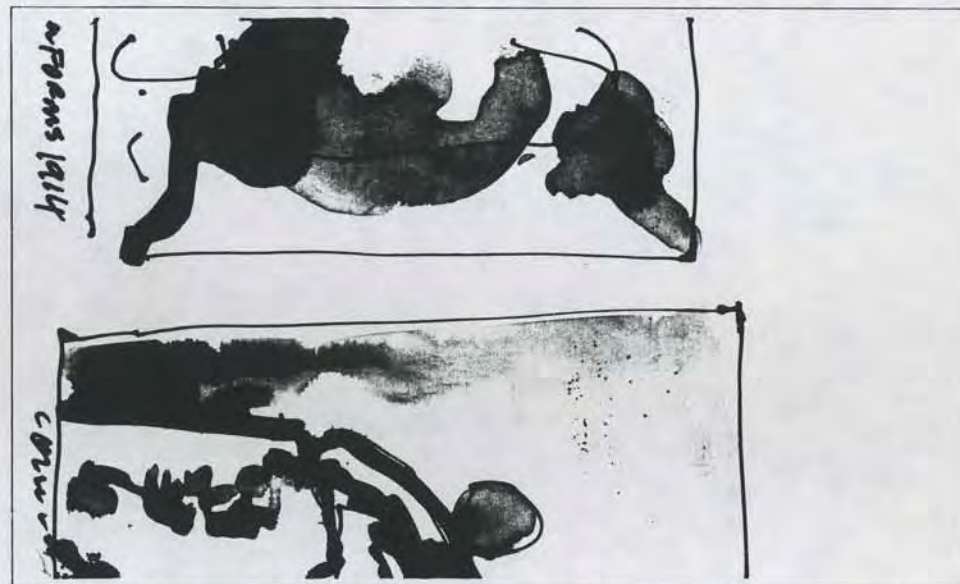
For example, if you happened to be looking up "Picasso" you would find all the fragments of Picasso images from Arneson's book filed behind the last entry on Picasso. The project began on 5 October 1981 and ended on 17 November 1981. The following is an enumeration of the cards and their locations in the catalogue:

- 3 cards entered under Jacques Louis David, behind "David to Delacroix"
- 2 cards entered under Gericault, behind "Gericault's Paintings of the Insane"
- 4 cards entered under Courbet, behind "Courbet's L'Atelier du peintre"
- 2 cards entered under Ingres, behind Ingres and other parables
- 4 cards entered under Daumier, behind "Daumier, the man and the artist"
- 5 cards entered under Manet, behind "Manet, Edouard, 1832-1883, Olympia"
- 3 cards entered under Corot, behind "Corot to Picasso: European Paintings in Canadian Collections"
- 10 cards entered under Degas, behind "Degas: the artist's mind"
- 4 cards entered under Monet, behind "Monet Unveiled"
- 8 cards entered under Van Gogh, behind "Van Gogh's life in his drawings."
- 13 cards entered under Cezanne, behind "Cezanne's portrait drawings"
- 2 cards entered under Signac, behind "Signac, Paul, 1863-1935"
- 13 cards entered under Rodin, behind "Rodin's sculpture"
- 30 cards entered under Matisse, behind "Matisse on art"
- 55 cards entered under Picasso, behind "Picasso's Guernica"
- 19 cards entered under Duchamp, behind "Duchamp's readymades"
- 1 card entered under Puvis, behind "Puvis de Chavannes et la peinture lyonnaise du XIXe siecle"
- 3 cards entered under Toulouse-Lautrec Monfa, behind "Toulouse-Lautrec Monfa, Henri Marie Raymond de 1864-1901"
- 6 cards entered under Bonnard, behind "Bonnard and his environment"
- 3 cards entered under Vuillard, behind "Vuillard, Edouard, 1868-1940"



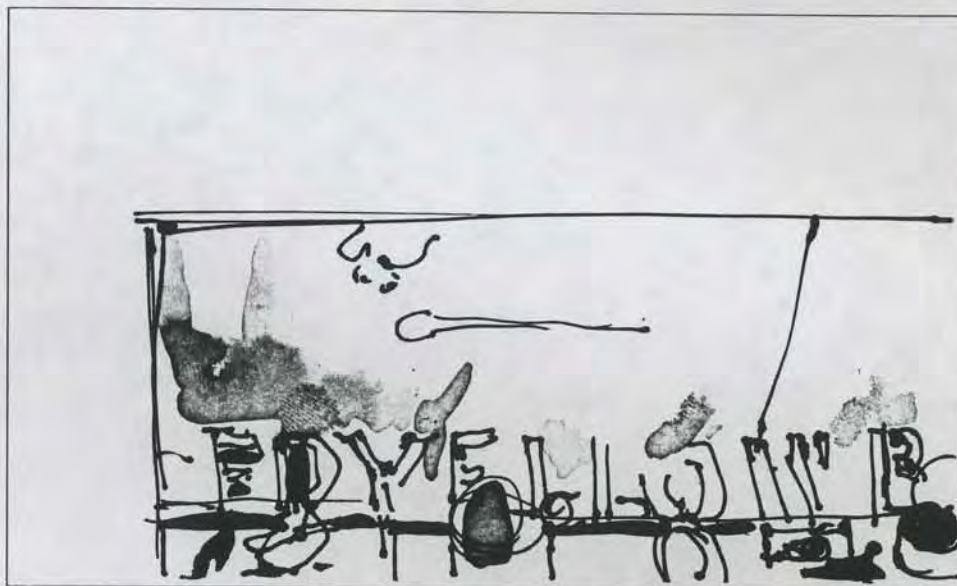


11 cards entered under Braque, behind "Braque: the great years"  
 2 cards entered under Seurat, behind "Seurat's Les Poseuses (small version) 1888-1975"  
 2 cards entered under Whistler, behind "Whistler themes and variations: an exhibition"  
 1 card entered under Rembrandt, behind "Rembrandt's Aristotle, and other Rembrandt studies"  
 2 cards entered under Kollwitz behind "Kollwitz, Kathe (Sshmidt) 1867-1945"  
 5 cards entered under Ensor, behind "New York (City) Museum of Modern Art. James Ensor. Card 2"  
 1 card entered under Morris, behind "Morris, William, 1834-1896"  
 4 cards entered under Munch, behind "Munch und Ibsen"  
 4 cards entered under Vlaminck, behind "Vlaminck, Maurice de, 1876-1958"  
 1 card entered under Tiepolo, behind "Tiepolo: Banquet of Cleopatra"  
 8 cards entered under Stella, behind "Stella since 1970"  
 2 cards entered under Rosso, behind "Rosso, Medaro"  
 2 cards entered under Samaras, behind "Samaras, Lucas"  
 1 card entered under Buren, behind "Buren, Daniel, 1938-"  
 2 cards entered under Tiffany, behind "Tiffany, Louis Comfort"  
 3 cards entered under Noland, behind "Noland, Kenneth"  
 6 cards entered under Brancusi, behind "Brancusi's birds"  
 3 cards entered under Redon, behind "Redon, Olidon"  
 1 card entered under Kosuth, behind "Kosuth, Joseph"  
 1 card entered under Darboven, behind "Darboven, Hanne, 1941-"  
 17 cards entered under Mondrian, behind "Mondrian, the process works"  
 6 cards entered under Rouault, behind "Rouault, Georges, 1871-1958"  
 10 cards entered under Kandinsky, behind "Kandinsky: watercolours"  
 5 cards entered under Gris, behind "Gris, Juan, 1887-1927"  
 8 cards entered under Leger, behind "Leger and the avant-garde"  
 8 cards entered under Klee, behind "Klee, Paul, 1879-1940"  
 6 cards entered under Chagall, behind "Chagall: watercolours and gouaches"  
 5 cards entered under Schiele, behind "Schiele in prison"  
 1 card entered under Pearlstein, behind "Pearlstein, Phillip"  
 1 card entered under Dufy, behind "Dufy, Raoul, 1877-1953"  
 5 cards entered under Rousseau, behind "Rousseau, Redon and fantasy"  
 3 cards entered under Malevich, behind "Malevich, Kazimer Severinovich, 1878-1935, Suprematism"  
 15 cards entered under Miro, behind "Miro, sculptures"  
 5 cards entered under De Chirico, behind "De Chirico, Georgio"  
 3 cards entered under Fontana, behind "Fontana, Lucio, 1899-1968"  
 6 cards entered under Motherwell, behind "Motherwell, Robert, 1915-"  
 1 card entered under Hopper, behind "Hopper, Edward, 1882-1967"  
 3 cards entered under Soutine, behind "Soutine"





2 cards entered under Hamilton, behind "Hamilton, Richard"  
 1 card entered under Blake, behind "Blake in his time, 1978. Card 2"  
 5 cards entered under Lichtenstein, behind "Lichtenstein, Roy"  
 6 cards entered under Dali, behind "Dali: Gemalde, Zeichnungen, Objekte, Schmuck"  
 3 cards entered under Pollock, behind "Pollock, Jackson, 1912-1956"  
 2 cards entered under Leslie, behind "Lesley Foxcroft"  
 2 cards entered under Held, behind "Held, Al"  
 1 card entered under Oppenheim behind "Oppenheim, Dennis, 1938-"  
 2 cards entered under Tatlin, behind "Contemporary British Painting. Card 2"  
 1 card entered under Harnett, behind "Hornoncourt, Rened, 1901-"  
 12 cards entered under Ernst, behind "Ernst, Max, 1891-"  
 4 cards entered under Oldenburg, behind "Oldenburg: six themes"  
 1 card entered under Hodler, behind "Hodkin, Frederick William"  
 4 cards entered under Francis, behind "Francis, Sam, 1923-"  
 6 cards entered under Warhol, behind "Warhol, Andy"  
 1 card entered under Linder, behind "Linden-Museum, Stuttgart"  
 3 cards entered under Flavin, behind "Flavin, Dan 1933-"  
 3 cards entered under Rauschenburg, behind "Pennsylvania. University Institute of Contemporary Art"  
 6 cards entered under Davis, behind "Davis, Stuart"  
 2 cards entered under Demuth, behind "Demuth, Charles, 1883-1935"  
 6 cards entered under Johns behind "Johns, Jasper"  
 6 cards entered under Modigliani, behind "Modigliani and sculpture"  
 7 cards entered under Giacometti, behind "Giacometti: sculptures, paintings, drawings"  
 2 cards entered under Marin, behind "Marin, John 1870-1953"  
 2 cards entered under Louis, behind "Louis, Morris"  
 4 cards entered under Poons, behind "Poons, Larry, 1937-"  
 1 card entered under Close, behind "Close, Chuck, 1941-"  
 1 card entered under Katz, behind "Katz, Alex, 1927-"  
 2 cards entered under Cornell, behind "Cornell, Joseph, 1903-1972"  
 4 cards entered under Nolde, behind "Nolde: forbidden pictures"  
 4 cards entered under Rothko, behind "Rothko, Mark, 1903-1970"  
 1 card entered under Jawlensky, behind "Jawlensky, Alexej von 1884-194-"  
 5 cards entered under Kelly, behind "Kelly, Ellsworth, 1923-"  
 1 card entered under Morandi, behind "Morandi...i desegni"  
 4 cards entered under Caro, behind "Caro, Anthony, 1924-"  
 1 card entered under Albright, behind "Albrecht Durer: master printmaker"  
 3 cards entered under Pascin, behind "Pascali, Pino"  
 1 card entered under O'Keeffe, behind "O'Keeffe, Georgia, 1887-"  
 1 card entered under Man Ray, behind "Man Ray, photographs, 1920-1934"  
 4 cards entered under Bacon, behind "Bacon, Francis, 1909-"



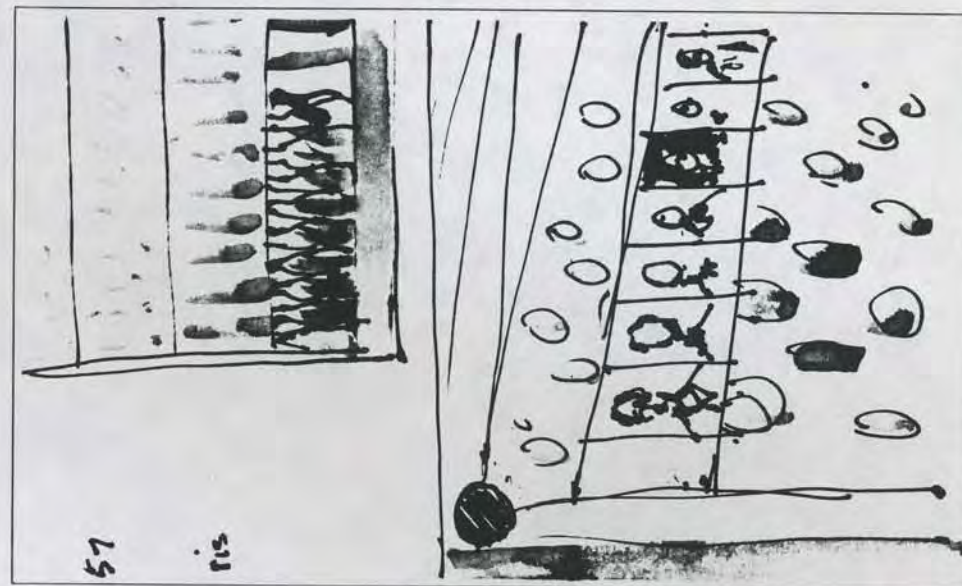


9 cards entered under Arp, behind "Arp, with two poems by Arp"  
 3 cards entered under Grosz, behind "Grosz, George, 1893-1959"  
 2 cards entered under Demuth, behind "Demuth, Charles, 1883-1935"  
 8 cards entered under Magritte, behind "Magritte- retrospective loan exhibition"  
 7 cards entered under Dubuffet, behind "Dubuffet, Jean, 1901-"  
 1 card entered under Nadelman, behind "Nadelman, Elie, 1885-1946"  
 1 card entered under Estes, behind "Estes, Richard, 1936-"  
 4 cards entered under Marca-Relli, behind "Marc Chagall et la Bible"  
 2 cards entered under Segal, behind "Segal, George"  
 1 card entered under Jenkins behind "Jenkins, Paul, 1923-"  
 1 card entered under Homer after "Homer, William Innes"  
 1 card entered under Judd, behind "Judd, Don"  
 10 cards entered under Calder, behind "Calder's Universe"  
 173 cards entered under Architecture behind "Leitner, Bernhard"  
 4 cards entered under Manzu, behind "Manzu, Giacomo, 1908"  
 4 cards entered under "Beckman, Max, 1884-1950"  
 6 cards entered under Lipchitz, behind "Lipchitz, Jacques, 1891-"  
 4 cards entered under Mariani, behind "Mariani, Umberto"  
 2 cards entered under Utrillo, behind "Utrillo, Maurice, 1883-1955"  
 2 cards entered under Marc, behind "Marc, Franz, 1880-1916"  
 2 cards entered under Klimt, behind "Klimt, Gustave"  
 2 cards entered under Rodchenko, behind "Rodchenko and the arts of revolutionary Russia"  
 2 cards entered under Kline, behind "Kline, Franz, 1910-1962"  
 2 cards entered under Severini, behind "Severini, Gino"  
 1 card entered under Carra, behind "Carra, Carlo, 1881-1966"  
 1 card entered under Titian, behind "Titian as portraitist"  
 1 card entered under Hepworth, behind "Hepworth, Barbara"  
 2 cards entered under Nakian, behind "Nakian, Reuben"  
 2 cards entered under Armitage, behind "Armitage, Kenneth, 1916-"  
 1 card entered under Turnbull after "Turn-of-the-century America"  
 2 cards entered under Etienne Hajdu, behind "Haire, Christopher P."  
 1 card entered under Roszak, behind "Roszak, Theodore"  
 1 card entered under Martin, behind "Martin, Kenneth, 1905-"  
 1 card entered under Goeritz, behind "Goepper, Roger"  
 1 card entered under Ferber, behind "Fenwick, Kathleen M. Ed."  
 1 card entered under van Hoeydonk, behind "Vanguard 1955"  
 1 card entered under Pomodoro, behind "Pomodoro, Gio, 1930-"  
 2 cards entered under Bourgeois, behind "Bourgeois, Louise"  
 1 card entered under Stankiewicz, behind "Stanislawski, Rysyard, 1921-"  
 2 cards entered under Chillida behind "Chilean contemporary art"  
 2 cards entered under Nevelson, behind "Nevelson wood sculptures"



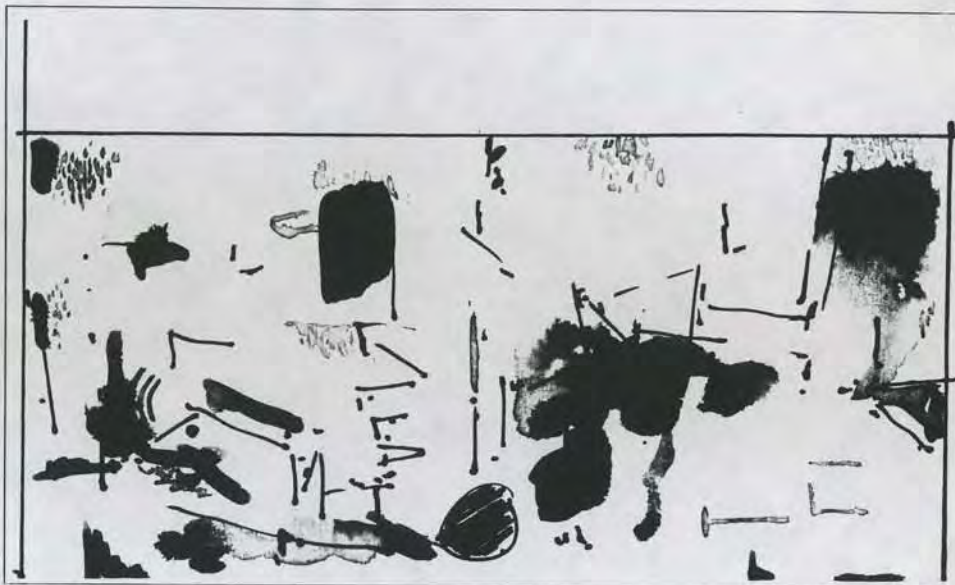


3 cards entered under Pevsner, behind "Pettit, Florence Harvey"  
 3 cards entered under Gonzalez, behind "Gonzalez, Julio"  
 6 cards entered under Gabo, behind "Gabo, Naum 1890-"  
 2 cards entered under Archipenko, behind "Toronto. Art Gallery of Ontario"  
 3 cards entered under Noguchi, behind "Noguchi, Isamu"  
 1 card entered under Flannagan behind "Flanary, David A."  
 2 cards entered under Morris, behind "Morris, Louis"  
 2 cards entered under Smith, behind "Smith, Tony"  
 2 cards entered under Liberman, behind "Liberation through art Dada and Surrealism"  
 1 card entered under King, behind "King, Phillip, 1934-"  
 1 card entered under Bladen, behind "Bladen, Ronald"  
 1 card entered under Tucker, behind "Tucker, William, 1935-"  
 1 card entered under Dufy, behind "Dufour, Gary"  
 1 card entered under Rossetti, behind "The Rossetti-Leyland letters"  
 1 card entered under Lachaise, behind "Lachaise, Gaston, 1882-1935"  
 1 card entered under Schoffer, behind "Schoenberg, Arnold"  
 1 card entered under Bell, behind "Bell, Larry"  
 2 cards entered under Bazaine, behind "Baysting, Arthur"  
 1 card entered under Skulason, behind "Skrine, Peter N., joint author"  
 2 cards entered under Soulages, behind "Souland farm"  
 2 cards entered under Zoa-Wou-ki, behind "Zapf, Hermann"  
 1 card entered under Winter, behind "Winter, Edward"  
 1 card entered under Silva, behind "Signs, systems, and meanings"  
 2 cards entered under Tworckov, behind "Twombly, Cy 1929-"  
 2 cards entered under Brooks, behind "New York [City] Museum of Modern Art"  
 4 cards entered under Moore, behind "Moore, Henry"  
 2 cards entered under Gaudier-Brzeska, behind "Gaudier-Brzeska, drawings"  
 1 card entered under Arman, behind "Arman: 33 accumulations"  
 3 cards entered under Appel, behind "Appel's appels"  
 1 card entered behind Asger, behind "Jorg, Wolfgang, illus."  
 1 card entered under Kjarval, behind "Kiyooka, Roy"  
 1 card entered under Noe, behind "Nocte, Gunther"  
 2 cards entered under Tamayo, behind "Tamayo, Rufino, 1899-"  
 2 cards entered under Matta, behind "Matta"  
 1 card entered under Martin, behind "Martin, Agnes, 1912-"  
 1 card entered under Sander behind "Sander, Auguste"  
 1 card entered under Bouguereau, behind "Boughy, Arthur S."  
 2 cards entered under Pousette-Dart, behind "Pousette-Dart, Richard"  
 1 card entered under Anuszkiewicz, behind "Anuszkiewicz, Richard"  
 1 card entered under Bury, behind "Bury, Pol 1922-"  
 1 card entered under Lye after "Lydia and Harry Lewis Winston Collection"



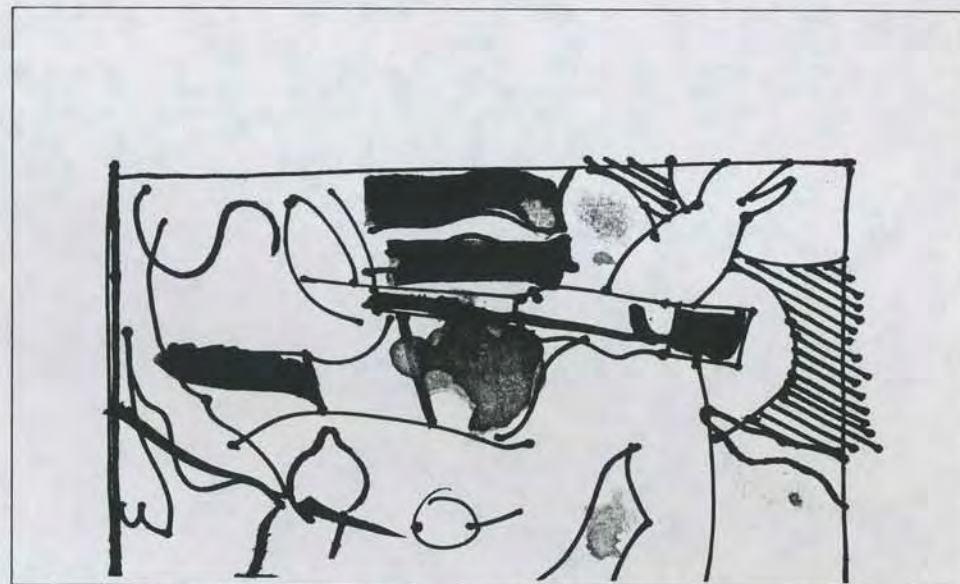


2 cards entered under Soto, behind "Soto: a retrospective exhibition"  
 1 card entered under Piene, behind "Piene, Otto 1928-"  
 1 card entered under McClanahan, behind "McClanahan, Preston"  
 3 Gauguin cards not entered [problem with drawer see below]  
 2 cards entered under Hausmann, behind "Hausmann, Raoul, 1886-"  
 1 card entered under Taeuber-Arp, behind "Taeuber-Arp, Sophie"  
 2 cards entered under Cesar, behind "Cesar, Baldaccini"  
 1 card entered under Lippold, behind "Lippe, Aschwin"  
 1 card entered under Phillips, behind "Phillips, Peter 1939"  
 1 card entered under Diller, behind "Diller, Burgoyne 1906-1965"  
 1 card entered under Barlach, behind "Barkley, Paul W."  
 1 card entered under Friesz, behind "Friesen, Wallace V."  
 1 card entered under Baruchello, behind "Bartram, Alan joint author"  
 2 cards entered under Ipousteguy, behind "Ipousteguy, Jean"  
 1 card entered under Shahn, behind "Shahn, Ben 1898-1969"  
 1 card entered under Muller, behind "Muller, Robert H."  
 1 card entered under Newman, behind "Newman, Barnett"  
 1 card entered under Hartung after "Hart, Frederick"  
 1 card entered under Johannesson, behind "Johannessen, Matthias 1930-"  
 1 card entered under Epstein, behind "Epstein, Lee"  
 1 card entered under Olitski, behind "Olitski, Jules, 1922"  
 1 card entered under Golfinopoulos, behind "Goffman, Erving"  
 1 card entered under Bellmer, behind "Bellmer, Hans 1902-"  
 1 card entered under Seligmann, behind "Seligmann, Kurt"  
 1 card entered under Dominguez, behind "Dominguez, Bordna"  
 1 card entered under Bearman, behind "Berlyne, D."  
 1 card entered under Tomlin, behind "Tomlin, Bradley Walker, 1899-1953"  
 1 card entered under Sickert, behind "Sickert"  
 1 card entered under Alechinsky, behind "Alechinsky, Pierre 1927-"  
 1 card entered under Saura, behind "Saunders, Robert J. 1926-"  
 1 card entered under Arroyo, behind "Arroyo, Eduardo 1937-"  
 1 card entered under Bourdelle, behind "Bourdelle 1861-1929"  
 1 card entered under Maillol, behind "Maillol, Aristide Joseph Bonaventure 1861-1944"  
 1 card entered under Renoir, behind "Renoir to Matisse"  
 2 cards entered under Albers, behind "Albers, Joseph 1888-"  
 1 card entered under Diebenkorn, behind "Diebenkorn, Richard"  
 1 card entered under Marcks, behind "Marck, Marc van der"  
 1 card entered under Schmidt-Rottluff after "Schmitt Healy, Julia 1947-"  
 1 card entered under Heckel, behind "Heck, Johann George"  
 1 card entered under Nolde, behind "Nolde, Emile"  
 1 card entered under Kirchner, behind "Kirchner: his graphic art"





1 card entered under Muller, behind "Muller, Hans Wolfgang"  
 1 card entered under Schwitters, behind "Schwitters, Kurt 1887-1948 Collision"  
 1 card entered under Fautrier, behind "Fauteux, Andre 1946"  
 1 card entered under Hoffman, behind "Hoffman, Hans 1880-1966"  
 1 card entered under Riley, behind "Riley, Bridget 1931-"  
 1 card entered under Hartley, behind "Hartley, Marsden 1887-1943"  
 1 card entered under Tchelitchev, behind "Tchelitchev; paintings and drawings"  
 1 card entered under Baumeister, behind "Bauman, Susan"  
 2 cards entered under Macke, behind "Mack, Piene, Uecker"  
 2 cards entered under Davie, behind "Davidson, Patricia F., joint author."  
 1 card entered under Hakonarson, behind "Hakim, Besin"  
 3 cards entered under Gauguin, behind "Gauguin's paradise lost"  
 1 card entered under Capogrossi, behind "Caplovitz, David"  
 1 card entered under Derain, behind "Derain, Andre 1881-1919"  
 1 card entered under Lehmbruck, behind "Lehmbruck, Wilhelm 1881-1919"  
 1 card entered under Balla, behind "Balla, Giacomo, 1871-1958"  
 1 card entered under Metzinger, behind "Metzinger, Jean, 1883-1956"  
 2 cards entered under Picabia, behind "Picabia, Francis, 1879-1953, illus."  
 1 card entered under Feininger, behind "Feininger, Lyonel, 1871-1956"  
 1 card entered under Tinguely, behind "Tinguely, Jean"  
 1 card entered under Berni, behind "Bernhard, Ruth, 1905-"  
 1 card entered under Pierre Roy, behind "Roy, Claude, 1915-"  
 165 cards entered behind "An Unfinished Work, 1966-1971"  
 (last entry November 17, 1981) ■





### 3) THE LETTER AND JACQUES DERRIDA, 1983

Spivak, Derrida's translator, on Derrida's changing of "e" to "a" in the word "différance": "The 'a' serves to remind us that, even within the graphic structure, the perfectly spelled word is always absent, constituted through an endless series of spelling mistakes." The "perfectly spelt word" has its corollary in perfectly true reproductions and perfectly accurate measurements. The following compilation of spelling mistakes is proofreading and/or a drastically condensed and cryptic version of Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology*. We presume that the vistas of *différance* opened up by these spelling mistakes extend from the individual letter to the outer reaches of Library. Other than in reference to the word "différance" it cannot be said which of the following spelling mistakes are deliberate "errors" on the part of Derrida or Spivak and which can be attributed to typesetters and others. I did not let Derrida's emphasis on the grapheme over the phoneme lead me to record every break and nick in the body of the book's typesetting such as the word "faults" on page 211, in which the lower half of the "e" is missing.

The following are examples of spelling mistakes in *Of Grammatology* by Jacques Derrida, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, published by the Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1976:

- p.215, first line: the word "subordinatèd" should read "subordinated"
- p.230, seventh line from the bottom: the word "genealogy" should read "genealogy"
- p.240, sixteenth line from the top: the word "produecs" should read "produces"
- p.265, ninth line from the bottom "without ill-eflect" should read "without ill-effect"
- p.284, line 3 from the top: "violent contorsions" should read "violent contortions"
- p.iv, trans. preface: line 3 from the top: "socio-ecoimics" should read "socio-economics"
- p.33, line 29 "anwser" should read "answer"
- p.38, line 16: "typranny" should read "tyranny"
- p.136, line 16 from the bottom: "itself" should read "itself"
- p.168, line 3 from the top: "exteriority" should read "exteriority"
- p.163, line 9 from the top: "...what writing it..." should read "...what writing is..."
- p.163, line 7 and 6 from the bottom: "It it certainly..." should read "it is certainly"
- p.139, line 23: "the already-three-ness" should read "already-there-ness" ■

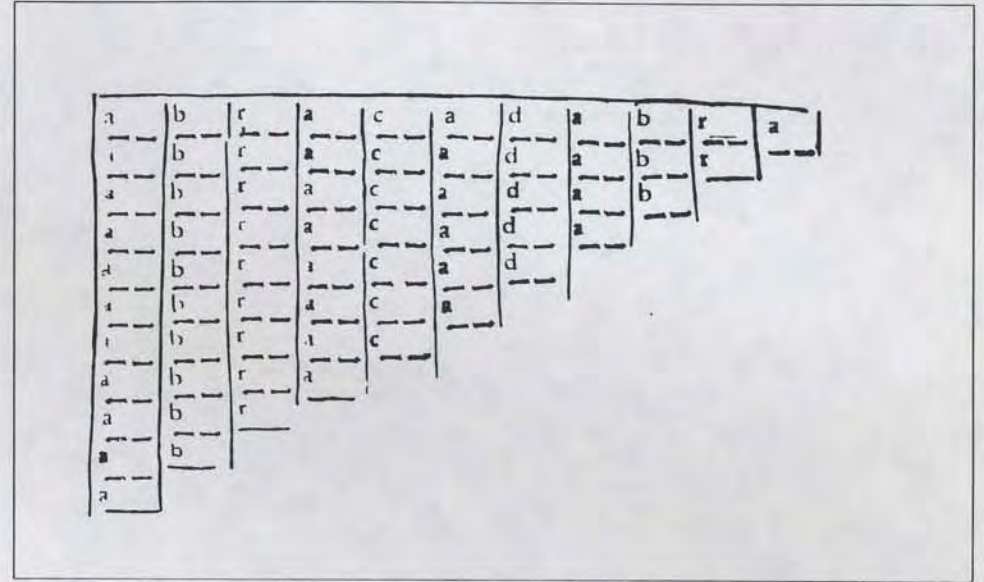
"violent contorsions"  
should read  
violent contortions  
p.284 line 3 from the top



#### 4) SEVERAL FIBONACCI NUMBERS 1988

(thanks to Patrick Kelly for programming)

2.	3.	5.
8.	13.	21.
34.	55.	89.
144.	233.	377.
610.	987.	1597.
2584.	4181.	6765.
10946.	17711.	28657.
46368.	75025.	121393.
196418.	317811.	514229.
832040.	1346269.	2178309.
3524578.	5702887.	9227465.
14930352.	24157818.	39088172.
63245992.	102334168.	165580160.
267914336.	433494496.	701408832.
1134903296.	1836312192.	2971215616.
4807527936.	7778743808.	12586271744.
20365015040.	32951287808.	53316304896.
86267592704.	139583897600.	225851490304.
365435387904.	591286894592.	956722315264.
1548009209856.	2504731656192.	4052740997120.
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498454241476608.	806515938164736.	1304970246750208.
2111486184914944.	3416456431665152.	5527942885015552.
8944399316680704.	14472342201696256.	23416741518376960.
37889084793815040.	61305826312192000.	99194915400974336.
160500746008133632.	259695661409107968.	■





## ERIC CAMERON, 1981-2

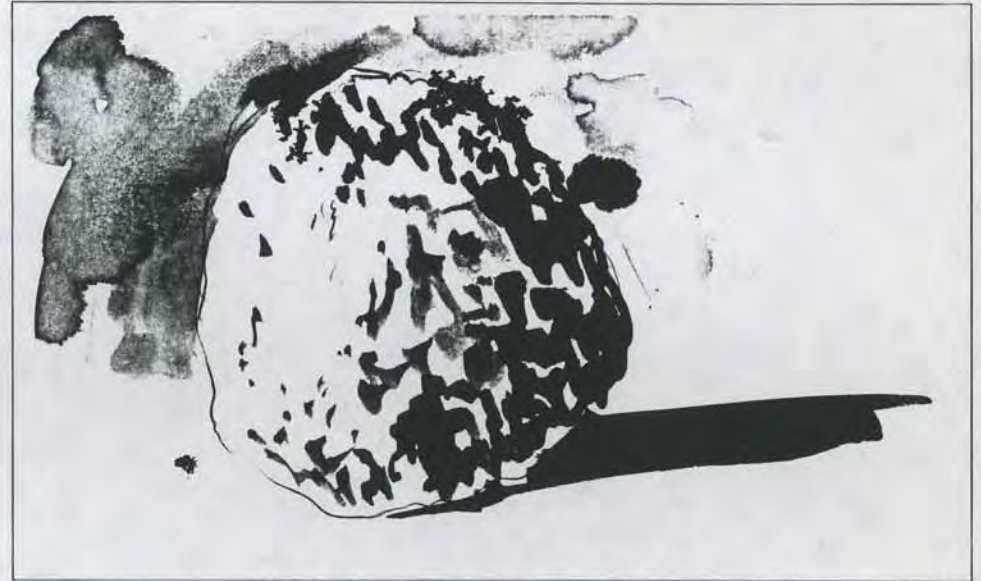
Craig Owens' *Allegorical Impulse* essays<sup>1</sup> discuss the re-emergence of allegory in "post-modern" art after its long censure by Modernist artists and critics. According to Owens, allegory is not an interpretive mode but can be provisionally characterized as one text doubled by another.<sup>2</sup> Despite this cautionary word, Owens inspires a peculiar way of looking at art. One recent example is a *Parachute*<sup>3</sup> magazine article about the expressionistic painter, Paterson Ewen. Although her principle source is Owens, the author culls quotations and impressions from many sources to support a claim that Ewen's rejection of Modernism was: "...a break with art making as he had traditionally known it..."<sup>4</sup> Dubious statements like that are given all the critical underpinning that current ideas about allegory can offer them. Indeed, the article is sandwiched onto the text of Ewen's painting in true allegorical fashion.

Eric Cameron<sup>5</sup> uses strategies of accumulation, palimpsest and plurality of means that have become identified with as typically "allegorical" or "postmodernist" by writers like Owens. Cameron, however, believes his art to be rooted in a modernist tradition and sensibility. One clue to that sensibility is a theme from Poussin that has figured heavily in Cameron's work since the early seventies. In his 1981 Art Gallery of Nova Scotia show Cameron put the words *Et in Arcadia Id* in large letters on the gallery wall. The phrase is an altered version of a tomb inscription in a Poussin painting which reads: "*Et in Arcadia Ego*". Cameron's play on words is a sly allusion to Freudian theory, which holds mythology to be subordinate to the psychoses. *Ego*,<sup>6</sup> the mythologizing entity, is replaced by *Id*, ego's primal precursor in Freud's schema of the mind. The kind of vegetative reading that references to myth encourage in some postmodernist work is cut off in Cameron's spliced phrase.

Over the past few years, Cameron's installations have included video monitors, mirrors and the occasional pot of grass. In his painted pieces a rose, a shoe, or a "gift" or some household article is buried under hundreds of layers of pure gesso alternated with layers made up of gesso mixed with a small portion of black paint. Three of these pieces were exhibited recently at Halifax's Eye Level Gallery. The following interview is an edited version of a taped conversation I had with Cameron on March 14, 1982.

CE: When did you start putting paint on objects?

EC: Around about the beginning of May '79...either late April or early May '79...Painting on other than regular art bases had been something that I had done with my students as a teaching project<sup>7</sup> because I had felt that it made



one of Eric's works c. 1985



people less inhibited not using standard materials. There were other things you could do just moving it a little bit out of the intimidating presence of the medium Titian had used. It would allow people to be more spontaneous in coming to grips with the problem of applying paint...

In one of the projects I did with people working on other materials, I'd ask people to paint pieces of fruit with the markings that were on the fruit and that generally went down very well. There was one woman who didn't like the idea - she painted fruit white and painted several layers on an apple, and I must admit that I had her in mind when I started my own object paintings.

Then, of course there have been several people around the college (Nova Scotia College of Art and Design)<sup>8</sup> who have done layer paintings. I think the first of these for whom layering was an issue in itself was Jeff Spalding, who was a graduate student when he started doing it. But before Jeff, Patrick Kelly did paintings which entailed layering but didn't focus on layering as the main aspect. Then, of course, there've been a lot of people doing layered painting at the college since then. So there were those different threads to it...

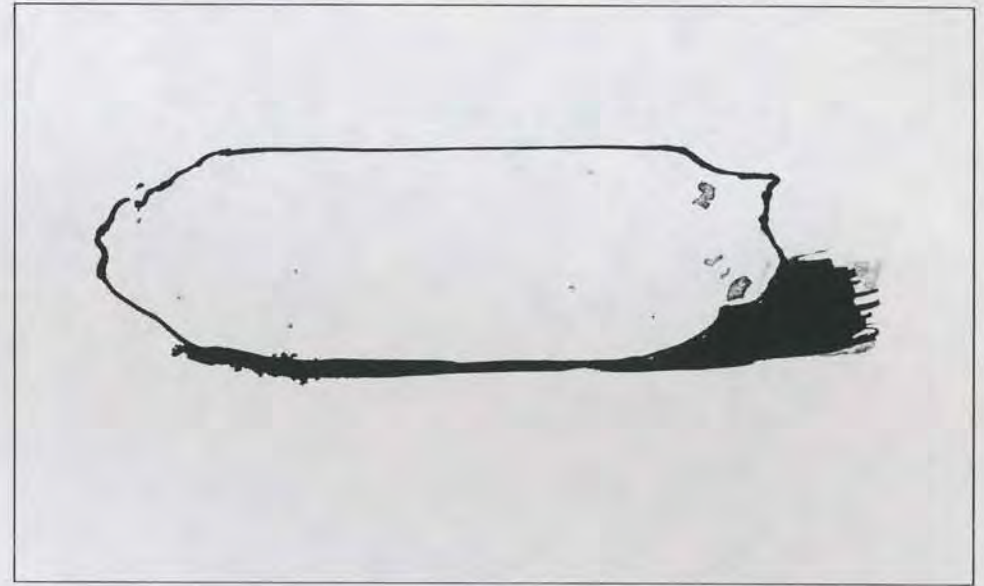
CE: The obsessiveness of your layered paintings seems incredible, the idea of putting over four hundred coats of paint on an object.

EC: I guess it gets obsessive when you think of it like that but when you actually see the object, aside from one or two where you can see the layers showing through, all you see is the top coat; it's just an object, you don't see the layers.

The one that has the most layers on it has 2986 [as of 1982 - CE] layers: that's a lettuce which, of course, doesn't have a lettuce inside anymore because the lettuce will have disintegrated absolutely and totally. It's almost eleven by eleven inches in each direction. It's quite heavy and you would never guess in a million years it had started from a lettuce unless you were told. It really has superseded that base totally and become something whose forms have to do with the way paint itself grows.

CE: I think of them as painting the "readymade" to death.

EC: Well, that's a good definition. The layer paintings start off with something. The first coat of paint on the thick paintings casts it in gesso and it suddenly loses its detail. The alarm clock suddenly loses its ability to tell the time but it has the form of an alarm clock; as you go on painting it eventually develops the form which becomes ever more remote from the starting point and becomes increasingly only itself.



*all illustrations of Eric's work which follow are based on photos in the National Gallery catalogue*



CE: What about impressionistic associations, like snow or sediment?

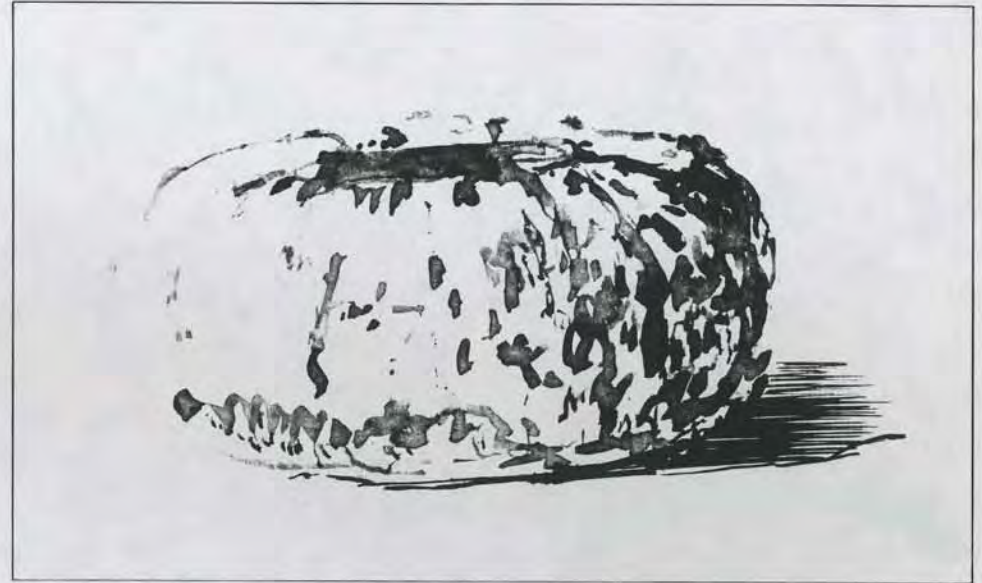
EC: There's a place in Yorkshire, (again it goes back to an English context because a lot of the specifics of my work, I think, do go back to English things) we used to go to a place in Knaresborough called Mother Shipton's Well, a limestone cave near a limestone spring and people would hang dolls - all sorts of things - under this water and they would become encased in stone. Oddly enough it produced very smooth, rounded forms and my anticipation when I first started doing the thick paintings was that they would grow to be ultimately spherical. I expected that simply by putting paint on gradually as one went over and over again, that everything would turn into a perfect sphere which seemed to be what ought to happen on the analogy with the objects from Mother Shipton's Well: but it just didn't work out like that. Maybe the shaking of my hand, maybe psychological pressures as well as the physical pressures and the properties of the paint being different from the properties of limestone distillation of water.

So it was like natural processes, and what I think I'm about is engaging the natural process. If there is an interface between human activity and the final context of nature, then what I'm doing is sacrificing my own control in the hope of engaging with the largest possible forces that operate through me.

CE: How "natural" is the kind of control that a Van Eyck would bring to painting, by contrast?

EC: That would be the very antithesis, wouldn't it? The notion of process within which I'm working opposes the notion of the highest refinement of technique within which Van Eyck is working. Paint can achieve an ultimate refinement in terms of control; of the medium itself and also in terms of its ability to recreate the world according to the artist's will.

I think there's a different relationship between man and nature implied in Van Eyck's paintings and in my thick paintings and that's a characteristic of the difference between Renaissance and modern art, a difference as well going back to Classical antiquity. I suppose it's one of the standard contrasts between Classicism and Romanticism and in this context Van Eyck could well be wrapped up with the Classicists for purpose of the analogy. Man and human will and human consciousness had a central place in the world view of Classical antiquity and Romanticism inverts that, inverts the relationship between man and nature. Nature then becomes a huge force against which man is tiny by comparison.





You look at sculptures on the Parthenon which do have bits of landscape, they have bits of rocks showing through here and there but the human figure dwarfs the natural elements to an enormous extent. You look at Turner's landscape paintings and there is an inverse of that. I think one of the things that's happened with modern art is that the dwarfing of man by the forces that surround him which ultimately I think you would call nature, whether they are social, mechanistic or whatever because they all emerge out of nature - if nature didn't contain the potential none of these things would be there. The forces have become so much greater that it has become impossible to create even an image in which one can believe, which can epitomize the scale of the contrast. What one can do is simply to harness an aspect of these forces themselves in order to sample the relationship, not to encompass the totality of a world view that is the art of Classical antiquity.

The art of the Renaissance presents a world view in which man is dominant, the art of Romanticism presents a world view in which nature is dominant, the art of modern man cannot present a world view at all...■

<sup>1</sup> Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernist," Part I, *October 13* (1980), and Part II, *October 14* (1980)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.68

<sup>3</sup> Janice Andrae, "Paterson Ewen: painting, image, allegory," *Parachute 28* (1982), pp.22-28.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.25.

<sup>5</sup> Eric Cameron was born in 1935. He studied art history at Durham University and the Courtauld Institute of Art. He has taught, exhibited, and written about art in England and Canada. He currently heads the graduate department at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax, N.S.

<sup>6</sup> Technically the "super-ego", see Jack J. Spector, *The Aesthetics of Freud, a study in psychoanalysis and art*, Penquin Press, London, (1972), p.111.

<sup>7</sup> Documented in Cameron's "Collective Art: some teaching projects at the University of Guelph, Canada," *Leonardo*, Vol. 5, (1972), pp.289-295.

<sup>8</sup> Bruce Campbell made several small boxes in the mid-'70s which he used as "paint moulds". Layer after layer of colour was painted into the molds over a number of months, forming cubes of solid paint which were exhibited outside their molds.

Garry Kennedy's Eye Level Gallery show of 1979 dealt with the layers of paint that had accumulated on the gallery walls over the years.





## JANICE LEONARD, 1982

Janice Leonard uses scraps of linoleum, carpet, paper and wood to make *Dream Homes*. They are not real buildings but collage constructions that hang on a wall. Six of these works were shown recently in a group show at Eye Level Gallery which included works by Robert Pope and Gary Spearin.

Leonard based her pieces on actual dreams recorded in her journals: "I HAD A DREAM I LIVED IN A HOUSE-BOAT ADRIFT ON HALIFAX HARBOUR" is a sentence stuck under an advertising drawing of a boat in one of the pieces. Strips of linoleum are tacked around the edge of the collage. These items are glued to a piece of wallpaper which has a swirling brown pattern on it. The other collages use similar materials to complement the sentences that are glued on them:

"I HAD A DREAM I LIVED IN A CABIN IN THE WOODS BY A LAKE"  
"I HAD A DREAM I LIVED NEAR THE SHORE IN A HOUSE MADE OF LARGE CEMENT BRICKS"  
"I HAD A DREAM I LIVED IN MARITIME MALL"  
"I HAD A DREAM I LIVED IN A MOBILE HOME WITH MY SISTER AND A LITTLE GIRL."  
"I HAD A DREAM I LIVED IN A GLASS-SIDED HOUSE DURING A WAR"

She has adapted the format and updated the content of "Home Sweet Home" samplers which were once found in every house years ago. The numbers and letters usually embroidered into samplers have been replaced with poems of longing. Her sentences are about the house she may never own (she and her husband eventually did buy a house in Halifax - CE). Leonard's personal frustration at having to move from one apartment to another, looking for reasonably priced accommodation, inspired the work. Her constructions have as much to do with economic hard times as an artistic play of materials.

Leonard's collage method originates in Cubist and Dada experiments which were assimilated into artmaking at the beginning of the century. What looks messy to some viewers, the rough found materials, looks elegant to those who are reminded of the Modernist work which precedes it. People who do like the look of the work, however, may not find positive value in the sentences; however, those who are irritated by the look of the collages will find their feelings reinforced by the statements. Such is the curious life of work which attempts to bridge the gap between formal concerns and social commentary - traditions which we are encouraged to believe to be diametrically opposed ■





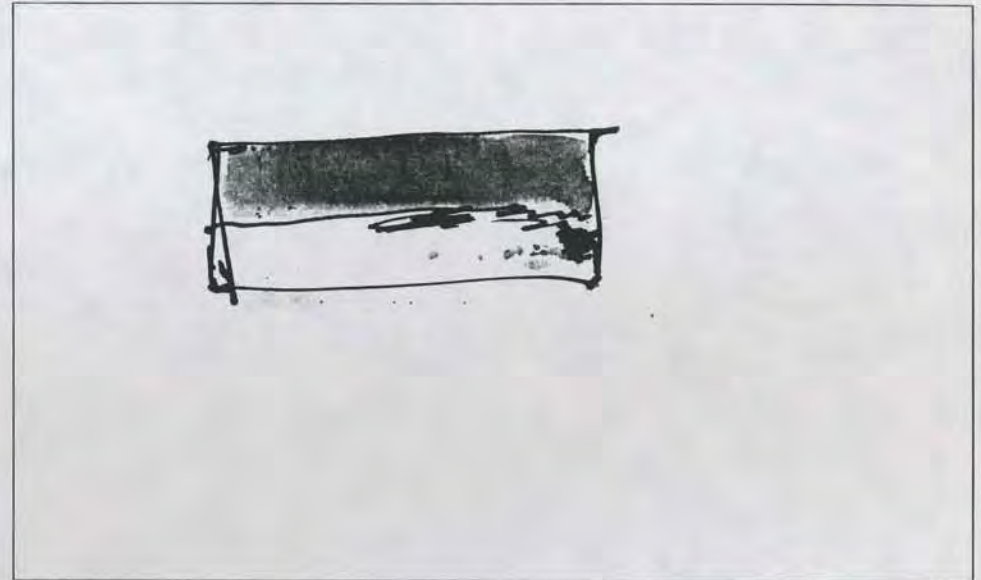
## DAVID MERRITT, 1983

David Merritt's installations are tightly structured and cleanly presented. He admits that "the presentation can eclipse the work itself," but feels that the quality of the idea should somehow be matched by the technical quality of the work. The work must be clearly presented in spite of pat readings which often greet well-packaged shows. For some viewers, a show that looks unambiguously clean looks deceitful: a false clarity can be manufactured around the work.

In his most recent show at Halifax's Anna Leonowens Gallery, Merritt arranged a few carefully chosen components in strict symmetry. A large photo-mural of a view of the Atlantic Ocean filled the end wall of the gallery. Two small ink drawings and two large photo reproductions of architectural reliefs faced each other from walls that flanked the photo-mural. The images were all related to the history of representations of labour and landscape in the Maritimes.

The original stone reliefs grace the facade of a vocational school in Halifax. They appeared in a photograph of the building which was showcased in the front door of the gallery as an introduction to the show. Inside, the reproductions were hung at the same height as the original reliefs and approximate their scale. One relief depicts a classicized version of fishermen hauling up a net by hand. Its mate depicts miners in the same idealized manner. The reliefs date from 1948 when the school was constructed. Period representations of grim-faced, heroically built workers are common enough, although this kind of pious depiction of the dignity of work is lost to many contemporary viewers. Nevertheless, Merritt's reproductions of the plaques were seen by some gallery visitors as straightforward glorifications of Nova Scotia labour, as on some level they are. A more complex reading engaged them as self-consciously appropriated images which used the debased rhetoric of social realist art to highlight the disjuncture between representations of labour and the present day realities of labour. The irony at work here involved an outdated or bogus representation in a parody of itself.

The title of the show, *Imagining Life Below and Beyond the Horizon* referred to the occupations of mining and fishing on the vocational school reliefs. An allusion to the use of the horizon in Romantic and popular art as a nostalgic symbol was also obvious. In the context of this show, the use of the horizon as a reference to ideological constrictures seemed important. As a metaphor used since Nietzsche's time, the horizon bounds one's sight and ideological outlook. Merritt sees the horizon metaphor operating in many discourses, including tourism, an important reference for his work. In "regionalizing" the work by



*the photo-mural*



using material associated with the immediate environment of Halifax, he feels he is attempting to lay the groundwork for the recovery of an audience, one inundated with a mass culture which attempts to crowd distinct regional identities into cleverly wrought tourist sites. Merritt, like many of us, often feels like a tourist in his own environment. His awareness of the methods of tourism and site-making led him to work that attempts to analyse the strategies of tourism which infect places like the Maritimes.

Many such strategies are used by government agencies like Parks Canada. They advise "interpreters" (those who "create" historic sites) in defining sites, establishing themes, and telling stories. Merritt learned much from a book by Freeman Tilden called *Interpreting Our Heritage*. "Pedagogical miscellany is a bore to a man on a holiday," says Tilden. He means history to function as instrumental entertainment which uses historic and natural sites as raw material. Merritt sees his work directed at an audience which has hitherto swallowed the rhetoric of tourism whole. The "site" of Merritt's show, the Anna Leonowens Gallery, is located in the centre of Halifax's revitalized historic district and the show was set up like the "interpretation centres" found at historic places everywhere.

In these centres, the need to tell a story is often more important than factual truth. Although the basis for a story was also built into Merritt's show, no narrative was delivered. Instead, the viewer made her/his way among familiar visual elements in the meditative atmosphere of the art gallery. As the viewer turned from the heroic versions of miners and fishermen to the small ink drawings of an office interior and a couple gazing out at the ocean, a thousand stories were possible. Most often, I think, the ink drawings were seen as subtly updated versions of the social realism of the reliefs.

The fishermen shared a wall with the drawing of a man and woman looking out at the horizon. Their backs are turned to the viewer. What are they looking at? Most likely, we may presume, the couple are looking across the history of representation of themselves in images of labour. On the same wall as the miners hung the small ink drawing of the office interior. In the drawing, the workers sit beside a landscape which hangs on the office wall. Is the landscape merely a pretty picture or does it round off the analogy to underground mining?

In this show, Merritt walks the line across which analytical tactics can lose their "difference" and become appropriated by the ideology they seek to take apart. That the "deconstructive" work can be turned on its head is a threat that Merritt is wary of, and will continue to struggle against. As for this show, I think he walks the line successfully ■



photo of a stone relief



## JOHN MURCHIE, 1983

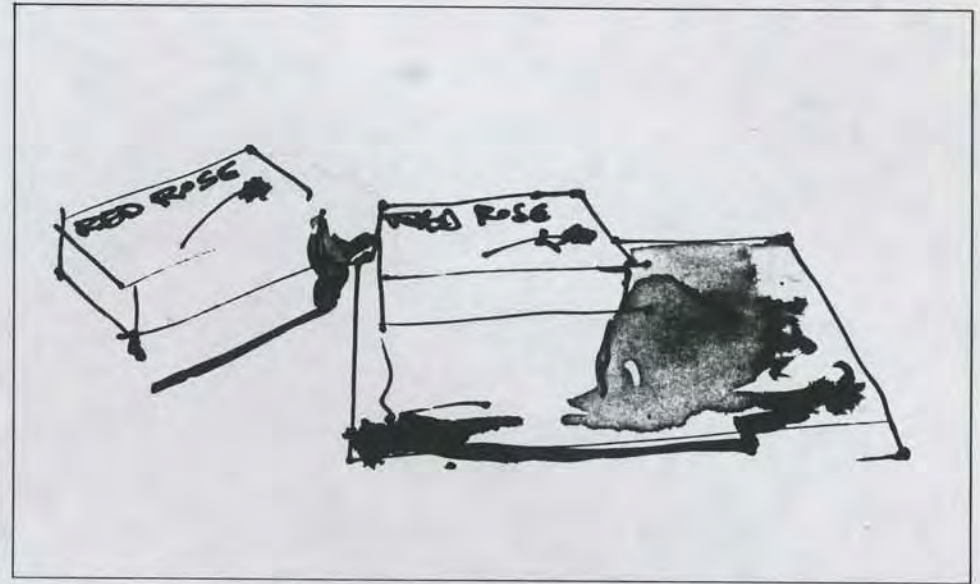
A reproduction of a painting in a book is an offset print from a metal plate, made with a half-tone printer's negative. This negative is taken from a silver photographic print which itself originates in a 35mm negative of a photograph of original painting. After all this, if paint is put on the final reproduction of a painting, it can be thought of as either the end of a long process or simple vandalism. The contrast between the real paint and the reproduction of paint is always quite marked.

John Murchie lays paint on art reproductions and photographs in an impasto, workerlike way, without fuss. Often little pieces of print are allowed to show through here and there as captions to an otherwise suffocated image. Murchie's poster for his 1982 Dalhousie Art Gallery show is a good example of his way of working. Using a poster of an old Chinese that advertised a West Coast photography school, Murchie painted out everything except patches at the eyes, mouth and neck. He also left a small caption legible: "Sponsored by Exxon".

Murchie's job as head of the library at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design gives him access to materials like the photo school poster [Murchie now lives in Sackville, New Brunswick - CE]. I think it also inclines him to look at artists' books in a particular way. When Murchie paints out the reproductions in a book of paintings as in his *Book Painting* of 1981-82, the volume can be leafed through with little more difficulty than an ordinary book. The pages are stiffer, and sometimes sticky, but the integrity of the book as a book is retained. The respect for books implied by his position at the library might prevent him from painting a book shut as Jasper Johns did, but Murchie does put books through indignities that must make his fellow librarians wince.

Surprisingly, Murchie does not think his job at the library to be greatly significant to his own art making. It is certain, however, that Murchie's published books (as opposed to his painted books) have been influenced by NSCAD people, especially Gerald Ferguson, whose use of columns of words in a print of 1970 radically changed Murchie's ideas about the possibilities of words in an art context. Ferguson's spare, simple arrangements of typewritten words contrasted sharply with the abstract expressionist derivations that Murchie had been used to regarding as "advanced art". (Murchie had studied literature as an undergraduate before receiving his Master's of Library Service at Dalhousie University, but perhaps he was not adequately prepared for the "conceptual" strategies that made NSCAD a hot spot in the late '60s and early '70s.)

The dichotomy between the clean, spare look of a page of words and the thick



grittiness of paintings is one which informs the body of Murchie's production as an artist. His book *Lines*, published in 1979, juxtaposes quotations and comments on either side of a loosely drawn line which bisects each page. Quotations from the likes of Wordsworth, Melville and William Carlos Williams neatly occupy the top half of the page while Murchie's aphoristic comments lie under the dividing line. The line of type against the painterly line can be seen to allude to the materials of paint and words which Murchie attempts to master in his work.

Because of his background in literature, Murchie may personally feel more comfortable as a writer. He speaks of his painted objects as being of a "tradition of naive and primitive art". But the toughness of many of his painted pieces is evidence that he is able to paint with confidence. This growing confidence shows in his most recent painting, which is based on photographs but which has moved onto plywood and off the reproduction itself. This move is a cipher of a rapidly maturing technical means in painting, but the critical weight of his painted reproductions is lost. In his newest paintings, Murchie may be (to paraphrase Robert Smithson) advancing specifically in order to get lost ■



## ARTISTS TALK ABOUT TECHNOLOGY, 1984

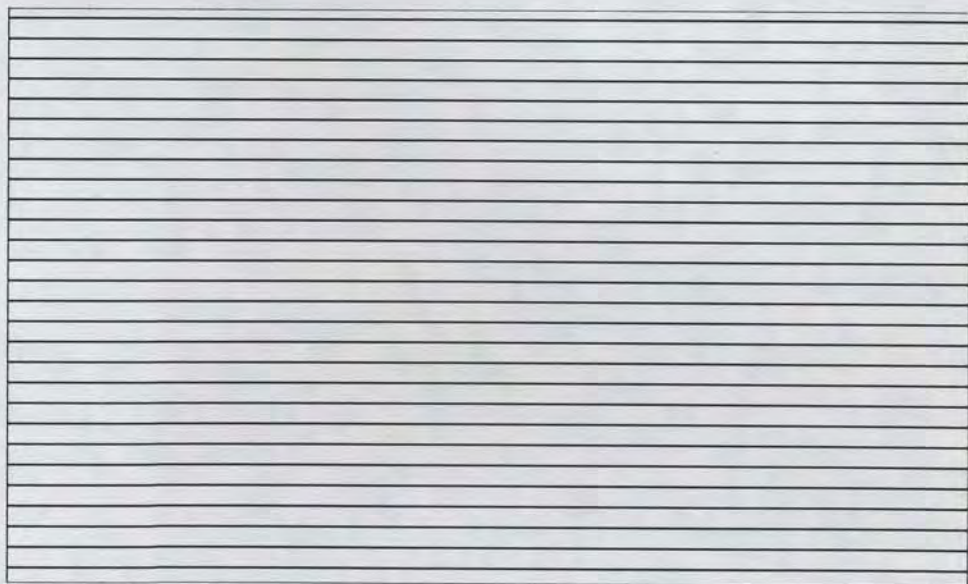
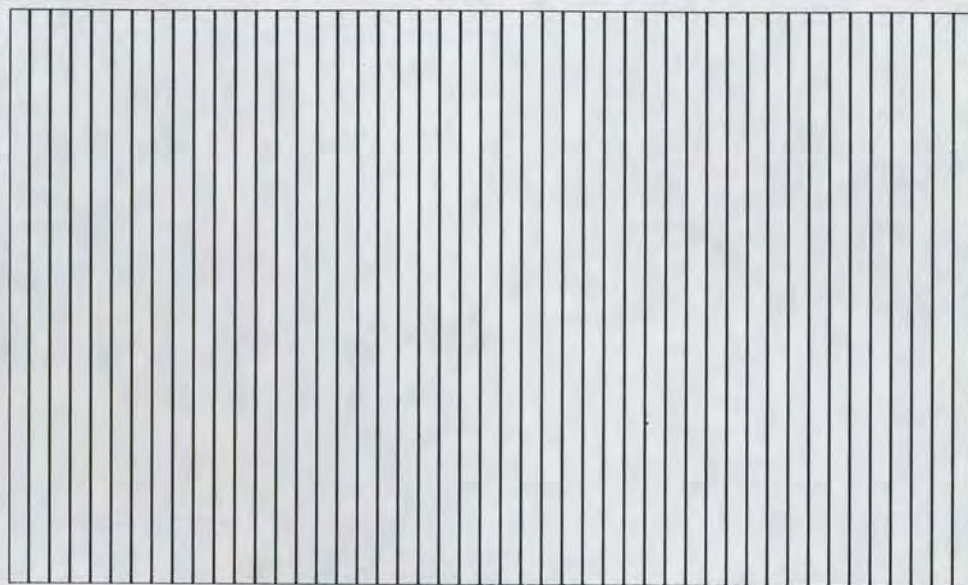
In our culture computer programs, essays and clay pots all exhibit greater or lesser traces of advanced technical means. The Artists Talk About Technology conference, sponsored by the Association of National Non-Profit Artist Run Centres, included art works, panel discussions, and presentations about work by the artists themselves, but no working definitions of "technology as it applies to artists were proposed.

As might be expected, given the ongoing computer revolution, issues of computer technology were hotly debated. Sara Diamond and Garry Kibbins described the increasingly oppressive character of technological progress on workers, while other speakers, notably Red Burns, urged ANNPAC delegates to treat advances in computer technology as opportunities which we pass up at our own expense. Among artists who showed their work there was an optimism about computer technology which grew out of a predisposition toward, and a familiarity with, technical equipment. I think the work itself said something slightly different. In most cases the art was never as interesting as the interaction of human being and machine involved in the art-making process itself. The real creativity in computers seems to rest in the hands of the people who design the machines and the software. A rag-tag band of artists follow behind at some distance.

The most interesting work happened while the artists were playing with the programming capacities of their machines, for example in the work of Doug Back, Nell Tenhaaf and Hu Hohn.

Back's humour is that of a crank inventor, a garage genius. In his piece, a computer was attached to a strange little machine by means of a thick braid of electronic wires. The computer co-ordinated the motions of the machine, which had a battered Chinese wok as its chassis. The wok made a clanky attempt to get away from its computer link-up in what looked like a parody of technology running away with itself. A set of weights and balancing mechanisms ensured that the wok walked, that is, that it tilted back and forth in a completely random way, according to the artist's software instructions.

Hu Hohn's installation had several parts. All the art magazines, all the high technology and scientific journals that Hohn's artist's fee of \$200.00 would buy at Halifax's best newsagent were lined up in two

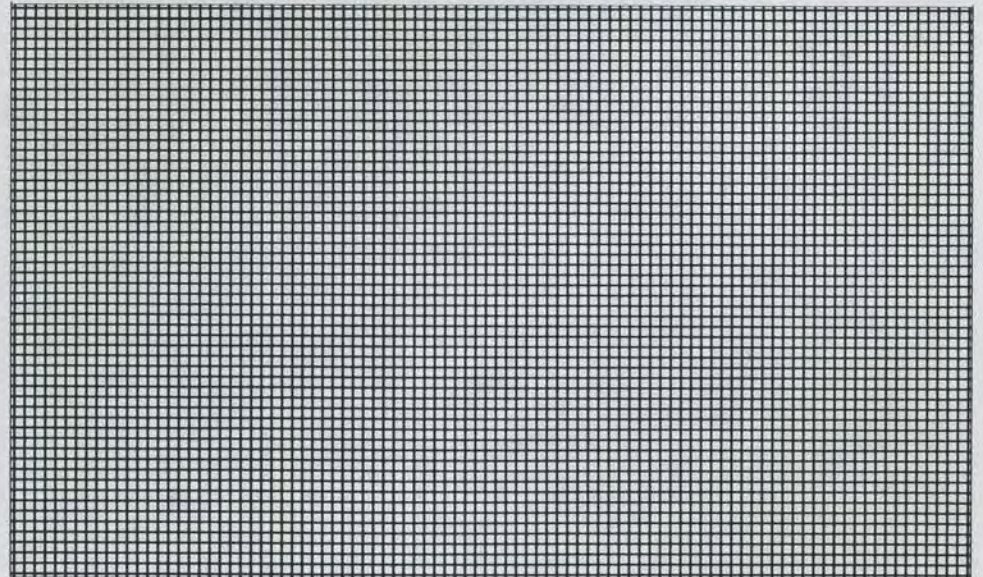
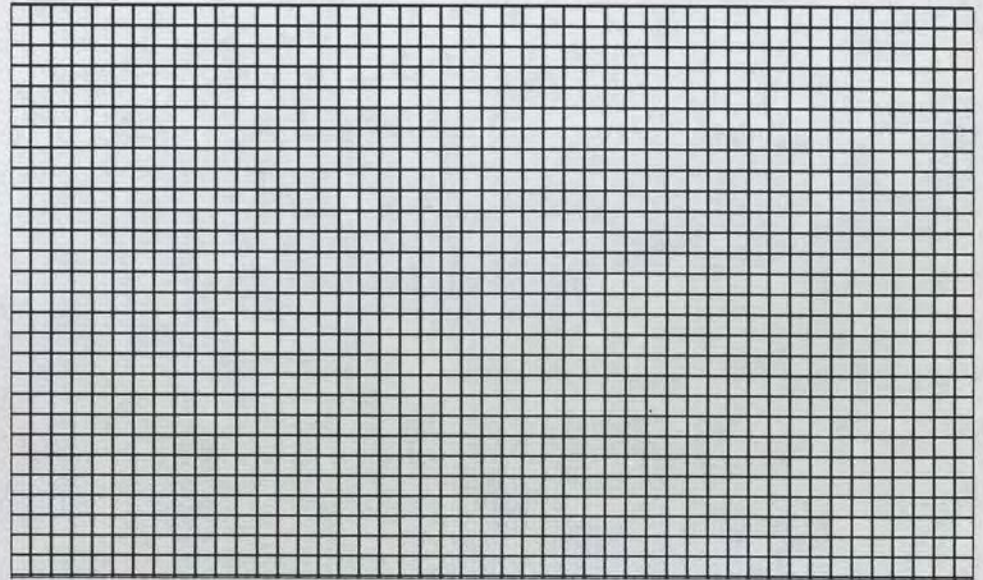




sets on a long table. The magazines looked alike, just as they incorporated similar scientific, technical and artistic skills in their production and distribution. In a corner Hohn's *Apple II* computer was rigged with a voice synthesizer. The voice box issued a set of notes programmed to repeat the sound of the words "Marcel Duchamp". The relentless, breathless, artificial voice was maddening: wholly within the tradition of absurdity we associate with Duchamp.

Nell Tenhaaf installed her computerized work in the conference hall itself in King's College. Her machine, a kind of *Teledon* video game, proved how difficult it can be to acquire a familiarity with these instruments. Tenhaaf programmed graphics and statistics on many subjects, for example nuclear war, and gave the user a chance to answer sample questions with a simple keyboard. (I took the illusion that the information on the screen disappeared forever when another set of buttons was pushed as a demonstration of my recalcitrant conformity to book culture.) Even though calling up information on the screen was scarcely more difficult than turning a page, it was surprising how little confidence one was able to develop in the activity.

Elizabeth Vander Zaag's computer-influenced videotapes had a formal connection to Hu Hohn's graphics and a series of *Ruin* photographs by Lee Silverman. They all used a grid pattern as the basis of the imagery - a pattern imposed on the work for the technical convenience of the computers. In Vander Zaag's *Baby Eyes* video the metaphor of a new computer-based vision was most explicit. This vision has a geometrical, mathematical, rational, and classical look: an inheritance of a distinct bundle of associations. Hohn felt that the blocky, grid-like nature of the graphics was a fitting display of the inner workings of the medium. In Silverman's work, the ruins theme included images composed of little brick-like computer-generated squares, as if the images were "ruined" in an ordered fashion, the way a building could come apart brick by brick. In optimistic moments, I see these works as attempts to think through - to "ruin" as Silverman would say - the high-tech rationality of the information age ■





## AUDIO BY ARTISTS FESTIVAL, 1984

Five Halifax/Dartmouth locations were used, along with dozens of artists, composers, and performers. Audio works of every description were included. Works by academic, experimental musicians like Steve Tittle, visual artists with a special interest in sound like Andy James, dancers (included in Paul Miller's performance), art school teachers like Bruce Barber, and audio neophytes (like those trained especially for this show at the Centre for Art Tapes) were collected and generously distributed across the early months of 1984. This was not an in-house Nova Scotia College Art & Design event, nor was it confined to Halifax's two Canada Council-sponsored spaces, Eye Level Gallery and the Centre for Art Tapes; Dalhousie University, Halifax's Culture, Recreation and Fitness auditorium, and even a tavern in downtown Dartmouth hosted events.

Most publicity holes were plugged: everyone in Halifax with an inclination toward innovative audio work was informed. Co-operation from Dalhousie University's CKDU radio station pulled in viewers/listeners from the student community, while posters all over Halifax kept the rest of us informed.

The show was broadly conceived and consistently cut across audience expectations. No attempt was made to reify the positions of visual artists, performers or musicians (although I know musicians who assert that the contemporary term "music" includes "audio art," and that a visual art bias is inevitable here). The aim was to integrate skills and sensibilities. The stress was on the relationship between sound and visual media but, to their credit, the organizers did not attempt to arrange performances according to ideas about consistency of medium or message.

For example, Paul Miller's symbolist multi-media event was performed in the same space and on the same evening as Gordon Monahan's witty and tight routine.

Monahan lives in Toronto and was trained at Mount Allison University, a school that is not yet very well known for innovative audio works. He encouraged listeners to enjoy the acoustical properties of his works, which included Jimi Hendrix-like guitar manipulations, audio tape "pulling," and a unique "speaker swinging" event. He positioned two black-clad volunteers on either side of a large room. Each of them held a speaker attached to a thick cord of nylon and wire. As they swung the speakers over their heads, oscillator sounds gradually built resonances against the room's elements: the people, chairs, walls and windows modified a zone of sound which reminded one of a



benedictine choir or the wind-swept campus at Mount Allison.

As he played with the sound board, Monahan became one of three centres of attention in the piece. His speaker-swinging assistants became the other two pivots for the work. I became curious as to how long the performance would last: would it stop when one of the assistants collapsed in exhaustion? For many viewers a resonance for the work grew around David Craig and Catherine Quinn, respective directors of Eye Level Gallery and the Centre for Art Tapes and Monahan's volunteers. Here was a graphic portrayal of the people who facilitate art-making, that is, two art gallery directors, becoming physically exhausted in the course of their duties.

Paul Miller's performance *Before the First Snow* was about the artist's personal transition from rural to urban life. It used video, 8mm film, pre-recorded sound, improvisational dance and live cello. The use of media harked back to experimenters like Nam June Paik and Charlotte Mooreman. Miller used the cello, an instrument he played surprisingly well for someone with no training, to create a subdued and reflective atmosphere. Unlike Monahan, who directed the audience in a verbal preface, Miller's work seemed closer to traditional theatre: stage hands worked props and media while the audience worked at putting the story together. In contrast to Monahan's lesson in acoustics (very good one at that) Miller seemed to work in a realm of fiction. He presented a dispirited slice of life, full of solemn music, film clips of murky interiors and images of solitary angst.

Clive Robertson, Toronto-based performance artist, *FUSE* magazine editor, and leftist polymath, performed at the Treasure Cove Tavern, a tiny bar in downtown Dartmouth. Robertson is a major, if little known, cultural figure in Canada, a combination of leftist agitator, vanguard performance person, writer, and arts administrator - an artist who seems simultaneously attracted and repulsed by mass culture as he welds together academic and pop concerns. (The working-class Treasure Cove was filled with art types that night: no regular patrons stayed on: The bartender seemed mystified - even threatened - by the spectacle.)

A *Welfare vrs. Warfare* theme ran through the work. A procession of upright brown paper bags made its way across the floor. Each bag had a letter on it. Among other things, the letters spelled out the slogan "Welfare vrs. Warfare" Robertson crawled among the bags, occasionally knocking one over, while an audio tape shouted out the abuses and faults of Western society, from wife-battering to war in the Falklands.



Paul Miller



With great physical dexterity, Robertson was able to pour himself successive glasses of red wine as he crawled. The gesture made him at once a skid-row drunk and a soldier amidst barbed wire.

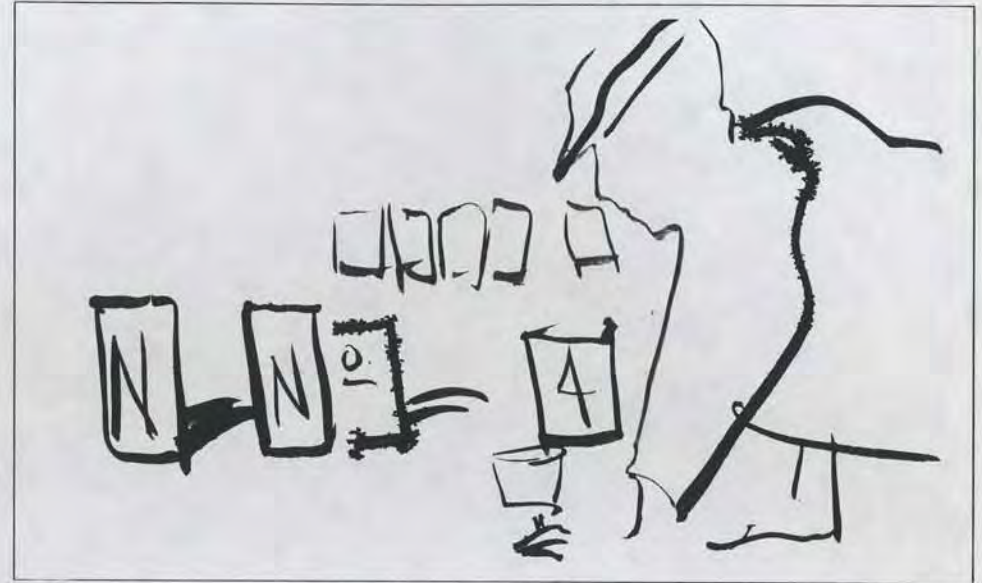
Robertson's confrontational attitude had its opposing *Audio by Artists* component in John Murchie's *Eye Level* piece. Murchie presented the work of Charles Ives, the early 20th Century avant-garde composer who sold insurance for a living. A stereo system was made available to the audience, along with Ives records and books. In a short introduction, the artist invited the audience to play what they liked. Murchie's piece had an attitude of aesthetic withdrawal about it, reminding me of New York artist Louise Lawler's habit of distributing invitations to concerts with the claim "Louise Lawler invites you to attend..." [a performance which she has had no part in producing.] Perhaps Murchie's work involved a little more effort than Lawler's, the piece consisting only of physical space, a group of recordings, a few books, and audience participation combined in a few pleasant hours on a rainy evening.

In the *Contained Sound Sculpture* portion of the festival, in one room at the Centre for Art Tapes, several artists gave in to a collective pressure not to noisily compete with each other. The result was a room full of whispering objects, or work which with earphones ensuring a private experience; in general, there was much tape-flipping required. In the setting, Bruce Barber's piece worked well, as did a collaborative piece which used a reception desk as a platform, and a bed in a corner which gave out psychiatric advice.

Barber wired the entrance to the room. An audio tape played as the door opened. A menacing voice read the text of a United Technologies advertisement which was posted at the door ("Your true value to society comes when someone says 'Let me see your work.'" Barber followed this analysis of advocacy advertising with a full-fledged show at Saint Mary's University Art Gallery in Halifax.) The United Technologies Corporation makes various weapons systems, among other things. The ads attempt to obliquely justify the company's status as a merchant of death.

My only hesitation about the work, which is becoming a major project for Barber, is its lack of specific reference to Halifax's position as Canada's largest military base. To his credit, however, Barber does introduce an explosive issue in an explosive context (if you will pardon the pun), in work that persistently examines militarism in the context of a militaristic city.

Another forceful "contained sound sculpture" was put together by the group Babineau, Fairfield, MacDougall, Needham and Schueing. It was a secretary's



*Clive Crawling.*



desk wired with statistics and polemics perhaps summed up in the explicit use of "secretary" as a metaphor for all women.

This fifth annual *Audio by Artists Festival* was capped by an event at Dalhousie University featuring the group The Palace at 4am, which "is not a band". The Palace is an art rock bunch from Toronto. The name, which is also the title of a famous Giacometti sculpture, is a clue to this group's precarious position at the point where multi-media art meets pop music, a point most successfully exploited recently by artists like David Byrne and Laurie Anderson. Surrealistic lyrics, synthesized rhythms, and a cool detached delivery reinforced, in my mind at least, similarities to Toronto-area performers like General Idea and (in recent videos) Rough Trade. The band orchestrated an urbane persona as carefully as it made music.

The Palace was an exciting band, and their Halifax performance was long overdue. The audience was at least momentarily confused, not being able to quickly decide whether the work called for polite applause or frenzied dancing.

An article on such a festival would not be complete without mentioning the important influence which Steve Tittle has had on the development of local music in Halifax over the last ten years. He teaches music at Dalhousie University. My difficulty in describing his performance ties in perfectly with the principle employed in his Murphy's Law performance group, which has been active in many forms for ten years. According to Murphy's Law, what can go wrong will go wrong: regrettably, I missed his piece ■



## ERIC CAMERON, 1984

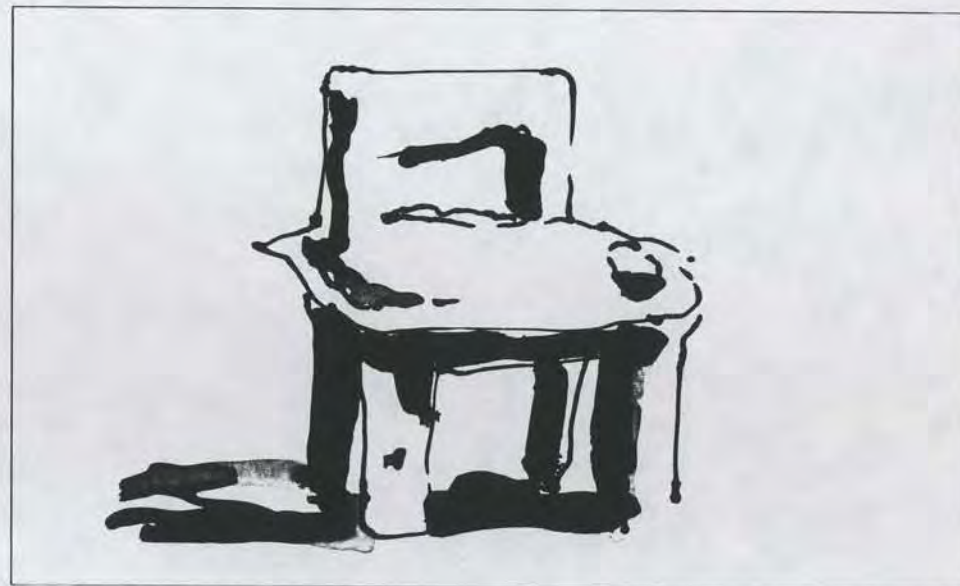
Scene: the basement of artist Eric Cameron's south-end Halifax home. A low, paint-spattered gangway of plinths sits covered in plastic sheeting. Many, perhaps thirty, variously shaped objects lie on the plinths. One object resembles a small, white asteroid, another work looks like a fish, a flatfish. They are dimly lit. Upstairs are three more white objects on a dining room table. What are they?

Cameron's house is tastefully decorated with pleasantly arranged antiques and art objects. The front windows overlook a wooded area. Occasionally, the suburban quiet is punctuated by the *scree* sound of a tea kettle.

Cameron has a good job as head of the graduate department at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. Among his writings, perhaps the best known is his 1974 piece about Lawrence Weiner, the conceptual artist.<sup>1</sup> Cameron has also written about artists Mac Adams<sup>2</sup>, Gerald Ferguson<sup>3</sup> and Garry Neill Kennedy,<sup>4</sup> to name a few. Regarding his plastic work, Cameron has described himself as "a very old fashioned artist, a painter at heart."<sup>5</sup> He works around a disciplined routine of painting, writing, academic and family duties.

He has not always made painting/objects (or objects made of paint): these unusual works date from 1979 onwards, when he began painting layer upon layer of gesso over household items. These same objects, with few additions, make up an evolving body of work, as gesso layers are added every day. Despite interests in installation, video and sculptural work, Cameron's shows have usually included some painted or graphic material. At one time he made checkerboard paintings with masking tape as a blocking material, going over canvas surfaces in anticipation of human error, in the application of regular lines of paint which crisscrossed each other. Other work involved painted newspapers. Some installations incorporated pots of grass (The reference here was to St. Paul's "flesh is grass" dictum and Cameron's erstwhile efforts at growing lawns in real life.)

Some of Cameron's published writings contain hints of his own art-making. Significant are his Italo Scanga piece,<sup>6</sup> his Lawrence Weiner review and an as yet unpublished work called *To justify the inevitability of its particular forms* [published by the Nickle Art Museum as *Bent Axis Approach* in 1985 - CE]. The article on Italo Scanga shows Cameron's lingering interest in religion with talk about Scanga's use of kitsch religious imagery. The Lawrence Weiner piece is a virtual synopsis of the avant-garde milieu in which Cameron matured. Finally, his most recent written work, *To justify ...*, fully articulates the





ideas behind his own "thick paintings".

Cameron brings what might variously be called an old-world or English education to his work. Whether he is lecturing on art history or talking casually about his own art, the references tend to broaden the listener's perspective. Cameron might introduce Clement Greenberg, Greek tragedy and Giotto simultaneously: names that move one out of the collapsed time of art magazines and into the mythical and geological time typical of art history surveys. These surveys (i.e. Janson's *History of Art*) tend to press artifacts together the way dirt squeezes the pottery of one age against the bronze of the next at an archaeological site. Two countervailing ideas come into play at the archaeological site and the art history survey: history as continuous and includes ourselves, history as discontinuous and exclusive. Cameron consistently argues for an art of continuity based on references to art history and criticism within a Modernist discourse.

Cameron's ideas about the function and purpose of art uphold a high-art/low-art distinction or rather, a high art/every-other-kind-of-art distinction. From this art-as-art point of view, largely founded on the writings and work of Ad Reinhardt and the criticism of Clement Greenberg, Cameron outlines the teleological position of his art:

The visual logic of the process is of crucial significance. This is where any claim of my art to justify the inevitability of its particular forms must primarily rest — that the forms reveal the dynamics of the process that has generated them and, moreover that the logic of that process is seen to be rooted in the physical properties of the materials, and in the nature of their reaction to being handled in a particular way... hopefully (the work) may register as more than a diagrammatic illustration of a procedural concept but may come to epitomize a mode of being in the world.<sup>7</sup>

The "inevitability of forms" idea derives from Clement Greenberg,<sup>8</sup> who would see, if we may use the example, the ascendance of abstract painting as inevitably proceeding from the encroachment of photography on painting's preserve; abstract painting becomes situated in a sphere of competence [for Cameron's opinion, see his 1990 National Gallery book].

Cameron's hope in the power of art to "epitomize" anything is not ubiquitous. Ideas about epitomes in art, of universal aesthetic values, the Kantian ideas, have fallen on hard times recently. What Kant envisaged as universal aesthetic assent seems to have little application now. As many latter-day critics suggest





(i.e. Adrian Piper), what was once universal is now seated only in the minds of white, male, Western intellectuals, in the form of beliefs about modernism.

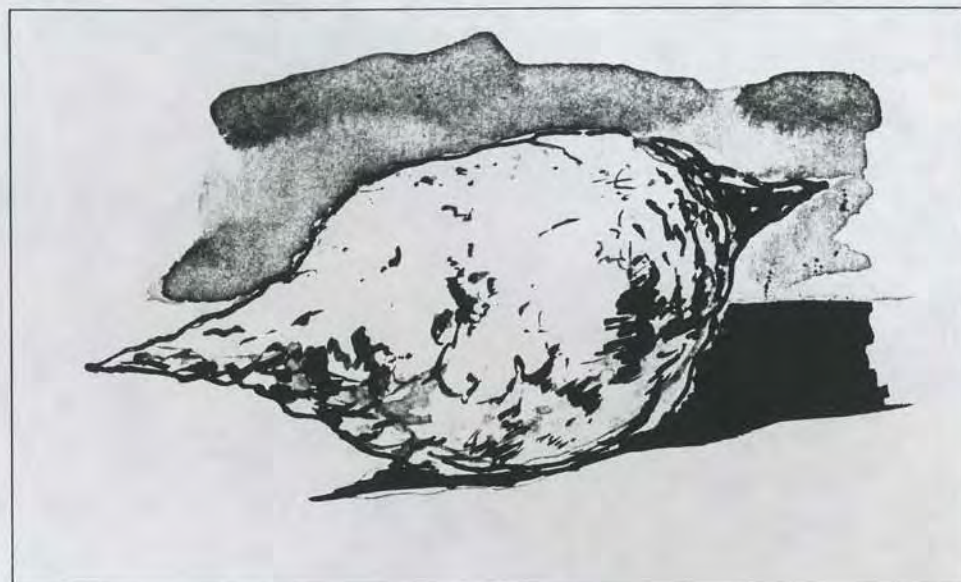
But why isn't this limited "ethnic" point of view treated as such instead of being elevated by adherents and naysayers into a fictional monolith? If Modernism is as ethnic in its orientation as, for example, expatriate Iranian art, what could inspire the invocations against it which permeate our art magazines? It seems clear. What must remain irretrievable by modernism after its demotion will be its presumption of universality in the guise of a beleaguered avant-garde, an avant-garde predicated on empiricist, scientific or hegemonic grounds. Nevertheless, and this is of course a contradiction, these are the only grounds Western males seem to have. I do not know how self-consciously Cameron is working through this contradiction, or whether he is working it through at all.

References to archaeology seem inescapable in the presence of Cameron's work. In his painted objects hundreds of layers of white gesso alternate with grey gesso on things like vegetables and lamps. Their density is surprising. Picking up Cameron's *Lettuce* is like lifting a small piece of concrete. Under thousands of paint layers a disintegrated lettuce has left a hollow which must resemble the empty casts of Pompeians. Sometimes the object/subject of Cameron's layering process leaves no vestige of its original form.

Cameron records each successive layer of paint as a mark on a yellow legal pad, as if he were counting off the days of a jail sentence. His doggedness seemed to connect with the pessimism of an artist like Giacometti, but of all the suggestions I made to him about his work, this one was flatly denied. For Cameron, the work is about procedural correctness, an idea about limits and the rules by which limits are tested.

The American Frank Stella is an example of an artist whose early process work followed a logic similar to Cameron's. In Stella's old work, the limit of the canvas edge became the inward-turning rationale through which a painting was constructed, and the constructive rules presupposed the frontier of the edge in every brush stroke. In Stella's painting a conquered frame was succeeded by new framing edges in new paintings. Cameron, however, is able to count his successive framing edges in each layer of paint until the process arbitrarily stops when the readymade painting/sculpture is sold.

Cameron has many works in progress: a beer bottle (1,757 half-coats of paint as of November 1983), a cup, saucer and spoon (1,472 half-coats), an egg, a shoe, a newspaper, a chair. Every day, new paint layers are applied with one of three





sizes of brush.

Some works involve technical difficulties. While a mackerel (which he has named in Greek) was being painted it began to ooze out of its encasement; finally, after diligent effort it became smothered in paint. Its growth continues. The chair is painted in tedious stages — first one half then, after tilting, the other half.

Some works take on unexpected forms. The pair of shoes in paint (so far 1,273 half-coats) looks from the top like a baboon head. The alarm clock resembles the kind of swinging half moon blade associated with dungeons. Like much abstract and process work, Cameron's pieces avail themselves of many readings from which the artist remains aloof.

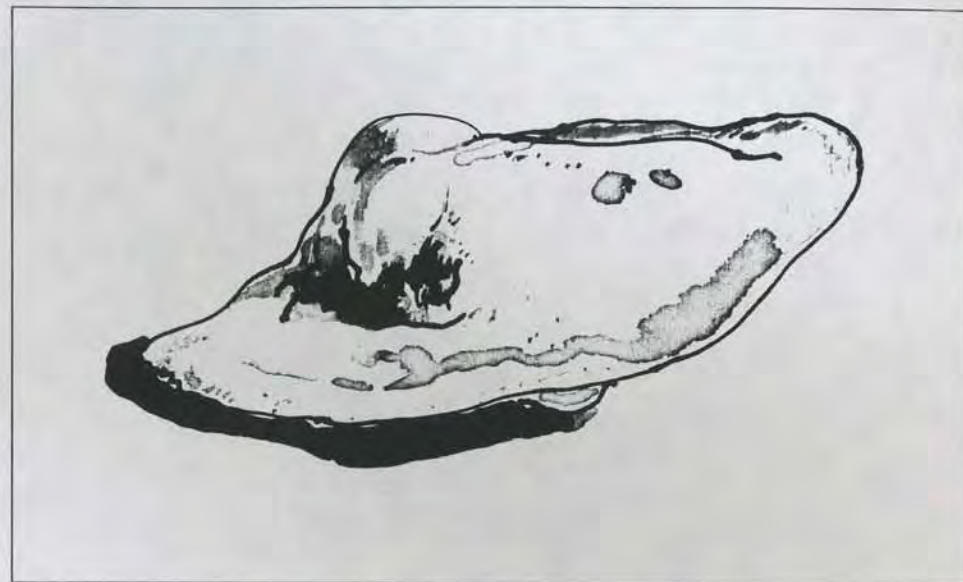
Cameron's work has affinities with the art of several people associated with the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. Most of these artists had given up layered paint techniques before 1979, when Cameron began to paint his objects.

In Garry Neill Kennedy's earlier work, hundreds of layers of paint were applied to a stretched canvas. Each layer was brought up just short of the edge of a previous layer leaving a thin line of underpainting visible. Kennedy's last piece in which layered paint was an issue involved work with gallery walls. A chip from a wall at Eye Level Gallery was photographed end-on and enlarged so that layers of paint and wallpaper could be identified. The chip was a colour guide which Kennedy used to repaint the interior of the gallery.

Bruce Campbell made several paint moulds as an undergraduate at NSCAD. They were small wooden boxes which he filled with layer upon layer of paint, although it is unlikely that Cameron was aware of this late '70s work. After applying several hundred layers, Campbell broke the boxes to reveal striped cubes of solid colour. In one sense Campbell's cubes can be seen to outstrip Cameron at his own game: his works are pure paint; but whereas Campbell threw away his framing edge (the wooden mould) after the work was complete, Cameron's framing edge is the paint itself.

Jeff Spalding, at one time Cameron's student, remains a formative influence of the thick paintings. According to Cameron's description, Spalding painted layer upon layer of thin glaze on canvas, alternating complementary colours in the creation of a dense black painting no thicker than the weave of the canvas. The result was an exquisite black monochrome.

One of Cameron's articles<sup>9</sup> describes a series of teaching projects which he





conducted in the early '70s. Rejecting his advice to paint a piece of fruit like the markings that were on it, a student painted a red apple white. In a photograph of the result, the white apple forecasts Cameron's own enigmatic direction ■

<sup>1</sup> Eric Cameron "Lawrence Weiner: the books," *Studio International* vol. 187, No. 962 (Jan. 1974), pp.28

<sup>2</sup> Eric Cameron, "Mac Adams," *Artforum* (Oct. 1976, pp.46-48.

<sup>3</sup> Eric Cameron, "System and Sensibility the Art of Gerald Ferguson," *Studio* No. 189 (March 1975), pp.124-8.

<sup>4</sup> Eric Cameron "Garry Kennedy: Painting Painting Itself," *Artforum* (May 1977) pp.50-51.

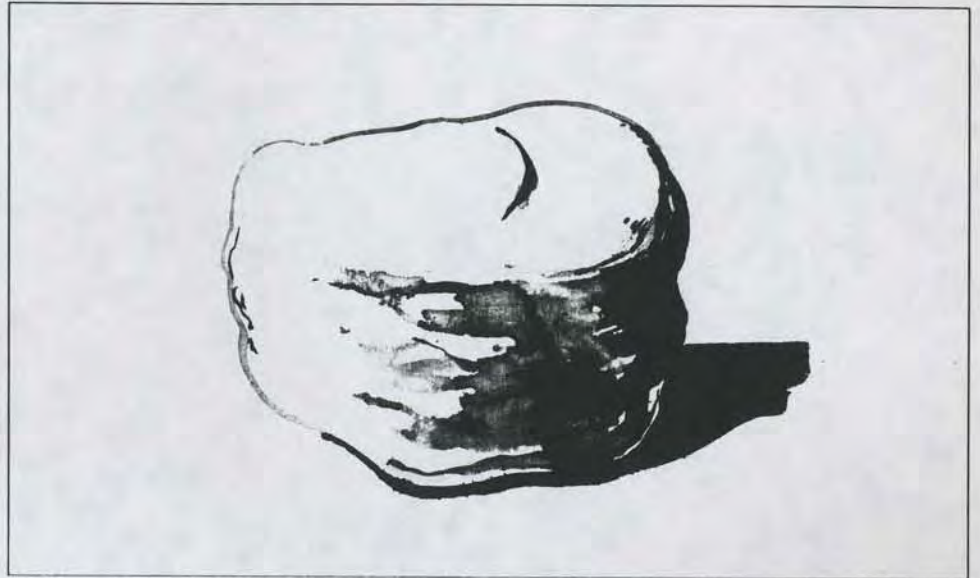
<sup>5</sup> Eric Cameron, "Two Audio-Visual Constructs," Vancouver Art Gallery (Jan. 19, 1978).

<sup>6</sup> Eric Cameron, "Italo Scanga: Torn Loyalties," *Artforum* (Jan. 1977), pp.51-53.

<sup>7</sup> Eric Cameron, "To Justify the Inevitability of Its Particular Forms" unpublished manuscript (1983) p.20 [published by the Nickle Arts Museum in 1985 as the book *Bent Axis Approach*.]

<sup>8</sup> Clement Greenberg, "Avant Garde and Kitsch," *Partisan Review* 6, (Fall 1939) pp.34-49.

<sup>9</sup> Eric Cameron, "Collective Art: Some Teaching Projects at the University of Guelph, Canada," *Leonardo*, Vol. 5, Pergamon Press (1972), pp.289-295.





## JOHN NESBITT, 1984

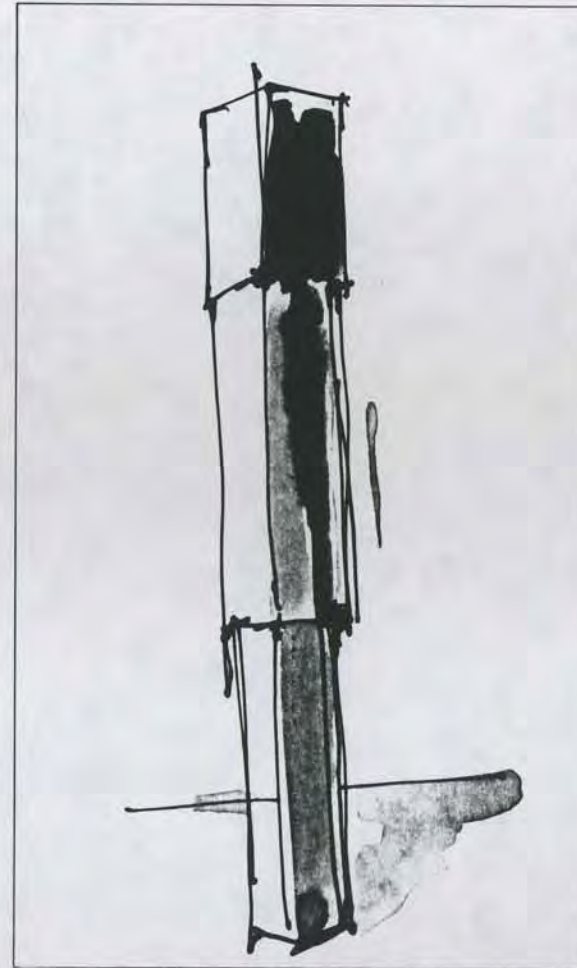
John Nesbitt has been making sculptures for thirty years, longer than many of us have been alive. Should he be given the benefit of the doubt on certain questions about his work? Is Nesbitt's abstract sculpture and its attendant formalist bias a viable form of art making in the '80s? Was the energy of this kind of work completely spent years ago?

Aluminium works made between 1968 and 1983 were included in the exhibition. Also included were many preliminary drawings and a lavish catalogue. By late Modernist standards the sculptures are medium-sized. Nesbitt makes bigger works, but the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia's limited exhibition space was unable to accommodate them. Many of the drawings were minuscule, no bigger than a teabag. From a thumbnail sketch that may take a minute to execute, Nesbitt patiently forms and paints works that sometimes take years to complete. Word play is used in titles like *cawlum* and *rolyboly*. The catalogue essay, a helpful sketch by Ruth Horowitz, encourages us to take Nesbitt's humour seriously and to identify his work with forms from the natural world.

In the late '60s Nesbitt began to make aluminium works which convey the buoyant optimism of Expo '67. He exhibited at Expo and the Centennial Year seems to neatly divide his career in two. It roughly coincides with his abandonment of the corroded angst-ridden look of his earlier work for the bright, bouncy use of spray-bombed sheet metal. It also roughly marks his abandonment of life in international centres like Montreal and New York in favour of the rural charm of Cape Breton.

Nesbitt identified with figures like Rimbaud, Gauguin and especially Cezanne as he searched for an isolated place to make art. But in our age of the satellite dish and mass distribution art magazines, getting away involves wilful ignorance - a stifling of influences. Nesbitt isolated himself by neglecting or ignoring many of the developments of '70s art in order to explore a few formal problems.

In the best of Nesbitt's pieces he exercises a strict control over his means. *Sienna*, a very recent work, and *Stirrup* (1968-78) are formally tight and weightless works. In other pieces, colour seems to be out of control. One is reminded of the graphic art of the '60s, with its flat blocks of arbitrary colour. In the pieces which do not work very well, like *feryoo*, the sculptures begin to look like three dimensional sections from Peter Max posters, or like baubles destined for corporate plazas.



The catalogue photographs which show Nesbitt's pieces amidst trees and grass do not convince us of Horowitz' assertion about their affinity to natural forms. We are too used to seeing similar works downtown embedded in cement. In her catalogue essay, Horowitz does not critically justify Nesbitt's continuance of what may only seem to be an exhausted tradition ■



## PAMELA RITCHIE, 1984

In this body of work stamps displace the hierarchical position of gemstones in jewellery. The use of stamps as an alternative material toys with the current jewellery issue of preciousness and poses Socrates' question of whether aesthetic experiences have intrinsic worth or are to be valued or depreciated by their stimulation of the profitable and good. (This quotation and others which follow are from Pamela Ritchie's catalogue statement.)

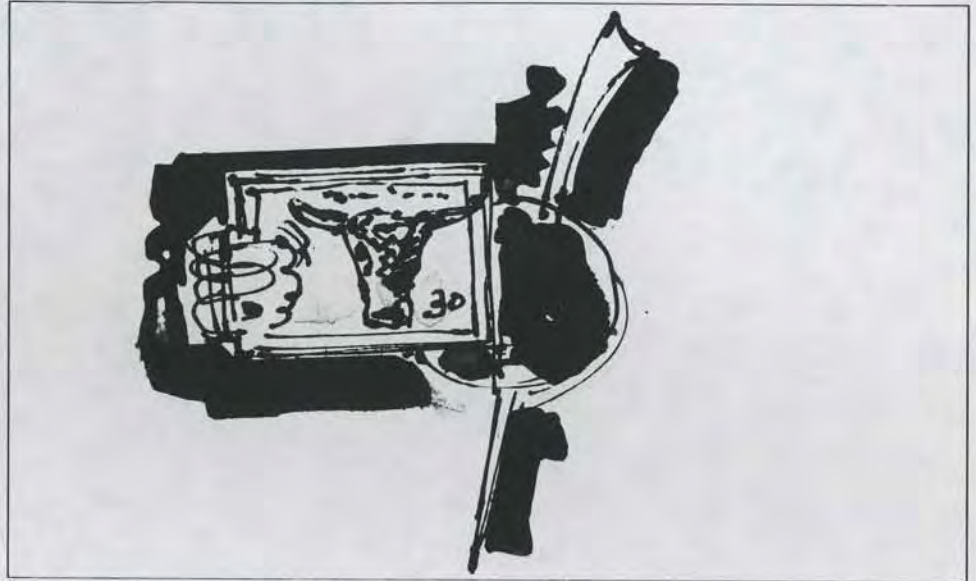
Contemporary jewellers use many materials other than precious metals and gems. However, plastic, paper, and wood - what goldsmiths call "alternative materials" - are not used in Pamela Ritchie's works merely as a way of making a contemporary statement. Ritchie simply uses materials which best suit the purposes of the work. In this exhibition she introduces formal, philosophical and even geographical issues related to the colour, content, cancellation marks and origin of particular stamps.

Equating value with the materials used, as is often done with jewellery, ignores the value of aesthetic experience. The use of stamps here, as an alternative to gemstones, is not intended to be anti-traditional but is intended to draw attention back to the aesthetic experience and to point out the irony of equating value with materials. Stamps are, after all, at the same time one of the most common and one of the most sought after items. Indeed they are a kind of currency as are silver and gold are collected as precious miniatures....

Curiously, Ritchie's interest in stamps has always been closely related to the work; she has never been a stamp collector in the conventional sense. In fact, her attitude to stamps has left more than a few stamp dealers scratching their heads in confusion: she has been ushered out of stamp shops for asking the wrong questions.

...Still, being paper, stamps have an ephemeral quality which places them in the realm of the non-precious. This juxtaposition of the precious and the non-precious is also manifested in many pieces by framing the devalued cut stamps with sterling silver. The stamp as icon is used here in the sense of image or portrait and most naturally as a form of communication. In some cases it is meant to make reference to the religious connotation and in other cases icon becomes a pun....

She will often use cancellation marks on used stamps as the basis for meticu-





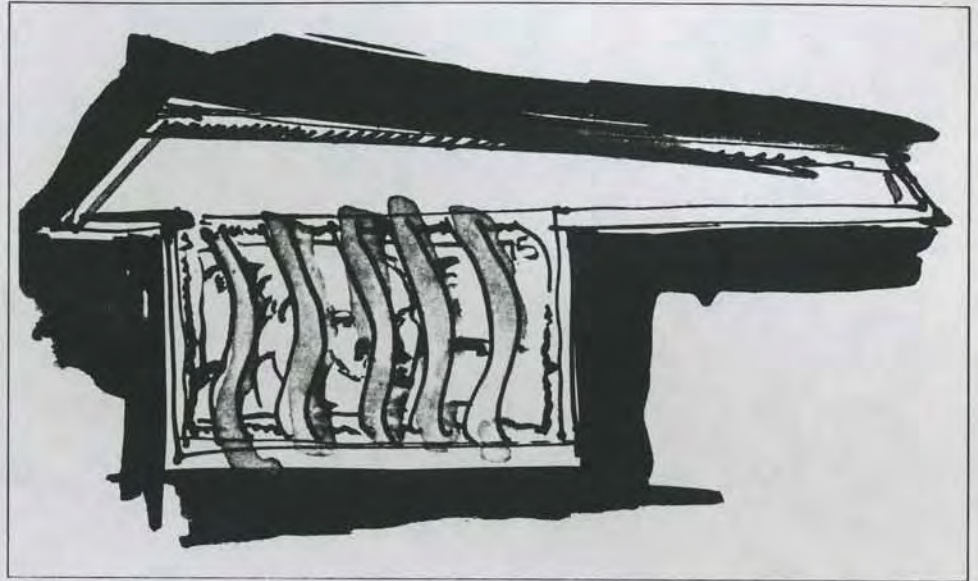
lous compositions - hence the show's title *Cancelled Icons*. She extends the cancellation lines into various metal and non-metal frames. Often the outer parts of the pieces take their cues from the stamps within them. This happens on many levels. In one piece a stamp with a picture of a fish on it is surrounded by blue plexiglas, as if the fish were inside a tiny Olympic pool. (The piece is called *Bermuda*). In many other works stamps are cut along cancellation lines to become intermingled with other materials in a composition. Stamp images are moulded and cut in the same way that clay or gemstone might be manipulated. With this attitude, Ritchie is able to work amongst all the old categories of painting, sculpture, and jewellery with great success.

The present pieces have evolved from earlier works which treated used stamps in such a way as to evoke images of travel and communication. In many of the pieces in this show stamps have been cut and extended along cancellation marks as an expansion of this consideration and more consciously as part of the formal concern, to create a sense of movement and illusion of shape.

In earlier work, made before the postage stamp series, Ritchie's use of commercially-made sewing needles in brooches highlighted the ancient function of pins as garment fasteners before the advent of commercially manufactured zippers and buttons. Similarly, in recent work like *Bermuda*, she uses mirror plexiglas burnished with steel wool to make a high-tech gem - a commercially manufactured version of an ancient, venerated substance. The use of industrially -made sewing needles, plexiglas and postage stamps indicates the distance and cultural difference between modern manufacturing methods and traditional craft approaches - a balancing act at which Ritchie has become quite adept.

*Cancelled Icons* has been installed on flats to allow the individual pieces to be vertical as one would normally see them on the body. This is an attempt to give the viewer a more natural and visible access than is usual in a standard display case.

In all cases it is my intention to make jewellery which communicates an idea; jewellery which is wearable art ■





## MARLENE CREATES, 1985

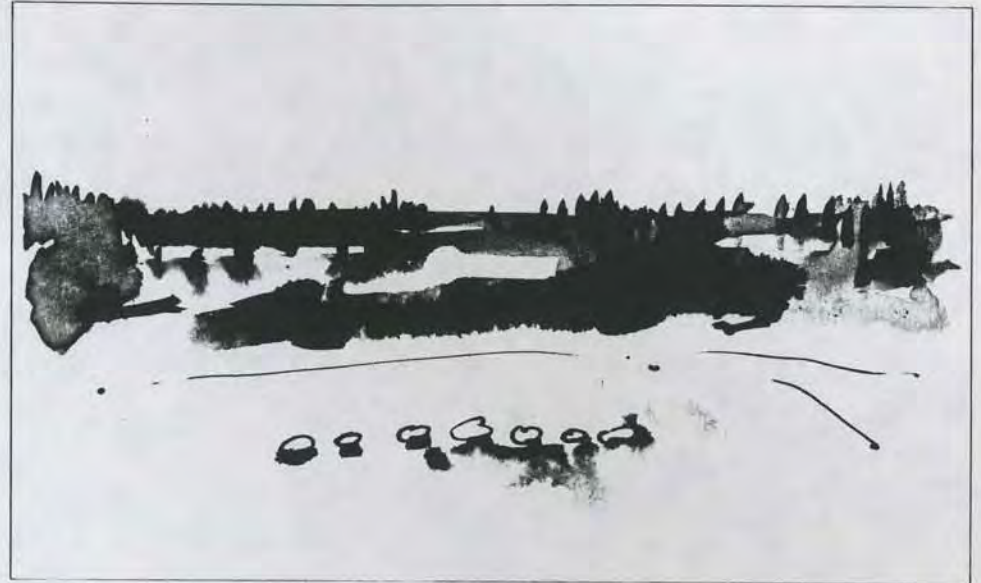
In Megalithic times, masonry was the placement of one stone on another without the use of binders like cement. What could be simpler (in principle!) than the choosing, gathering, and precise placement of gigantic stones at sites like Stonehenge?

In consumer society we choose among the packaged spinach in a supermarket the way megalithic builders might pick over stones looking for the exact jigsaw piece for a cairn or stone wall. In these choices - this choosing instead of making - a visual and tactile mathematics comes into play - perhaps what we call "style". In Megalithic astronomy, the correct placement of a stone was crucial: it permitted the heavens to be locked into the earth at viewing places. In our supermarkets, products are locked into precise viewing arrangements for consumption.

In 20th century art, the readymade is a choice which locks together effort and effortlessness, identity and anonymity, the common-place and the esoteric. But the readymades of the first readymaker, Marcel Duchamp, and many of his progeny depend heavily on a cosmopolitan sense of irony.

There is an important link between Creates' work and Duchamp's via the work of Britain's Richard Long, who, like Creates, documents realignments of stone and wood in natural settings. Duchamp's term was "infra-thin," an idea about minute differences between things, for example, the difference in the local air temperature activated by the expulsion of one breath. More recently, the quixotic and occasionally indecipherable Jacques Derrida has introduced several "infrathin" terms, one of them the word "trace", which suggests the unquantifiable residue produced in the cancellation of the meaning of a word, i.e. residue plus ~~residue~~ makes not a third term, but some paradoxical space. For the socially-conscious traveller in the contemporary world, the ideal "trace" might be the impression of a bicycle tire on wet pavement (here I may be illicitly trading on the morphology of the word "trace," but I'm enjoying myself). The impression should be fleeting and impermanent, a movement which leaves no permanently altered landscape and no monuments to the traveller. Creates seems to conceive of travel in this way. In one respect the work can be said to be about the problem: what are we allowed to take home with us? In contrast to the archetypal tourist, Creates leaves traces of only the subtlest kind.

She documents her work in photographs. The works themselves are made of paper and stone (in fact, the "documentation" is also the "work"). She has visited many sites of standing stones, temple tombs and hill forts in the British



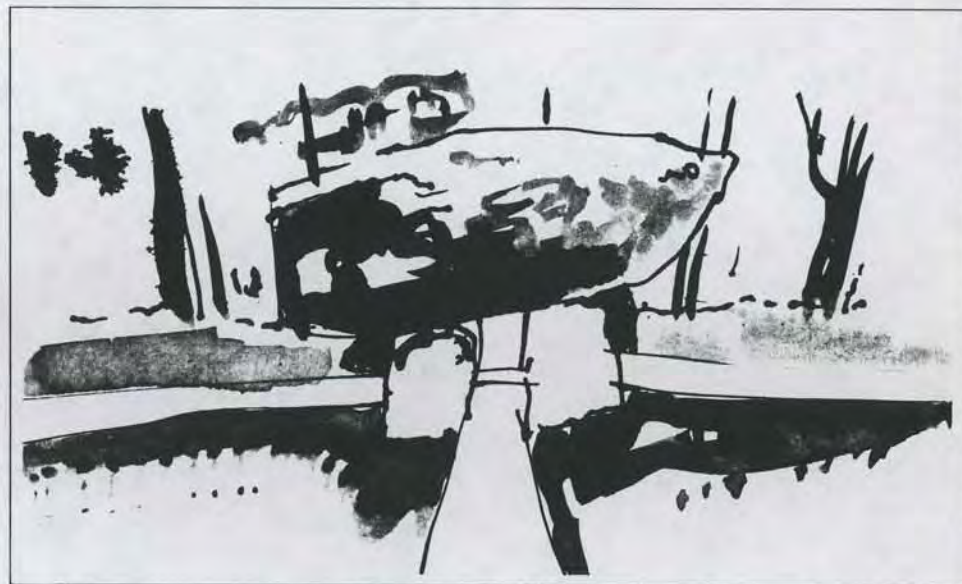
*Creates' placement of stones -*



Isles and Ireland, bringing rolls of white paper along as she searches out prospective sites. In *One Wave Acting on Pebbles and Paper Wales 1980*, a wet piece of paper several feet long clings to beach rocks like those which line Nova Scotian shores. In *Paper Across Portal Stones of the Drombohilly Circle, Ireland 1981*, a similarly shaped piece of paper wraps itself like a flag around the craggy surface of a long, thin stone: in the photographic documentation, we see the wind holding the sheet aloft. After a piece is documented, Creates bundles up the paper and all evidence of her presence. In *Sleeping Places, Newfoundland, 1982*, the impression of her sleeping bag and body on grass is recorded in still photographs. A striking photograph on a poster for a Creates' exhibition at the Dunlop Art Gallery/Central Library Gallery in Regina shows Creates' "signature" paper on the surface of a lily pond; under the paper the green vegetation looks blue. In another piece, Creates has simply documented the result of a placement of seven beach stones on a stone surface overlooking the ocean.

Creates takes the same care in making an installation as is taken in the photographic documentation. Her photographic prints are technically immaculate. In fact, the hallmarks of every work by Creates are simplicity, technical perfection, and the careful, considerate use of materials.

Like a plant ecologist or a botanist, Creates finds herself in the most unlikely places, performing what might seem to be the most esoteric researches. To the uninitiated, contemporary art can often seem as removed from daily life as the work of pure scientists. Why do scientists live in tents in Antarctica? And why do artists go to all that trouble to make work? Why do they set such goals for themselves? There are no easy answers. In Creates' case, perhaps the fascination with ancient sites and natural places is an attempt to address our general lack of comprehension of the ancient and the natural world. Her use of inaccessible sites may superficially resemble a cave painter's use of inaccessible surfaces, and her placement of paper is analogous to the placement of stone on stone by megalithic builders; but her awareness, curiosity and methodology are thoroughly 20th century passions. Perhaps Creates is attempting to somehow reconcile ancient and contemporary cultures in her work ■





## WAYNE BOUCHER, 1985

In a notebook on display Boucher writes "The common element is the shape?" Boucher's last decade of work can be seen as a long exercise in the absorption and filtering of art world influences through a formalist sensibility. From drawings of tools, which recall Jim Dine, to the (apparent) influences of Haligonian Ron Shuebrook, Boucher has worked through an ambivalence about the purposes of painting. *Flamingo* is a large mixed media work in which plastic lawn ornaments pay homage to what seems to be an emerging painted flamingo, as if Clement Greenberg's Avant Garde and Kitsch distinction is being parodied. Or perhaps we should take the flamingoes at face value and concede the influence of Boucher's rural setting, where lawn ornaments are taken seriously. Does the flamingo painting make Boucher Nova Scotia's Julian Schnabel, our newest Jack Bush, our latest embodiment of New York cultural domination? (Struan Robertson, the Development officer of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, said in opening remarks at the Rothman's sponsored "American Accents" show earlier this year, "American art still leads the world!")

Perhaps I'm being too hard on the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. I certainly don't want to suggest that either the AGNS or Boucher should shoulder the burden of responsibility for American cultural domination: it's everyone's problem. It would also be malicious to characterize Boucher's work as the ephemera of foreign culture. The struggles he has been engaged in for identity and difference in painting are part of a general grappling in all areas of Canadian cultural life.

In other works, Boucher demonstrates an ability and fluency at drawing and painting. The 1978 painting *Birthday*, an oil on beeswax work, has the all-overness and decorative ebullience of both abstract expressionist work and wrapping paper, and amounts to a humorous post-mortem of abstract expressionism. Other works, like *Feathery* and *Winter Garden*, two large acrylics, are visually coherent in a number of ways, and they demonstrate Boucher's easy handling of scale.

My hunch is that Boucher is genuinely trying to get to the bottom of picture-making, that the flamingoes are a spectacular and transitory aspect of his work, and that the artist's statement operates as a defence mechanism for work which doesn't require any. Artists have a wealth of available imagery and groupings of imagery to choose from. If a 1978 work like *Birthday* looks in retrospect like a beautifully crafted send-up of "advanced" painting of the '60s and '70s, then *Flamingo*, the centre-piece of this show, may read as both bravura painting and a poke at Schnabel: the two need not be incompatible. There is something unhealthy about work which habitually feeds off other art in this way, but I think Boucher has more than enough of himself among the references to sustain the attention which he has received ■





## JAMELIE HASSAN, 1985

London, in the vast agricultural heartland of Ontario, is a long way from the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon where Jamelie Hassan's parents were born, and a long way from Iraq, Italy, Central America and France where Hassan has lived and worked. Canadians are used to long distances, however, which we often mundanely translate into a few more hours on an airplane: after all, Halifax is a long way from London, too. Hassan's work tends to shorten the distances between places. It is eclectic, sensual, politically committed and global in its references. Her legacy from the London art community is, as Brian Fawcett has put it "an extraordinarily well informed indifference to style (Brian Fawcett, "Provincial Essays," *Vanguard*, April 1985, p.50). He also writes about "the extraordinary fecundity of London, Ontario as a breeding ground for artists from a variety of disciplines over the past thirty years..." and "the secret of London's ongoing vitality probably lies partially in its relative geographical isolation..."

London artists are often identified with the London regionalist movement of the '60s, which centred around artists like Greg Curnoe and critic/curators like Barry Lord. Hassan is part of a succeeding generation of London artists which is much less intimidated by the demands of art centres than provincials ever were. To her legacy from the London art community, Hassan adds an extraordinarily well-informed interest in problems of culture as they have to do with the suffering of ordinary people.

Hassan's work *Primer for War* had its debut at the *New City of Sculpture* exhibition in Toronto in 1984. As the piece gains momentum [eventually it was exhibited at the National Gallery and bought by the Art Gallery of Ontario - CE] and as Hassan's work gains a wider audience, we might ask ourselves what it is about the work that is capturing our imagination. Somehow, we sense that her work successfully addresses subject matter from everywhere: the plight of Argentina's missing people became part of *Desaparecidos* of 1981; the war in Lebanon has figured in much of her work (such as *Lebanese Tiles* of 1983); the struggles of minorities in Canada is spoken about in *Hong Kong, for Dave and Lucy* of 1984. Hassan's work generates the expansive feeling that artists have the moral right to address *anything*. Working out of the small city of London, Ontario, Hassan creates permissions for other artists, especially those from outside major art world centres, to sidestep the problem of provincial art versus the dominant trends in favour of other kinds of engagement.

Hassan's work can look classically restrained, as does *Primer for War*, the work featured in this exhibition, it can look generously expressionistic, as do

A PRIMER  
OF THE WAR.  
FOR  
AMERICANS

WRITTEN AND COMPILED BY  
AN AMERICAN



her watercolours; or sumptuously decorative, as does her *Bench from Cordoba* (1982), which splendidly replicates a bench Hassan saw during her travels in Spain. Hassan often makes installation art: most notably in the context of this exhibition may be her *Is War Art (Beyrouth)* of 1980, which imaginatively brought home to London Hassan's witness of the war in Lebanon in the late '70s. That work involved dismantling part of a brick wall at London's Forest City Gallery (a gallery that Hassan had helped to found) so that an interior filled with documentation of the devastation of Beirut was revealed. In allusive ways, *Primer for War* expresses dismay at the possibility of a nuclear war in which Beirut's destruction would be repeated everywhere.

### *Primer for War*

Cultural issues become hot political issues in times of tension between the superpowers. Hassan's *Primer for War* includes passages excerpted from a book published during the early years of World War I by J. William White which rationalizes an entry into the conflict by the United States: the book is a militarist's plea for involvement. These passages, along with photographs taken by Hassan in West Germany, are affixed to ceramic books. The books are arranged on a specially-built bench. Hassan's photographs from Germany (a pivot of East-West conflict), the pew-like bench, and the ceramic "bibles" amount to a visual critique of deeply-held beliefs about the possibility of war.

*Primer for War* is being exhibited in the Upstairs Gallery during the International Peace Conference: Women's Alternatives for Peace which will convene on the campus of Mount Saint Vincent University. As Hassan's exhibition opens, ships from NATO fleets will gather in Bedford Basin, visible from the university's campus and, through windows, visible from the Upstairs Gallery. The ships will participate in a celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Canadian Navy. Hassan's appropriated texts may be read through a background of celebration and criticism of military preparations in Halifax during the summer of 1985, may lead the viewer to update their reading of *Primer for War's* chapter headings:

"What Evidence Exists as to the Real Reason, the Fundamental Cause of this War?"

"Is There Any Evidence Which Tends to Show Why the Present Time Was Selected By Germany to Precipitate the War?"

"What Are the Principles Represented by the Opposing Forces in This War?"





"In Addition to the Evidence Already Presented as to the Mental Attitude of the Average German Toward His Own Race and Toward Other European Races, Are There Any Facts Tending to Show His Real Attitude Toward America?"

"What is the Attitude of German-Americans Toward This War and Toward the Principles Involved?"

"How Much Reliance is to be Placed Upon Statements Emanating from Germany at this Time?"

"What is the Truth as to the Pre-eminence of German *Kultur*, of German Civilization, of German Achievement in Letters, Arts and Sciences?"

"What are the Duties of America at this Time?"

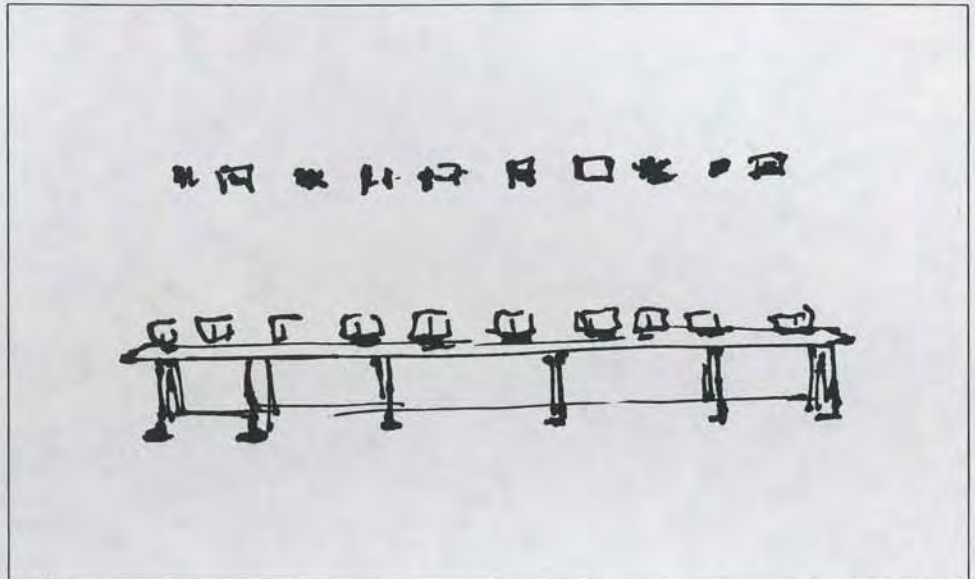
"What, in the Light of this War, Should Be the Aim of This and Other Civilized Countries for the Future?"

The *Primer for War* statements are chapter headings in the original text, (called *Primer of the War for Americans, written and compiled by an American*) and draw their energy from fear, a fear which we "update" in this work as fear of nuclear war. As it was put by the artist Conrad Atkinson on a recent visit to Halifax:

...a central fear in Europe, and from my observations in Halifax it is becoming a central fear here also...is that our society is not simply heading toward a consuming war but is actually consuming the products of war right now; in other words, war is consuming us already. We live in a kind of military-industrial complex, as was first pointed out by President Eisenhower in the fifties. He saw it as the greatest danger facing us and lots of workers and intellectuals now see the military-industrial complex as the main focus of power.

- (Charlotte Townsend-Gault, "Conrad Atkinson" [interview] *Parachute*, March/April/May 1985, p.23)

Without doomsday histrionics, works like *Primer for War* help us think through and act positively on our fears of war and our involvement in the machinery of war, not only in the expression of support for groups such as those represented at the Women's Alternatives for Peace Conference, but also among the growing numbers of civilians, including artists, who are making their voices for peace heard ■





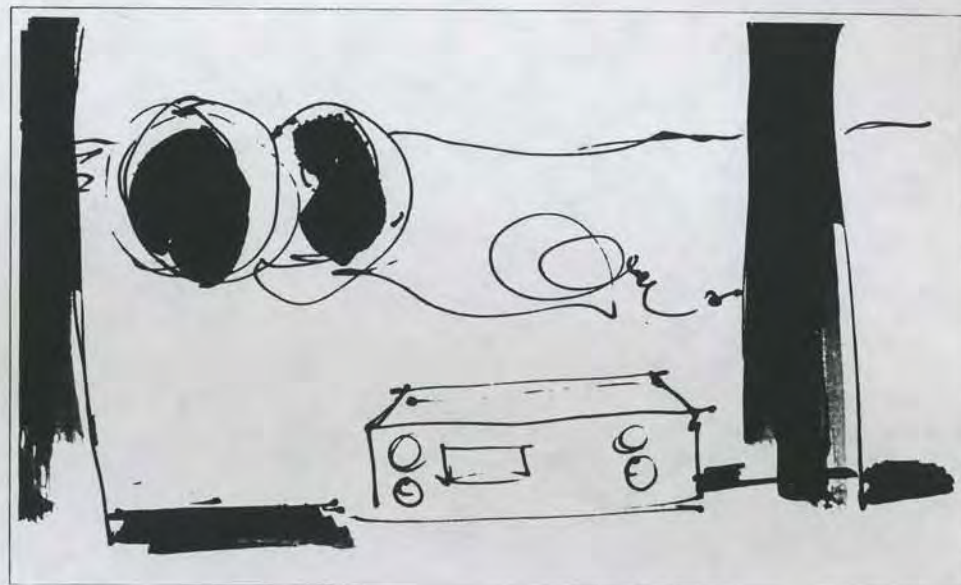
## FELICITY REDGRAVE, 1985

I think they are called "night terrors," and in certain wards of hospitals and extended care centres curtains are drawn tight and windows are closed in fear of them. Most people experience the drapery that for a moment illusionistically becomes a body or a bird as sleep sets in.

In the Saint Mary's University Art Gallery, an audio recording called *Oxygen* wafted over the space, more a mood setter than a component in what we lately think of as installation art.

The curtain, the bedside digital clock radio, the plant on a window sill, the hallucinogenic bird (i.e. how we first explain UFOs), a polyp of light against a blue-black sky; a sky seen through a window where the flattening of colour is like that of a print under plexiglas... Redgrave gets palpably poetic. In *Night Stage III* a plant pattern fans across the painting multiplying as blurred double images marry fleeting memories. A plant tips over. One believes that in a Redgrave the subtlest movement can spark a semi-conscious reverie, given the right conditions. All of us at one time or another have witnessed similar visions. The painter is elaborating a set of conventions for visionary painting, some old, some new, without (thankfully) becoming a latter-day Vincent Van Gogh. Many of Redgrave's pieces sustain themselves the way good fiction does, because the visionary references (so often made gratuitously by artists) are grounded in simple everyday/every night things. At her best, Redgrave becomes a visionary of everyday nightlife.

Redgrave is using *paint* in this show. She has caught up with our culture of thick paint, or in her case thicker paint, the substance of a burgeoning international paint-off which has involved artists of varying ages and inclinations in a strange experiment in regression, re-evaluation and revision over the past five or six years. There are many suspicions surrounding recent painting. From what I know of Redgrave's previous work, especially the coastline/rock paintings, there is a tentativeness of execution about them which the recent paintings do not have: for whatever reason, and one might speculate that the reason may be the international scene, the *Night Spaces* paint is applied cleanly and liberally. Occasionally there are flourishes which are uninterestingly graphic. As M. Maryniak wrote in *ArtsAtlantic 21* (Winter 1985, p.8) "to measure Redgrave's artistic worth solely on drawing would be misleading" Works like *Northern Lights*, a small serigraph and *Northern Lights*, a large acrylic don't work; works like the *Gothic Night* drawings are pedestrian and illustrative (by that I mean, of course, that they are illustrative in a way that I dislike). The *Night Windows* series of watercolours, and most of the paintings, are meatier -





worth another look. Redgrave's occasional lapses bear on the international problem of paint and credibility talked about by Ron Shuebrook in his prosaic and clear-headed catalogue essay:

Despite the widespread assumption by many of the most prominent artists on the international scene today that painting should be cynically pursued as a convenient medium of generalized representation and historical convention, Felicity Redgrave continues to make paintings as a process of self-renewal and optimistic commitment. - Ron Shuebrook (*Felicity Redgrave/Night Spaces*, Saint Mary's University Art Gallery, 1984, p.6)

At one point I thought that Redgrave was interested in extending French Impressionist ideas into night paintings. I wasn't thinking of the way she applies paint, but the attention she gives to optical effects and personal interpretations of them. My point would have been that, like Monet (or a Canadian impressionist like H. Clapp) Redgrave was gathering together or making a set of conventions in the portrayal of the optics of half-sleep: the drowsiness of comfort and complacency endemic to the over-heated interiors of Canada's suburbs. Are these unconsciously-made pictures of Halifax's middle and upper classes? Perhaps. I had decided to bring up the relation of her work to Roald Nasgaard's exhibition *The Mystic North* without realizing that Redgrave had once studied under Nasgaard at Guelph in the early '70s. Nasgaard's show, an historical look at North American connections to Scandinavian art around the turn of the century (and later) explores Symbolist ideas without directly addressing their relevance to contemporary work. Redgrave sees a direct relation between the Symbolists and herself (I should note that Redgrave has neither seen the *Mystic North* show nor read the accompanying book, but she is, of course, familiar with the Symbolist oeuvre).

What is important about the Nasgaard show and Redgrave's work is a simultaneous turning from a southward gaze, i.e. American art, toward northern vistas. The possibility of working in Canada without American cultural dominance depends not only on seeing Canadian art in reference to non-American things but also, and most importantly, on aligning work with that of other countries which have exactly the same relation to US cultural hegemony as Canada. The parallels between the struggles of Scandinavian painters of the 1890s to overcome French influences and Group of Seven-type nationalism have been duly noted. That there is at least a smidgen of Canadian nationalist feeling in Redgrave's work is worth mentioning, although allegorizing her art into a polemical stance about Canadian subject matter would be inaccurate. The Scandinavians of the turn of the century used twilight in paintings as a national-





ist rallying cry, but with an intelligent ambivalence. Nasgaard quotes Krogh: "All nationalist art is bad, all good art is national." (Roald Nasgaard, *The Mystic North*, University of Toronto Press, 1984, p.42)

Redgrave's own view of her work is couched in the astronomical and scientific literature she reads, and her references in conversation (for instance, about her paintings which include clocks and nebulae on either side of a window pane) tend to range from the subject of painting to the topic of the difference between ordinary time and the time computations of astronomers. When bringing up problems of symbolism and the paintings, it should be kept in mind that Redgrave's symbolism is a symbolism of what is commonly understood; the paintings can usually be deciphered quite easily if one approaches them on that level. The digital clock may read 12:00 midnight, and the galaxy outside may seem to be an obvious sign for space time, but there is nothing in the painting or title that narrows one's focus too much; after all, the nebulae may be just frost on the window in Redgrave's wintery world of interiors.

This world of interiors and windows seems to have its daylight expression in the work of Haligonian Judith Mann [like Redgrave herself, no Mann is longer a Halifax resident - CE], who makes paintings of window casings in a much different way than Redgrave. The inadequacy of the comparison lies in methodology as much as in the differing ways in which the two handle paint. In Mann's work, a formal clarity and unity, as well as a subject matter that is deliberately limited (so that other levels of articulation come into play) leads the viewer to an examination of each painting the way one might examine the original window for meaning: her work becomes visual metaphysics in the tradition of Cezanne or Morandi. By contrast, each of Redgrave's works, has its own story ■





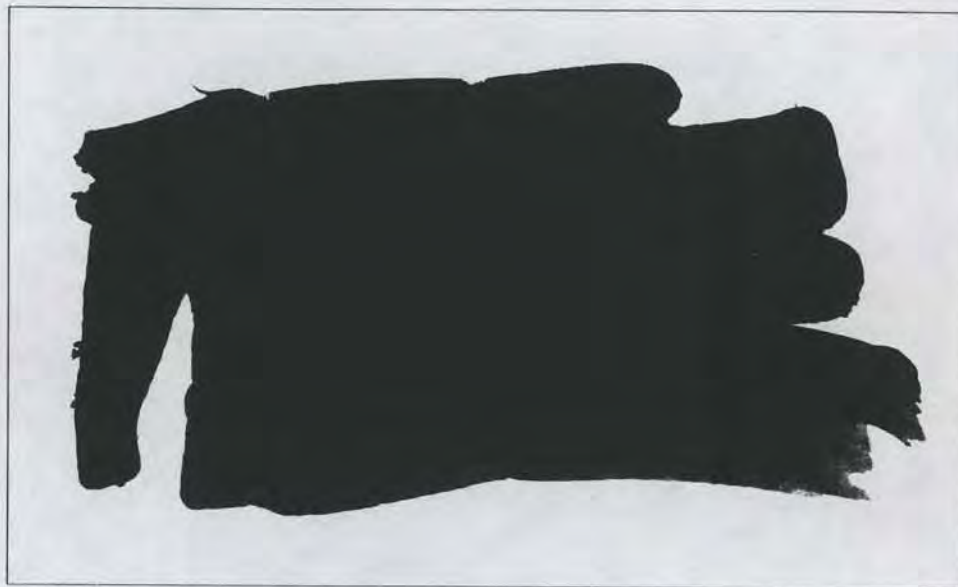
## LESLIE SASAKI, 1985

When we were kids in the burbs, we'd sneak up to people's big picture windows and look in. If the Griswalds, or whoever they were, had situated the TV correctly, we could see the Ed Sullivan show flicker off their zombie faces like Degas' pitlights off a chanteuse. You could peek in and the Griswalds would be sitting, not blinking or moving. It was scary.

Leslie Sasaki is about the right age to have grown up irradiated by television, and his latest paintings are suggestive of the numbness, boredom and despair that overtakes people as they watch other people watch TV. Recently, several Halifax artists have avoided the use of video-tape in works which directly address problems about television. Garry Conway's recent exhibition of fabricated metal TV screens and Gerry Amey's recent TV news photomontages are examples. As in Sasaki's work, an un-moving visual reference to TV is substituted for the video medium with every confidence that the mere reference can do the job. It is as if making video-tapes involved a conflict of interest or compromise. Some local artists, the most prominent being Ed Slopek, have given up the video medium for good: Slopek believes that TV is a health hazard.

Sasaki's works are small. They play with certain optical effects. They incorporate some of the thick, crusty paint that has been going around Halifax for years, in this case on thin paper surfaces. At first you notice all the blobs - impasto TV rays at one side of the pictures. As the rods and cones adjust themselves, the black-on- black silhouette figures emerge at the other side of the pictures. The most memorable image is that of a person in a chair watching TV. The guy consists of a black area painted over a black ground, so that from several angles he is virtually invisible.

Some of Sasaki's works of the past few years have used op-art effects in a similar way. In patterned paintings, splashes of paint become rows of people standing at attention or marching in files down the picture plane. Repetition and patterning in these pieces is a sign for regimentation - a connection not often made by pattern painters (if there are any left: Sasaki cannot really be called a "pattern painter".) His attempt to reinvest op-art and pattern painting techniques with oblique social messages leads one to think that offset printing or some other graphic medium would suit the work. Except for the thick patches on the TV paintings, which would have to be re-worked or applied manually (a quibble of technique), these works could be very effective as graphic art. By this I mean that they deserve the wide distribution of a particular kind that would then be possible. Ironically enough, the TV paintings are probably impossible to reproduce accurately in slides or black and white film.



What these works have to say about TV is slightly sinister and moralistic. One asks in their presence whether there are any empathetic uses of television by artists other than rock videos, which are uniformly and fascinatingly awful. The typical device used by artists when TV is the subject is to have someone watch someone else watch. The position is reinforced in an art gallery setting, which makes for slower and more contemplative viewing than seems possible with television itself.

Sasaki's works get a heightened auratic glow because of their physical fragility. As the works are constructed of tempera paint piled high in places, they would not survive long without preservation. I like to think of them as studies for mass produced, graphic pieces ■



## ELIZABETH SHATFORD, 1985

Around the Parthenon lie shattered columns and weather-worn stones. These broken pieces of Ictinus' building form the basis for the group of paintings in this exhibition entitled *Doric Column*.  
-Elizabeth Shatford

If a singular image of the most highly publicized art motifs of the '80s were possible, it might be a skull atop a Greek column: an image of classically-ordered death which welds human bone to architectural ruin. Some of these works are seen by critics as hackneyed ciphers of blank social conscience, sentimentalism and regression. To others, the revival of ancient themes and techniques is a healthy sign of a return to roots as well as implied criticism of Modernist assumptions about authenticity and originality.

Since the early '70s, Elizabeth Shatford has quietly dealt with issues of neo-classicism in the paintings, drawings, prints, sculptures of her *Doric Column* series. The series has involved a slow working out of a number of themes connected to the Parthenon "...that absolute home base of classicism..."<sup>1</sup>

What leavens the loaf in Shatford's work is her eccentric take on the Greek mystique, as exemplified in work's like *Tatlin's Tooth*, a plaster chunk inspired by bits and pieces at the base of the Parthenon; *Doric Column Soft Sculpture*, which has resonances in Claes Oldenburg, Greek architecture, fibre work, and surrealism; and the painting *Old Town Clock*.

The Old Town Clock is Halifax's most photographed building and an example of the neo-classicism of the early 1800s as practised by colonials. Its flimsy, decorative pillars prop up a clock visible to the bulk of local business people. No doubt an idea of classical order was explicitly linked in the minds of the builders with an efficient ticking of commerce. Like much of Georgian neo-classicism, the Old Town Clock building fits into Joseph Masheck's characterization of contemporary post-modern architecture:

Actually, much 'post-modernism' is marked by a kind of Deco-recoco infatuation with out-of-scale classical detail illiterately disengaged from the classical grammar for the fun of high fashion.<sup>2</sup>

It is all there in Shatford's painting, which loses none of its charm because it rehashes an ancient subject like Greek Classicism.

Shatford's "post-modern" works are closely linked to her minimalist paintings,





drawings, and collographs begun in the early '70s. They derive from the structural elements of the Parthenon, its tryglyphs, its metopes (many now in the British Museum) and its marble fragments scattered around the Acropolis. Hard-edged, one-shot works, most made without evidence of indecision or hesitation, these paintings and drawings adapt a vocabulary of minimalism. Broad areas of flat colour connect painting to architecture with the logic of a van Doesburg, that is, as architectural structure transposed onto canvas in terms of architectonic flat forms and unmodulated colour.

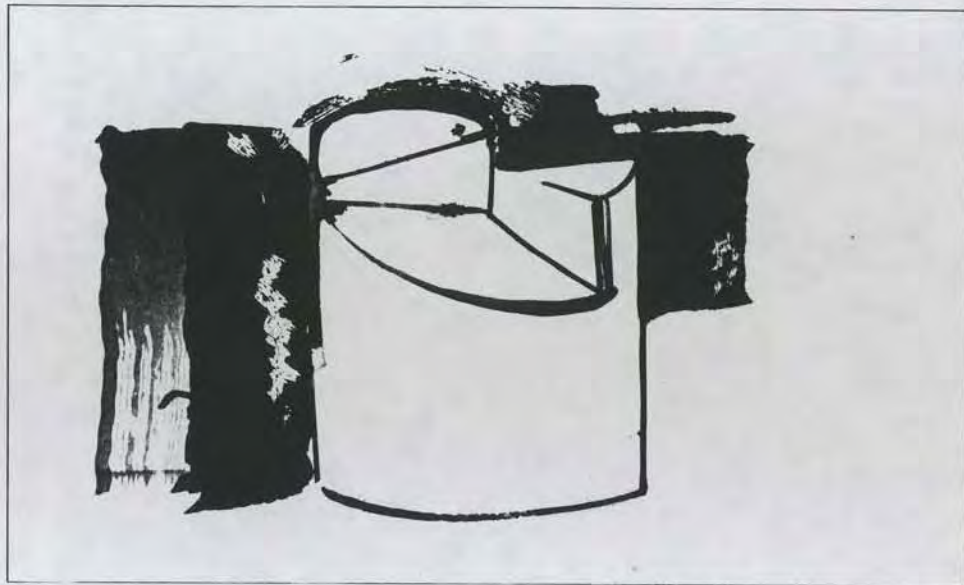
The choices about colour and structure are made in studies, several of which are included in this exhibition, and not in the final work. Shatford's method involves searching through compositional problems as if a mysterious order of values, proportion and aesthetics might be divined.

### Postscript

There are tantalizing links between Elizabeth Shatford's neo-classical art and work as curator of Mount Saint Vincent University Art Gallery's Slide Registry of Nova Scotia Women Artists. The Slide Registry was formed in 1975, International Women's Year. Shatford has maintained the Registry ever since, and it has grown into an instructive example of self-documentation by a community. Membership in the Registry is open to any woman artist born and/or living in Nova Scotia. Up to six slides from each artist are arranged in carousels. A file of biographical information accompanies the slides, and a cross-indexing system allows for easy consultation. Shatford's long-standing care of the 1000 slides by 175 artists complements her classicizing tendencies in painting and sculpture, where a mythology of order associated with the ancient Greeks as well as the Enlightenment encyclopedists is mingled with the neo-classical practices of post-modernist aesthetics ■

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Masheck, "Judy Rifka and 'Post-modernism' in Architecture", *Art in America*, Dec. 1984, pp.148-163

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



Tatlin's Tooth.



## ANDREW FORSTER, 1986

I see now how fruitless an interest is the history of art, and how worthless an undertaking is that of determining who painted or carved, or built whatever it be. I see now how valueless all such matters are in the life of the spirit.

- Bernard Berenson

What's in a name? Andrew Forster is finding out.

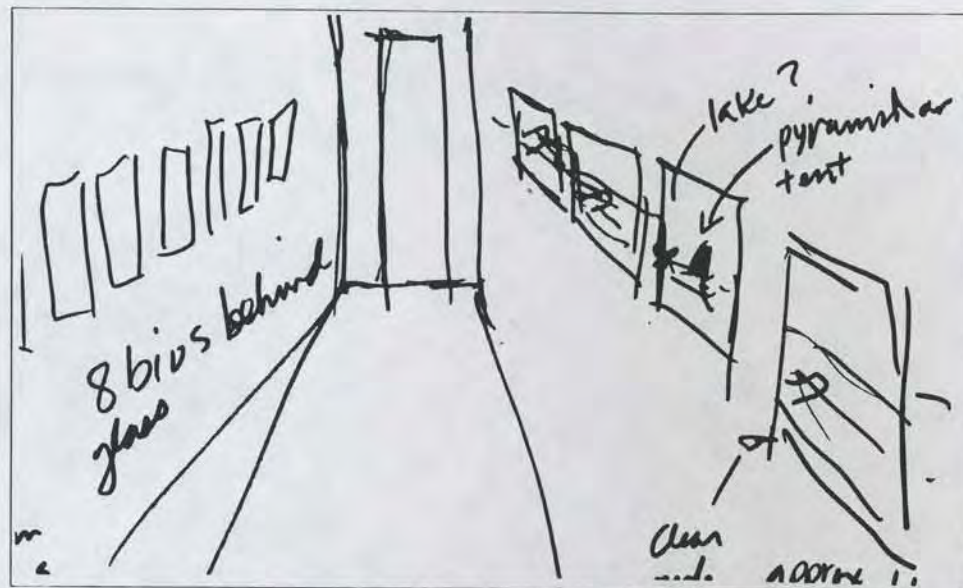
Forster does not always feel he should be himself. He can just as easily be other artists if he likes, so he inserts his name in the biographies of well-known Canadian artists, and posts them on a wall at Eye Level Gallery. In these biographies we can recognise the lives of Garry Kennedy, Liz Magor, Alex Colville, Michael Snow, and others. Accompanying the exhibition is a slick and thick catalogue which features a most ambitious borrowed biography, that of the contemporary European artist Jannis Kounellis.

Actually not a biography, Forster has reprinted a catalogue text by Rudi Fuchs, the Mary Kay cosmetician of the last *Documenta*, and substituted his name for the name of the original subject of the piece, Jannis Kounellis. Nowhere in the reprinted version does Jannis Kounellis' name appear. Forster also substitutes certain of the catalogue's photographs for others of his own choosing. The result is an piece of satire and an eccentric voyage into Forster's own increasingly complicated personal mythology.

Fuchs' overblown ad-talk is composed of Classical Greek and French Romantic references which swim around the subject of Kounellis' art. They appear in Forster's appropriated version as even more content-less, if that is possible, than the original. (Fuchs' minimalism of critical thought inspires debate about degrees of vacuity.)

Kounellis is Forster's shrewd choice. As an artist who has been consistently admired throughout the cataclysmic last-few-years, Kounellis might be called a "cross-over" artist - one whose work spans the most rigorous conceptual and performance strategies - like exhibiting live horses - and the most characteristically post-modernist, for example, the classical statuary he sandwiches into his assemblages. Perhaps Forster choose Kounellis not only for the convenience of the Fuchs' essay, but also as a way of situating his own work at the point of transition of new and old sensibilities.

But we are suspicious of "shrewdness" in artists; shrewdness too often means a canny career move, a cynical use of techniques of appropriation, and an .



Forster's Eye Level show.



uncomplicated dishonesty. Several of Forster's teachers at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, most notably Robin Peck and Garry Kennedy, regard certain kinds of "dishonesty" as artistic tools or materials - things that facilitate the effective manipulation of other materials, such as the art press, the audience, or dealers.

What we usually regard as an academic's loyalty to the truth has been flaunted by Forster's teachers at NSCAD for years. In many ways, Forster is merely one-upping his mentors. In any case, the influence of these people should be acknowledged.

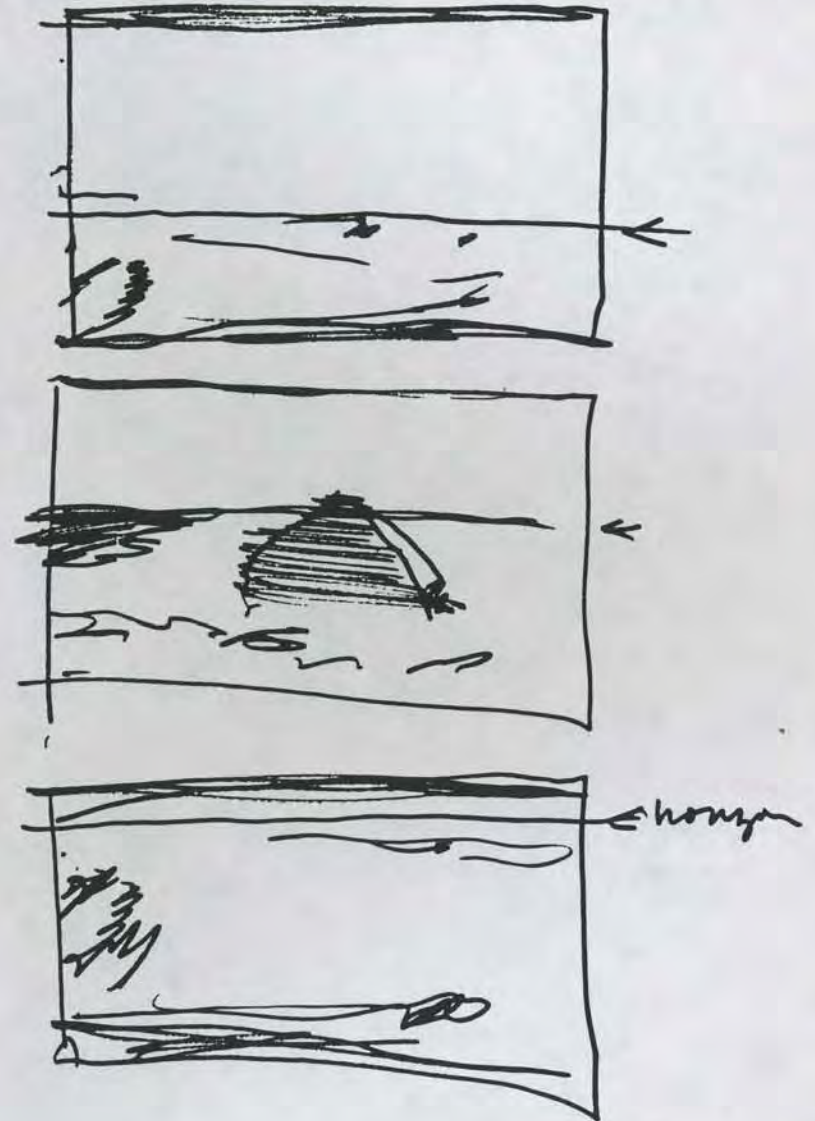
In his first exhibition, Forster imitated, made-up, made-over and mythified himself. It was called *Andrew Forster (1942- ) Retrospective*. In the "retrospective" Forster worked out a pastiche of real and imagined works, dates, and places. Forster's "real" work (a provisional term), his sculpture and written pieces of the previous few years, had a minimalist or conceptual nature. It was easy to imagine them matching the spurious dates he made up for them in the catalogue.

In his 1983 exhibition Forster constructed a complete fictional artistic personality for himself. His catalogue was central to the exhibition. The show consisted of cards on the gallery wall which named the works, but the works to which he referred were not in the gallery. Instead the catalogue contained photographs of the work and a brief, fictional chronology of his life and work. It also contained an "interview" with Forster.

The 1983 catalogue was dedicated to Elmyr de Hory, the famous art forger, and for those who know Forster personally, as many in Halifax's tightly-knit art community did and do, the catalogue's mis-information was transparent - an inside joke.

For example, in the 1983 catalogue Forster gave his birth date as 1942, when his actual birth date may be closer to 1952 or even 1962. Works that he listed as being first shown in 1966, like his monument to Giacometti, Haligonians knew were made between 1980-83. In the catalogue photograph of the "Giacometti" piece only little clues like the contemporary lighting fixtures were evidence that the piece was not made in 1966, as stated in the catalogue.

In the recent exhibition, Forster presents a much more complicated set of variables, for the show by no means simply stops at the appropriation of the Fuchs/Kounellis catalogue. Forster is not just dabbling in the ephemera of artist's lives - the stuff that gets published, shown and made. The way Canadian comedians make a living at imitating American media figures is not an apt



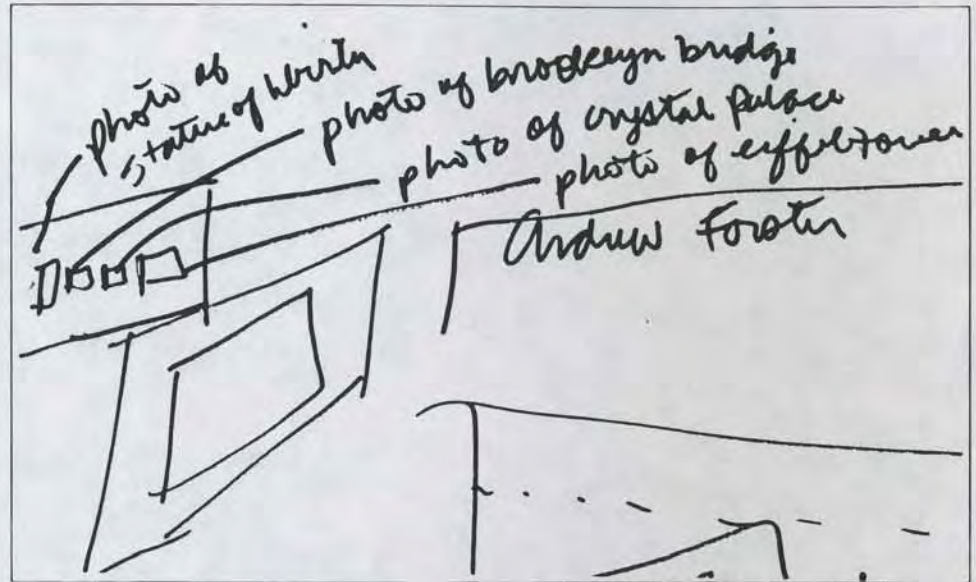


analogy to Forster's project. Much of the power of his work has to do with the poetic character of his substitutions and the ease with which the layers can be distinguished from each other.

Everywhere, Forster's name appears like a code word. His appropriated catalogue substitutes pictures of spoons, handles and mechanical looking things, landscapes of the pyramids, blurred photos of a painting and a spectator in a museum, the Statue of Liberty, boxing gloves on truncated arms - for pictures which we must imagine would have appeared in the original book. The photos are puzzling, personal and evocative of the 19th Century, none more so than the photo of the Crystal Palace and Paxton's sketch for the building. Forster includes an elegant ink on canvas version of the original sketch for the 19th Century showplace.

The inclusion of photos of national monuments of the last century and various mechanical parts in Forster's version of the Fuchs' catalogue highlights what is glossed over in the flowery rhetoric of Fuchs' original words and photos, like the sketch of Rimbaud playing a harp, and Courbet's nude. Perhaps we are meant to pose questions about the continuing industrial basis of Romanticism.

Like Fuchs, but with distance, Forster addresses a version of the Romantic artist and the Satanic mills. But unlike Fuchs and other neo-Romantics, Forster is able to slip in and out of his own place in the art tradition by being other people and revelling in the discontinuity of it all. Like a ghost, he is out of the fray, invisible, or so it would seem. Forster ventures into commentary as art the way a logician envelops one system within another - as a temporary, pyramid-building way out of an insoluble problem. The insoluble problem for Forster, as it was for Duchamp and a thousand others, is how to be and not be an artist, how to deny and simultaneously glory in a privileged position ■





## LEYA EVELYN, 1987

Leya Evelyn believes that painting should be a contemplative experience. She lives on a beautiful stretch of Nova Scotia coastline in Sambro, and feels landscape painting "is unnecessary, it's already here."

She makes abstract paintings in muted colours. Recent works include photographs collaged into painted abstract surfaces. The empirical - even positivist - presumption that an abstract painting is an object in its own right has to do with photography: are photographs and abstract paintings historically inevitable objects which are linked by historical succession?

Evelyn studied with Joseph Albers and afterward spent over twenty years in New York. She recalls that her first day at class with Albers involved drawing straight lines on paper; that sort of exercise opened her mind up. The classes were extremely demanding and disciplined. She also studied life drawing with William Bailey.

Evelyn's new works are small, sometimes about two feet square. Colour photographs and/or photographic reproductions are literally painted into them. Out of pastel and oil float photographic bits of vegetation, Italianate architecture, ballet dancers and blue sky. Evelyn loves photographs. "They aren't really what's there, they're really censorship," she says.

A simple fan shape or rhombus is etched out of the paint on paper as a container of the photo images. A squarish off-centre form plays against the edges of a work, or a fan shape is sectioned off with strips of photographic prints.

Photographs and paintings did not mix it up in her 1985 solo exhibition at the Anna Leonowens Gallery in Halifax, making me think the newer work is an oblique response to life in Nova Scotia. The 1985 paintings included bits of fabric collaged into larger oil on canvas paintings which had square or flat pie-shapes in them. One of these older paintings hung in the Studio 21 exhibition as (perhaps) a token of an abandoned style.

The photographs highlight something dreamy and romantic in Evelyn's work as they bubble up to the surface amidst scumbles and scraps of paint and pastel. They are obviously meant to please and not to provoke, like Matisse's arm-chairs for sinking into after a hard day. Evelyn must mean by "contemplation" something pleasant, a watery interlude for busy people.

These paintings depart from the program we bluntly assume of abstract paint-



ing if we think it excludes obvious representational imagery. Evelyn's work seems so much a part of a tradition of New York abstract painting that some viewers might think she is breaking a rule by including photographs.

They can be seen as a species of late '70s New Image painting. Instead of reintroducing representational images as flat, clumsy signs which announce the return of academic representational painting, the photographs inside these works stand-off (however well they seem to be formally integrated into the surfaces) against what Evelyn makes into a representation of her own abstract painting. Hugging the photo-scrap is remnants of a ruptured painting style. The inclusion of photographs looks like a graphic denial of her previous work. That is positive: seeing how simply collage can disturb the surface of an otherwise run-of-the-mill painting.

But the word "rupture" is too strong. What saves these paintings from being confections is Evelyn's skill as a painter, but what prevents them from deeply moving viewers is the contemplative mood evoked by them ■



## SEAN MCQUAY, 1987

I caught glimpses of Sean McQuay's recent exhibition through the windows of the Anna Leonowens Gallery while walking a picket line in support of striking NSCAD Faculty. Entering the building was out of the question, but I wonder if this post-exhibition review of McQuay's work is 4th dimensional strike-breaking?

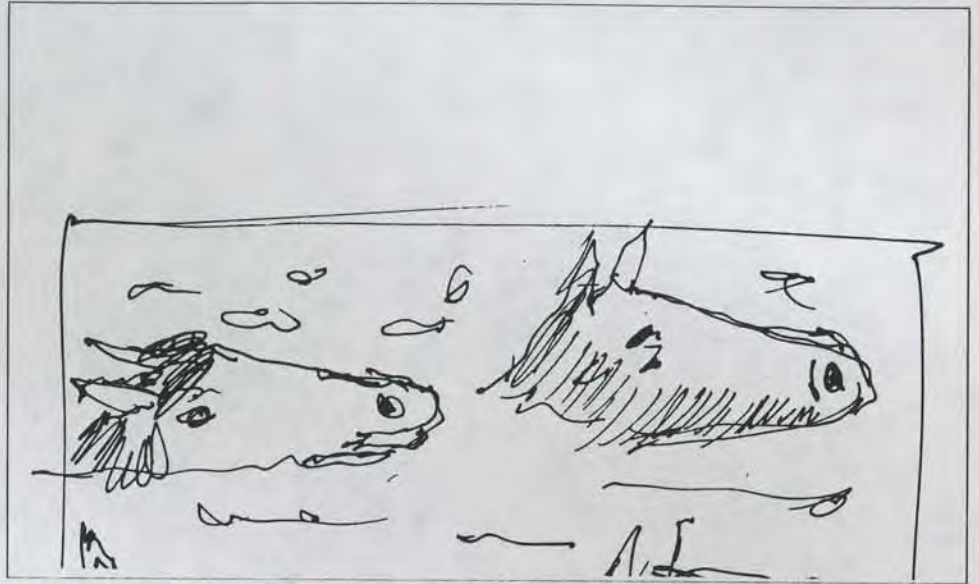
Nova Scotia experienced a solar eclipse during McQuay's show. Like the eclipse, the NSCAD strike was an accident of scheduling; the show's doom and gloom subject matter was eerily appropriate. Now that the strike has been successfully resolved, a wry, cosmic humour can be seen in the juxtapositions.

Sean McQuay has a keen sense of humour - too few contemporary painters are funny: they like seriousness of the "serious artist" kind, as expressed in huge scale and juicy paint. McQuay also paints big, but there is a lurking laugh of a good natured sort in his work. As a cartoonist, one of his avocations, McQuay could effectively lampoon young Romantics. His painting has always been flecked with funny bits, however grim the theme. And this show's theme - *Apocalypso* - was grim.

McQuay's set piece, a huge painting of horses swimming against a current, is a brushy, confident bit of painting. Water has many personal associations for McQuay, including brooding, pestilence, indifference and violence. A horse's head pokes out of the tide on each side of the painting, which is physically composed of interlocking pieces which make a big square. The horse's head and the word *Apocalypso* immediately suggest puns on Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* and the horse-head-in-a-bed-scene in *The Godfather*. The title suggests a frantic dance in the face of destruction.

In a dark painting called *Eclipse*, horses swim across Halifax Harbour. The Macdonald Bridge is visible in the background as receding rows of horse heads rush toward the Dartmouth side. A red patch around Tuft's Cove in the painting could be a reference to the Halifax Explosion, the 1917 munitions ship disaster which was the world's largest non-nuclear explosion (that is, unassisted by nature). If this work is to presage a holocaust, there would be no more appropriate disaster than the Halifax Explosion to refer to, but it might strike some as being facile.

In another work, the multi-panelled *Upstream*, McQuay assembles 19 aluminium framed paper paintings - mostly watercolour - based on the iconography of tourist brochures: there is a pun on escapism here, mixed up with an idea about escapes to survival. The perfectly symmetrical structure of the assemblage was resolved during installation.



The tourist items are shown floating in greenish water, "Things go on, they don't go under..." says McQuay, "Everything is floating above water." It is in comments about the work like this that one hears McQuay's optimism and black humour.

McQuay's floating hotel menagerie includes streamers, poker chips, cards, ostrich feathers, beach umbrellas, a guitar, a cake, a chair, a straw hat and, as a thematic element of desperation, a couple of horses heads - as if the flotsam survived a cruise ship disaster. One thinks of the deck chairs of the Titanic washing up on Atlantic beaches (to keep the references local).

Sean McQuay's contemporary Book of Revelation is not meant to be too Biblical. His *Apocalypse* horses, the eclipse references, and the flood scenes are seen by McQuay to be the "flip side of Revelation." Perhaps McQuay is not addressing conquest, pestilence, death and war directly, but cartoon or media versions of them. The glossy, celluloid - even light - references are cathartic, the way films are cathartic, and the response is a detached, ironic chuckle at anticipated disaster: a disaster deferred so often we develop a skewed sense of confidence ■



## QUOI FAIRE? QUOI DIRE? 1987

Catholic content in (French) Surrealism disappeared as it moved to America during the War. Several artists in this exhibition remind us that French Surrealism was first of all French, and got deposited in places other than New York when it crossed the Atlantic. We mix up Surrealism with American art: in art history the juncture is uneasily defined.

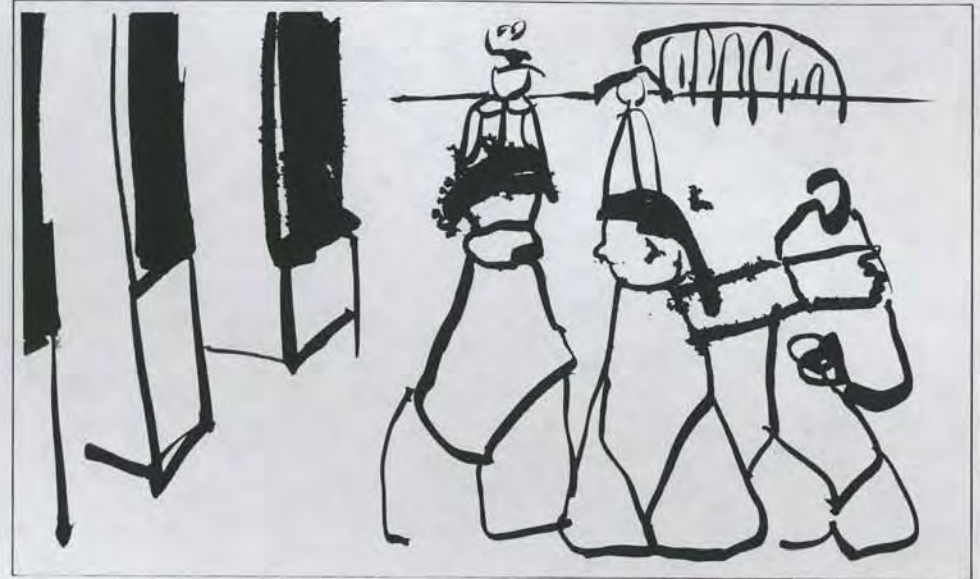
Perhaps the anti-clericism of an artist like Moncton's Yvon Gallant can help English artists remember that their European modernist heroes, the Bretons, Duchamps, Picabias - often grappled with a Catholic culture. This is a tricky question which isn't addressed by merely skimming off the art of Europe for themselves (read ourselves).

Acadian artists in this exhibition mix up contemporary life in Moncton with French Surrealism of good vintage, and bring up intriguing questions about European, Acadian and Canadian culture as they work. What a revelation this exhibition has been to the Halifax community! It has generated a great deal of excitement - and embarrassment at seeing vitality so close to home, and yet so little known. Perhaps the globe-hopping cosmopolitanism of many Halifax artists can be blamed: Moncton is too close. They (we) are more familiar with East Village, Winnipeg and European art than art three hours away by car.

On the other hand, as Charlotte Townsend-Gault points out in her catalogue essay, these artists *are* relatively new: the first generation of Acadians to have been trained at the art department at the University of Moncton. They owe something to a spiritual founder, Claude Roussel, the University of Moncton's first artist in residence. It is not Roussel's abstract art that has guided the younger people, but his example as a working professional. Moncton artists are tuned in to international trends, but local heroes help.

Yvon Gallant may be familiar to readers of *Vanguard* [where this review was first published - CE]. His *Quoi Faire? Quoi Dire?* paintings included a depiction of Pope John Paul II's visit to Moncton, a contemporary philosopher dressed as Descartes, a cat at the vet's, a RCMP officer, and a woman in an old age home.

The Pope painting is a send up of John Paul's Knights of Columbus attendants; one of them holds up a daub of an arm as if directing traffic. Gallant paints a raw, rough local cosmology of homely characters with a sardonic folk painter's touch. The colours in the Pope painting are brown, ochre, and green - subdued for Gallant. The painting was stapled to the gallery wall like a piece of burlap on a fishing shack. In his picture of an RCMP constable, a bird is painted in an



Yvon Gallant's painting.



unyieldingly flat black - a visual hole is made in the canvas. Everything about Gallant's work is rough. Hidden in the upstairs office area of the gallery was a late entry: a Gallant painting of a pig, a man, and a hypodermic needle.

Gallant's work has affinities with the painting of Halifax artists like Janice Leonard and Eric Walker, who use Maritime folk art conventions to record local history.

Paul Bourque's "Rococo" paintings are sedate and sumptuous. The psychedelic colour of Jacques Arsenault's prints and Yvon Gallant's paintings is absent in Bourque's art. He may yet develop into the most exciting colourist of the group, despite his tendency towards a cloying palette. His fish, antelope and mink are given lush - at times garish - treatment. Viewers lingered at his *Blue Beggars* painting, which is full of impressionistic subtleties.

Brightly coloured prints by Jacques Arsenault dominated half of a wall. Franz Kafka is instantly recognizable in several of them. Kafka's ghost-face floats over images of city streets (Prague?), over titles like *The Trial* and *The Sentence of K*. There is a Statue of Liberty image in one print, and in another Arsenault writes "AMERIKA" across Kafka's face. There are angels with trumpets and a green devil lurking in the depths of individual works. In this exhibition, Arsenault plays Tragedy, Yvon Gallant, Comedy. Arsenault brings Acadian surrealism to boil in images of a personal hell, where Kafka stands in for the viewer, and the viewer stands in for Kafka.

Hermenegilde Chiasson, like Yvon Gallant, is known to Halifax as a participant in the 1979 Mount Saint Vincent Art Gallery exhibition *Survival Atlantic Style*, curated by Barry Lord. For me, his was the only familiar name. He is the oldest (read most mature) artist, and a bit of a polymath. Here he exhibited an installation work, which consisted of a projector focused at the ceiling (projecting a French verse about Andre Breton), blown up photocopies of the same text, and objects placed carefully on top of the photocopies.

The objects are painted a deep blue with gold stars. The blue could be night sky, Yves Klein blue, or the blue of the Acadian flag (matching the Acadian flag gold stars), or all of the above. As one surveyed the collection of painted objects, which includes a door knob, a tin can, parts of a tire jack, a piston head, a pipe, or a printing press roll, Chiasson emerges as the most poetic and perhaps the most difficult of these artists.

Is Chiasson's installation a lament for an Acadian nation or personal poetry? Are the Acadians more interested in local culture than wider legibility? Why do their problems seem to be heightened versions of similar difficulties we have in Halifax? Questions like these inspired the great interest the Halifax art community showed in this work ■



Paul Bourque's work.



## DENNIS GILL, 1988

Questions about God and Dennis Gill's sculptural installation surfaced at a gallery talk: the artist said he uses myth in a general way. A non-believer, he envies the "energy" of people who believe, and the "signifiers associated with religion".

One person felt Gill set people up for a religious experience. Gill insisted that he did not believe in "God" or even in "culture"; the work is about emblems of authority. Television emblems figured highly in Gill's critique.

A lightning rod for the religious was a colonnade of two-inch thick cast aluminium heads on stands. American media figures of the '50s and '60s were included: Mickey Mouse, a young Nixon, Popeye, Tom Mix and Jesus - twelve stars lined up like apostles in two rows on one-foot square, four-foot high plinths. A viewer could walk processionally past Dick Tracy, Andy Warhol, Chairman Mao, Ed Sullivan, (the dog) Strongheart, Santa, Alfred Hitchcock, and others. A granite dais with a drawing of an open book etched on top faced the colonnade; on a wall at the other end a slate panel with an incised drawing of a satellite dish was stuck to the wall. The image of Jesus reduced to another personality among a host of personalities turned the installation into religious allegory for some viewers. A slate wall piece with the quotation "How but through a broken heart can God enter" (Oscar Wilde) encouraged the religious to hope the work grew out of personal commitment to something. In conversation, the artist was politely elliptical.

The sculpture heads are cut-outs (actually 3-inch thick casts), flat signs that prompt the word "iconic" (why not symbolic or indexical?). "Iconic" has come to mean the advertisement, the widely distributed face, the easily manipulated, flat, recognizable unit - a kind of coinage. In the catalogue essay, curator Gemey Kelly speaks of media icons and the individual facial trademarks of the portrait heads in exactly these terms. I see big cast aluminium coin-heads from a mint in Hollywood.

Gill has fun playing with sculptural forms as thin as a TV image (relative to most sculptors' insistence on three-dimensionality), thin as a watch, so to speak, and just as timely. The work meshes interestingly with current art-world theorizing about simulacra, snapped connections among signifieds and signifiers, ambiguous religious references and the idea of installation art itself: Dennis Gill gives evidence that sculptors have a natural advantage over painters and media artists at installation art. The confidence shows.

Gill carves drawings of a satellite dish (as mentioned), a heart-shaped tomb-



*Gill's Dick Tracy.*

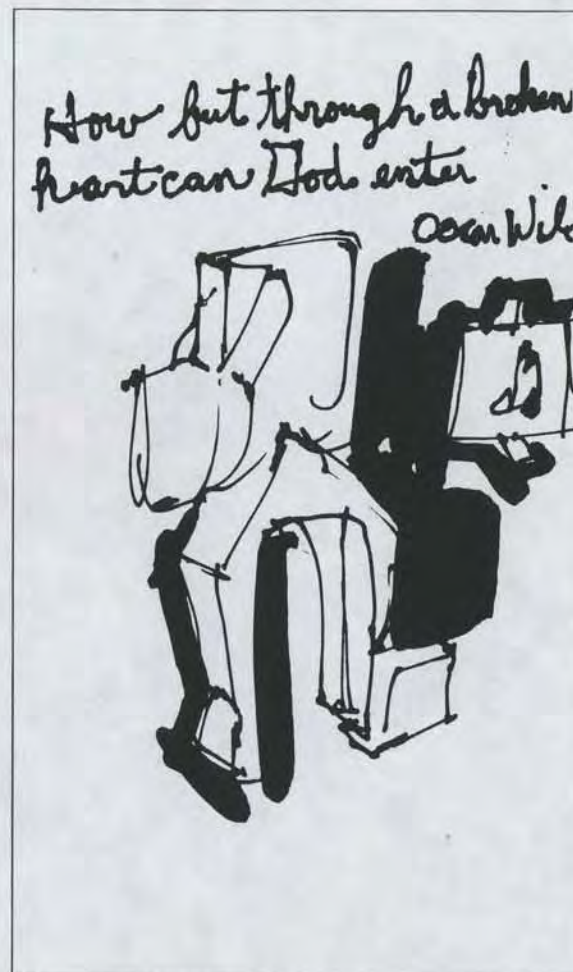


stone, a Brancusi sculpture (the *Prodigal*) into slate blackboards. The material has the advantage of easily being chalked over with messages.

He is sensitive to the weight of the ephemeral chalk scrawl over a line incised in slate. Gill writes a column of "And they lived happily ever after" lines over the heart-shaped tombstone on one slate panel - the way John Baldessari, or a child doing penance, would. The irony in the death/romance (sex and death?) pivot works its way back to the television world of Gill's aluminium heads: in the mixing of a static (TV) world with the static authority of sculptural objects, Gill introduces one tradition to another with dry wit.

One piece dropped out of the exhibition, perhaps because it was constructed as a conceptual key. It lends its name to the entire show: *In The Heat Of The Moment There is No Reason* was tucked away in an alcove of the gallery. Five snakes, cookie-cutter flat and identical pointed slitheringly toward a working orange heat lamp. Formally, they completed a jigsaw puzzle with the irregularly shaped edge of the heat lamp's base. They "moved" toward the lamp with the earnestness and energy of (if I can mix metaphors) Freudian flies. An impulsive, elemental feeling was added to the show: the portrait head installation evoked a sense of a child's innocent comprehension of a media world; the snakes cast a disturbing reptilian shadow on the exhibition, as if the heat lamp was a TV and the snake/lemmings were a Neilson-rated public.

There is an emotional bottom line to Gill's work, something that attracts and repels a viewer according to memories and associations about the media people and cultural figures he presents. Gill's inventive technical twists (like the slate pieces) are compelling ■





## DAVID BOBIER, 1988

Let's begin with an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1968 called *The Machine*, curated by K. G. Pontus Hulten, director of Sweden's Moderna Museet at the time (this is not a review of the exhibition, but it does touch on the notion of recycling critical writing the way artists recycle historical styles.) We want to put David Bobier's "machine-geo" art in perspective (with something like Durer's device?); I will let readers gauge for themselves how the Venice Biennale's Roland Brener and Michel Goulet and other machine artists can be pulled into the orbit of this discussion (see Bruce Ferguson in *Vanguard* Summer 1988). The perspective will include talk about Bobier's art past and his current situation on the faculty at Mount Allison University in New Brunswick.

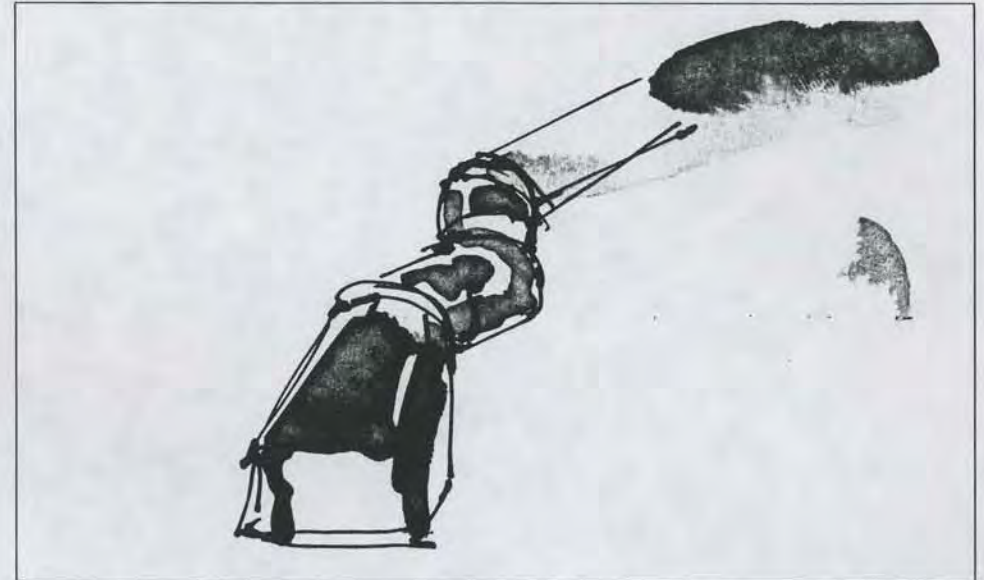
*The Machine*, the 1968 exhibition, included 220 works, ranging from Leonardo's drawings to Picabia's painting to Oldenburg and Tinguely. *Time* magazine's coverage of the exhibition (December 6, 1968) attested to its popularity: photo-coverage included a playful Jean Tinguely and spectators throwing balls into a whimsical machine ("whimsical" is part of the vocabulary of machine art).

Explanations by Hulten are startling. For example, he believed that a disgust with war machines of the '40s turned post-war artists away from machine art. If general statements like that have any validity, what are we to make of the present resurgence of machine art in the context of continuing world-wide warfare? Hulten believed that the ultimate machine, the atom bomb, was the ultimate turn-off for artists of the '50s. Why should anything have changed?

Machine-art must not connote warfare to the contemporary artist or viewer; also, we are expected to disassociate it from both the frivolity of a Rube Goldberg cartoon and the terror of Marinetti's Futurist manifesto. As we walk within an exhibition of contemporary machine art, nobody fears the click of a mine-trigger.

Machine art reminds us of Marshall McLuhan's characterization of humans as "servo-mechanisms" - things that serve machines - and it makes us wonder why artists, whether Bobier or even Duchamp, are willing to submit themselves to their own mechanical creations in play rituals.

Proudhon articulated the problem for artists as early as 1865, long before McLuhan, but before ideas about divided and abandoned subjectivity in 20th century theory completely excised the (Descartes') ghost in the machine/body. Somehow, in ways that Proudhon probably could never understand, contempo-





rary anthropomorphized machine-art assumes that the differences between Courbet's *Stonebreakers* and machines are irrelevant:

In general, our machines, masterpieces of precision, are more skilful than ourselves; they do better than we do, provided that what we ask of them requires intelligence or even dexterity; once they are in movement, they replace us with great advantage. They have only one fault: they do not go into motion themselves, but need someone to watch over them and control them and even to serve them. Who, then, is the servitor of the machine? Man. Man-serf - this is the latest term of modern industrialization.

(Proudhon quoted in Nochlin's *Realism and Tradition in Art 1848-1900*, p.51)

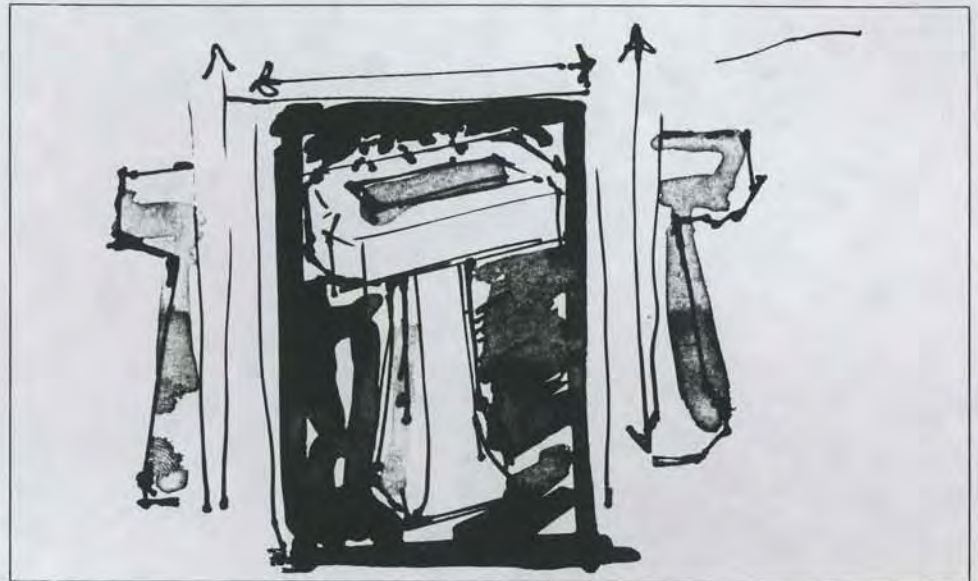
Man-serf or servo-mechanism: there are important points here: Proudhon's text was written out of reflection about the socialist realism of Courbet's *The Stonebreakers*, the realist ode to alienated labour; secondly, it may have been made within a (pre-futurist) consciousness which was already beginning to acknowledge the possibility of things like bridges and other engineered forms as art (Tom Peters of Cornell University is currently working out the details of such a thesis).

However, a (stretched) point might be advanced that as early as 1865 the parameters of a rejection of "machine aesthetics" by socially-minded artists had been sketched out (we can say this only retrospectively or allegorically) by Proudhon - rejected in favour of socialist/realist painting. Canadian heirs of the critical tradition like Barry Lord continue to convincingly espouse variations Proudhon's view.

David Bobier's exhibition is called *Domestic Effects*; it takes machine art into the home in a play of references using parts of vents, tubs, plumbing and mechanical flotsam in sculptures which look like they were made in a basement or garage: a home-made look. Prints displayed continue the washbasin home mechanics around the walls.

According to Bobier, I wasn't the only viewer of this exhibition who was reminded of Duchamp's remark that America's contribution to modern life consisted in its plumbing and bridges: but the work is not just a Baroque play on Duchamp or plumbing.

Bobier's experience in London, Ontario with artist/teachers like Graham Wright, Peter Borowsky, Don Bonham and Murray Favro closes down the



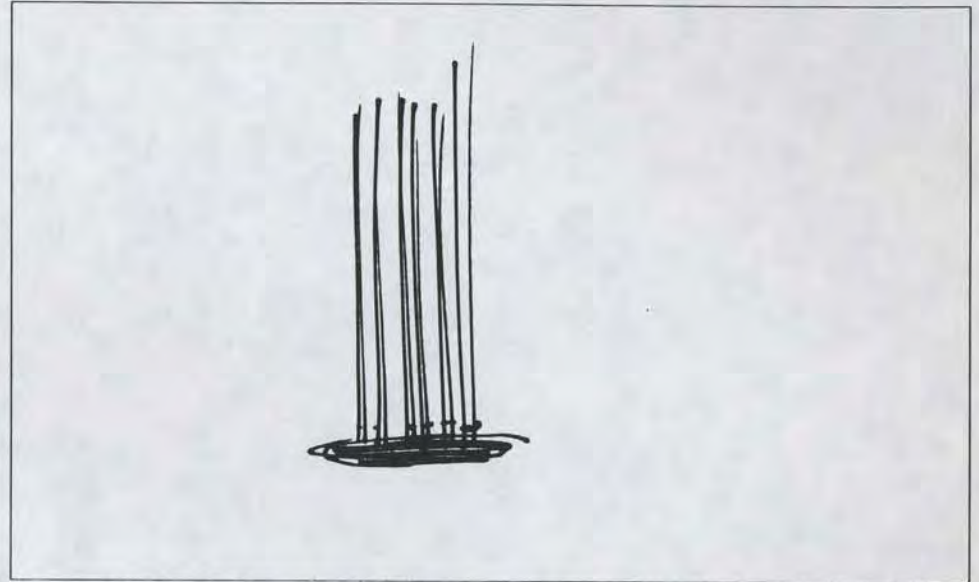
a Bobier print.



aperture on the work. His stint at graduate school in industrial Windsor is also important: it is likely that immersion the materials of industrial Windsor led to Bobier's reflections on the dead industrial base of Sackville, New Brunswick (former home of the Enterprise and Fawcett businesses; current home to a revitalized art department and gallery at Mount Allison University).

There is a story about one of his pieces owned by fellow Sackville artist Terry Graff. It was installed in Graff's house; he sold the house, but the new owners assumed the work was part of the home's heating system and did not want Graff to remove it. Sources for Bobier's works exist in old heating machines depicted in his collection of found photographs of Sackville's industrial product lines. It should not be news to anyone that most contemporary homeowners understand nothing about the systems that animate the building systems in their houses. It is important, I think, when seeing Bobier's work in an art gallery, to imagine the richness some of the pieces can take on in a domestic (site-specific) environment. Many of them could almost disappear in the vent-hung basements of many suburbs.

Like the marine artist who would rather be sailing, Bobier gives one the impression that tinkering in the garage like somebody's dad is at least as amusing as being an artist: this is what we should keep in mind - how wonderfully bizarre his work can be if we forget that it is made by an artist/academic conscious of the latest crises in machine-art: that makes for whimsical viewing ■





## ALEX LIVINGSTON, 1988

Alex Livingston did not show flower pictures because it was Spring in Nova Scotia.

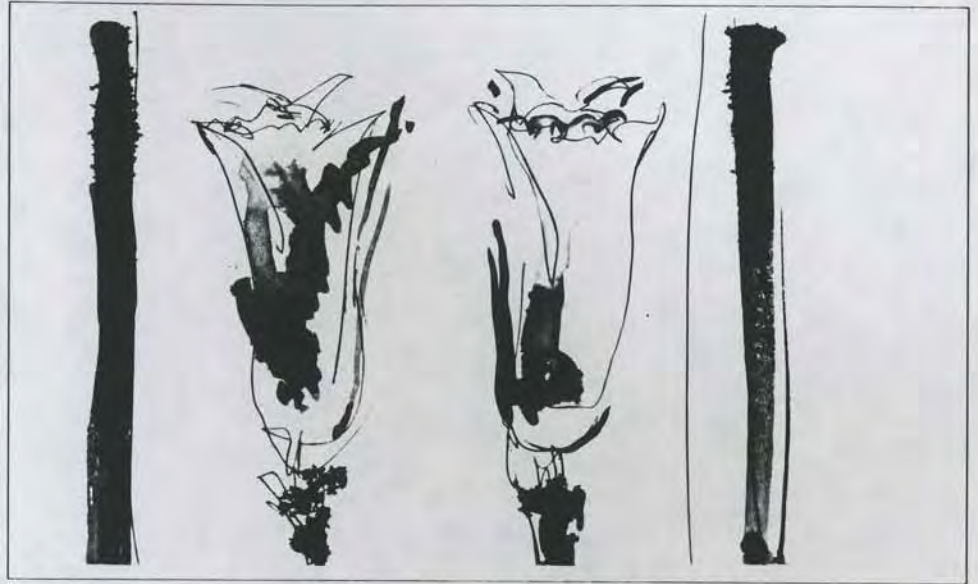
Comments like "pleasure", "inspiring", "soothing", "sensual", "compelling", "beautiful", "seductive", and "evocative" decorated Eye Level Gallery's visitor-book. Alex Livingston's recent exhibition may have been unusual for the wrong reasons. When exactly did parallel gallery exhibitions begin to get responses like these?

Few artists paint monumental flower pictures these days; one has to rummage the bin to come up with Monet, Matisse, Abstract Expressionist derivations...Flora painters on the contemporary Nova Scotia scene like Roger Savage, Joy Laking, Anna Syperek and Vicky Golling-MacLean (all of whom displayed flower paintings recently at Lyghtesome Gallery in Antigonish) do not work at Livingston's scale.

In a spiteful local art scene, Alex Livingston's work has been praised and validated by diverse factions: he teaches at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (academic credibility), his work has appeared on the cover of an edition of Halifax's *White Pages*, (public acceptability), he recently came out on top in a corporate art competition (corporate OK), his work has toured the country in an exhibition (*Innova*) sponsored by Lavalin (another corporate kudo), and he has been described as the among the best of the area's brushy expressionists by Charlotte Townsend-Gault (critical acceptance).

In this exhibition there are seven oil paintings which include images of tulip-like flowers (described as hybrid tulip/daffodils by the artist), intertwined stems and buds, and blossoms that look like trumpets (trumpets reminiscent of Looney Tunes cartoons). Six are installed without labels; one painting is identified as being owned by a Halifax development company, the builders of Purdy's Wharf, a downtown high-rise. The Purdy's Wharf competition encouraged artists to work out a visual idea about a proposed sister building to the existing Purdy's Wharf; Livingston won with an image of two hybrid tulip plants in a painting which is included in this exhibition.

One set of paint-plant stems in this show are intertwined like the lines of a Celtic manuscript illumination. Some of the flowering plants have various-coloured halos; in one or two, the patches of paint look arbitrary in colour, but somehow right as structural anchors. Everywhere, paint is generously dolloped on.





Livingston is straightforward about the seductive nature of his work. Any guilt associated with generous, hedonistic painting, the suggestion of moral laxity, associations with idolatry - all that Calvinist Christian stuff - is absent. He is aware of the difficulty in making credible flower paintings, of bringing something new to the effort - the problem of investing new significance into certain subject matter. So much imagery has been "devalued", according to Livingston.

Except for one painting of blue-striped intertwined stems and blooms (reproduced on the exhibition mailer), the paintings did not begin in preparatory drawings: the blue-bells painting did look less worked over than the others. The decision making of paintings in progress was plainly visible in the work. Livingston fought for images without a "surface" being the goal, he says. This claim is puzzling.

"I don't try to achieve an end product/surface...I'd be quite happy to let the painting stop at any point if it worked," he says.

Since art school, Livingston has been interested in gardens, the image of a mythical garden as a place of repose and delight - a visual idea a viewer might associate with Matisse, or the sensibility of the gardens at Versailles: part of the traditional iconography of the idle or ruling rich. Livingston feels these *Vista* paintings, as he calls them, express a jaded nostalgia associated with a certain class or group sensibility.

Study at the NSCAD with English/Canadian painter John Clark seems important to Livingston's work. Clark participated in a reintroduction of lush, big figure painting at NSCAD in the late '70s and early '80s, a period experienced by art students as an ideological glass-bead game involving faculty like Benjamin Buchloh, Krzysztof Wodiczko, Bruce Barber (committed to socio/critical work) and a group of painters including (roughly) John Clark, Ron Shuebrook and Judith Mann (this overview is too simple and symmetrical - I am describing only one of many features of the college's intellectual life at the time.)

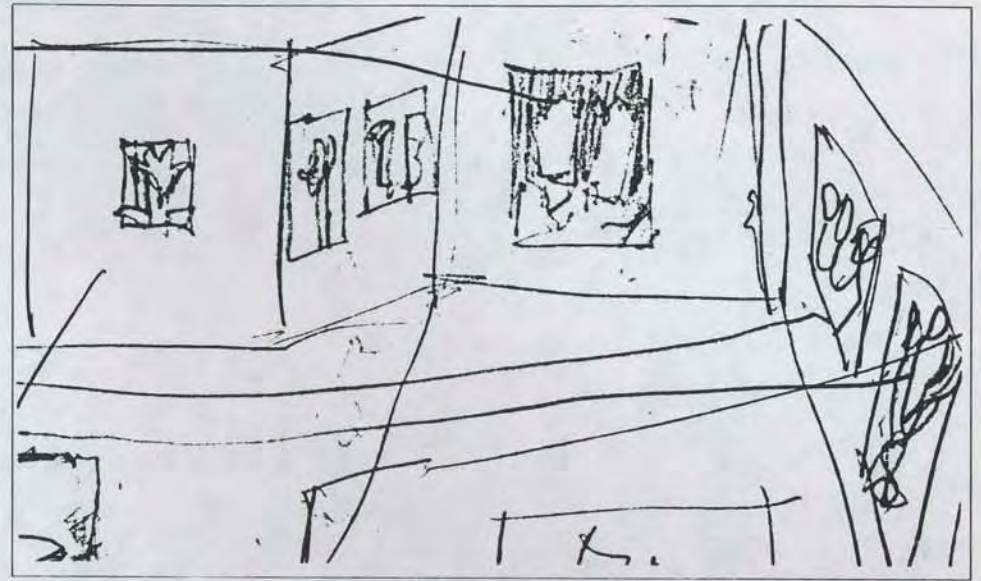
Within an art world revival of expressionism, NSCAD painters like Clark and students like Livingston consciously distanced themselves from a developing expressionistic trend, despite apparent morphological or procedural correspondences: the Buchloh faction, as might be anticipated, condemned the painting revival outright, no doubt seeing Clark and his compatriots as another colonial variation on a new and regressive international style.





The buzz around the painting studio, fluently articulated by Clark, was negative on neo-expressionism. It was seen to be less a revival of painting than a take over of painting by conceptual art. Also, it seemed to Clark and others that neo-expressionists were not interested in the structure of painting but only the imagery and subject matter. As Clark described it (and who could disagree) there was a strange mixture of obsessive attitudes and stylistic detachment in neo-expressionism, particularly in the German painters: obsessiveness was almost being used as a system, but with an ironical distance in the work. The attitude of neo-expressionists seemed to reflect a strategy designed to fill the work up with meaning.

The NSCAD painters related better to an earlier generation of artists like Hartley, Guston and Avery, and with British painters like Auerbach and Hodgkin. In conversation, Clark has referred to Schnabel's work as having a "theatrical surface like [the cartoonist] Ralph Steadman". Livingston's remark about "not going after a surface" becomes more intelligible. As painting reverts to a position in contemporary art as one medium among many, confusion about surfaces which look - superficially, is that possible? - like each other will recede, and artists like Livingston and Clark will be assessed with greater seriousness. Livingston, Clark, and others may well be pulling off the project of a reinvestment of devalued imagery, but it is ironic that a decade of neo-expressionism in painting may have inhibited the effort ■





## ROBERT POPE, 1988

Saint Mary's University Art Gallery is a large box-like space - a difficult space to fill, especially for smaller scale art like Pope's. The artist loaded the space with images.

The painting is thin, watercolour thin acrylic applied without the technical capability of an artist trained as a watercolourist (Nova Scotian Roger Savage, for example).

Forms are blocked out in pencil after small studies based on photographs and other material, and "filled in" with paint, which never gets thick enough to assert much materiality. The technique might be called "deadpan acrylic", where the application of acrylic washes is perfunctory and literal. Look elsewhere for work that expresses the joy of painting.

Pope's small studies make one wonder whether the paintings are "presentation paintings", with edges made clean and compositions resolved so they look finished. They seem to have been made with an excessive concern for legibility. If everything is in the studies (studies made with a much more sophisticated attitude to texture, among other things, than the finished work) why make the larger works? I think Pope feels illustrational legibility is important: that the wider audience he seeks for his work needs a highly coded presentation for efficient viewing. I think that the energy used to fill in these paintings is busy-work, and that everything required for a deep appreciation of Pope's oeuvre is shown in the studies. Making these academic machines is unnecessary (I am speaking out of a love for things closer to the creative process, as if the most economic thing is best.) Many works seem destined for publication, to occupy the world of novels as allusive illustrations. The exhibition is not meant to survive as installation art intact, obviously, since individual paintings are available for sale: as installation art, this work will likely never be seen again after its Maritime tour. The large *velox* excerpts from Smart's novel shown amidst the paintings will become stranded after the show - they'll become odd, floating texts (not so the paintings, I suspect.)

The paintings set up dramatic scenes, like movie stills, or like academic history painting, where the significant moment before some action is depicted. In a painting like *Addiction*, 1988, a female face stares through stems and flowers like a perfume ad: several works look like advertisements in women's magazines (without the slightest hint that the artist is being critical of such conventional imagery: I think Pope is interested in something tragic or even epic, and not in visual/critical analysis).



Other paintings hint around aspects of pathos, tension or, as in *Butterfly*, straightforward sentimentality. In *High*, 1988, shown in the exhibition catalogue, a couple dances slowly on the edge of a cliff, the woman's heel flirts with the edge - one is encouraged to see a story as a visual thing, cut off at the edges of the painting - we can't really go further than that without getting poetic ourselves: Pope's work is vague enough in its insinuation of fear, longing or sadness to speak of it as poetry, as being "literary".

It seems fitting that Pope chose Robin Metcalfe to write an introduction. Metcalfe is able to keep the terms of the exhibition in a literary realm (if such a realm really exists) consistent with the coming to grips of one work of art by another. Metcalfe engages Pope's painting as Pope engages Smart's poetic novel *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept* but more prosaically, as befits a catalogue.

I think Pope should avoid mawkish sentimentality and get a better grasp on a technical means. Nevertheless, he has made a few images that are difficult to forget and that is a rare trick ■

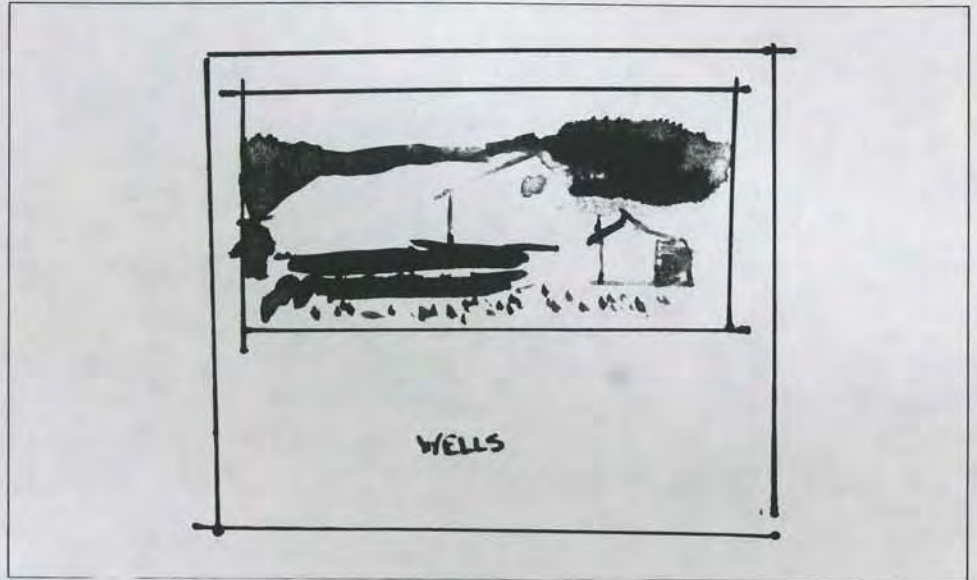


## DON GILL, 1989

*Sites of Production* plays on a cruel irony. Very few of the black-and-white photographs taken by Gill for this series of panoramic and 35 mm prints depict sites for any kind of production other than nostalgia in tourists. The work develops a poetics of abandoned sites, vacant lots, busted sternwheelers, city edges, industrial and mining sites, abandoned prisons (hardly a site of "production" strictly speaking) and wasted landscapes.

Gill has a quiet moment with his camera before the ruins of outdated things (most sites seem "outdated" as opposed to "historical"). Like a hometown historian, Gill has anecdotes for every photograph. Literal narratives are not spelled out in text anywhere in the work itself, but are located like a puzzle in the stranded place-name titles Gill presses into the blank matt under a photograph. The labelling has a hand-punched look, a roughness just short of slick which suggests a signature. Gill's titles become an irritating edge to slick surfaces.

Gill confronts the testy relationship we have to abandoned sites - the middle-class tourist's moral ambivalence and anxiety about fluctuating property values. The work also has associations with Romantic cult-of-ruins thinking: in the landscape projects of Walpole, the watercolours of an early Turner, and certain of Fuseli's drawings (to name some high-flown examples), the ruin was meant to inspire the imponderable glories of Rome and Greece. Of course, the nostalgia (quite a different sentiment) generated by the abandoned mining town is of a different order. In Gill's work, these forlorn spots are emblems of the fits-and-starts capitalism of a resource-based economy - as relevant to Canadian east-coast fisheries as west-coast mining ■





## HICK VRS. SLICK, 1989

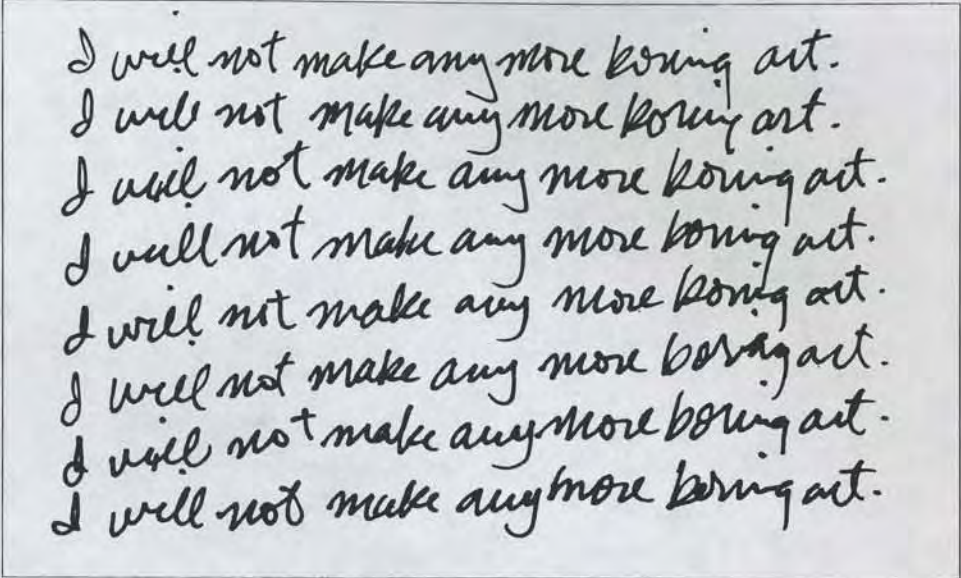
NSCAD faculty chose to celebrate their school's anniversary in 1987 with picket line struggle for unionization and better pay. What began in the late '60s as Garry Neill Kennedy's admittedly contradictory idea about an art college institutionalizing constant change came full circle in a strike by NSCAD's Faculty Union, which opposed and opposes constant change of staff (one ex-NSCAD administrator privately calls the recently-created FUNSCAD a "yuppy" union, which encourages fine art students to think that there are jobs waiting for them in the art world.)

Early on, *I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art* insinuates an idea about local down-to-earth art practice, represented by artists like Dorothy Ellis-Jackson, an anatomy teacher fired by in Kennedy 1967-8, which opposed (an continues to oppose?) an "American" avant-garde take-over. In an interview, Nova Scotian artist and NSCAD alumnus Ian Murray defends the College against accusations of colonialism. Despite Murray's clarification, the film seems to ride on an undercurrent of mistrust of contemporary artists and practice as if the stuff were a virus from outer space. Through film and video clips, and excerpts from more recent events like the last *Documenta*, *Boring Art's* attitude seems to be mildly xenophobic, even at times philistine in its quick takes on art world odd-balls.

Film maker Bill MacGillivray follows a culture of alien names through the turbulent years, the late '60s to early '80s, of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. The names are impressive.

The film introduces, interviews, or makes reference to: Joseph Beuys, Michael Snow, David Askevold, Dan Graham, Krzysztof Wodiczko, Joseph Kosuth, Les Levine, Eric Fischl, Dara Birnbaum, Robert Frank, etc. etc. all of whom visited or taught at the College. Many of these artists were able to exhibit and even make work such as a print or video tape while at the college: artists like Joyce Weiland chose to make a print, Claes Oldenberg's project turned into a book, Dan Graham made historically important video tapes. Visitors did not pass through as quickly as they might other art colleges, they stuck around long enough to get a little work done, or have their first solo exhibition.

There are many amusing moments in this film: there is a circa-'60s video clip of Joseph Kosuth in sunglasses, chewing gum and babbling about art like a teenager on acid. (For kicks, read Kosuth's "Art after Philosophy" again after you've seen the film.) Receiving an honorary degree, Joseph Beuys begins an acceptance speech after thanking almost everything: "I endeavour not to throw



I will not make any more boring art.  
I will not make any more boring art.  
I will not make any more boring art.  
I will not make any more boring art.  
I will not make any more boring art.  
I will not make any more boring art.  
I will not make any more boring art.  
I will not make any more boring art.



the dollop of fat on the table..." Richard Demarco, Scottish art impresario, rambles hysterically about NSCAD's "one brief shining moment..."

David Askevold's description of his 1973 Projects class is amusing. Doug Huebner proposed that students set up an imaginary art school. Ads were taken out in *Artforum* magazine, with famous faculty members listed: Frank Stella's lawyer followed up the ad with a threatening letter.

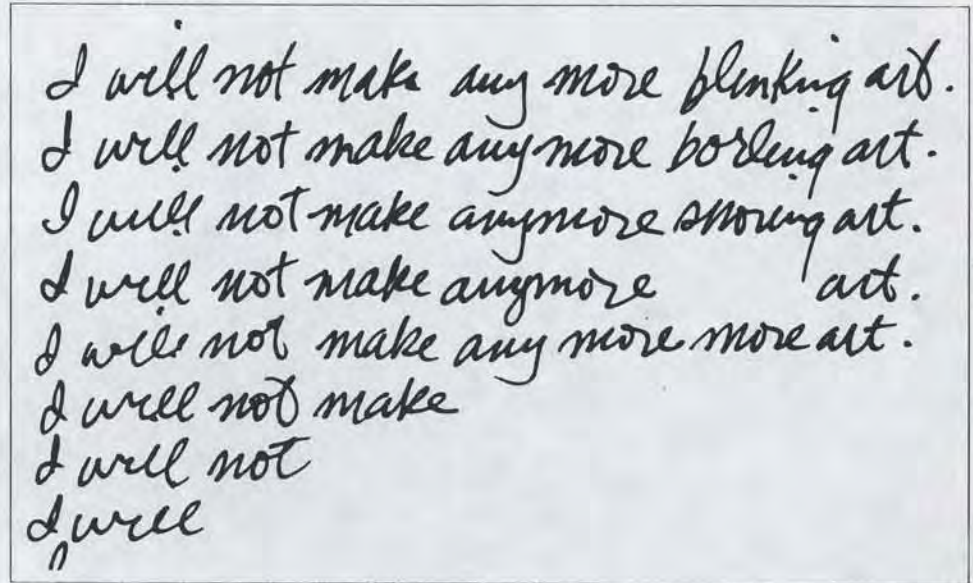
Director MacGillivray mixes up goofy shenanigans with serious '60s art, incongruously at times. Sometimes the film seems not to take humour seriously. Situations which grew out of Askevold's projects class developed a pedagogical method which got artists together with students to make work. John Baldessari's piece "I will not make any more boring art," the film's namesake, was originally a proposal for a show at the College's Mezzanine Gallery: the installation was produced by students with instructions for writing the sentence over and over on gallery walls. The circulation of the work through stages and participants dovetailed with late '60s thinking about the distribution and fabrication of art.

Unposed questions simmer as the lives of successful artists flit across the screen: Why have things tightened up so much in the art world? The atmosphere at the college during the *Boring Art* years was anything but jovial, but the seriousness was tempered by an attitude of acceptance of non-traditional media and new ideas. Why do Garry Kennedy and Les Levine (for different reasons) characterize NSCAD's heroic years and administration as being "conservative"? The characterization is false.

Certainly many of the artists profiled in this film deserve attention, but at what price? Some of the unspoken resentment of MacGillivray's look at the art college may be simple frustration at having to pay attention to the art stars who seem so remote. Because the art-world is little-known outside its own circles, *Boring Art* must spend most of its time speaking about Joseph Beuys *et al* or else (film backers must believe) its potential audience will be severely limited.

Left out of the patchwork of '60s survivors is the daily life of an art institution, the boring truth of the film's subject. This daily life is not often very interesting. Gerald Ferguson, Garry Kennedy's partner/key-player at NSCAD (who refused to be interviewed on camera for the film) tells me flatly that the film focuses on "extracurricular" activity by the time peripheral art world figures. This work happened at night and on weekends. Meanwhile, ordinary art college activities droned along.

MacGillivray could not have included everything in his film, and video/film works are obviously going to easier to include than illustrations of paintings (evidenced in the Eric Fischl interview conducted in front of one of his



I will not make any more blinking art.  
I will not make any more boring art.  
I will not make anymore showing art.  
I will not make anymore art.  
I will not make any more more art.  
I will not make  
I will not  
I will

paintings: grainy student video tape excerpts were easier to experience.) Daniel Buren, Martha Rosler, Alan Sekula, Benjamin Buchloh, Dennis Young, Charlotte Townsend and most glaringly, Gerald Ferguson were absent or quickly passed over, affirming an idea a viewer might have been nurturing about the film's off-hand treatment of some NSCAD characters: none of these people could have been portrayed as flakes.

MacGillivray's *Night Classes* can be seen as a visual pendant to *Boring Art*. *Night Classes* is a fictional account of a young Cape Breton mother's introduction to art school (NSCAD) life. In both films MacGillivray displays ambivalence about his *alma mater*. NSCAD is the art world in Nova Scotia: nobody has made significant art here who does not have some connection to the college (Alex Colville, perhaps?). MacGillivray knows this, but perhaps feels that his generation of artists, as Nova Scotia's first home-grown cosmopolitans, wilt in the shadow of NSCAD's past.

Nonsense: the hick-versus-slick art college dichotomy hinted at in these films is an unnecessary expression of insecurity. MacGillivray's sentiment is understandable, but he shouldn't let his intimidation show ■



## ALAN HARDING MACKAY WITH CHARLOTTE TOWNSEND-GAULT, 1989

The politics of personality and art-world authority figure heavily in MacKay's long brown paper painting of Canadian art-world characters. This enormous work was made by a curator and painter who is himself a figure of authority in the Canadian art world - someone to be reckoned with.

The curator of the exhibition eschewed the traditional role of a curator as a slightly distanced chooser of work. Townsend-Gault collaborated in making the work, the exhibition, and the catalogue.

The portrayal of art world authorities (see below) in the painting begs interesting questions about Canada's art patronage system.

Curatorial projects are always collaborations among artists and curators. Charlotte Townsend-Gault and Alan Harding MacKay make this situation plain. MacKay painted a ribbon of Canadian Art world personalities "a tracing of my own contacts" he says, "a slice of the fabric" of the Canadian art world. As an enlightened patron and a knowledgeable friend, Townsend-Gault collaborated with comments, suggestions and encouragement while writing the exhibition's catalogue text.

MacKay traces his own path through the art world as an artist and administrator, which has recently lead him to a double career as director of Toronto's Power Plant and as an established painter. Townsend-Gault and MacKay knew from the beginning that their project was a portrait project; they developed it out of correspondence and meetings throughout MacKay's years in Switzerland and Canada.

The faces of the Canadian art world were chosen by virtue of "their recognized authority". The figures are "critical countenances" because "what they countenance is what counts as art in this country today". Also, says Townsend-Gault (catalogue, p.55): "It reflects a mainstream, centrist, still essentially WASP establishment."

MacKay considers everyone he has painted in his trans-Canada scroll a peer: Michael Snow, Brenda Wallace, Bruce Parsons, Max Dean, Alan Wood, Melvin Charney, Joan Borsa, Mira Godard, Dennis Reid, Edythe Goodridge, Alf Bogusky, Doris Shadbolt, Liz Magor, Gerald Ferguson, Ian Wallace, Carroll Moppett, Diana Nemiroff, Eric Fischl, Doug Bentham, Mark Holton, Jeff Spalding, David Craig, etc. Hundreds of face-feet worth of comfortably





powerful art figures are displayed.

It is debatable whether the MacKay/Townsend-Gault project constitutes a variety of official portraiture (obviously, it has not been commissioned). Nevertheless, we have a wealth of imagery with which to compare and contrast *Some Critical Countenances*.

As a slightly off-the-wall example, some Elizabethan court portraits position a tiny face on top of an extraordinary body of raiment - a raiment of authority. By contrast, MacKay shows wisps of clothing around enormous faces (most often wisps of the small-"a" academic tradition of bad dressing which gives away the sitters' connections to the rumpled authority of The Professor).

Fantin-Latour's 19th Century portraits of his artist and critic friends, including Manet, Baudelaire, etc. might be a more fitting comparison, since the paintings were made as self-conscious promotional pieces, although it could be argued that MacKay's painting is hardly any more a vehicle of personal self-promotion than any other exhibition - the work does not have the same sense of ideological coherence as Fantin-Latour, who was a propagandist against a much more clearly defined establishment.

The determination of the sequence of characters in his frieze was random, so we cannot read a left-to-right sequence of the most or least powerful people, or a west-to-east layout: some of the paintings-within-a-painting were false starts, abandoned half-finished. All were made in an illustrative style based on projected slides, and painted in cramped conditions; there could have been others included who were not included, but a natural time limit on the project was forced by the upcoming date at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.

The work suggests a panopticon of bureaucratic personalities supervising art production with a small "g" gaze. MacKay and Townsend-Gault look at the faces, the faces look at grant applications, the faces look at the pictures they produce, their neighbours, the absent others, the camera...

Townsend-Gault's 1988 *Art History* article "Symbolic Facades: Official Portraits In British Institutions Since 1920" prefigures issues of the MacKay/Townsend-Gault collaboration: "The portraits are controlled, at all stages of their realisation, by the institution..." (*Art History*, Dec. 1988, p.512) and "...within the specific institutional context for which they were intended and to which all contribute, they endorse it; without, they lose their power, their meaning." (p.514)





In order to justify the claim that these portraits should be seen as images of social control rather than of individuals, it is suggested that certain aspects of the history of portraiture, psychology, body language and reception have survived in an attenuated or re-contextualized form in the genre. They are the conventions, observed by the artists and expected by the endorsing institution to symbolise its explicit attributes and implicit ideology.

The conventions of official portraiture discussed by Townsend-Gault in her essay on the British tradition suggests directions for assessment of the MacKay/Townsend-Gault project. The weight of history and tradition and authority have not had much of an opportunity to bear down too heavily on most of the faces portrayed by MacKay. Also, we are looking at a set of institutions in Canada - and a society - which has an ambivalence about figures of authority. Across MacKay's panorama, few figures demand unequivocal acknowledgement as embodiments of spiritual authority - most would themselves straightaway deny many of the positions of authority we think they have. Do any of the people depicted in this work have more power over a "community" than a successful car dealer has over his? I doubt it. But however small the authority, beware its object.

Again, the informality of these paintings as official portraits of movers and shakers in the Canadian art world tells us something about the general informality, or perhaps the ideology of informality, under which we operate. Every one of these people is a bureaucrat of some sort (I like to use this word in a very positive way.)

MacKay has supplied the face to the faceless bureaucrat in the form of the giant face of a mother hovering over her child, or the big spectacle face given the movie-goer in the darkened theatre, or (more appropriately) the faces of negotiation at close quarters in which art world people schmooze: one can imagine these faces exchanging politics across a desk (at which artists can be on either side.) This knowledge - the knowledge of the face - is invaluable to the supplicant in a bureaucratic system: as you enter the lobby of the funding agency, or the gallery, or as you approach the loft of the artist, or the favourite bar of the gallery worker, you must have a clear idea about the authority of the signature of the person you are approaching, and a clear idea about what they look like, so as not to confuse them with a similarly-clad bicycle courier. We know that the bicycle courier may be an artist, that the curator may also be a critic, that the curator/critic can be the artist, that the art-applicant may become the authority (we get this in remembrance of the past lives of some of the artists shown in the work: they too had to struggle through the system, several struggle still). Identities are slippery things in the art world ■





## TANTRAMAR CITY CONTEMPORARY PAINTING BY MOUNT ALLISON ASSOCIATES, 1989

Proposing that almost all contemporary North American art schools encourage "pluralism" is another way of saying that they are homogenous, that one art school's curriculum is just as good as another's.

So if this exhibition demonstrates, as we think it does, that art from Mount Allison is as pluralistic and multi-faceted as anywhere else in Canada, setting right in the process the persistent misconceptions of many visiting curators, critics, artists and members of the public, should that news be welcomed by art professionals and educators across the country? Mount Allison, the school which instituted the first Bachelor of Fine Arts degree programme in the country, has lately come to see itself as just one more department within an international fine art system.

It has been many years since Mount Allison art moved out of its academic grove of ivy-covered stone buildings and into the wilds of an urban sensibility. There has scarcely been any contemporary art medium or technique left unexplored by Mount Allison associates over the past twenty years. The production of video, sculpture, holography (holography by Dinsmore), painting of every style, performance, sound sculpture (Richard Struan Robertson, for example) and even television (by Bill Langstroth of Don Messer's Jubilee and Anne Murray fame, and Dianne Bos, a rock/video artist and photographer) has proliferated against a perceived tradition of autonomous painting developed in the middle years of this century within Mount Allison's ivy-league ambience according to certain standards of excellence in realist painting.<sup>1</sup>

Christopher Pratt's term "Atlantic Realists"<sup>2</sup> is most useful as a catch-all for the significant coterie of Mount Allison painters associated with a tradition which clings like velcro to Mount Allison's name. However, this group is not really a coherent movement, but a collection of artistic loners which includes Alex Colville, perhaps Canada's best known artist.<sup>3</sup>

To date, no critic has dealt straightforwardly with the media life of Atlantic Realist work. Aside from photography and the movies, which filter all mass-media images, painting is the ultimate mass-media art. Its images are grasped quickly, they are illusionistically reproduced in a number of ways, and amongst all the arts painting is most strongly linked to a prevalent Western myth of the artist as a Romantic struggler who produces unique, valuable objects with auratic power.



*Colville.*



Technically, the small-stroke articulation of a Colville painting, the smooth gradation of surface in the work of Christopher Pratt and Mary Pratt, and the dry-brush and /or egg tempera technique of Forrestall, Tolmie, and Hugh MacKenzie and D.P. Brown results most often in a flat, matt, often smallish-scale image which is easily photographed. Often, the image has graphic contrast, and is composed in a way which makes it suitable for reproduction by the half-tone dot of offset printing. These points are worth mentioning, because an ease of assimilation into print is a technical requirement of the mass-media fulfilled very well by Atlantic Realist painting. Sentimentality, nostalgia, banality, and theatricality are also "technical" requirements of mass-media images, and Atlantic Realism often meets mass-media's agenda of entertainment and diversion more than halfway.

As noted below in comments by Mary Pratt and Ken Tolmie about their years at Mount Allison, the Atlantic Realist era grew out of rural roots. Of importance to the success of Atlantic Realism, however, is its satisfaction of the needs of urban people. Evidence of the Atlantic Realist rural sensibility taking over the big city can be seen in Toronto's Mira Godard Gallery, which represents or has represented most of the important Atlantic Realist artists.

The contemporary Mount Allison scene is now almost exclusively composed of urban artists, sometimes refugees from city life, who address urban issues. The only rural connection for many of these artists is the backdrop of the New Brunswick countryside around Mount Allison University.

### Current Painting

With the advent of the Mount Allison art administration of the '70s (directed by Lawren P. Harris, 1946-1975, and then Virgil G. Hammock, 1975 - present) the characterization "excellence" in painting might be said to have been subsumed within the terms "eclecticism" or "pluralism" in art.<sup>4</sup> Understandably, perhaps, the current art faculty is ambivalent about making a formal declaration of independence from the Atlantic Realist School, if only because a pluralistic art school should have no interest (if it admires philosophical consistency) in denying or promoting any particular painting style.

The current regime encourages an eclecticism not only within painting, but also in and among other media. Before the '70s, the painting department was "eclectic" within an older realism/abstraction dichotomy in the work and direction of staff like Lawren Harris, who ranged freely among painting styles, and in Alex Colville, who did not promote his own painting style in classes. Later, a spirit of eclecticism was at work in the appointment of faculty like video artist Colin Campbell (1969-1973), abstract painter Harold Feist (1975-



Feist



1979) and curator Chris Youngs (1973-1976).

As director of the Owens, Youngs was a force along with Barbara Sternberg and Dyana Werden in the creation of what eventually became Sackville's parallel space, Struts Gallery. Like other "alternative" Canada Council-funded galleries, Struts encourages intermedia work and experimental art.

More recently, the art department at Mount Allison has strengthened its ties with the art community surrounding the Université de Moncton, and this cross-fertilization has made the Sackville/Moncton area an artistic microcosm of Canada's Two Solitudes - except that in New Brunswick, the two solitudes talk to each other, visit each other, and show with each other. Moncton is only a few kilometres away, and the Moncton/Sackville extended community has existed in its present form only since the first generation of Acadian artists graduated from the Université de Moncton.

The Mount Allison/Moncton axis has become "Tantramar City", a place which admits influences of all kinds, and which, however small, is developing the character of an urban centre.

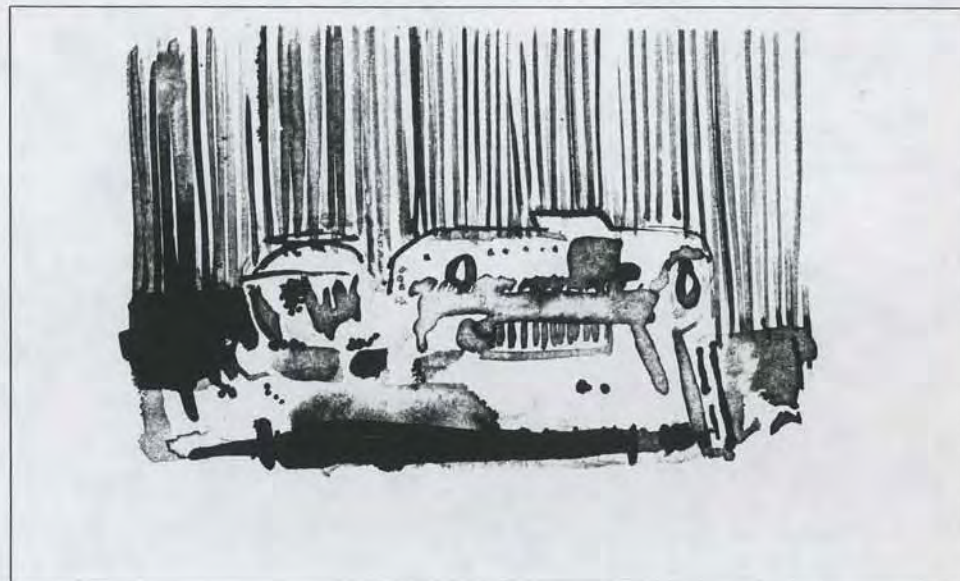
## The Painters

At the time of the compilation of this exhibition, we chose painting by current faculty and staff members (slightly expanding our definition of painting to include prints and photographs) including: Virgil Hammock, Rebecca Burke, Tom Henderson, Barrie Szekely, David Bobier, David Silverberg, Thaddeus Holownia, and Dan Steeves.<sup>5</sup>

Past Faculty members (who paint) included in the exhibition are Harold Feist, Lawren Harris, Alex Colville and Ted Pulford.

Former students whose work is included as painting are Dianne Bos, Sydney Dinsmore, Evergon, Tom Forrestall, Paul Miller, Michael Coyne, Susan Wood, Don Pentz, Roger Savage, Christopher Pratt, Mary Pratt, D.P. Brown, and Ken Tolmie.

David Bobier (current faculty) - There is a low-tech mechanized humour in prints by David Bobier, one of which is included in this exhibition. This humour also figures in his mechanized sculpture (also included). Machine aesthetics are practised by several local artists, including Sackville's Terry Graff, who often collaborates with Bobier, and Moncton's Luc A. Charette and Daniel Dugas. Sackville's abandoned manufacturing plants have provided material for the other Sackville artists, including sculptor Dennis Gill.



Forrestall



Dianne Bos (1979 graduate) - has been educational co-ordinator at the Power Plant Gallery at Harbourfront in Toronto since 1984. Although she majored in painting and sculpture while at Mount Allison, she became interested in pinhole photography (included in this exhibition). While at Mount Allison, Bos helped create one of the first punk bands on the east coast (called Italian Tv).

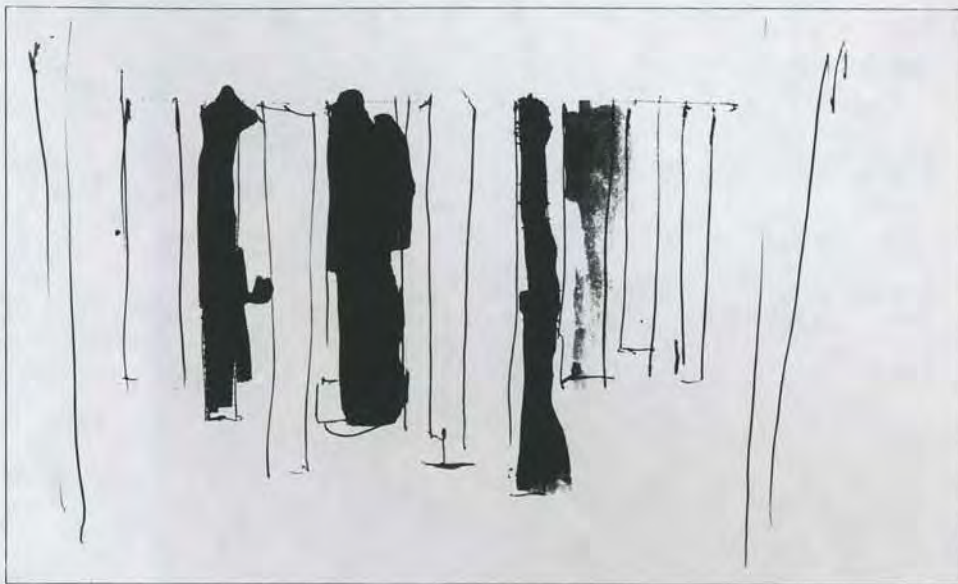
"Most of my music is inspired by strong visual images," she says.

D.P. Brown (1969 graduate) - a self-portrait from the Owens Art Gallery permanent collection. We have made a suite of self-portraits in this exhibition. A tradition at Mount Allison had graduating students donate a self-portrait to the Owens permanent collection (included are Edward Pulford's, Christopher Pratt's and Ken Tolmie's self-portraits). Several Mount Allison artists were prominently included in the *Hand Holding the Brush* travelling exhibition, curated by Robert Stacey in the early eighties, which examined Canadian self-portraits.

Rebecca Burke (current faculty) - Art history references abound in the recent large, juicy, expressionistic paintings of Rebecca Burke. Burke made a series of muscle-man cut-out paintings in the early '80s which mocked physical beauty cults. A recent stint in Paris produced paintings about mythology, which led to very recent work (one of these paintings is barely dry off the easel) referring to Picasso's classicizing period (as a starting point). In her large water-carriers painting, Burke seems to be taking herself through another stage in her exploration of classical imagery. Also included in the exhibition is *Noah Resting*, a slightly earlier foray into biblical mythology, produced during her extended visit to Paris.

Alex Colville (1942 graduate/faculty 1946-63) - Mount Allison's Fine Arts Department still attracts students who are interested in a generalized notion of realist painting, but too much can be made of this (it was pointed out to me some years ago by a Nova Scotia College of Art and Design administrator that often the only contemporary Canadian artist incoming NSCAD art students know is Colville). He has been referred to as the world's leading realist painter (by German critic Heinz Ohff among others), but unfortunately the literature on Colville is seldom challenging. To date, David Burnett's retrospective catalogue provides the best overview of his work, as well as summing up very neatly more general problems of realist and regional painting (see *Colville*, by Burnett, p.199).

Michael Coyne (1975 graduate) - Coyne takes "hackneyed" (his term) subjects like woodland scenes and makes brushy paintings in the fine line between



Harris.



"cliché and non-cliché". For Coyne, nature is a pivotal idea. Often he will work from a small photograph which is not blown up mechanically, but by hand. Sometimes he will make a painting out of square fragments of an image in a grid format. In the latter works, each passage is painted separately and the pieces are then put together to form a very large work. In his student days at Mount Allison, Coyne produced much different work which can be described as being "Atlantic Realist". He is currently chair of the Department of Visual Arts at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College in Corner Brook, Newfoundland part of Memorial University.

Sydney Dinsmore (1980 graduate) - was a co-founder and director of the Interference Hologram Gallery, and is currently curating an exhibition of holographic art called *Spring Light* at the Museum of Holography in New York. We have reproduced a Dinsmore hologram in this catalogue; however, she cautions that "There is a tremendous volume and a sensuality which cannot transcend a photographic representation [of a hologram]."

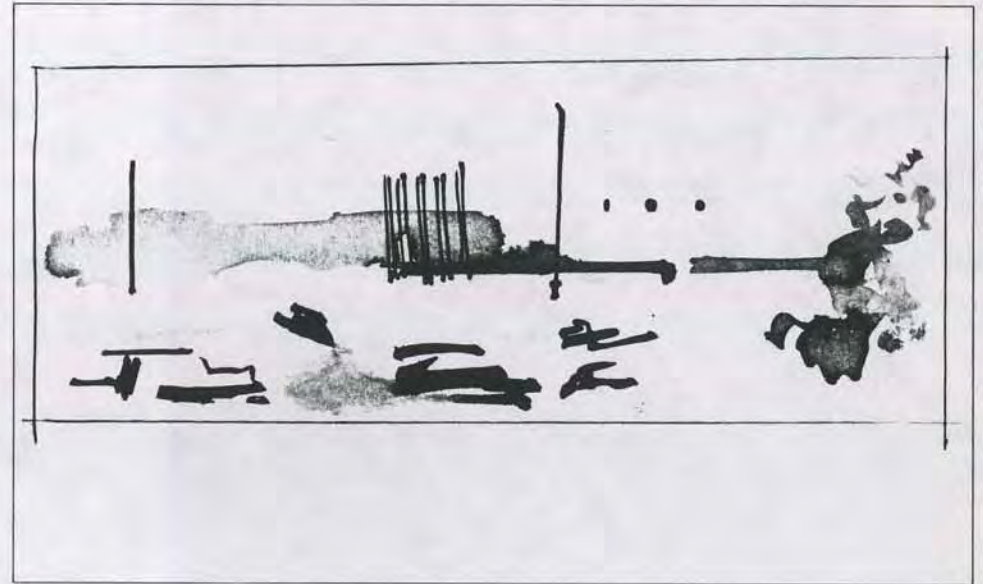
Evergon (1970 graduate) - Recently featured in a solo exhibition at the National Gallery, his images are almost exclusively based on references to the history of painting. Included in this exhibition are Evergon's colour polaroid photographs, witty and extravagant neo-Baroque homages to Delacroix.

Harold Feist (faculty 1975-79) - Feist's "mandala" (or "spoke" or "wheel") paintings - works associated with '60s and '70s colour painting - are currently on tour in a major retrospective organized by the Agnes Etherington Art Centre. Curator Karen Wilkin characterizes these '70s paintings as "...testimonials to his attempt to tread the boundary between rational geometry and unchannelled instinct, even unchannelled emotion." (*Harold Feist: Genesis of an Image* catalogue, p.19). We include one of Feist's paintings from the Owens collection.

Tom Forrestall (1958 graduate) - Forrestall's use of various shaped frames in his tempera paintings reads as a post-modern display of pure disjuncture - an aspect of his work which has never been tackled adequately by the critics. The fluidity and assurance of his watercolours is striking. Forrestall limits his palette to a tight range of subdued colours.

Virgil Hammock (current faculty) - Hammock once served in the American military in Korea, and these sunny portrayals of military men are ironic. In conversation Hammock relates his neo-primitivist style to Flemish primitives, but one also detects a Maritime Folk influence in these works.

Lawren P. Harris (faculty 1946-1975) - An interesting comparison can be made



*Hologram photograph.*



between Lawren Harris and another contemporary artist, the West German painter Gerhard Richter. Both artists range between abstract painting and the most convincing photographic realism. Harris' abstract work has a Bauhaus/European sense of scale (much more intimate than, say, American Minimalist abstraction). Examples of his realist portraits of Mount Allison academics may be seen in Mount Allison's Centennial Hall.

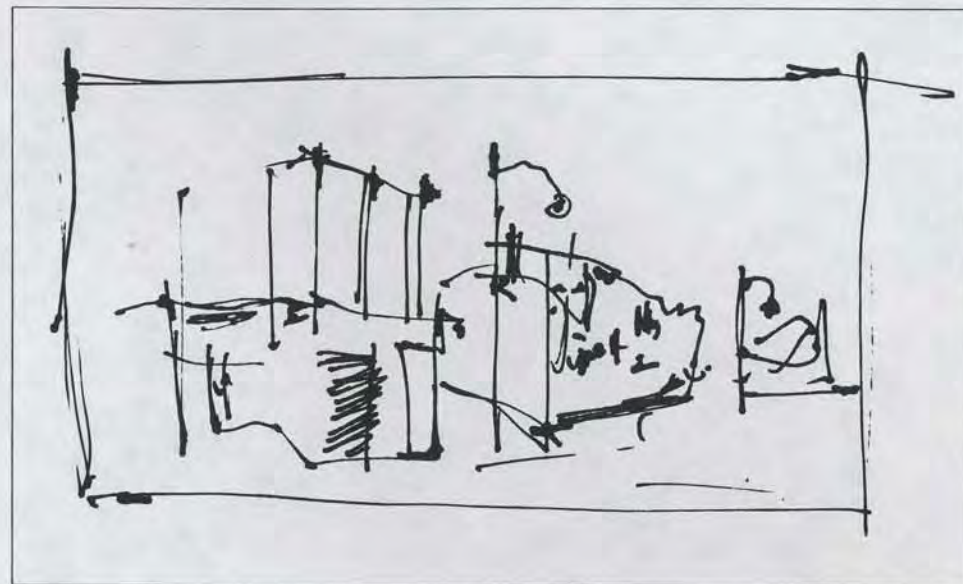
Tom Henderson (current faculty) - An Acadian influence may account for the visual alliances among certain of Hermenegilde Chiasson's assemblages and Henderson's work, and Yvon Gallant's painting and Henderson (mutual influences, no doubt). The loud, raucous humour in the Tom Henderson painting included in this exhibition is a relatively recent development. Henderson has also produced formalist sculpture which one can place solidly within a Late Modernist tradition.

Thaddeus Holownia (current) - Holownia's technically "perfect" photographs depend for part of their strength on resonances with the academic history of painting (see Evergon) and traditional high-art photographic technique. The dead-tech industrial references in the colour photographs in this exhibition can easily be made to relate to the work of several (see Bobier) Sackville/Moncton area artists. One of Holownia's photos was taken at the site of the defunct Trenton, Nova Scotia railroad car works. Like Sackville, this small town is a recent a victim of de-industrialisation. Holownia's *Aeolian Harp*, a wind sculpture, can be viewed in permanent installation at his home in Jolicure, just outside Sackville.

Paul Miller (1980 graduate) - Miller is a young neo-expressionist painter who at one time made accomplished, traditional watercolours. He is prolific, and his works, usually made in acrylic with collage, are huge. The painting in this exhibition has affinities with Anselm Keifer's thickly encrusted paintings. Like Rebecca Burke, Miller makes work that fits easily into the international mainstream of recent painting.

Donald Pentz (1966 graduate)- Donald Pentz, who is also a realist painter and illustrator, makes strong black, Motherwell-like abstract paintings, two of which are included in this exhibition. Other Pentz abstract paintings have the look of "simulacra" abstraction, a recent trend in which abstract painting uses as its referent other abstract painting.

Christopher Pratt (1961 graduate) - Robert Fulford, in a recent catalogue for Pratt's 49th Parallel exhibition in New York, makes a connection between Pratt's work and minimalist sculpture (e.g. Donald Judd) - a connection which seems inescapable. We include in this exhibition both studies and the finished



Christopher Pratt sketch.



painting of *Demolitions on the South Side*, which highlights Pratt's architectural/minimalist aesthetic. Alex Colville also bases his imagery on a careful geometry, which he makes into a kind of oracle out of which a painting emerges. Pratt, however, lets the geometry show in the final work. "Architectonic" is a word which seems to have been invented to describe Pratt's work.

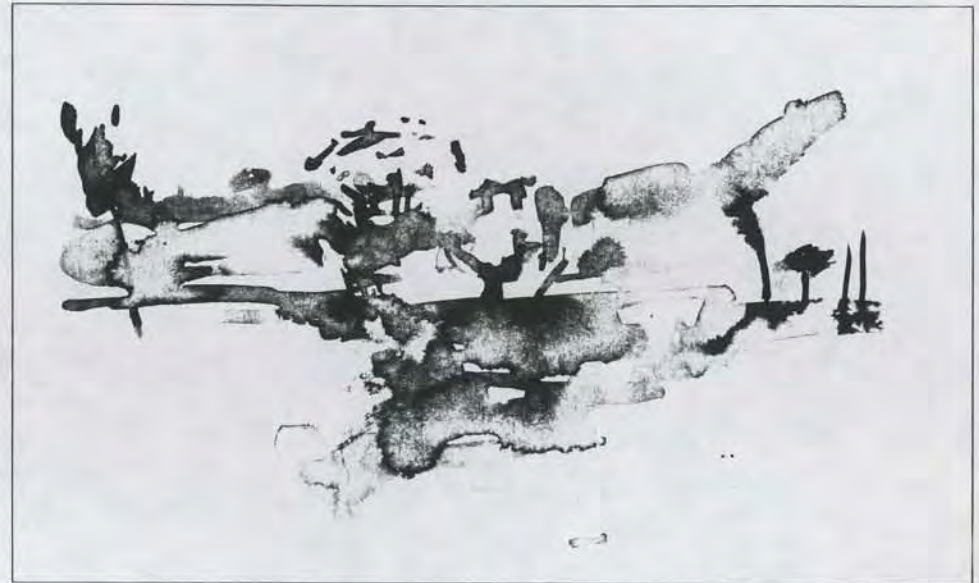
Mary Pratt (1961 graduate) - Pratt comments on her student years in the late '50s at Mount Allison (Kimber, 1983, CBC interview - see bibliography):

....all of us painted realistically and I don't know whether it was because we were from small places where we saw things in an immediate and precise way. If you go to a city the effect of the city on your mind is quite different I think than if you live in the country. And you have to deal with particular things over and over again. The big city has a rushing effect on you...You don't have this over and over looking at the same thing again and again and again perhaps that you do in a small place.

Edward Pulford (1947 graduate/ faculty 1949-80) - I disagree with Hartwell Daley, who once (*ArtsAtlantic*, Fall, 1980, p.29) characterized Pulford's relation to the geomorphology of the Atlantic region as "...so different... from the Prairies of his youth". There is something reminiscent of the prairies in the Tantramar Marshes of Sackville. Except at seaside, no where else in the Maritimes does one sense the raw, physical expanse of nature in quite the same way. Pulford's watercolours, like those of several of his pupils (e.g. Roger Savage and Alice Reed) relate to the English Romantic landscape tradition (he is a regular visitor to Wordsworth's Lake District). True to that tradition, Pulford's work operates somewhere between pre-photographic empirical notation (one thinks of Constable), and (as we read it today) a celebration of a threatened natural environment.

Roger Savage (1963 graduate) - We include a screen-print by Savage, a watercolourist and printmaker who lives on Nova Scotia's South Shore. Like Silverberg and Pulford, Savage ranges geographically far afield, often to the tropics, to make work. In the travel works of Silverberg and Savage (coincidentally) the palm tree signifies about as far away from the Tantramar Marshes as it is possible to get.

David Silverberg (current faculty) - Travelogue prints by David Silverberg show a technical handling inspired by art history's drawing masters. Silverberg is exclusively a printmaker who has nurtured two generations of students (e.g. Suezan Aikins) in this hermetic art.





Dan Steeves (1981 graduate) - Painter and printmaker Dan Steeves, who works as a technician in the Art Department's printmaking studio, made the print *Apokatalasses*, (1987) out of the personal trauma of his child's surgery. I read (perhaps ambitiously) in this empty crib a metaphorical summing up of the withering away of the Atlantic Realist attitude of the Romantic individual as artist.

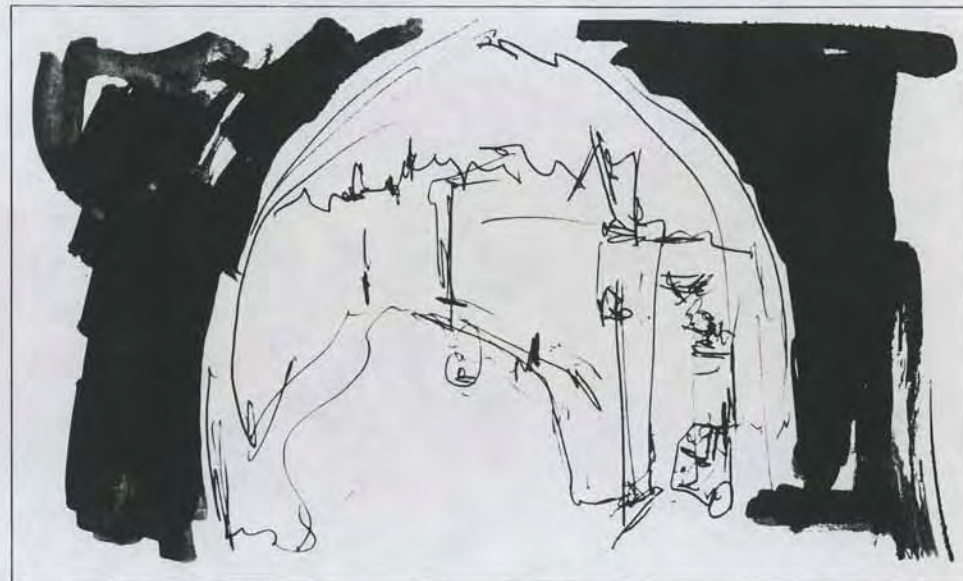
Barrie Szekely (faculty 1988-89) - A faculty replacement during a sabbatical leave, Szekely, who is said to have had an enormously positive influence on students, makes "floating signifier" (my term) paintings which look like semiotic puzzles: a branch here, a patch of a colour there...The work has a "new image" look, as if figurative bits have wandered onto the canvas in hopes of at some future date composing themselves into a landscape of some sort.

Ken Tolmie (1962 graduate) - Commenting on the rural backgrounds of the Atlantic Realist painters in 1983, (on the CBC) Tolmie said:

.....The mechanics simply made this occur at that particular time. And they were all from conservative set-ups. Tom Forrestall from the rural part of the Valley and from Dartmouth...How the hell are you going to get (an) abstractionist out of situations like that (?)....It would be natural to be a realist, just as it was natural for Colville himself to choose to be a realist having lived most of his life in the Maritimes.

His dry-brush watercolours of the recently completed *Bridgetown Series*, documented the people of a small Nova Scotia town, Tolmie recently moved to Toronto, where he is pursuing his documentary painting in Cabbagetown. We include a self-portrait from the Owens permanent collection.

Susan Wood (1976 graduate) - "*Devil's Purse* is a colloquial term for the empty egg case of the skate, often found on beaches tangled amongst seaweed....These works, while exploring the imagery of menstruation, incubation, and reproduction, are in no way a celebration of fecundity..." (Vita Plume, *Vanguard*, Nov. 1987, p.40). Woods' *Devil's Purse* series is evidence of drawing abilities developed during her student days through Mount Allison's emphasis on basic drawing skills. One thinks of Pam Hall and Marlene Creates as having fellow sensibilities among Woods' colleagues in Newfoundland. They share an interest in work which communicates the natural environment's weather-beaten edge. Some of Wood's work has the blood-and-soil feeling of the Joseph Beuys' work. [Note: since this essay was written, Wood has moved to Halifax, Nova Scotia - CE] ■



Silverberg.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the focus on "excellence" at Mount Allison is best exemplified by the 1961 Mount Allison Faculty Association's "committee on excellence", chaired by Alex Colville (see Reid, *Mount Allison University: A History II: 1914-1963 Vol. II 1914-1963*, pp. 336-337).

<sup>2</sup> Gemey Kelly's historical component of the exhibition is hung separately from the contemporary work. We have hung the contemporary portion of exhibition according to the shapes and forms and juxtapositions suggested by the work.

<sup>3</sup> There are realist painters among Mount Allison associates who do not quite fit into the category for various reasons, for example, E. Nancy Stevens, Hugh MacKenzie, Alice Reed, and others - artists who make representational, often narrative or anecdotal paintings in oil, watercolour, acrylic and egg tempera. Most associates of Mount Allison who paint have not been overly influenced by Alex Colville, who left the painting Faculty in 1963.

<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, "pluralism", has an official expression in Canada in the Federal Government's multiculturalism policy.

<sup>5</sup> "Painting" also includes the graphic art in this exhibition by David Bobier, David Silverberg, Roger Savage, Dan Steeves, Lawren Harris, and Alex Colville. (Among these artists, only Silverberg is exclusively a printmaker). The photographs of Evergon, Dinsmore and Holownia depend for at least some of their strength on references to the history of painting.

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## GERALD FERGUSON, 1990

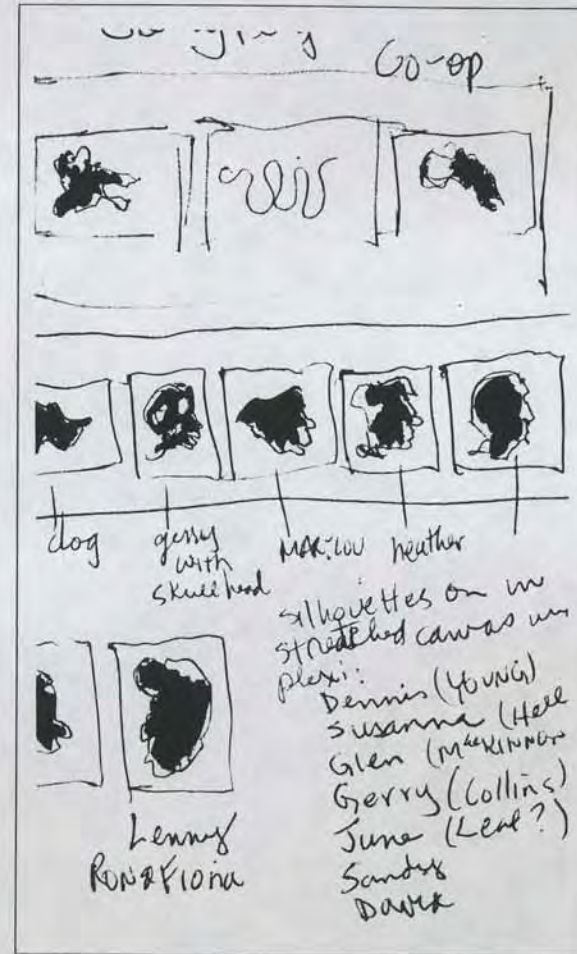
Snatches of Cezanne, Marsden Hartley, Nova Scotia folk painting, Dufy and even rococo wall paper motifs could be picked out of Gerald Ferguson's recent Halifax exhibition of still life paintings at the Art Gallery at Mount Saint Vincent University. The paintings include stencil impressions of lobsters, bowls, fish, fruit and glasses with details painted free hand. "The immediate reference... is Theorem painting: the still lifes in Folk Art that are derived from the stencil decoration of furniture," writes Ferguson in the Mount Saint Vincent catalogue. Also, the tracery of "transparency" or "palimpsest" painting popularized in the '80s by Sigmar Polke and David Salle (in the spirit of Picabia) flickers across Ferguson's filigreed *tours de force*.

(As a figure of speech, alliteration can suggest a number of emotions, including pathos. Some sort of alliterative vocabulary of pathos - a pathos of phonic mnemonics - is apposite to both the use of stencils to make repeated images of parts of the alphabet in the early '70s painting, and the use of stencils in making still lifes and silhouettes in the more recent work. The word "alliteration" is being used here "metaphorically", if you catch my drift.)

In another recent exhibition, this one at the Nova Scotia Photo Co-op in Halifax, Ferguson displayed silhouette portraits, mostly on unstretched canvas under sheets of plexiglas. (The show was accompanied by an engaging catalogue essay by Marcus Miller.) The silhouettes derive from the wide practice of pre-photographic cut-out portraiture of the late 1700s and earlier. These works, slightly more austere and solemn than the *Still Life* paintings, include *memento mori* portraits of: Dennis (Young), Susanna (Heller), Glen (McKinnon), Gerry (Collins) - several of Ferguson's friends. Stretched canvasses include the following images: a bouquet inside a flounder, a skull, a vase of flowers inside a silhouette of a woman with an adjacent panel of lobster silhouettes...

For comic relief, *The Ascension of Susy* makes an appearance. This picture shows Ferguson's recently deceased dog being paid homage by other pooches. Augmenting a self-portrait called *Self-portrait with Corinthian Capital*, is a picture of a tusked boar from a book of design motifs. This "tough, wiry little bugger" is the symbol of Florence and (we speculate) Ferguson himself, ever the tenacious art fighter.

Fighting Ferguson was born in the USA in 1937, and came to Canada in 1968 to teach at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, where he and a few others under the presidency of Garry Neill Kennedy ignited a mini-revolution in Canadian visual art. Ferguson is wrapped up in the recent history of the





Halifax art school, and must figure prominently in attempts to make sense of NSCAD's contribution to the Canadian and international art discourse.

Like many other of the "best and brightest" who left the United States in the '60s and '70s, Ferguson was not exactly "assimilated" into Nova Scotian or Maritime or Canadian culture.

Ferguson's engagement in the local and "long-distance" scene since 1968 has touched on every aspect of the problems of Nova Scotian historical and contemporary visual art except feminism. As a whole (of course an imaginary "whole") Ferguson's activity grapples with where he is and who he is as much as what art is and what art does. As a teacher/artist, he moulded and continues to influence many of this country's leading contemporary visual artists. As a collector, he was involved in the first significant exhibitions of Nova Scotian Folk art in the seventies. As a curator, Ferguson's exhibition of the Nova Scotia work of the American Modernist painter Marsden Hartley not only illuminated a lost episode in the life of the important American modernist, but also, I think, metaphorically defined Ferguson's own place in the history of Nova Scotia culture.

An examination of the first twenty years of his art and commentary about it contains little that anticipates the radical change of direction Ferguson's art has taken since the cusp of the '80s. Not only has the use of stencils changed markedly, but in works like *One Million Pennies* (1979, comprised of one million actual pennies piled on the floor of the Glenbow Museum), the assisted landscape paintings made by hiring painter Gerard Collins as a collaborator, and later, Ferguson's still life, landscape and seascape paintings of his own hand, Ferguson began committing himself to a kind of imagery unthinkable ten years before.

But Ferguson's new work does not necessarily cast the artist in a completely new light. Given Ferguson's background, his latest period of work might seem to be an extreme expression of artistic crisis in which a prominent artist risks credibility by questioning an orthodoxy he is seen to be partly responsible for constructing and maintaining. Ferguson's painting has developed through a series of crisis, the greatest being "post-modernism" itself, or to put it negatively (and more accurately), the perceived collapse in modernist artistic values over the last twenty years, a collapse which (paradoxically) was precipitated partly by the bare-bones examination of art basics of the minimalist movement associated with Ferguson's early works. If one is looking for a kind of "consistency" here, it may only be grasped in Ferguson's practice of deliberately working himself in and out of corners over the years as he moves in and out of periods of work.





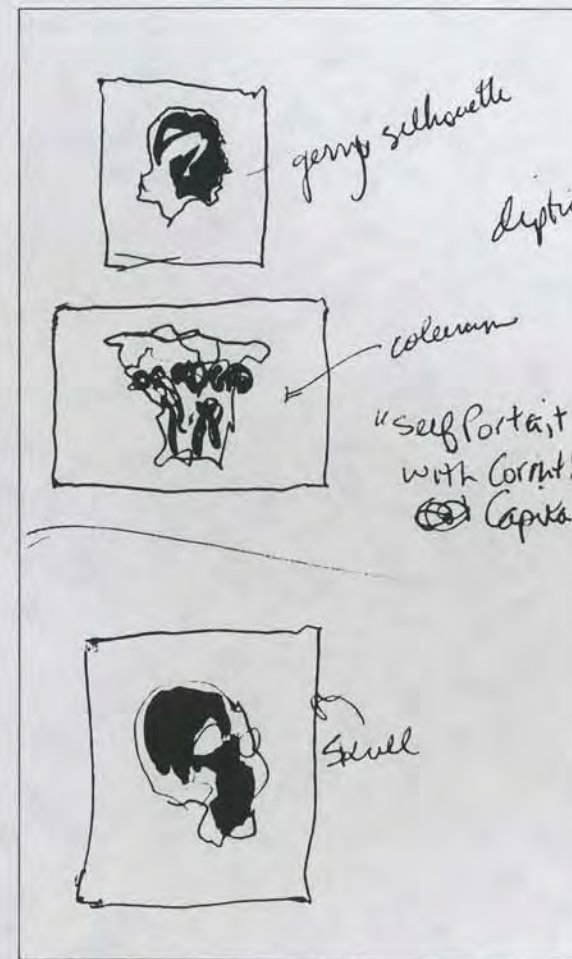
I've made a pun on the word "period", because "periods" once appeared in Ferguson's painting of the early '70s. Well, not "periods" exactly: the dots that hover over the stems of lower case "i"'s were once a dominant motif; other paintings depicted upper case "I"'s. That work was part of a long sequence of paintings, books and prints about the alphabet which began in the late '60s. The "dot" paintings were made using a plasterer's beading as a spray paint stencil. The recent use of a lobster template from the Clearwater fish company to make rococo-looking still-lives has its methodological precedents in these "dot" works, however marked the difference in iconography.

To attempt to neatly link up the iconic "I" of the early painting; the metaphorical "I" in (what I think is) Ferguson's identification with Hartley; and the biographical and autobiographical "I" of the jumble of portraits of friends and himself in the silhouette paintings may strain tenuous connections within the totality of Ferguson's oeuvre, described by Dennis Young in 1977 as employing a "...range of media...wider than that of almost any artist of his time." (*Gerald Ferguson Paintings*, The Dalhousie Art Gallery, 1977, p.5) Linking up these "I"'s also entertains the presumption that there is a single, unified personality out there somewhere: "Ferguson" - a fiction behind the facts - something no post-structuralist critic would dare attempt to identify.

Ferguson's old stencil work is so different from the new stencil work that one or two links may be worth talking about, if only to highlight the contrast. Warhol was the foundation through which Ferguson's earlier ideas about seriality developed (silk-screen stencils and sprayed-through stencils do have their affinities). However, says Ferguson, he never "bought" the basics of Pop Art, for example, I would suspect, its commercialism and high art hatred. It was Warhol's methodology and off-register indifference relative to prevailing "academy" notions about painting which Ferguson found interesting.

Ferguson's use of a spray/stencil technique periodically within twenty years of various kinds of production could be seen to demonstrate either the limit of the possibilities of radical transformation within a technical means, or a perverse self-mockery, part of an artist's utter rejection of the early work, or both. I don't think either characterization would be correct, strictly speaking. An earlier work like Ferguson's book *The Standard Corpus of Present Day English Language Usage, arranged by word length and alphabetized within word length*, 1970 and the recent stencil paintings have little in common. One would be hesitant to say that the earlier work involving letters and words somehow "lead" eventually to the current stencil painting.

Artists do not need precedents in their own work to justify a change. However,





for us, it may be reassuring to look at whatever straws we may grasp for a sense of continuity. An observation made by Eric Cameron in 1975 seems valid, or even prophetic, today:

But for all the systematic subtlety of the strategy, he recognizes that the things he uses, whether words or walls or etching plates, are drawn out of the broader context of the world at large and one of those tangential shifts of emphasis may at any time bring us face to face with the most emotionally charged of real life issues: the irrationality of linguistic taboo [in reference to Ferguson's use of the word "fuck" in an early tape] or the social competitiveness of self-gratification [a reference to a performance piece which involved performers clapping for themselves]. At that point he always turns back, but recurrences are sufficiently frequent to endow the work as a whole with a sense of latent metaphor...

- *Studio International* (Vol. 189 No. 974, Mar/April 1975 pp.124-128)

At one point around 1979 Ferguson simply decided not to "turn back". "Latent metaphor" came out of the closet and the work became accessible in an extraordinary way. (As mentioned) the new stencil paintings retain a certain austerity about them like the earlier work, however loaded the imagery and flashy the brushwork. In a way, these paintings are just as tastefully iconoclastic as his task-oriented word art of the early '70s.

Unfortunately, Ferguson's early "alliterative" paintings have never been scrutinized in a comprehensive exhibition. Such an exhibition would enrich the viewing of the recent work ■





## PETER KIRBY, 1990

Peter Kirby does not initiate exhibitions of his work, so there have been few solo shows over the years. Although he has been a full-time painter for many years, he is not represented by a dealer, and his work so far has had little exposure. His paintings are small, and not intended specifically for art galleries. They seem more compatible with the cluttered apartments and homes of his sitters, a class of graduate students and others at the sad margins of the academic world. The paintings do not exhibit any of the formal scale, technique or ambition of museum painting. In fact, the art/museum discourse holds little interest for Kirby. He seems to make these gestures of respect as small celebrations of ordinary people. His work exists within the limits of the world of a few friends who pose either in their homes or in Kirby's studio. The "discourse" around the work consists almost entirely of the thoughts sitters and friends exchange about the portraits. These works are not commissioned: Kirby asks his subjects to pose without any money exchanging hands - in fact, almost all of the works displayed at Dalhousie are still in the artist's possession.

Kirby's work seems particularly suited to Dalhousie Art Gallery's recently initiated *Alcove Series*, which gives artists the opportunity to show evolving work in an intimate space without the formality and pressure of a full-blown, catalogue-accompanied exhibition.

Kirby is a Newfamerican (I just made up that word): half-Newfoundlander and half Rhode Islander. He paints his friends and relatives. I know most of the people he has painted - Jane; Joe, a former employee of mine and current friend; Marie, the artist's wife; Terry Graff, a Sackville, New Brunswick artist; Barbara Symington, a Sackville curator and artist; Peter Wardrope, a friend of mine since childhood. I haven't met Peter's parents Fred and Stella or his brother Stephen or sister Cynthia, who also figure in these paintings, but they crop up in our conversations often enough that I feel at least some personal connection.

As I define Kirby's work in terms of my relationships to the painter's subjects, am I using the art for the construction of my own public ego, or for confessional reasons? Perhaps these thoughts shouldn't be the subject of a piece in an art magazine. Why should we talk about our real relationships: for the benefit of outsiders? Lately it has interested me to write about my friends, to try to make clear personal relationships within Atlantic Canada's art world, and to discuss aspects of the viewing and local reception of art.

Kirby's paintings include wide borders which are painted to make visual or anecdotal connections to his sitter's life and interests, and which make "circles"



of self-reference in the work. For example, Peter Wardrope, a musician, in addition to being painted in his apartment playing guitar, is surrounded by a border of tennis rackets - tennis is the sitter's other consuming interest. Jane is surrounded by a border of floral patterns similar to the patterns of materials she buys at flea markets.

Joe's border is composed of a swirl of photographic bits of his profession of photography. Sections of contact sheets intersect with a painted ladder, suggesting something like a reel of film rolling. A strong shadow cast by Joe on a wall reinforces an idea that the picture develops a sub-theme about photographic or cinematic projection. A private joke informs the placement of the photographs of dogs on the border of the Joe painting.

Some border-elements in the portraits can't be easily deciphered, although we can assume that personal allusions make perfect sense to the sitters ■



## RICHARD MUELLER, 1990

Three small squares, one green and two red, are set in a ground of saturated colour in Richard Mueller's 1986 work *Is Red More Wicked Than Green?*, an acrylic and paper abstract painting. That is all you need to know in order for me to make two quick characterizations of Mueller's work.

Firstly, Mueller is a natural colourist who delights in strongly saturated paint. Secondly, and one can read this between the lines of his artist's statement, Mueller's painting grows partly out of his life as an art educator, someone who continues to be art-educated himself through teaching at the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design and the Technical University of Nova Scotia School of Architecture in Halifax. Mueller's native enthusiasm, combined with a deep respect for students, opens him out to many artistic discoveries.

The recent works in painting and sculpture mark a significant development for Mueller. For several years he has made investigative, formal paintings which easily align themselves with a certain long pedagogical art school tradition. If nothing else, *Is Red More Wicked Than Green?* is an analysis of the visual elements of painting; colour, line, form, material, perspective, and emotional weight are juggled for effect. Such painting gives one the sense of going over the evidence of an artist's quiet, philosophical play.

The recent works, however, add loaded imagery to formal play, setting the philosophical mix on edge. These paintings, sculptures and drawings participate with much other current art in the imagery of environmental catastrophe. For Mueller, the references to toxins highlight an essential paradox in technology, which he characterizes as being simultaneously symbolic of human annihilation and human salvation.

The artist's experience of the Emergency Training Centre for the Department of National Defence got the work started. Halifax is the location of a major armed forces base in Canada, and the military occupies many scattered sites around the city. Witnessing emergency training procedures at the base as he drove past on route home, Mueller was intrigued by one particular set-up of boxes used for training in fire fighting. He arranged for a full tour of the facility and the current imagery is a distillation of a broad range of images he made out of the experience.

Painted and sculpted flames shoot through many of these pieces. Thickly applied colour is sometimes complemented by a line of wire or a piece of sheet metal, giving some of the work the look of stray bits of military hardware - a metallic high-tech look. The surfaces of the paintings are scumbled and overpainted into rich portrayals of acrid smoke and searing flames. Many of



the works are painted on, or cut out of, aluminium, a very thin support, and sometimes paint is scraped through, exposing a shiny ground. Tar, paint and metal combine to convey the repulsive "beauty" of toxic chemicals. Like a rainbow patch of oil on the road, pollution can look good.

There are a number of repeated images in the paintings and sculptures: open boxes (sometimes on wheels and sometimes not), smoke and flame. Other images occur only in the earlier works, for example, a wind sock and some scaffolding.

Mueller has devised a simple hinge hanging system for the paintings on aluminium, allowing the works to float several inches from the wall. The hanging device supplements the works' industrial design look and draws attention to the thinness of the support; one imagines a bizarre furniture-from-hell line in the presence of the work, a toxic furniture calculated to become more popular as the earth's air approaches the unbreathable atmosphere of Mueller's imagery ■



## CHARLIE MURPHY, 1990

[A minister of the crown] told me, in a great fright, that thirty thousand French had marched from Acadie to Cape Breton —Where did they find transports? (said I) 'Transports! (cried he) I tell you, they marched by land—' By land to the island of Cape Breton? 'What! is Cape Breton an island?' Certainly. 'Ha! are you sure of that?' When I pointed it out in the map, he examined it earnestly with his spectacles; then, taking me in his arms, 'My dear C—! (cried he) you always bring us good news—Egad! I'll go directly, and tell the king that Cape Breton is an island—'

- *Humphry Clinker* by Tobias Smollett, (p.118)

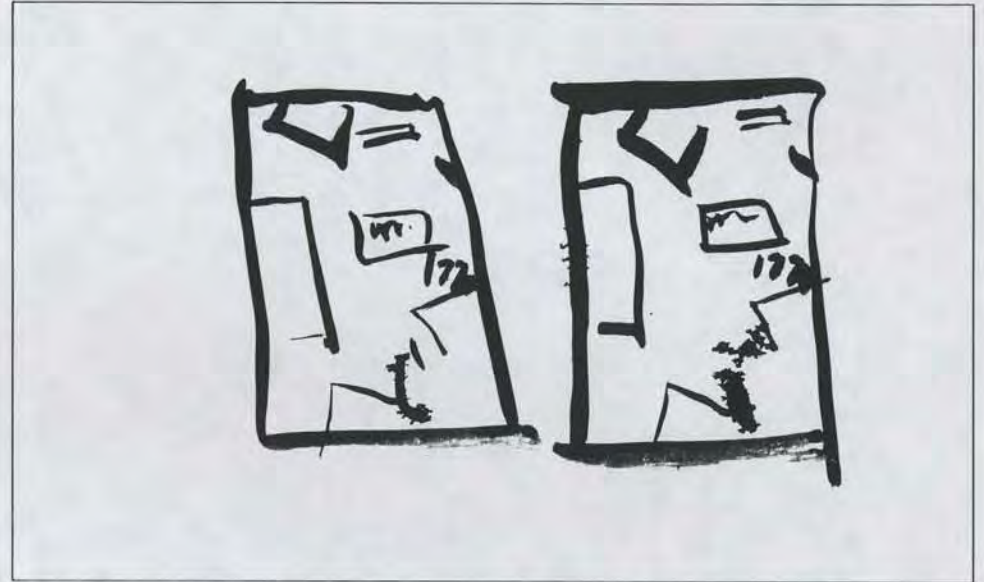
In the 18th century, when Smollett wrote *Humphry Clinker*, Cape Breton was enjoying its zenith as a centre of world attention, even if most Europeans were dimly aware of its geography. The Island is now connected to the rest of world by telephones, satellite dishes, fast food and a fixed link causeway, by, in other words, much contemporary urban culture. But how many know as much about Cape Breton today as Smollett knew in 1771?

The island is full of visual artists. Many are locals, like Charlie Murphy. During the late '60s and early '70s, when scores of urban artists decided to move as far away from the city as a Volkswagen could take them, a few landed in Cape Breton. American refugees of the Vietnam era became a demographical force in Cape Breton's visual arts scene.

Given the diverse origins of its many artists, Cape Breton could hardly match preconceptions about its art being "primitive" or even "rural". John Nesbitt settled there after having lived in Toronto and New York. He makes large, playful, brightly-coloured abstract aluminium sculptures. New Yorkers Robert Frank and partner June Leaf have a house there (since 1969). Frank, the author of the beat-era photography classic, *The Americans*, is also a well-known film and video maker. Leaf is best known for her anthropomorphic machines and her expressionistic painting.

Gaelic activist/artist Ellison Robertson lives in Cape Breton as does the painter/sculptor/photographer Carl Zimmerman, both of whom are, like Murphy, native Cape Bretoners. The Québécois abstract painter Jacques Hurtubise and many other visual artists like Neil Livingston and Susan Mills either summer in Cape Breton or make their permanent homes there.

Charlie Murphy was born in Sydney, Nova Scotia, 1 March 1946 and grew up



Handouts NYC.



there. He graduated from Saint Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, in 1969, trained as a biologist and physical education teacher. He began teaching school, mostly in Nova Scotia, but also for a time in northern Manitoba.

Murphy's self-apprenticeship in art making began during the '70s in photography and culminated in a collaboration with Robert Frank as his teacher in 1976. Murphy began to incorporate collage, painting, drawing, and photographs into constructions under the influence of both Frank and his wife June Leaf. He has since developed into a collage and assemblage artist best described as a "painter" rather than a "photographer".

Robert Frank and Murphy have become close, close enough that Murphy makes the odd reference to Frank's work in the gathering maturity of his own painting (see *My Nephew Terry in Room 525*, and *O Daddy O*). Frank visited Murphy during the latter's 1981 stint in Northern Manitoba:

Mabou Nov. 2 1981  
Dear Kazuhiko Motomura

I have just returned from a trip to Northern Canada. It is a vast country with a small population. I visited a friend who is a Teacher [Charlie Murphy]. For one year he is teaching at School on an Indian Reservation. There are no roads except a Railroad twice a week. There is snow and frozen lakes and the Indians trap animals (Fur) and Fish. Indians and Whites are separate [sic]- I felt uncomfortable- it was a short visit. I've learned that the bigger the ambitions are, the more difficult it gets to control them. I think that my sympathies will always be with people who are weaker and will almost certainly be losers [sic]. It might be romantic to feel that way-unless I would believe in Justice-and I don't.  
So much for philosophy.  
your friend,

(p.68 *Robert Frank: New York to Nova Scotia*, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1986, Ed. Anne Wilkes Tucker)

If anything links Frank's work with Murphy's after fifteen years, it might be summed up in the sentiment shown in this letter, a feeling about the subject matter of ordinary people. A 1951 statement by Robert Frank also seems akin to Murphy's feelings. People are photographed: "...not because they are unusual, but because they are typical of people I had seen before, almost anywhere in the city."

- (Previously unpublished introduction to the 1951 series submission to *Life*,



*O Daddy O*



quoted on p. 92 of *Robert Frank: New York to Nova Scotia.*)

Murphy received a Canada Council Arts Award in the late seventies, two years after the brief period of study with Frank (quite a coup for a mostly self-taught artist). The funded New York stay involved him in printing for photographer Louis Faurer (one of Frank's oldest collaborators and friends) in preparation for Faurer's Guggenheim Fellowship. The following year Murphy attended workshops at the international photographic symposium, *Venezia '79*, Italy, an experience he rates as formative. Beginning in 1979, he developed the series *Handouts NYC*, *My Mother was an American*, and other series in Manitoba (1981-82), in Toronto (1985-87) and in Nova Scotia. Trips away from Cape Breton began with that important first foray to New York in 1978-79:

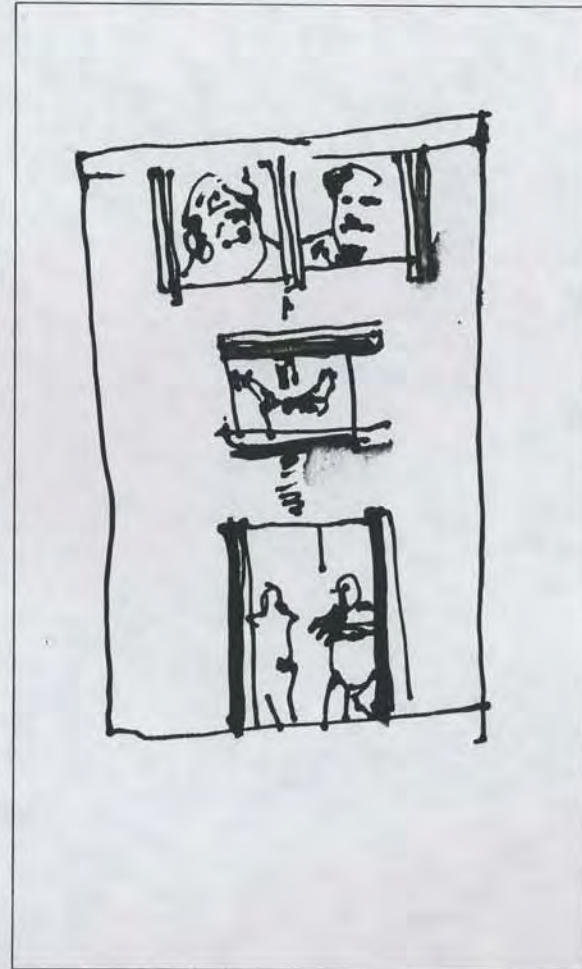
...It seems that I was following in the footsteps of artists such as Kurt Schwitters and Robert Rauschenberg... I had worked with multiple and single images before in Cape Breton where I was motivated by the presence of Robert Frank and June Leaf. That work and the New York environment stimulated me to continue...

Murphy's work has changed radically since the *Handouts NYC* piece. Contrast Murphy's older statement with the following statement, which reads like an introduction to his work of the '80s:

Emotions, thought stifled, come out in a rural area. You see a lot more in a rural area, you get into the whole make-up of the community. In a small town, the religious conflicts and sexual conflicts come out.... I like the contrast - living in the country and being in the city.

Murphy has developed a hinge between the worlds of urban and rural art in his work. The imagery often portrays an urban malaise from within Murphy's essentially rural perspective. He uses black and white photographs, mostly taken in urban settings like Toronto, which he collages into painted and sculpted surfaces. Some of these surfaces appear to be slung together in an almost brutal way. The images often make up a melancholic scene, as if the carnival has just left town, and the locals are resuming their ordinary lives.

The work can look like urban punk art as much as rural "folk" assemblage. Most of Murphy's recent collages are constructed with paint, staples, all kinds of construction materials, and whole photographic prints. Sometimes these prints-pasted-on-the-canvas are identical, appearing like quickly assembled outtakes from some Canadian documentary. Murphy has jokingly referred to himself as a "repressed film maker".



*Remember the Time.*



(Although this exhibition gathers together works made since 1979, the emphasis is put on Murphy's work of the last five years, work which marks the beginnings of a maturity in Murphy's painting. "I first started to make bigger works in 1983," says Murphy "More colourful and more personal in a way - that's when I felt it was coming together in a more coherent way.")

In *S*, three photos of a woman standing next to a *Globe & Mail* box overlap, strengthening what we might take to be a representation of motion as in a Muybridge series, or a movie. (As we look at *S*, we may be reminded that looking at a random set of five or six frames from a movie shows little evidence of motion.) Pasted below the photograph of the woman are pictures of watchers, offhand shots of people looking at something "off camera". Attached to the bottom half of the painting are photographs of two young people lazily watching something - probably just life passing by: Murphy watches urbanites watch each other. Ordinary people doing ordinary things are not glamorized but are nevertheless celebrated in the work.

In the work *Bridge*, a central photograph shows a man (cropped at the shoulders in the photograph) holding the hand of a small, sad-looking boy. In the background, a bridge or overpass is visible. Swirling around this central photograph are four photographs of an identical group of three people who look to be surveying the landscape through which the man and child walk. There is a snap-shot ordinariness in the photographs. None of the subjects looks to be in anyway posed; they appear indifferent or unaware of the photographer. An I-beam shaped bridge column is echoed in the I-beam shaped strips of metal surrounding the man and boy. Paint and metal are used to delineate a bridge form across the length of the painting. A yellow, an orange, red and blue square each take positions at the four corners of the canvas, looking like formal stabilizers for the Maltese-cross form made up by the collaged photographs.

Murphy's comments about his childhood seem to make a particularly poignant connection with *Bridge*:

As a kid I remember seeing a picture of my father and myself at an old artillery site in Sydney, a photo with a gulf in between us taken when I was a teenager. Seeing that gulf between the two people who look so 'together' in the photo: it's the gulf between people in family snapshots. You see people together but you don't know what's going on. Often the snapshot does not reveal the truth about people. I try to liberate the truth in the photograph...

Work by the largely self-educated Murphy, with its rough-hewn look, plain-



S.



folks subject matter, and rural location of production, might be unproblematically read as being a kind of folk art. Several contemporary Nova Scotian artists are redefining what it means to make regional work within an official culture which defines local art as "folk art".

Like the work of Nova Scotian artists Gerald Ferguson, Janice Leonard and Eric Walker, Murphy's painting does have a certain folk art ambience about it - an ambience which can be misleading. Folk art can be approached through academic, pop culture and formal routes, some of which are explored by these artists, but none of them is trying to "become" a folk artist.

Contemporary art-school-educated artists like Leonard, Walker and Ferguson explore the imagery and techniques of folk art for many reasons, no doubt partly in critical response to its status as the region's "official art". They make work that is clearly from a particular place, which is made under specific conditions, and which exists within a self-conceived historical and cultural framework. They attempt to reclaim and re-inherit what has been sanitized, commodified and appropriated by mass media and tourist culture.

Janice Leonard's recent paintings evoke her rural upbringing in Paradise, Nova Scotia, and her sense of the dissolution of her childhood village in the Annapolis Valley over the past thirty years as the amenities gradually disappear, the automobile encourages travel to far-off jobs, and the corner store closes down in favour of the consolidated superstore... In Leonard's recent work, the bucolic myth of pre-industrial Nova Scotia meets a fluid painting style. Leonard's earlier work of the 1980s, however, used collage and assemblage techniques similar to those of Murphy to examine historical subjects. Works like *Belgian Relief*, make reference to Nova Scotia events like the Halifax Explosion of 1917.

Eric Walker, a close friend of Leonard's, makes collage constructions which celebrate local sayings and historical incidents of the region. The work of Leonard and Walker has many technical affinities to Murphy's painting - affinities which have a common genesis in high-art collage and folk art bricolage traditions of construction.

Gerald Ferguson's adaptation of 19th Century theorem painting (stencil) techniques is part of a sophisticated play of art historical references used to specifically locate a painting as "Nova Scotian", "post-modernist" and "a Gerald Ferguson". It incorporates none of the assemblage techniques used by Murphy, Leonard, and Walker, but is linked in technique and subject matter to: 1) a body of the artist's stencil work which has been developing since 1968, and 2) to traditional folk stencil techniques that reach back to the 18th Century



Saturday



in Nova Scotia (theorem and decorative painting). In Ferguson's work the stencil techniques locate the work as "Nova Scotian" in a general art historical way, while the specific use of a Clearwater fisheries lobster stencil makes reference to contemporary Nova Scotian life. Art historical references (for example, Cezanne still life motifs) connect the work to a current high art tendency to incorporate cut-and-paste art history into paintings.

Murphy is the only artist among this amorphous group who is a photographer:

When I first started I made single photographs, then photomontage and then collage. I began with the perspective of the photographer. When I started everything was in series - it helped me a lot - putting something together with a beginning, middle and end - making it easier to understand for myself...

At one extreme, Murphy's work is capable of displaying a high art academicism, as represented in *Handouts NYC*, a work reminiscent in spirit to the irony of Rauschenberg's *Factum I* and *Factum II*. In Rauschenberg's 1957 diptych two almost identical pop/expressionist paintings invite comparisons with each other). *Handouts NYC* is a photograph of a collage of collected handbills displayed beside the actual handbill collage.

Contrast this work with Murphy seven years later in *O Daddy O*. A rural frankness (the "Frank" pun is intended) gives works like *O Daddy O* - and other works which include self-portraits of the artist - a strong emotional pitch which is absent from *Handouts NYC* and indicative of the direction Murphy's fifteen year development as an artist has taken. Murphy's earlier experimentation with the ironic distance of the urban post-modern artist was destined not to last long. Very soon, Murphy was showing an emotional honesty and guilelessness in his work, an honesty which permits almost no appropriation of imagery, and almost no violation of the integrity of the photographic print as it gets collaged on canvas.

Murphy's respect for a separation of media within one work often creates a sense of disjuncture in the painting, as if the paint in a work "frames" the photographs or, alternately, as if the photographs intrude on a painted ground.

They start with photographs and build out of some sort of response to the photographs - some of the works start with an idea, for example, a depressed state of mind [as in the *Suicide* works, a set of self-portraits]. They start out with the photos and these photos move into paint - the paint somehow has to correlate. I'd like to use some other medium than painting - painting doesn't mean anything. It's not the painting that's important but the colour. It's nice to have something



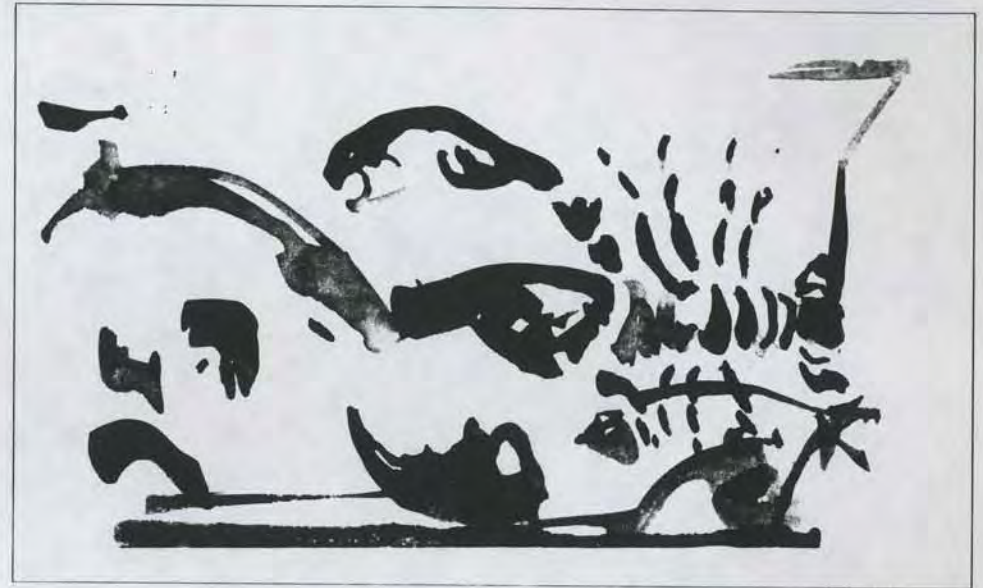


to put your hands on. There are other materials too: wire gates, plaster, mirrors, cloth, plastic, aluminium, staples, glass, concrete, carpenters' squares... What I try to do is to make a complete work which unites the photo with the work, which makes the essence of both come together as one...

Charlie Murphy's painting is made with an emotional honesty that is rare among contemporary artists. As viewers from the city, we may too quickly identify, "emotional honesty" as a "rural" value seen to be in opposition to the ironic distancing and layering - the coolness - which characterizes contemporary "city" art. Nevertheless, as ironic post-modernist strategies begin to lose their interest for artists, we are more and more likely to look to people like Murphy for ways of re-introducing into our work a sense of daily reality. Like Murphy, the "Teacher", we may want to begin our own self-education by transcribing into art a personal ideological record of exactly what we think, how we feel and where we live ■

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One of Gerry Ferguson's works.



RECENT WORK FROM THE  
TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF NOVA SCOTIA  
SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE, 1990

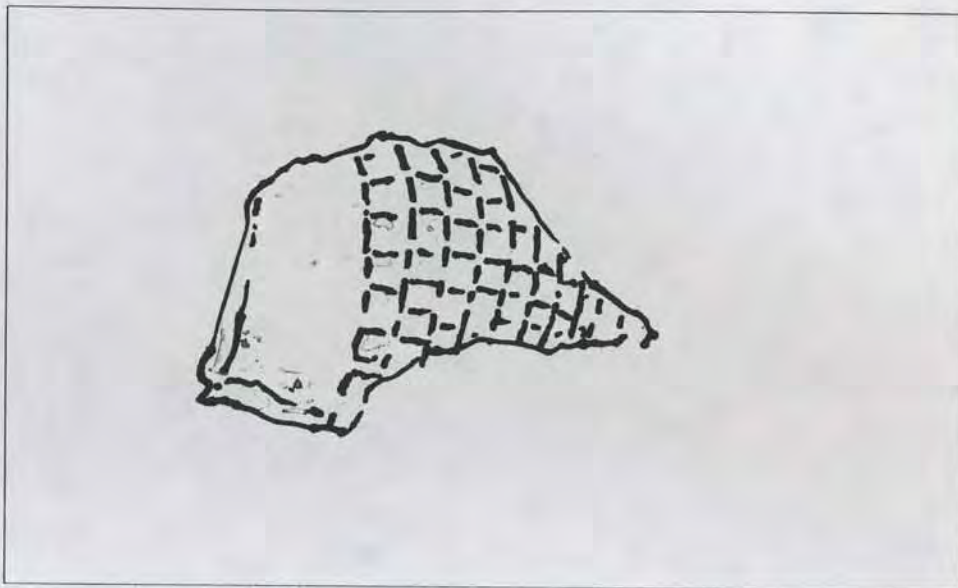
It is hoped that the status of architectural design materials as visual art may be partly addressed by this exhibition. As the curator, my intention is to show a variety of works in different media in order to pose one question strongly: does consideration of architectural design work as visual art advance either discipline? In fact, is such a question worth asking?

An architectural drawing or model - material which is not a realized building - is sometimes disparagingly called "paper architecture" by some architects. The term highlights the contrast between the ephemeral design drawn or modelled in flimsy materials and the heavy materiality of built form. Impermanent materials like trace paper, balsa and illustration board are often used in architectural design. As we see in this exhibition, quite permanent sculptural materials may also be used in models. The work ranges from actual-size building details to quick pencil sketches.

Many architects, often the same ones who use the term "paper architecture", insist that the medium of architecture is building and building only, and that the representational techniques used to design, explain or promote architecture are like train stops on the last VIA passenger run - mere stations to be passed through on the way to a final destination. Meanwhile, the architectural debate rages on in every conceivable medium: before building, after building, and in spite of building. Within the intellectual and academic life of architecture, anything goes. Painting, sculpture, installation art, performance and poetry take (or refuse to take) their respective places within this debate.

Is it accurate to speak about architecture as "visual art"? Despite opinions which Modernist architects like Le Corbusier promoted: "Man looks at the creation of architecture with his eyes...one can only deal with aims which the eye can appreciate..."

(*Towards a New Architecture*, translated by Frederick Etchells, The Architectural Press, London, 1927, p.11), actual architecture envelopes a person in a complete experience of the senses the way few pieces of visual art do. When we speak of architecture as a visual art, we keep in mind the great caveats, huge digressions, and big conceptual leaps which accumulate between an *esquisse* and built form - architecture embodies much more than purely visual experience. (Both Le Corbusier and the Modernist visual art critic Clement Greenberg promoted an idea of a detached "visuality" as a fundamental goal of Modernist practice which now seems eccentric.)



(all illustrations are from  
Geoff Crosby's thesis project.)



This is another way of saying that visual art that is also architectural design may seem to be terribly misleading because it takes one immediately outside the gallery, outside the drawing, and outside the model. Most architectural graphic and three-dimensional material is really art about art - second generation art: not graphic design itself, and not architecture.

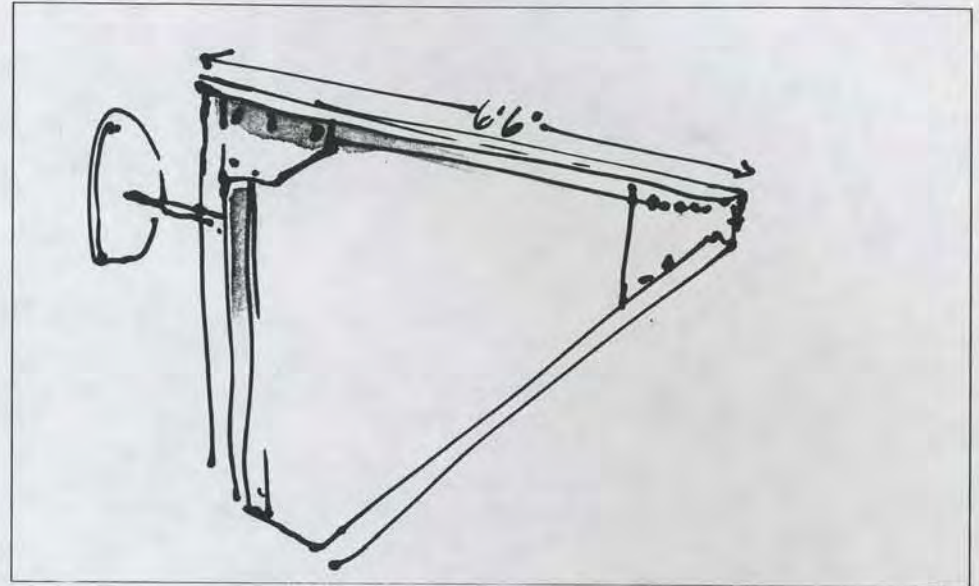
Obviously, it is much easier to draw or model a building than it is to actually construct one, so architectural design as visual art has none of the limitations imposed by the exigencies of actual building: unlimited numbers of workable and unworkable architectural solutions may be proposed on paper for any problem. As visual art, architectural design drawings and models compete with the art of built architecture for credibility. Should it be a surprise that some of work in this exhibition is architecturally more interesting than many buildings?

## The Work

Architects continue to utilize traditional drawing skills and techniques in their work which have been given up by many contemporary artists. These drawing skills are useful in the conceptualization of projects and the interpretation of existing buildings. TUNS Faculty members Essy Baniassad and Grant Wanzel have each contributed drawings made on site at various locations in Nova Scotia and elsewhere, drawings which one might associate with Impressionism or a continuing tradition of Romantic landscape drawing. These drawings are quick, skilful, graphic notations made in the service of an architectural idea. As Wanzel says:

A few [drawings] were simply pictorial aids to memory. Most are conscious studies of architectural form and concentrated on: the elements of form; order, density and relation in architectural form; theme and variation; and so on. Detail and texture were of little concern. The same goes for technique - no more than simple line drawings (ink or pencil) in which both texture and line weight were used to indicate emphasis.

Allen Penney's research drawings about an historical building in Nova Scotia, were drawn after, not before, the fact of architecture, and are similar in intention to Wanzel's. Made over a period of seventeen years, Penney's studies investigate the history of the *Thomas Chandler Haliburton House* near Windsor, Nova Scotia, built in 1833-35: "These drawings, like most architectural drawings, are not an end in themselves, merely a means to an end...." says Penney "When the drawing fails to pin-point the significant issue, it can be





discarded or redrawn....”

Kresten Jespersen's paintings, which are included in this exhibition along with the published article they were made to illustrate, support his polemical stance in support of ornament in architecture. Jespersen is interested in the study and revival of ornament within a “pre-modernist” (and now “postmodernist”) architectural aesthetic. He puts it bluntly: “The damage done by the Modern Movement to ornament constitutes the destruction of an essential human language parallel to the burning of all books in ancient China....” (*CRIT* 21, Fall 1988, p.30).

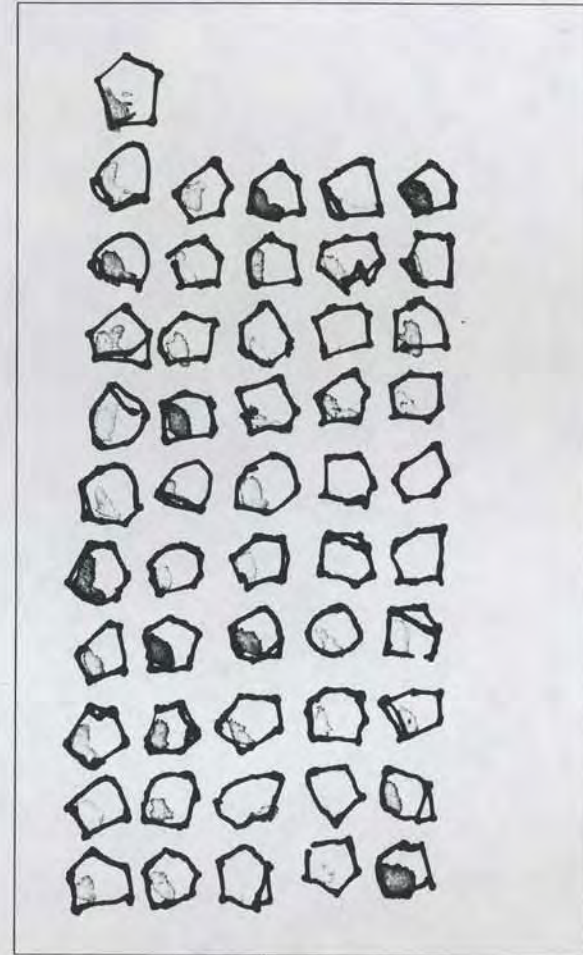
Stephen Parcell contributed examples of his students' work which, quite appropriately for this exhibition, explores conventions of architectural representation. Stephen Outerbridge and Gary Fields were given an assignment in which they were asked to make up to twenty representations of an object of their choice in a range of media and techniques. Fields, chose the garden at Nova Scotia's Province House as illustrated in the work entitled *Representations of the Garden at Province House*; Outerbridge chose to make *Representations of a Marker Buoy outside Halifax Harbour*. The text of their assignment could well act as a summation of this entire exhibition:

Methods of architectural representation are not simply timeless, neutral techniques; all have unique properties, latent meanings, and distinct histories. A graphic or modelled artifact can be regarded both as a strategic representation of a built work and as an independent presence in its own domain.

Each student is asked to represent an existing object, place, or event in twenty different ways. This will involve various kinds of drawings, models, etc. Each representation will disclose a different kind of perception, selectively recalling the initial subject. A method which allows most of the subject to slip through its nets of representation may be as enlightening as a method which seems to capture it all. During this project, historical examples should be sought and emulated.

(from the course outline, *Studies in Architectural Representation*, Master of Architecture program)

Other projects by recent graduates Geoff Crosby, Darrell Campbell and Niall Savage, made under various tutors, are fine examples of what marks the culmination of a student's academic work, the thesis. These projects are included in this exhibition for their connections to several strains of 20th



Geoff itemizes stones.



Century art practice, including Cubism and Dada.

Crosby, by proposing to gather abandoned building materials to make a rural church, becomes an architectural Kurt Schwitters (the early 20th Century Dada collagist); Campbell does a theme and variation play on a series of house designs using an architectural method which originates ultimately in constructed cubist sculpture (one thinks of Picasso's guitar of 1912 in the presence of this kind of architectural work). Savage explores graphic and illustrational conventions of architectural representation.

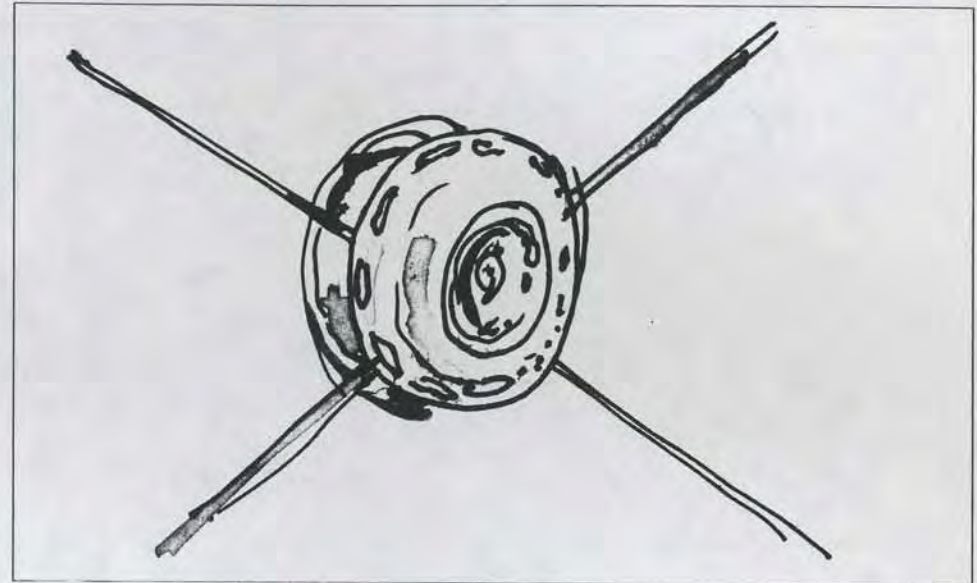
Savage adapts the smooth-facet painting of Juan Gris as one of several illustrational conventions. The difference between the Savage and Campbell projects is important to the discussion of art and architectural conventions of representation in this exhibition. Campbell uses a method of formal play to design, while Savage seems to present more or less worked out ideas within a graphic language he carefully chooses for its suitability to the particular design. Most of the work in this exhibition follows one or the other of these paths.

Professors Tom Emodi, Dimitri Procos, Stephen Parcell, Richard Mueller and Brian MacKay-Lyons have contributed their own architectural design work to this exhibition. Much of the "work" of faculty members at TUNS is considered by them to be the work of their students. Like art education, architectural education has been evolving into its own discourse, allied but somewhat separate from practice.

MacKay-Lyons, a part-time faculty member, is considered by many to be a rising star in Atlantic Canada, having won a Governor General's Medal in addition to receiving international recognition for his work. On display is his winning entry to the recent international design competition for the TUNS School of Architecture extension.

Tom Emodi with MacFawn & Rogers Architects, includes his *Edgemere Housing Project* in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, a design which embodies his approach to urban design. His description reads as a manifesto of humanism in architecture:

- The project presents opportunities to study important contemporary architectural questions including:
1. how to densify existing suburbs with new uses while keeping suburban scale and spatial structure;
  2. how to efficiently house large groups of people while creating non-institutional buildings;



3. how to integrate cherished old buildings with contemporary architectural forms;
4. how to provide accessibility and community for independent and active yet aging people.

The work of Ted Cavanagh's students constitutes a special set of issues involving art and architecture. A 1:1 "model" of a building fragment such as Alexa Fotheringham's work looks deceptively like a formalist piece of sculpture in its incorporation of contemporary architectural materials (called "non-traditional" in an art context). Other 1:1 works in this exhibition seem to take cues from the walls and built form of the art gallery the way minimalist art does - again, deceptively, since these works were not intentionally made to be "art" ■



## W. CHRIS WOODS, 1990

For twenty years, the dominant theme in Woods' work has been the relationship between the inside and the outside of the body. He has not abandoned the shaped canvas made with sculptural wood bracing, but lately has tended to use unmounted rag paper as a support for drawing and painting. This exhibition includes paintings, drawings and a video tape.

A 1972 *artscanada* review<sup>1</sup> includes, among other illustrations, photographs of shaped three-dimensional paintings of animals with openings in their bodies and a painting of a doctor's head.

A 1974 review of a Canada House group exhibition by William Packer describes Woods' work as "canvas objects each shaped to the contours of a single image..." and "The best and most interesting of all the work....They are crudely, even perfunctorily painted, with a deliberate rawness in the handling...."<sup>2</sup>

CW: "...pig I saw slaughtered when I was eleven years old in France...seeing Goya in the Prado was a revelation...the paradox of beautiful painting with grotesque imagery seemed to me to be a metaphor of life and death..."

His painting may also owe something to his having lived in England for ten years during the period of his maturation as an artist. This "body-work" seems to grow out of an English post-war sensibility: full of dread, pessimism and mortification of flesh combined with accomplished, even "beautiful", technical handling with an abstract expressionist edge - gorgeous technique with disturbing content. Woods' sources in medical illustration and dental surgery texts also hold a fascination for English painters of the macabre like Francis Bacon, but Woods prefers to cite as influences Goya, Van Gogh and Giacometti and the English painter: Frank Auerbach.

CW: "...In 1982 John Doull gave me a medical book, *Handbook of Surgical Practice*, and I kept going back to it..."

Woods' drawings are made up in series composed of four to six drawings. Each series relates to a specific image or aspect of the overall theme of the body subjected to internal and external forces. The surface quality comes from working and reworking a particular piece using dyes, watercolour, ink, various types of charcoal, conté and pastel.

CW: "...some image hits me...something about the dog's nose interested me...or one head from a medical text...something about the lighting...and I made five or





six drawings from the image..."

Woods makes "painterly" work. This kind of painting favours the ambiguous form over the graphic form; a range of thick and thin paint over evenly handled surfaces; figure painting over other traditional genres; and, (when references are widened into art history) Rembrandt over Vermeer; Post-Impressionism over the French Academy, Matisse and Bonnard and Soutine over Dadaists like Arp.

CW: "...black humour has always fascinated me...writers like Kafka, Knut Hamsen, or Malcolm Lowry...it's about sensitivity, it's not fear with make-up on it..."

Music as well as visual art plays a major role in Woods' life. The Babbies Upstairs is an artists' band akin to other artist bands in Canada like CCMC in Toronto or the Nihilist Spasm Band in London. All three groups improvise performances, and they share a visual art sensibility. The Babbies and the Spasm Band also use humour as an expressive vehicle. The Port Authority is another band Woods plays with, an all-percussion group inspired by Latin American and African drumming, for example Tito Puente, and Dou Dou D'Y Rose.

CW: "...drumming and music play a big part in staying awake...aware...you blow a horn and build a certain structure from it...the improvising and the form happen together...Cezanne is a great teacher of that, and in jazz, people like Archie Shepp, Billie Holiday, and Elvin Jones..."

Woods tends to separate his oeuvre into clear bodies of work which may conveniently be categorized by medium - or perhaps more accurately, by humour. He can be boisterously funny in Babbie performances, high-mindedly serious in the painting, and emotionally eclectic in his choice of images for making video tapes. Woods' video tapes, like his 1988-89 *Sanctuary of the Heart* included in this exhibition, adapt textural and thematic motives of his painting, and combine them with his own music.

CW: "...trying to create something that helps us look into ourselves...questioning our emotions and desires...art making as a form of teaching (oneself)...not about pictures as a commodity..." ■

<sup>1</sup> Gerver, "Chris Woods," *artscanada* (Spring 1972): pp.26-29

<sup>2</sup> Packer, "Five Young Artists," *Financial Times*, London (18 September 1974)





## MICHAEL FERNANDES, 1991

A lazy whistle from an overhead speaker catches your attention as you walk by a Gottingen Street store front. The entire exhibition is visible through the window. An elevated, empty plywood coffin has the ends taken off so you can see out the other side. There is a text in white Letrasign on the floor:

I Know what you  
guys are up to  
so keep it down  
I am trying to sleep

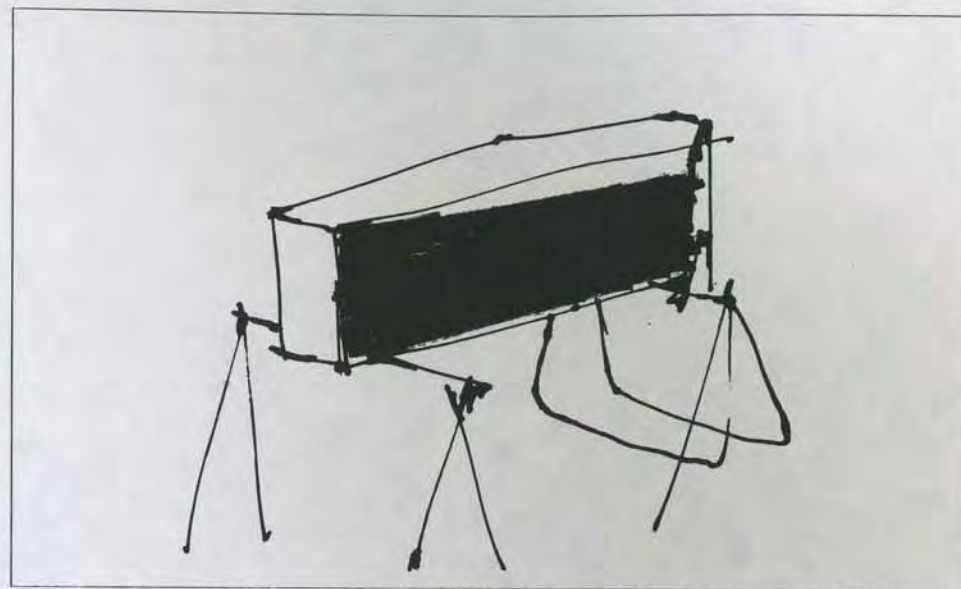
At the window an LED machine flashes orange/red messages, advertising slogans, and aphorisms:

Fat smoke is history  
Because there is more to hair care than meets the eye  
The best costs no more  
The pain is real  
Today we saved a life  
Its like slowly being burned alive  
Family fitness  
Everybody's got a dream  
Coming through with flying colours  
Your comfort is our business  
Thanks to you they are learning, keep up the good works  
How you are playing with power  
Get out of town by sundown  
The taste is gonna move you...

(Note: quotations are from a 1987 interview first published as a computer disk for a Fernandes exhibition at the Art Gallery, Mount Saint Vincent University).

CE: You don't get this work fast...

MF: I don't think you can. I don't work on them fast. I like holding on to a certain amount of time, releasing it in a certain way: it is time-release work. You don't get it right away, and I don't get it right away, so there are levels to it. It gradually unfolds itself. When it is successful, the work finds itself and you in it. At the onset, in encountering the work, familiarity with certain elements comes first, and identification follows. As viewers enter the work, at first I want them to feel familiar.



*a coffin by M.F.*



Once a painter, Fernandes has used borrowed images and texts from mass-media sources in installations and multi-media works for about fifteen years. He is unpredictable in his use of objects, sometimes recycling bits from previous installations in addition to inventing new objects and arrangements. For example, the hand-made coffin with the ends removed in this exhibition first appeared at Mount Saint Vincent University Art Gallery in 1987: a version of this coffin also appeared in an exhibition at Power Plant in Toronto and subsequently at the Owens Art Gallery in Sackville (at the time of writing).

Fernandes presents a disjunctive experience. All decisions, like the installations themselves, are made within a framework of three-dimensional real space which admits the world - including the world of mass-media - into a viewer's calculations about the work's meaning:

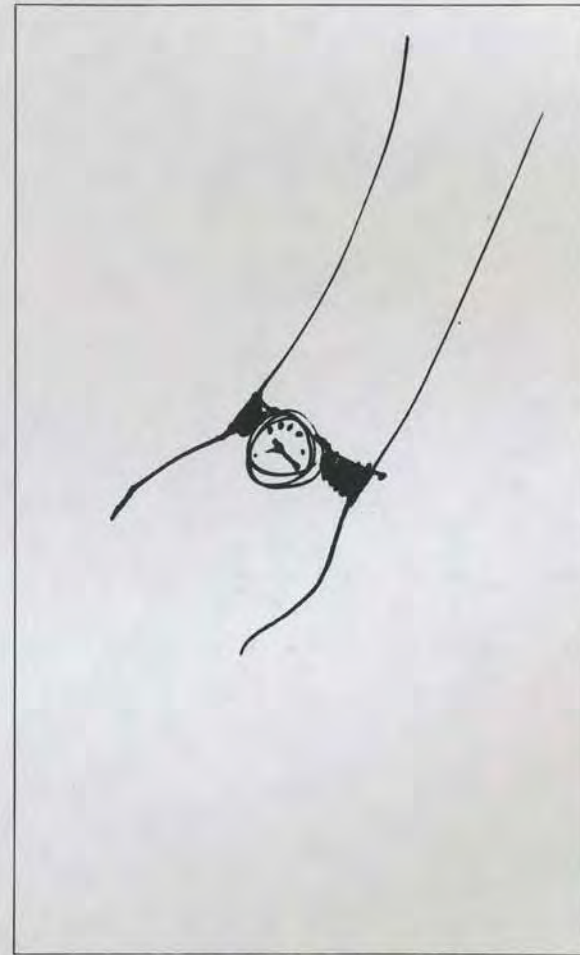
...As early as 1975, Fernandes used mass media imagery and texts to explore issues of personal and collective exotica, focusing on those elements of cultural difference and similarity. Throughout his career, in his paintings, photo-text works, books, installations, and sound works, Fernandes has pursued his art out of personal curiosity rather than from a theoretical premise. Though his various works look like products of vanguardist intentions, Fernandes seems to have been too immersed in his own experience of the culture and available materials to worry about finding the historic and contemporary justifications for his interests...

Ron Shuebrook, *News from Nova Scotia* catalogue, The Art Gallery at Harbourfront, 1985, p.7

Fernandes' method seems to be to assign value, make associations, and invent elements as the work is installed. Everything is provisional. The installations are not fully articulated "extended-objects" or resolved "sculptures" positioned in a space.

Fernandes does have a discernable set of interests, however, a conceptual framework and a way of constructing work:

Michael Fernandes often relies on polemical constructs like 'us' and 'them' to provoke self-recognition in the viewer. His installation works establish a setting which is more akin to an artist's studio or home than a gallery. The work has a sense of improvisation and literalism which results in an intimacy and directness and which opposes the packaged, the streamlined and simulated... One could



Michael's watch.



say, at least metaphorically, that this work is in the first person, present tense, and that it stands against the facade and the spectacle in favour of activism. Fernandes wishes to return us to a confrontation with valuation and to formulate a critique based on the local as opposed to the formal and 'universal'.

Stephen Horne, *Territories* catalogue, Eye Level Gallery and YYZ, 1985, p.11

The work is generally read as being "critical" or "polemical", always vaguely social and general in its address. For some, Fernandes' oblique approach is interpreted as a lack of political will, liberalism, or intellectual obscurantism. Everyday life is addressed directly, and yet many viewers feel they have no means of entering Fernandes' excerpts from this daily life, any more, perhaps, than they have a means of entering the construction of the advertising slogans the artist borrows.

Fernandes would like us to attend to every moment. There is no quick message. Attention takes time. His text on the floor of the gallery: I Know/what you guys are up to /so keep it down /I am trying to sleep, as likely as not is meant as a reference to the unconsciousness with which we sleep walk through everyday life (in an earlier tape, the word "unconsciousness" is repeated in sentences almost like a mantra).

In the past fifteen years Fernandes has distributed his imagery carefully across Canada's alternate gallery system, from Victoria, to Saskatoon, to Toronto, Halifax, Toronto, and Sackville. Only the artist has a real grasp of the variety of his own work: a writer is left to piece together bits of documentation with the occasional reference in art magazines. Fernandes will not let his work settle on two or three points that a reviewer can glibly reiterate:

MF: You get a drift of something. You have some idea. I always try to have something so that if you are interested further the tape opens up to be something else.

I hear myself thinking in the work and then I watch it...I'm a witness to my own work. There's a point where I catch myself witnessing and then I say 'oh yeah, this is how I sense this' and then I'll put that down. What that does is to make listening and being a part of it closer. It's like all of a sudden you realize you're pulled in. There are always hooks in them.

Like someone thinking 'what's going on here?' Yeah, I've had that...that happens even with painting. With installation work, there is more space to get lost in. Some people are not helped by that.



I want these works to continue to form after they are seen. Paintings seem to stay on the wall; my installation works are talking about a change that is active. You can go away and still work on it.

CE: Could you bring the same attention you give to installations to walking down the street?

MF: That's good; that's where it comes from originally. I'm not going to it from one particular point of view. In the street the thinking is not of the street - sometimes it is. I walk down the street not quite being where I am, so sometimes those states are reflected in the work. I'm more interested in things that are not only pertinent to making art work but to making life work. There's no difference between the two. I find that when I'm not in the moment, I miss things ■



## CARL ZIMMERMAN, 1991

Eight points of reference for the recent work of Carl Zimmerman, with quotations from the artist:

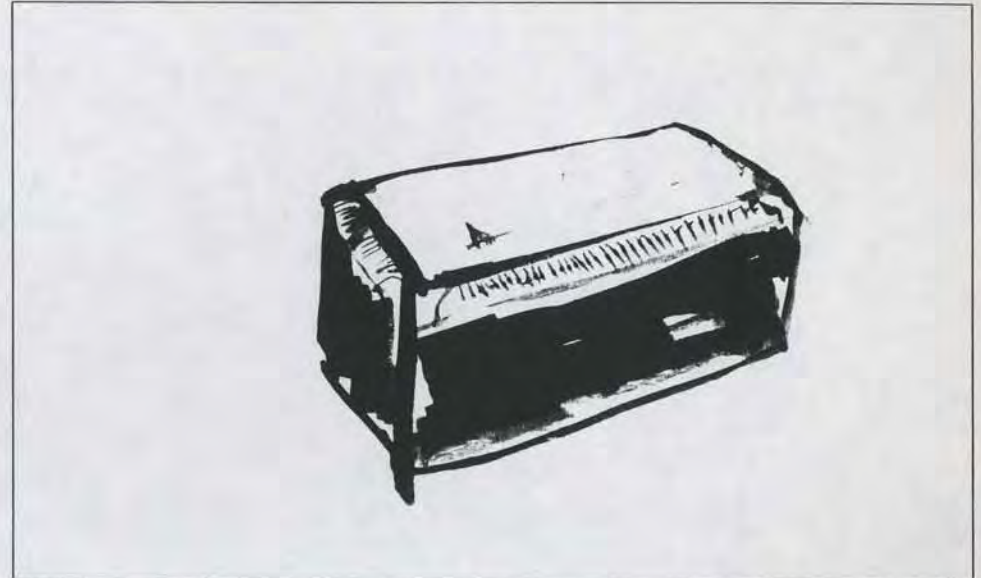
1) Power politics, not photography, dominated opening night discussion about Carl Zimmerman's work at the Nova Scotia Photo Co-op. Several gallery-goers attempted with little success to divine the artist's personal feelings about power and the '30s as evoked in his references to streamlined engineering and hydro-dams. The insinuation was that art about power in the '30s should address fascism explicitly, obviously something the artist had no interest in doing. Not only power emblems from the '30s, but minimalist power emblems of the '60s suffused the exhibition. As critics like Anna C. Clave have recently re-read it, minimalist art has always been concerned with expressions of power. Zimmerman's minimalist medium seems perfectly symmetrical with his "power" subject matter.

CZ: There is no doubt that the immediate post-war period in which I grew up was essentially a different world from our present world, a world still bathed in the late afternoon haze of pre-war positivism. If I could categorize the time since, I would say that the cold light of day has exposed the emptiness of almost every ideal...

2) Nobody seems to know exactly what photography is: this confusion was deepened by 1989's big 150-year retrospective exhibitions of photography. Photography's terrain is too big and too amorphous to parcel out in a few exhibitions, however huge and ambitious they might be, so the curators of these exhibitions decided to confine the work to the infinitesimally tiny band width of the spectrum we call "high art photography".

Personified, photography has a fascist's totality of vision, leaving the traces of its technique (see Jacques Ellul on "technique") on the tiniest silicon chip and the biggest billboard. The Nova Scotia Photo Coop has recently sponsored a splendid series of tiny exhibitions which question photography at its edges: in sculpture/installation like Zimmerman's, in painting like Gerald Ferguson's, and in installation art like Marcus Miller's recent show.

CZ: The American dream saw man in control of life on every front. Images of technology and transportation decorated the friezes of classically - inspired public buildings - at once appealing to both traditional authority and the order of the classical past. A similar vision was seen in the monumental building programs by Albert Speer in Nazi Germany....





3) What has not been photographed? The production of billions of photographs results in the dumping of billions of kilos of toxic chemicals into the environment - a James Bay Dam's worth of chemical waste spewed out by photographic processing companies every year. As a photographer, Zimmerman uses materials very sparingly - as photocopies: no photo emulsion is used in this work. (What are the environmental dangers associated photocopy toner, you ask.)

CZ: While Germany and Italy looked to the past, America looked also to technology and a vision of the future. Dam construction and the development of hydro-electric power under the New Deal (T.V.A.) created the largest structures up until that time ever built. These projects were the symbolic American counterparts to Germany's great halls and stadia....

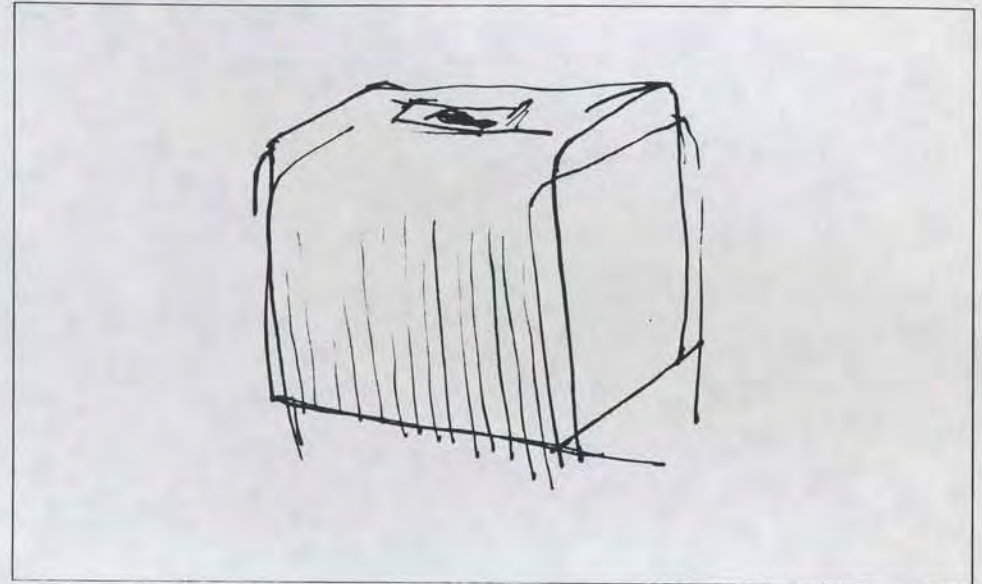
4) Zimmerman's installation reminds me of a room for the Ark of the Covenant, not the real one, but the cartoon version in the movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. A secular room meant to stir a viewer's feelings about many forms of power: electrical, fascistic and aesthetic...

CZ: The face of technology itself was moulded accordingly. The clean windswept lines of 'streamform' styling embodied ideas of speed, power, progress, and the world was redesigned (everything from vacuum cleaners and radios to cars and trains) according to the futurist aesthetic. The theme achieved its zenith at *The World of Tomorrow* World's Fair in New York in 1939....

5) He affixes photocopies of water to individual bases ("tiered structures" and "hydrostats") - handcrafted things made of lead, plywood, paint, etc., placed on a wood-slatted base. This structure: table, base, and photograph, like Brancusi's series of plinths, elevates photographs as objects, and carries the viewer through a procession of viewing as the support of a photograph is built up and transposed into a stepped reliquary.

CZ: America, no less than Germany or the Soviet Union, built a dream of along the Biblical proportions of a new Jerusalem: one has to consider the 'naïvete' of these evangelical promises and impossible expectations....

6) The gently rounded, streamlined elegance of Zimmerman's "hydrostats" bespeaks a pre-war era of speed and weight (however quaint it may seem today), the '30s and '40s, an era when sheer scale, as embodied in the hydro





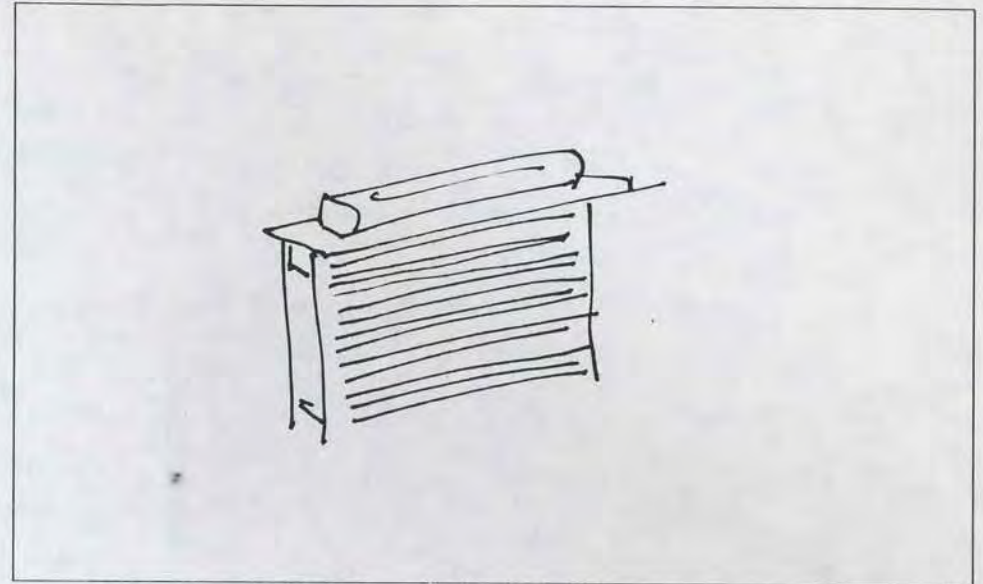
projects of America and Russia, was readily comprehensible. By contrast, no individual can imagine the scale of contemporary life.

CZ: The development of dams and water systems, once emblematic of the rise of this and former eras, now represents the complexity of current economic and environmental concerns....

7) To some photographers, Zimmerman's objects might read like overwrought frames or ponderous vehicles, especially seeing as they are being exhibited in a photo gallery. The work of the artist Alan Belcher, who also makes photo/objects, may come to mind. Zimmerman's shrine to power is constructed in the language of minimalism, and attempts to express the artist's misgivings about an object of worship.

CZ: Although I was essentially not interested in the basic tenets and direction of minimalism, minimalism seemed to accommodate alternate readings for me; minimalist reductiveness, minimalism's concern for materials and integrity of approach begin to make sense in terms of my own experience and environment (living rural Cape Breton). In many ways the minimalist program offered to uncover the essential self, the essential community...

8) Zimmerman's evocation of Stalin-era and New Deal power generation suggests a transaction where the limitless (!) generosity of nature is wrestled into use by means of limitless supplies of cheap even slave labour. Stalin's workers in the Soviet Union and North American Depression-era work-camp labourers figured too heavily in utopian power schemes. Zimmerman consolidates a number of misgivings about several kinds of power in this exhibition. I see a little shrine to workers in Zimmerman's installation ■

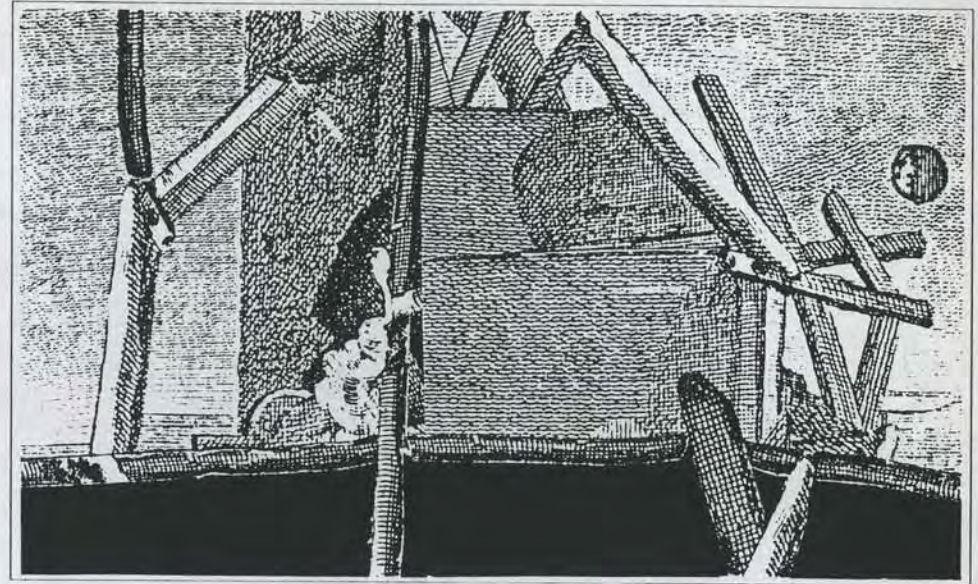




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1988 CLIFF EYLAND: OCEAN PLAYGROUND, Robin Metcalfe, *ArtsAtlantic* 32, pp.52-53; CATALOGUE, LUBLIN/HALIFAX EXCHANGE; EYE LEVEL GALLERY, *Parallogramme*, April/May, p.54; ARTIST'S ART, quoted in catalogue essay by Gemey Kelly, Dalhousie Art Gallery; EYLAND'S NEW EXHIBITION, Elissa Bernard, *Mail-Star/Chronicle-Herald*, 17 February, p. 2-E; MICHAEL FERNANDES by Barbara Lounder (review of exhibition) *ArtsAtlantic* 30, p.3

1987 EVENTS, (report of a panel discussion) *ArtsAtlantic* 28, p.60

1986 CLIFF EYLAND by Robin Metcalfe (review) *ArtsAtlantic* 25, p.5

1984 CLIFF EYLAND by Charlotte Townsend-Gault, (review) *Vanguard*, March, pp.48-49

1983 NOTES ON THE WORK, Jan Peacock, APPROPRIATION/EXPROPRIATION catalogue, M.S.V.U. Gallery, p.12

### Curatorial (other than the TUNS School of Architecture)

1990 TEACHING/PRACTICE; ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION AND THE VISUAL ARTS Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax; AFFLICTIONS AND CURES, (CHRIS WOODS), Saint Mary's University Art Gallery, Halifax; CHARLIE MURPHY, M.S.V.U. Art Gallery; THEIRRY DELVA, M.S.V.U. Art Gallery

1989 THE PLACE OF WORK, Royal Architectural Institute of Canada conference and exhibition (with Brent Ash), Winnipeg, Halifax, Toronto, Hamilton, Montreal, etc.; ATQUE ARS, ART FROM MOUNT ALLISON, 1854-1989 (with Gemey Kelly and Charlotte Townsend-Gault) Owens Art Gallery, Sackville

1988 CATHERINE GALLAGHER, Anna Leonowens Gallery

1987 MICHAEL FERNANDES; RECENT WORK, M.S.V.U. Art Gallery  
 1985 PRIMER FOR WAR, Jamelie Hassan, M.S.V.U. Art Gallery; PETER KIRBY/LESLIE SAMPSON, M.S.V.U. Art Gallery

1984 PAMELA RITCHIE; CANCELLED ICONS, M.S.V.U. Gallery

1983 LOCATIONS/NATIONAL HALIFAX, Eye Level Gallery

1982 JOE CLARENCE DRAWINGS FROM JAMAICA, Anna Leonowens Gallery ■