

Universities Art Association of Canada
Report on the 1980 Annual Meeting, Ottawa, Ontario,
12-15 March 1980
Association d'art des universités du Canada

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Report on the 1980 Annual Meeting
 Ottawa, Ontario, 12-15 March 1980

The annual meeting of the Universities Art Association of Canada, held at the National Gallery of Canada, featured papers and panels on historic and current art. Three sessions concerned with contemporary art were co-sponsored by the Canadian chapter of the International Association of Art Critics/Association internationale des critiques d'art. Many papers focused upon works in the National Gallery of Canada in order to celebrate the centenary of that institution.

Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque Art

MYRA NAN ROSENFELD, Montréal Museum of Fine Arts, Chairperson

Alain Laframboise, Université de Montréal, began the meeting with *Le Gentilhomme d'Ottawa: une réponse de Bronzino à l'Inchiesta de Varchi*. Bronzino's reply to Vardi's celebrated survey of 1546, asking leading artists to comment on the relative merits of painting and sculpture, can be found in part in his paintings. The nature of Bronzino's portraits of 1535-55, particularly the *Gentleman* in the National Gallery of Canada, demonstrate his conviction in the superiority of painting as a means of imitating nature.

In *Isabella d'Este: Guglielmo and Ludovico Gonzaga and the Grotto in the Ducal Palace*, Clifford M. Brown, Carleton University, used unpublished documents pertaining to litigation between the two Gonzagas to shed new light on their famed grandmother's career as a patroness and collector of the arts. The men's dispute centred around Isabella's famed collection contained in those rooms of her palace known as the Grotta.

It is well known that *Rubens's Entombment at Ottawa* is a free adaptation of Caravaggio's Roman altarpiece of 1601-03. Thomas L. Glen, McGill University, reconsidered the painting in the context of Rubens's own altarpieces of 1609-20, addressing such questions as why and where the *Entombment* was painted, and how Caravaggio's iconography was changed.

Joel Brink, University of British Columbia, spoke on *Form and Content in an Orvietan Altarpiece by Simone Martini: The Original Physical and Iconographical Context of the Ottawa St. Catherine of Alexandria*. He showed how technical and iconographic investigations have revealed that the Ottawa panel by Simone Martini (Fig. 1)

once formed a part of an elaborate gabled triptych in Orvieto. Another surviving panel from the dismantled altarpiece is the *Madonna and Child with Angels and Redeemer* in the Opera del Duomo in Orvieto.

Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Art

GEORGE KNOX, University of British Columbia, Chairperson

In *Richard Wilson and Twickenham*, David Solkin, University of British Columbia, explored the various levels of meaning inherent in Richard Wilson's *View on the Thames near Twickenham* (ca. 1760-62). He explained the various readable symbols in the painting, and showed its many profoundly classical connotations that



FIGURE 1. Simone Martini, *St. Catherine of Alexandria*, ca. 1320. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada (Photo: National Gallery of Canada).

would have been understood by a sophisticated audience.

Pierre du Prey, Queen's University, introduced Soane's *Museum for the Society of Dilettanti*. He showed the sources of this design in classical architecture, placed it into the development of museums, and suggested that it reflected a 'Dilettanti/Grand Tour' style.

The depiction of architecture in the paintings of J.M.W. Turner, as well as Turner's work as an architectural designer, were introduced by Rhodri Liscombe, University of British Columbia. In *Turner's Architecture* he showed the relationship between backgrounds and new buildings, including relating Turner's various designs for picture galleries to the work of Soane.

John Constable's *Geometric Analysis of the Woof of Iris in the Context of English Rainbow Theory* was the subject of a paper by Paul D. Schweitzer, St. Lawrence University. He demonstrated how the rainbow in Constable's *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows* deliberately violated the laws of optics, relating this to the confusion of the time over the number of fundamental colours in the 'woof of Iris.'

Eve Kliman, University of Waterloo, illustrated Delacroix's explorations in physiognomy and showed his preoccupation with comparisons between men and lions. In *Delacroix's Lions and Tigers: Romantic Self-projection Re-examined*, she explored the traditions in the history of thought revealed by the artist's interest in feline creatures.

Art of the Twentieth Century

FERNANDE SAINT-MARTIN, Université du Québec à Montréal, Chairperson

Nicole Dubreuil-Blondin, Université de Montréal, addressed the two levels of reference found in painting: the reflection of painting as painting itself, and painting seen as an arbitrary system of signs. In *El Lissitzky et la figuration utopique*, she analyzed these two

levels in the works of the Russian painter, showing the first one in his development of new techniques, and the second in his desire to build a new model for society.

Charred Beloved II (1946) d'Arshile Gorky, by François-Marc Gagnon, Université de Montréal, discussed the painting in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada. He contrasted it with *Charred Beloved I* in Chicago and other paintings of the period 1945-46, and showed how Gorky's new reductive process was crucial to his own work and to American painting.

David Burnett, Carleton University, explained the significance of the shift in Barnett Newman's work evident in *The Way I (1951)* in Ottawa. In *Barnett Newman: The Way I*, he showed the assertion of a new kind of pictorial space in this pivotal painting. It is seen in the more pronounced assertion of the centre of the picture with its elimination of dialogue between figure and ground.

Patricia Vervoort, Lakehead University, spoke on *Klimt's Hope I: An Iconographical Interpretation*. She identified the various themes and motifs in the Ottawa painting of 1903 (Fig. 2), and suggested that its sources lie in historical iconography, but that Klimt's imaginative and erotic transformation of the theme obscures his conventionality.

Canadian Art History BRENDEN LANGFORD,
Nova Scotia College of Art and Design,
Chairperson

In *Morrice and his Critics*, Ghislain Clermont, Université de Moncton, explored how Canadian and European critics reacted to the paintings of J.W. Morrice, particularly during his 'golden years' of 1900-14 when he exhibited often and became an international figure. Critics appreciated the harmony and delicacy of his work, and linked him with European movements such as Impressionism.

Peter Larisey, Carleton University, addressed the meeting on *Mind over Nature: Lauren S. Harris's Abstract Painting No. 20*. He showed the progressive development of *Abstract Painting No. 20* (completed in 1945) in the context of Harris's efforts to paint abstraction, and speculated that the final work is a record of the tensions of the war as viewed from a Theosophical perspective.

Death and Ethnicity: Swiss-German Mennonite Gravestones of the 'Pennsylvania Style' (1804-1851) in the Waterloo Region, Ontario was the title of a paper delivered by Nancy-Lou Patterson, University of Waterloo. She described certain repeated motifs in gravestones found in eight Ontario cemeteries, and traced their origins to Pennsylvania.

The careers and landscape paintings of Florence Mary Rogers and H.R.H. Princess Louise were introduced by Helen J. Dow, University of Guelph. In *Two Canadian Women Painters*, she discussed the significance of both artists in the development of Canadian painting.



FIGURE 2. Gustav Klimt, *Hope I*, 1903. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada (Photo: National Gallery of Canada).



FIGURE 3. Odilon Redon, *Pégase captif*, 1889. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada (Photo: National Gallery of Canada).

Slides of Canadian Art and Architecture
NANCY KIRKPATRICK, York University,
Chairperson

Participants sought information on sources of slides of Canadian art, and lamented the lack of any uniform classification system. They expressed pleasure at the continued publication of *Positive: A Newsletter for Slide and Photograph Curators of Visual Art in Canada*, launched in 1977.

Cathy Goldsmith, Art Gallery of Ontario, discussed sources of documentation for slides. Kathleen Perry, Concordia University, suggested that the list of artists and engravers presented in the 1979 colloquium *Art and the Computer* (Public Archives of Canada) will prove useful in cataloguing slides.

Methodological Approaches to Art History
GUY P.R. MÉTRAUX, York University,
Chairperson

George Swinton, Carleton University, began the session with *Art and the World of Ideas*. He charged that traditional methods of art history are inadequate for the study of native and folk arts. These art forms, he contended, must be understood as the sensory and intellectual expressions of people having no word for 'art,' yet in whose life art plays important functions. Their study must place greater emphasis on the world of ideas inherent in their own cultures.

The 1830s and 1840s in France and England witnessed an 'image explosion' of cheap popular prints and photography. Because of this, suggested Gerald Needham, York University, in *'Influences' on Painting of the Mid-nineteenth Century*, the examination of 'influences' in terms of individual paintings, specific artists, and 'high art' is an inadequate way in which to approach the art of the period. The influence of popular graphic art must be considered in the study of the Impressionists and their contemporaries.

Mark H. Sandler, State University of New York at Potsdam, spoke on *Images from Heian Literature in the Popular Arts of the Edo Period*. He showed how Japanese art of the Edo period (1600-1868) developed a cultural iconography out of the literature of the late Heian period (ca. 900-1185), in part as a reminder of Japan's past grandeur.

Leslie Dawn, University of British Columbia, spoke on *Aspects of Primitive Thought in the Stone and Metal Work of Constantin Brancusi*. She applied the structuralist methodology of Claude Lévi-Strauss to the sculpture of Brancusi as a way of establishing new relationships between his works and revealing an integrated mythological universe.

Prints and Drawings in the Collection of the National Gallery
DOUGLAS DRUICK,
National Gallery of Canada, Chairperson

Mimi Cazort, National Gallery of Canada, examined *The Relationship between Bologna and Venice in the Eighteenth Century as seen in Drawings*. Venetian artists were trained in Bologna, and the current between the two cities was reversed after mid-century, only to fall into a pan-European style around 1780. Dissemination of influence through drawings would be effected mainly by etched or engraved separate sheets or illustrated books, the latter requiring close collaboration between artists and their publishers, mainly in Rome.

In a more iconographical vein, Roger J. Mesley, University of Guelph, addressed the problems arising from a charcoal drawing in the National Gallery (Fig. 3) in *Odilon Redon's Pégase captif Drawing: Towards an Apotheosis of Mallarmé?* His point of reference was Redon's 1898 lithograph, *Le Poète et le Pégase*, in order to elucidate the development of motifs and to demonstrate the inadequacy of present titles. He concluded that the lithograph is one of several artistic memorials inspired by texts of Mallarmé.

Robert J. Lamb, Carleton University, investigated the career of *James Kerr-Lawson: An Expatriate Painter-Graver*. Kerr-Lawson (1862-1939) is remembered for his decorative panels and the prints after them – the scenes from Italy, Spain, and the War Memorials that earned him the sobriquet of the English Canaletto. A founding member of the Senefelder Club dedicated to the revival of artistic lithography, he also lithographed many bust-length portraits of associates from the fields of art and literature.

Douglas Druick investigated *Courbet's Association with Émile Lassalle: Uses and Abuses of Reproductive Lithography in Nineteenth-century France*. He used this collaboration of painter and lithographer as a case history of the infidelity of reproductive printmaking. While Courbet's landscapes and hunting scenes enjoyed considerable success once transposed into prints, his more 'realistic' works did less well.

Recent Canadian Contemporary Acquisitions at the National Gallery
ERIC CAMERON, Nova Scotia
College of Art and Design, Chairperson

Recent acquisitions by three artists were discussed and analyzed at length. This session, like several others, was held in the galleries, where the audience was able to examine the actual works of art. Georges Bogardi, Université Laval, addressed *Betty Goodwin's Tarpaulin*

FIGURE 4. Robin Collyer, *Without the Concepts of Space and Time*, 1976. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada (Photo: National Gallery of Canada).

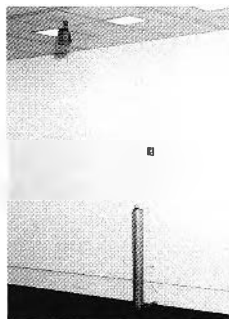


FIGURE 5. Allan Ramsay, *Portrait of Mrs. Lindesay of Eaglescarnie*. X-ray photograph (Photo: National Gallery of Canada).

No. 3, 1975. Alan Sondheim, University of Ottawa, introduced *Robin Collyer's Recent Sculptures: Without the Concepts of Space and Time*, 1976, *We Can Build Belief Systems*, 1976 (Fig. 4). Chantal Pontbriand, *Parachute*, spoke on *Pierre Boogaerts: propositions à partir d'un travail photographique*.

The Balance Between Science and Connoisseurship: Conservation IAN S. HODKINSON, Queen's University, Chairperson

J. MacGregor Grant, National Gallery of Canada, spoke on *The Use of X-Rays, Ultraviolet, and Infrared in the Examination of Paintings*. He explained how x-rays allow the study of a painting's in-depth structure, including design changes, restored paint losses, and earlier under-paintings (Fig. 5). Infrared examination may reveal features such as restorations and over-paints. Ultraviolet radiation can show the extent of old varnish remains and the presence of recent retouchings. All three non-destructive techniques provide valuable information for the art historian.

John Taylor followed with a talk entitled *Instrumental Analysis of Painted Works of Art: Possibilities and Limitations*. He showed how the analysis of pigments and media present in paintings can yield additional important information.

The support forms an integral part of a painting, and plays a vital role in its preservation. Ursus Dix, National Gallery of Canada, spoke on *The Hazards of Painting Support Treatment*. He explained the merits and disadvantages of various current practices, including strip-lining, lining with adhesives, marouflage, transfer, panel repair, laminating, and cradling.

Ian S. Hodkinson concluded the session with *Cleaning and Varnish Removal: Restoration or Ruination*. He warned that the removal of deteriorated surface coatings presents a hazardous operation, and examined the problem from technical, historical, aesthetic, and ethical points of view.

The Role of the National Gallery of Canada VIRGIL HAMMOCK, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Chairperson

Three panelists made introductory statements which led to a lively but inconclusive question-and-answer

period. Robert H. Hubbard, Government House, opened the session with an overview of the development of the National Gallery of Canada. Shawn Murphy, National Museums of Canada, explained the mandate of the corporation's board of trustees, and discussed some of their projects, including the as-yet unsuccessful efforts to provide a new building for the National Gallery of Canada. David Burnett, Carleton University, posed two questions which must be answered in order to define the priorities of the Gallery: is it a repository of art, and is it an institution dedicated to the spread and promotion of art?

Public Art ANDRÉE PARADIS, *Vie des Arts*, Chairperson

Five speakers addressed various topics related to public art in Canada. J. McNiven, National Capital Commission, revealed that the commission has conducted sculpture walks in the Ottawa area since 1978, viewing art as a part of the public space. Laurent Lamy, Montréal, talked about the art-support programmes of large corporations, including a discussion of certain tax advantages on purchases and sales of art. He gave details of the efforts of the National Bank of Canada and Imperial Oil Limited. Chris Youngs, Art Bank, explained the priorities of his own agency. Denis Castonguay, Public Archives of Canada, spoke on *Computers and Public Access to Art*. He discussed the Archives' efforts to formulate standards for describing art objects, and the investigation of new techniques such as videodisc, fibre optics, and Telidon, in order to reproduce and spread the arts. Raymond Vézina, Public Archives of Canada, gave a paper entitled *Les arts de la rue: projet d'étude-carrefour*. He traced the role of the street in providing an environment for the arts.

Promotion of Canadian Art Abroad LUKE ROMBOUT, Vancouver Art Gallery, Chairperson

William Withrow, Art Gallery of Ontario, and Geoffrey James, Canada Council, addressed the audience on the topic of the session. Two conclusions that emerged were that Canadians should establish their own contacts with foreign institutions, and that it is better to prepare shows on individual artists and themes rather than on surveys of Canadian art.