

Book Review

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COLLAPSE #3

THE VIEW FROM HERE
HOME IMPROVE-
MENTS

INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER
PERVERSIONS, 224 PP.

Vancouver Art Forum Society,
Judith Mastai, John O'Brian, edi-
tors, Nathan Printing Services,
Burnaby, B.C., U.B.C. Press
Dec., 1997, ISBN: 1203-3286,
http://home.istar.ca/~collapse

The contributors to this third edition of *Collapse* collectively suggest that the arts, and in particular the visual arts, play an important role in registering relationships to authority and institutions at the end of the twentieth century. The sub-title suggests that there is always room for improvement and that a perversity of institutions occurs when stasis turns them inward toward self-sustenance.

A chapter with the same title as Mark Lewis' recent film *Upside Down Touch of Evil*, is factual and ironic, yet still not cynical. Reesa Greenberg's essay, *Defining Canada* prepares the way for one definition to supplant yet another definition, in the same way that Western institutions have become estranged from Utopian origins.

Sue Malvern writes on nations that supplement lack of identity "through endless "self-representation", through the images of monarchy, royal tours and a cuisine of coronations." The self-protective mechanisms of bureaucracy and the apparent logic of technology, that provide a "falsified openness", corrupting the self proclaimed transparency of museums, universities and public institutions, are explored by these contributors, subtly attentive to the paradoxes and counterfeits of institutions.

COLLAPSE # 3 CONTAINS ESSAYS
BY :

Christopher Brayshaw: "A Substrata of Disaster"; Colin Browne: *Taking Pictures So I Remember*; Jim-me Yoon: *Group of Sixty Seven*; Grant Arnold: *Purism*, *Heterogeneity and the Group of Sixty Seven*; Jon Bird: with Katherine Gretzinger about Three Public Art Projects in Vancouver; Heather Dawkins: *Embodied Histories and the Critical Stories of Art*; Sue Malvern: *Narrating Modernism, Imagining Nations: Museums of Modern Art at the End of the Millennium*; and Ardele Lister: *an interview with Leslie Tonkonow*.

NAMING A PRACTICE: CURATORIAL STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE

Walter Phillip Gallery Editions, 1996,
Banff Centre Press, 280 pp.
The Banff Centre for the Arts,
ISBN 0-920159-84-2.

A compilation of texts from a national perspective by participants in this 1994 session, publication coordinated by Peter White. An introductory text by Scott Watson: *The Past of Our Practice: A Note on the 1960's*, the traditional role of curator and the institution are revisited. The future present is examined in a commentary by Tom Hill, *Local Knowledge/New Internationalism*, and in essays by Jamelie Hassan: "Dodge Ball": *Cultural Differences and Local Knowledge*; Mathew Teitelbaum: *Notes on the Meeting of Cultures*; Henry Tsang: *Community Building and the Chinese Cultural Centre in Vancouver*; Joan Borsa: *Nomadic Locations, Travelling Subjects: Affirmations of Autobiographical Acts*; Sunil Gupta: *Curating the "New International Visual Arts; On Methodologies* texts are by: Rosemary Donegan, Sharo Brooks, Renee Baert, Karen Atkinson, Sara Diamond, Judith Mastai and Bruce Grenville. *Negotiations*, is introduced by Sylvie Fortin with texts by Wayne Baerwaldt, Barbara Fischer, Nicole Gingras and Scott Marsden, explores interventions, spaces, voices, sites and communities. *Ethics* are treated by Lorne Falk, Jennifer Fisher, France Gascon, Sylvie Gilbert, Evelyn Nicodemus and Keith Wallace. In conclusion, Daina Augaitis, in a section on Response, with Johanne Lamoureux and Richard Fung, discuss existing gaps in the system and the making of changes.

M. Molter

GOT LOST / A'JANA'ZHAYA : TRADITIONS / NEW VISIONS

by Curator Ann Smith, Contemporary Art by Yukon artists, Keith Wolfe Smarch, Ann Smith, Mrs. Kitty Smith and Jacqueline Worrell, Walter Phillips Gallery, The Banff Centre, February 12-April 5.

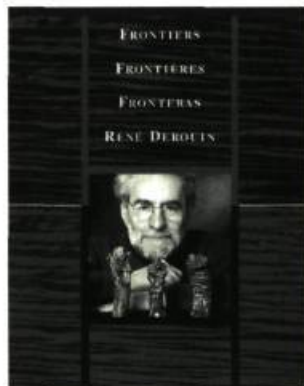
This exhibition is the second in an ongoing series at the Walter Phillips Gallery in collaboration with the Aboriginal Arts Program in partnership with the Aboriginal Film and Video Alliance and The Banff Centre for the Arts intended to provide professional development and program opportunities for Aboriginal artists and curators. It is based on a shared commitment to foster self-government within the arts for aboriginal peoples. The opening featured prayers and a Smudge Dance - Elder Grace Daniels; a Round Dance by the Broken Knife Drummers and Singers,

and a film screening of *Picturing a People: George Johnston, Tlingit Photographer*, by Carol Geddes.

Aboriginal programs this season include: Chinook Winds III, Aboriginal Dance Project, June 7-July 19, 1998. "Cultures Around the Fire: From the Mayan to the Inuit" "A human being who has a vision is not able to use the power of it until after they have performed this vision on earth for people to see": Black Elk, Oglala Sioux.

FRONTIERS, FRONTIÈRES, FRONTERAS: RENÉ DEROUIN

Patricia Ainslie; Jeanne Watson, editor, 160 pp., Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1998, Sundog Printing Ltd., ISBN 1-895379-11-3



This exhibition catalogue provides a unique perspective on the international importance of the artist's work and an understanding of its influences. Produced by The Glenbow Museum, Calgary, in association with the exhibition of the same name, curated by Patricia Ainslie, Vice President, collections, the text explores Drouin's recurrent themes of land, memory and migration. Drouin's employment of nature to explore concepts of time, place, culture and personal identity, and the impact of the St. Lawrence, the Laurentians, James Bay and Mexico integral to his work are revealed.

In 1994, the donation of 300 works, mostly blockprints, to the Glenbow Museum from 19 donors, was the catalyst to this exhibition. The Glenbow's already vast collection of blockprints is particularly suited to the production of such a vast exhibition, with work in prints, paintings, photographs, books, videos and installations. Drouin was first introduced to the colour woodprint process when he attended a symposium at the University of Calgary in 1967, led by the Japanese master printer Toshii Yoshida. Drouin has since frequently presented his own workshops and exhibited in Calgary. The catalogue draws upon literary

sources and Quebec origins in an introduction, followed by chapters on: *Migration*: with reference to Mexico, the U.S., and equinox; *Land*: Munakata's inspiration, Consolidation, Suite Nordique and Nouveau Québec; *Memory*: Finding a Voice, Cobra, Return to Mexico and Fleuve-Mémoires; and *Integration* with notes, bibliography, chronology and list of works. In English and French, with 18 colour prints, 47 black and white prints and illustrative photographs.

CHINOOK WINDS: ABORIGINAL DANCE PROJECT, A DANCE, A BOOK, A CELEBRATION

5 1/2 x 7", 96 pp., 76, bl. & wh. and with 5 duotone photographs,
ISBN 1-896923-02-X / 10.95 \$
A 7th Generation Books /
Banff Centre Press Book

AFVAA and Banff Centre C D release *Hearts of the Nations*, *Aboriginal Women's Voices*, Artistic Director, Sadie Buck, 19.99 \$ + 5.00 \$ shipping, available through Sweet Grass Records, PO Box 23022, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7J 5H3.

PLAIN TRUTH

WORKS BY EARLY PHOTOGRAPHERS AND FILMMAKERS

Mendel Art Gallery, 1998, 90 pp.
ISBN 1-896359-19-1,
Dan Ring, Keith Bell, Sheila Petty

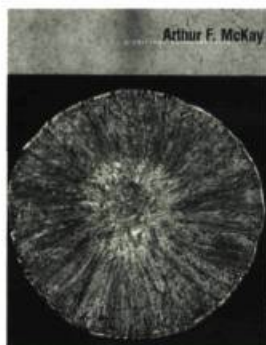
Glenbow Museum, Calgary, to Aug. 13;
MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina,
Sept. 11-Nov. 21, 1998

In a survey of Canadian photography and film between 1858 and 1950, *Plain Truth* analyzes how western Canadian identity has been shaped by the way images were used and circulated in promotional pamphlets, posters, maps, paintings, drawings, film, and postcards. An introduction by curator Dan Ring, (*Urban Prairie*, 1993) explores constructed images of First Nations people and culture, and the power relationships of *picture maker* and *pictured*, as well as the representation of labour in photography, film and other print material. *Plain Truth* examines the confident belief that photography was a superior technology, and the idea that the West was a vast empty place waiting to be discovered, as described by Gayatri Spivak, through the prevalent assumption of space as a blank text, creating conditions for the colonial process, that she calls "worlding a world". Seeing the desired place, and verification of its geographical existence, constituted the first stage of acquisition. (*Re*) *inventing the West: Photography and the Selling of the West as a Land of Opportunity*, and Tourism and Culture are examined by

Keith Bell. Sheila Petty introduces filmmaking in the chapter *(Re) positioning the Stable Frame: Early Cinematic Visions of the Canadian Prairies, and (Re) Visioning Geography and Culture as a Commodity*.

**ARTHUR F. MCKAY:
A CRITICAL RETROSPECTIVE**

1997, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, 64pp. ISBN 1-896470-07-6, Brenda Beckman-Long, Merit Printing Ltd. Texts: curator Dr. David Howard, Alex Kelly and Timothy Long.



In the 1950's and '60's the Regina Five: McKay, Bloore, Lochhead, Morton and Godwin, with Kiyooka, and Wiens, were a stimulus to the Regina Art community. In this second retrospective, following the 1991 exhibition, *Ronald L. Bloore: Not Without Design*, curator David Howard examines McKay's work in the context of cultural Cold War politics, rather than raising issues of the relationship of modernism to postmodernism, or the omnipresence of U.S. culture in Canadian society.

Howard traces Art McKay's momentary international status by his inclusion in Clement Greenberg's controversial Post Painterly abstraction Los Angeles exhibition in 1964. McKay's studies at the Barnes institute and the influence of instructor Violette de Mazia are highlighted. The Mandala characterizing McKay's enamel paintings for over two decades is discussed in context of the influence of Zen and Satori on his work. McKay, in an unpublished essay "The Basic Dichotomy", is quoted: "... We float in a sea of other beings and objects. We know they are as we are, but do not experience them being, except on our periphery at the interstices of our common experience. The state of love is the only exception to this condition of alienation; either personal or generalized love and compassion." McKay's synthetic abstraction is examined in light of its universality. Research for this project began in 1982. The Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon, July 3 - 23 August, 1998; The Glenbow Museum, Calgary, 23 January - 21 March 1999.

**GORDON SMITH:
THE ACT OF PAINTING**

Ian M. Thom; Andrew Hunter, 1997, Vancouver Art Gallery and Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver, 164 pp. ISBN 1-55054-585-X, hardcover, with 55 full colour plate reproductions.

Essays by Vancouver curator Ian M. Thom and Kamloops curator Andrew Hunter place Gordon Smith in the context of postwar modernism. Combining fact and fiction, they explore the relationships of the artist to painting and place, and to the process of remembering and writing history. A British emigrant to Winnipeg in 1933, at the height of the Depression, Smith enrolled at the Winnipeg School of Fine Art in 1937 and was influenced there by Lionel Lemoyne Fitzgerald and Walter J. Phillips. He returned to England in 1942, as a



Canadian soldier, and returned from Sicily, wounded in battle, via London to Vancouver in 1944. Smith taught at The Vancouver School of Art and exhibited his landscapes at The Vancouver Art Gallery in the 1950's. In 1960, Smith represented Canada at the Sao Paulo Biennale. The Vancouver Art Gallery's first acquisition of work by Gordon Smith in 1953,

when the artist won first prize at the First Biennial of Canadian Painting at the National Gallery of Canada, was followed by the acquisition to 1996 of another 17 paintings and 105 works on paper. Smith played a vital part in defining the aesthetic direction of West Coast painting. In Smith's work, painting is a recreation of experience as opposed to an illustration thereof. His paintings are balanced between colour field abstraction and the depiction of the British Columbia wilderness, the physical act of painting and his affection for the land. *Gordon Smith: The Act of Painting*, presents a composite view of the artistic production by one of Canada's most prominent and influential artists.

Michael J. Molter

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