

## English Reports

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Volume 44, Number 181, Winter 2000–2001

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/53027ac>

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### Publisher(s)

La Société La Vie des Arts

### ISSN

0042-5435 (print)

1923-3183 (digital)

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### Cite this review

(2000). Review of [English Reports]. *Vie des arts*, 44(181), 69–74.



Jeffrey Burns, *Conversions*, 2000, oil and acrylic on canvas, 114.5 x 29 cm

## FREDERICTON, N.B.

### ARTISTS IN A FLOATING WORLD

THE MARION MCCAIN ATLANTIC ART EXHIBITION  
Beaverbrook Art Gallery  
15 October 2000 - 7 January 2001

Democratic is how one participant described this exhibition of the work of seventy-three Atlantic Canadian artists. It was an apt description. Tom Smart, former curator of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery who is now at the Frick Museum in Pittsburgh, has assembled a genuine survey of the art of Atlantic Canada. The range of artists represented – from all four Atlantic provinces: New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland – is impressive. It demonstrates the high level of artistic activity within a region so often overlooked by central Canada. There are well known senior artists and those just starting their careers and a very wide variety of artistic styles. Too often exhibitions of this sort – regional surveys – are soap-boxes for curators to impose their narrow vision of the art world which often distorts what is actually within the art of a region. There is a world of difference between a carefully scripted Alex Colville painting, of which there are two in this exhibition, and an installation by New Brunswick artist, Linda Rae Dornan, yet both artists have a place in this exhibition. Those that think that Atlantic Canadian art is limited to high realism will be rewarded with very good works by the usual suspects: Alex Colville, the Pratts, Tom Forrestall and Fred Ross. There are other quite good realist works in the exhibition by artists such as Herzl Kashetsky and Glenn Adams. But there are also sculpture, prints, photographs, mixed media and what is often called craft included the exhibition which can in no way be confused with Maritime Realism.

I used to think Canadian art could fit into neat little regional niches. Even if this was once true, it is no longer the case. Maybe it is because we live in a world of rapid communications or we have accepted the idea of post-Modernism in the art world. Most artists, including those that live in Atlantic Canada see themselves on the world stage rather than a regional one. Much of the art in *Artists in a Floating World* would be at home in an exhibition anywhere in the world. This does not mean that these artists' works are not also grounded in Atlantic Canada. Maritime artists are spread out and some live in cities such as Halifax or St. John's, while others live in small towns such as Sackville, New Brunswick or Corner Brook, Newfoundland. Such geography favours artistic individuality as evidenced by artists like Alex Colville and Tom Forrestall. A sense of place is as important to them as it is to the Maritime Realists. There are younger artists in this exhibition working in styles away from the mainstream. One such artist is Jeff Burns whose painting *Conversions* is a strange unnatural landscape. Perhaps it could be better termed a dreamscape. It resembles more a vision of the bottom of the sea than the great salt marsh that surrounds his Sackville, New Brunswick home. Moncton's Acadian community is well represented in the exhibition. The humour in the works by Yvon Gallant, Nancy Moran and Gisèle Savoie is delightful and proves that art can also be fun!

*Artists in a Floating World* is rather a hodgepodge, but I am rather fond of hodgepodes with their mixtures of many flavours. Curator Smart has shown variety makes a good artistic stew: old artists, young artists, men and women and each with their own vision. All of the exhibited works are colour illustrated in a lavish catalogue with a rather poetic essay by curator Smart, who not only knows Maritime art and artists, but has a real love of the subject. I doubt that an exhibition such as this could have been mounted by

any other gallery in Canada than the Beaverbrook with its extensive private resources. This particular exhibition is the latest in a series of exhibitions sponsored by the Marion McCain Foundation. *Artists in a Floating World* will tour Canada over the next two years. I hope that a Quebec venue will be found for the exhibition as it deserves to be seen by as many people as possible.

Virgil Hammock

## MONTREAL

### CULTURES AND INTERFERENCES

CÉSAR SAEZ:  
CULTURE JAMMING  
Montréal arts interculturels  
3680 rue Jeanne-Mance  
September 14 - October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2000

Unpredictable and vital are two attributes of the work of César Saez. At a time where the polarities between real cultural issues and artistic systems of representation are widening, Saez tackles the gallery-as-monument, and uses technology to expand the field of art into "culture jamming"

Inside the gallery at MAI, César Saez's mayhem juxtaposes sheer bombast of chaotic sound with the sensory deprivation of a cave-like environs to serve his message, which is partly a metaphor for information overload and the way it affects our perception and an enactment of artistic practise. Outside Montréal arts interculturels, Saez has installed a sculpture comprising nine resin figures. The figures are attached to the base of the building and exert a strong physical presence. In a way, these figures resemble the caryatides of ancient Greece, decorative columns that acted as support structures for monuments. Saez's expression – the twisted bodies suggest unbearable pain from supporting a terrible weight – is a metaphor for a once noble search for difference, now oppressed by some undefined weight.

Inside the gallery, a squadron of forty video monitors hover a meter above the visitor's head. Inside the



César Saez  
*Culture interference*  
Photo: Paul Litherland

darkly lit space, strains of "twilight zone" sound mingle with images from monitors which include people attending a vernissage, a hand pouring beer into a glass, a passerby looking at pictures in an art gallery. Other monitors are neutral, on permanent VHE

As systems die and change into other systems, new emerging hybrids of subversion and technology likewise change and develop. This is the material and message that César Saez has used to sculpt and transmit. What remains to be seen is what role artistic practise will play as new technologies, mass media and global economy continue to dominate the stage. By challenging and seeking to deal with these issues Saez's art has a kind of brazen pertinence.

Isak Augustine



Dorothy Grostern  
Charcoal on paper

### DOROTHY GROSTERN TRAGIC AMBIGUITIES

David Astrof Fine Arts  
Thomson House  
3650 McTavish

Encapsulating all those features that make us human, yet rendering all of it with an acute sense of life's experience, Dorothy Grostern's *People* series depicts the container and the contained in tight, theatrical settings. In the most intimate and contemplative of places – the interior spaces we inhabit – we find people as invisible to themselves as they are to others. Rendered in charcoal and pastel these drawings are full of people contained or separated by walls



and barriers. They exist in relationship not only to each other, in groups, or couples, and to themselves, but more importantly to the cube-like spaces that contain and constrict them, which are abstract and undefined. There is no fixed point we can find in these compositions that establishes a source for the light that circumscribes the bodies and spaces...

Groster's ghost-like people move through space, or simply inhabit it. These are uncomfortable non-spaces defined by chiaroscuro effects of light and dark whose sources are undefined. In these "houses of the mind", or on the surface of these paperworks, Groster's illusory images of people are a superb analogy for the illusion of life itself.

The bodies of these people are like light containers, that seem to float in Euclidian non-spaces. They are arranged in tandem, positioned at oblique angles to one another, as if what they seek the most somehow escapes at the last moment, like a genie out of a bottle. Their stances and composites run the full gamete of emotional states, from repose, inner reflection, and loving embrace to suspicion, and even jealousy. These people seem caught and trapped by the absurdity of their situation(s). The window-like panes of glass or light refractions in Groster's works on paper, are material allusions for the mental barriers harboured deep within ourselves. Not only does the containment contain, the *awareness* of this containment which is not just physical, constricts and alters one's actions and reactions even further. What an irony! Groster's drawings express a tentative state of being that none of us can escape the parentheses that circumscribe the lives we live. She does not draw her figures from life, but invents them and comments: "I don't often work from a model, which probably sounds strange because my work is of people. But models bring their personalities, which can intrude. I prefer somebody neutral."

In *Convergences* (2000) the embracing couple we see are more like ghosts or spirits than physical entities. The older woman in her undergarments in *The Latecomer* is not illustrious, nor is she bold. She is just absorbed by the realities of life. The two figures in *Gone* (1998) lean on each other but there is no sense of gratification. One of them is leaving. We have no idea what is happening, if it is good or bad. This sense of the *impossibility of knowing* or being able to uncover a specific emotion gives Groster's work a great strength, as if not knowing allows us inadvertently to accept the unknown with a

greater confidence. It is the immeasurability of state(s) of being that give an ethereal edge to this work.

*Staircase 955* has memory stairs that are flooded with light in sharp black and white contrasts. We see a man's head in side profile. Another evanescent shadowy figure stands nearby. There is an androgynous feeling to this unsettling scene. Groster is at her strongest here, for her use of light-dark surface effects, of interior spaces filled with innuendo creates a most succinct analogy for the forces of good and evil, and of a potentially redeeming spiritual catharsis. These emotions and realities are expressed in the simplest of ways by arranging space, light, and the human figure in a variety of ways. There is a sense that a time has passed, and these people are unaware of this.

Groster's art seems to suggest that for all the self-gratification, or alternatively self-immolation, that are the hallmark of our age, there is an ambiguity to our innermost desires that is indeed tragic, if only for a fleeting moment in time. Groster has seized something largely intangible in these textural, light sensitive charcoal and pastel drawings – what and how we really feel!

John K. Grande

## LENNOXVILLE

### CEDAR PEOPLE; ANCESTORS LIVING AMONG US

Bishops University Art Gallery  
College St., Lennoxville  
November 8<sup>th</sup> -  
December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2000

As a Vancouver-based photographer Nancy Bleck has carved out a niche of her own capturing the intertwining of nature and culture in contemporary First Nations Squamish life. Collectively titled *Cedar People: Ancestors Living Among Us* her show at Bishops University Art Gallery will provide Quebecers with a rare first hand look at the issues of ecology, home, identity, nature and ceremony and how they continue to be alive in contemporary West Coast tribal life and customs. Bleck is not just documenting the West Coast Squamish people but is likewise a witness and participant in their ceremonies and culture. Interestingly, Nancy Bleck is an outsider, who has had the great freedom to enter into tribal life and participate with Hereditary Chief of the Squamish Nation Bill Williams' approval. It becomes a way of better understanding her own Euro-Canadian



Nancy Bleck  
Cedar elder as witnessed  
by daughter of immigrants, 1999-2000

identity. Many of these photos taken in the Elaho Valley and Sims Creek areas of lower Mainland British Columbia, traditional Squamish territory, embody a basic respect for nature in the here and now.

On view are large-scale 3 x 12 ft photo-mural composites produced by Bleck using a heat transfer process on canvas. *Breach of Protocol* (1997-2000) collages together two photo images that create a counterpoint subtext. One photo is of a muddy logging road that was punched through the wilderness near Sims Creek in 1995. The road scene looks like a war zone, with tree bark, mature tree logs and stumps strewn about. Paired with the landscape photo is a black and white portrait of native cultural worker

William Nahanee wearing his headdress, feathers, jacket and sacred tumult paint used for spiritual protection that comes from the roots of the cedar tree. Nahanee's face is like an enduring map, that expresses a solemnity, a silent acceptance of worldly things, and above all a basic humanity and wisdom.

Bleck's photo of a tree spray painted by a logger with the words "Have Fun!" exemplifies the other extreme of wisdom, the sublime ignorance and disrespect for nature that goes with extracting primary resources for wholesale profit. *Stick in my Heart*, is Bleck's portrait of Longhouse Speaker Eugene Harry, whose spiritual advice greatly influenced Bleck on her journey of self-discovery. As Bleck states: "*Stick in my Heart* describes the feeling I have when I see the devastation we do to the land." *Kal'kalihl: Wild Cedar Woman of the Woods eating her Children* presents a more explicit colour panorama of a clear cut and logged block of forest, inspired by the Squamish myth of how Kal'kalihl the wild woman of the woods steals children in her sack and tries to eat them. Despite her evil intention one child escapes to free the others. Then the group as a whole push the woman into the fire and she perishes.

This exchange between cultures Bleck has brought to Bishops University Art

Gallery as *Cedar People: Ancestors Living Among Us* is part of an ongoing global effort to teach ourselves and our children the value of understanding the perspective of the other, if only to show how important the trees and forests and rivers and streams – nature's resource – upon which all cultures depend for their sustenance really are. Understanding nature's place in our lives is one way to better understand ourselves, and thus the real meaning of community. Squamish carver Aaron Nelson-Moody has made the trip to Lennoxville during Bleck's show to work with Bishops University students making and carving bowls that will be given to Mohawks at the Khanasetake reserve in Quebec in a symbolic gesture of support, healing, and spiritual catharsis for their peoples.

John K. Grande



## JOLIETTE

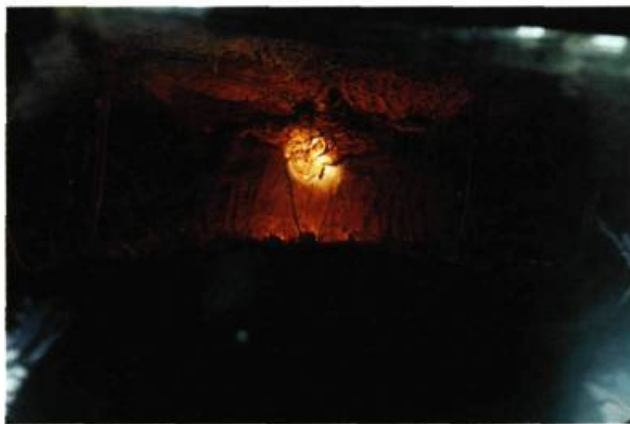
### PLACARDS

September 22<sup>nd</sup> -  
October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2000

When the public does not always seek the art why not bring the art to the public! With this simple idea in mind, twenty young Quebec artists have taken a proactive approach to exhibiting their art. It can be found in ordinary mid-sized business venues in downtown Joliette for all to see.

Valerie Kolakis presents her imaterial neo-conceptual bags hanging in space at Chez Faktory 66, while Andre Willot has a do-it-yourself participatory piece installed at a music store filled with guitars, synthesizers, and drums. The piece consists of a stand on which an engraved image of a blindfolded man has been placed. The public is invited to make their own print from the work using readily available plain paper, by making a rubbing with a graphite pencil. At AVS Voyages Josée Fafard has a series of wooden boxes with handles that look like travel bags hidden in a secluded cupboard. On request, these innocent looking valises are brought out, and you open them only to find strange trophy-like objects made of fur, and suede within. They are mysterious anomalies. Why are they there? What is their purpose? Alain Bouchard's paintings are installed in a series of blank white drawers that you open at will to create your own multi-panel composition. By pulling the drawers in the order you choose, the monochrome paintings which have images of a hat, shadows, build a fictional narrative. The images are surreal and the composition changes according to which drawers you open.

At the pharmacy Chez O' Bonsoins Serge Lesquer has a sound recording piece you ask the assistant to turn on. The voice you hear recounts instructions on the use of a medical chair. A beautiful hand made artist's book by Natalie Lafortune can be found among the other books at La Librairie le livre et la tortue. Delicate images of pots, glasses, containers, themselves contained within this book are rendered with a poetic sensibility. In a sex shop called La clé du plaisir, Andrea Szilasi has installed a tiny peep hole on a door that you look into to see a photo image of a private moment of passion between a couple. Not as risqué as you might think! Next door at Au Melting Pot, a hair salon, Ymane Fakhir's photo im-



C. Varady-Szabo  
*Camera natura (vu intérieur)*, 2000  
Photo: C. Varady-Szabo

ages of a mannequin give you the feeling this innate object can be brought to life and is almost human. Maybe this one should have been at the sex shop and Szilasi's in the hair salon! At the Cafe Bar Interlude, a room that once served as a safety vault has been set aside for Marie-Josée Laframboise's simply innovative installation of a floor covered in marbles. You can slide on and glide on them just for the fun of it. Christine Bolduc's fashion statement at the Chez Pense a toi clothes store has Polaroids photos and a head wildly decorated with colourful hair made of ribbons. The most interesting piece, to my mind, is Christopher Varady-Szabo's primitive oversized camera whose container is made of mud and supported by sticks. There is a mirror you look down into that reflects the subject supposedly being photographed which is a simple pod and burrs – elements from nature. The other end of the camera which is in fact a typical glass store counter is packed full of wool, mud and straw and has mushrooms actually growing inside! This nature camera is a sight to behold. Nature is both the subject and the object here – the very structure and materials that go to make up Varady-Szabo's camera image object!

The fun in Placards is looking for the artworks, walking from store to store to find the art, which is often disguised, hidden or placed in unusual venues amid the everyday commerce. This is an art treasure hunt with a difference! The art you find is of the experimental genre and varies from place to place. One may be a toilet, the next in a cupboard, another on a display shelf or in a drawer. Walking from store A to store B to store C you are presented with some cultural variations of the contemporary kind!

John K. Grande

## OTTAWA

### DIANE ARBUS: FAIRY TALES FOR GROWN-UPS

National Gallery of Canada  
Until January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2001

The images of American photographer Diane Arbus, who was a student of Lisette Model towards the end of the 1950s, present a penetrating look at human nature. Arbus developed, throughout her career, a very personal style.

She liked to focus her lens on surreal aspects of daily life, on people living on the margins of society. This imbues her work with a particularly strange quality. The images in the exhibition *Fairy Tales for Grown Ups*, a title chosen by the photographer herself for a photo portrait series presentation in Esquire magazine, provide a good sampling of Arbus' style, which has been celebrated by some and criticized by others.

The image titled *A Family on their Lawn one Sunday in Westchester, N.Y., 1968* presents a basically banal scenario. A man and a woman are stretched out on identical lawn chairs separated by a small wooden table. Behind them, one can see a child leaning over her small plastic swimming pool. This apparently typical suburban scene, seen through Arbus' lens, projects an unsettling quality, because the solitude we sense somehow make us feel smothered. The spectator almost has the impression of seeing this scene for the first time. The same strange-banal relation is presented in the image titled *A Husband and Wife in the Woods at a Nudist Camp, N.J., 1963*. The married couple are seated on armchairs in a room what looks like the living room. A big television between the two armchairs dominates the scene, but the couple is not watching it, but instead the lens. The sense of strangeness does not arise from their nudity, but more

from the fact that in looking at this image, the viewer forgets their nudity because the scene is so ordinary, and has been seen a hundred times before.

The photographer puts us in the role of voyeur, by presenting us with realities that would normally not catch our attention. The first impression is always deceiving in this photographer's image. She always tries to go beyond the ordinary and puts us face to face with our humanity and that of others, and with our fragility and imperfections. This is not just because her subjects are not conventional, that we cannot eat them up, but also because her images are a curious mix of honesty, strangeness, sensibility and even coldness.

Diane Arbus' work has been published in numerous magazine and she has twice received the prestigious Guggenheim Award, in 1963 and 1966. She took her life in 1971. This exhibition, presented by the National Gallery of Canada, is accompanied by a video produced by Camera Three Productions in 1989 and titled *The Photography of Diane Arbus*. The French translation and the feminine voice that guides the narration are not of the highest quality, but the information presented is nevertheless interesting, above all because the spectator discovers Diane Arbus' work. The National Gallery has also had the foresight to include quotes and comments by Diane Arbus on her work on the exhibition walls. I take the liberty of ending with these words from Diane Arbus that I find extremely interesting: "It was my teacher Lisette Model who finally made it clear to me that the more specific you are, the more general it'll be. You really have to face that thing."

Julie Lanctôt



Arbus, Diane  
*Girl with a shiny dress, N.Y.C., 1967*  
Gelatin silver print  
50.6 x 40.6 cm





Marie de Sousa,  
*Moving landscape #2, 2000*,  
Oil on canvas, 120 x 150 cm.

## TORONTO

### TIMESCAPE MARIE DE SOUSA

The Red Head Gallery  
96 Spadina Ave., 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
November 2 - 25, 2000

*Timescape* is a painting-based installation born out of experimentation. A conceptual artist, Marie de Sousa uses paint as her medium. In *Timescape* she has used the most supposedly banal subject matter, the weather, to talk about movement in and of painting. In this exhibition De Sousa has chosen a range of approaches and presentation techniques for her paintings. Some paintings suggest movement through the way paint is applied. Others have been painted on canvases that were rigged to vibrate and move as she worked. Two works in this show actually move! These practices raise questions about how mechanics affect painting both literally and theoretically? Does the moving surface diminish or enhance the authority of the artists brush? Can the quiet passive presence of painting compete for the T.V. raised internet - savvy viewer's attention?

The most blatant use of mechanics in this painting installation is the work titled *Following the Weather*. At first glance this looks like a very realistically painted sky, but as the viewer approaches the work a motion sensor is triggered and the painting shoots quickly away on a track. The viewer then has to decide whether to chase the painting or enjoy the surprise of the unexpected mechanical moment thus dismissing content of the image as secondary. The individual's response to the work is superficially obvious. Not so obvious will be the individual response to *Local Calendar*.

At first glance this work is a large modernist piece with seemingly little relationship to the shifty *Following the Weather*. Upon closer examination, however, *Local Calendar* is revealed to be an artistic and scientific record of Toronto's daily temperature fluctuations for 1999.

De Sousa is the person who records the forgotten weather, weather we dress to enjoy or to protect ourselves from. It is at once a painting and scientific record. The results are found and confirmed by many instruments. All of this makes me feel that the weather is often an excuse for a deeper conversation. Perhaps one about paint.

Elizabeth Fearon

### CUBAN PHOTOGRAPHERS EXHIBITION

LAZARO MIRANDA

ENRIQUE DE LA UZ

EDDY GARICOA

MARIO DIAZ

RAUL CANIBANO

CRISTOBAL HERRERA

RICARDO ELIAS

CURATED BY: ANDREW DANSON

Justina M. Barnicke Gallery,

Hart House

University of Toronto

October 12 - November 9, 2000

Comprising 88 documentary photos by seven photographers, this show provides North American audiences with a rare glimpse into Cuban society. The majority of the black and white photoworks provide slice-of-life views of Cuban society in a 11"x14" format. The images depict the lives of ordinary people doing their daily tasks in ordinary places, and for the wealth of knowledge they transmit about contemporary Cuban society the show is unusually intense.

The most striking image in the show by Eddy Garicoa is a small unassuming untitled black and white photo. Here, Garicoa has captured the image of a woman holding a child while suckling a small animal. Men are sitting in the background near a house, seemingly disinterested in the kind-faced woman's activity. The central man in the background is

wearing a Labatts Blue baseball cap. This odd artifact of North American culture, adds a resonance to the image, particularly as Cuba is largely cut off from the abundance and wealth this seemingly insignificant visual anecdote represents

Elizabeth Fearon

### BEING ON TIME: AN EXHIBITION ON TIME AND THE MILLENNIUM

A PUBLIC ACCESS PROJECT

JAMES CARL

SHAWNA DEMPSEY

& LORRI MILLAN

JOHN GREYSON

MIKE MAC DONALD

KELLY MARK

MICHAEL SNOW, LISA STEELE

& KIM TOMCZAK

HO TAM

CURATOR: JANINE MARCHESSAULT

The Art Centre

Central Technical

High School

725 Bathurst St.

November 3 - December 14, 2000

*Being on Time* is the latest in a 14-year history of Public Access produced exhibitions. Public Access is a non-profit charitable organization with a very strong simple mandate:

1) To discover new places and audiences for art

2) To experiment with new technologies to make art.

The curator of this project, Janine Marchessault, is a writer, video maker and director of the film and video Graduate Program at York University. Her current academic research exploring the theories of Marshall McLuhan, became a curatorial point of departure for *Being on Time*. Specifically Marchessault wanted to explore McLuhan's question: "Do teenagers experience time differently?"

Rife with teenagers and students, Central Technical High School thus became an ideal location for this art exhibition. Marchessault's choice of artists, however, is anything but adolescent as most have national and international careers. For the show the whole school became an art space with installations can be found in washrooms, the teachers lounge, the front steps, lockers, stairways and hallways. This approach to the architecture encouraged sense of exploration of public and private space, of the institution, its faculty and student body. A good example of this is Michael Snow's audio installation in the teacher's lounge. On entering this space, viewers are instructed to take a number from a mechanical dispenser. The individual may not leave the room until his or her number is called. In many ways this feels much like waiting for the school bell!

Kelly Mark also plays with time in *Hiccup*. Mark choreographed a series of banal waiting-type actions that include drinking coffee, smoking a cigarette, and reading the same three pages in Martin Amis's book *Time Zero*. This repetitive performance took place on the school's front steps from 8:45am to 9:00am each school day during the month before the exhibition. The documentation of this performance was shown as a video on three monitors during the exhibition. Through the use of multiple monitors, the consistency of Mark's movements is made evident against an ever changing backdrop.

John Greyson is also putting a body on the stairs, but unlike Mark, it is not his own. Greyson has affixed a photo of a male life drawing nude to the risers of a heavily travelled staircase. When this installation is viewed from the bottom the image can be read as a whole. During the exhibition, the wear and tear of 100's of feet will take its toll on the photo image. The stair installation is accompanied by a video featuring the life drawing model being drawn by a class. Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan also encourage the viewer to reflect on the body, quite literally by installing fun house mirrors in the girls washroom! This silly good natured installation mocks conventions of beauty and body type. With these and many other provocative installations to explore *Being on Time* is a must see for the general public. Please note viewing hours are after school, so please confirm the hours and day you want to experience the show.

Elizabeth Fearon



Image from Cuban  
Photographers-Hart House Toronto





Catherine Heard  
*Vanitas*, 1999  
Oil on masonite  
Photo: Simon Glass

## CATHERINE HEARD

### VANITAS

Angell Gallery

Sept. 7 - Sept. 30, 2000

## CATHERINE HEARD AND RYANBARRETT

### OUR DARLING

S.P.I.N. Gallery

Aug. 30 - Sept. 19, 2000

Catherine Heard has taken over a good chunk of Queen St. West for the bulk of September! Neighbouring street level galleries S.P.I.N. and Angell are boasting two different bodies of her work. The Angell Gallery is presenting her *Vanitas* paintings as a solo exhibition. While S.P.I.N. has cleverly coupled Heard's sculptural works with those of artist ryanbarrett to create an eerie, intriguing, show called *Our Darling*. The title is based on a plaque Heard scavenged that had once been affixed to a child's coffin!

Death is a major theme in Heard's work. Her morbid affinity is boldly strutted in *Vanitas* where the artist has turned her hand to moody black and white oil paintings which depict a child-like woman making love to death in a skeletal form. Here the artist has chosen to reference Dutch *vanitas* paintings, which became popular around the turn of the 15th century, as well as the history of erotic drawing. This referencing is an anchor into the human condition. Heard considers these paintings a Millennial series. Humour and whimsy

lighten her depiction of the carnal act/death dance thus allowing the viewer a chuckle while entering into and confronting (1) "our fear of the body's sexuality and eventual decay."

Next door at S.P.I.N. Gallery *Our Darling* greets us with ryanbarrett's deceptively innocent looking antique prams, strollers, and baby carriages. At first glance the white child transportation devices are reminiscent of white wicker chairs. On closer

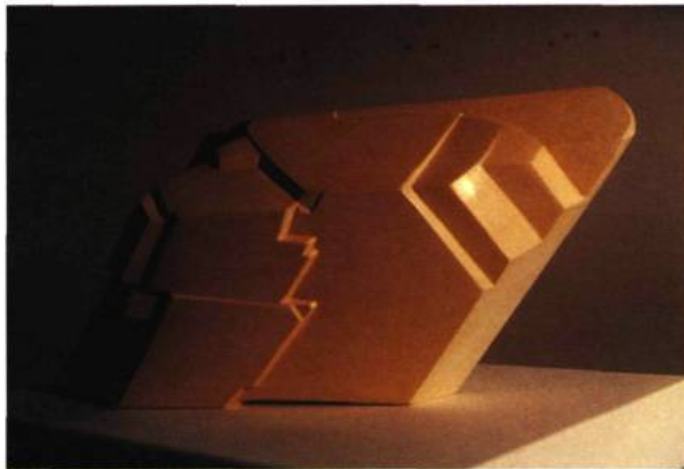
examination, the viewer realizes each pram is covered with set mouse traps! They will go off! They will hurt you!

Heard's contribution to *Our Darling* is a series titled *Ennui* consisting of eerie stuffed "dolls". Her materials make you want to touch them but her imagery is ghoulis! This series explores the possibility of language manifesting itself in a physical form. The tie in with barrett's work is the shared use of the child as a symbol for the vulnerable adult. Here, Heard has text sausages, curling through the stuffed figures exposed brains, and mouths and in the work titled *Rumour*, into another figures mouth, through that figures body and excreted out its anus.

The embryo like doll forms seem in the process of forming like ideas needing the right words to be expressed or the effect language may have on you when the ideas enter you through language. Heard's dolls are constructed using antique fabric. The fabric itself is manipulated in the sewing process to highlight areas of blood, like the blush of a cheek or a severed limb with a reddish floral pattern. However the strongest use of pattern is the artists choice of toile de Jouy! Here the dolls are constructed with fabric which itself tells a story through pictures! This pictorial approach to fabric patterning gained popularity in the mid-1800's and is artfully implemented in *Ennui*.

*Vanitas* and *Our Darling* are morbid, disturbing, and heavily conceptually and historically layered. Angell Gallery and S.P.I.N. must be commended for their collaboration.

Elizabeth Fearon



Robin Peck, *Untitled*, 1993  
Plaster sculpture, 67.5 x 30 x 22.5 cm

## ALBERTA

### 50/50: ROBIN PECK AND GLEN MACKINNON

Trianon Gallery

104, 5th Street South

October 14th -

December 20th, 2000.

### HAMISH FULTON: TWO RIVER WALKS

Southern Alberta Art Gallery

October 14th -

November 19th, 2000

### CLOUDS AND ROCKS

Lethbridge's reputation as a vital art centre grows yearly. Although a small city (70,000), it supports the internationally respected Southern Alberta Art Gallery which innovative curator Joan Stebbins has helped make famous for its challenging exhibitions and art publications. The University of Lethbridge has a strong Visual Arts Division and one of the largest art collections in Canada (over 12,000 works). Lethbridge is also home to international installation artists David Hoffos, Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller. Community support for the arts in Lethbridge abounds as evidenced by the Trianon Gallery. Located off the Gault Garden's Park, the downtown square that also holds the S.A.A.G., the Trianon's second floor space is a converted dance hall housing Savill Group Architects and the art gallery. The gallery area with its white walls and hardwood floors looks like a typical artist-run space or New York loft, circa 1970. Neither artist-run nor council funded (the art-loving architects donate the space) the Trianon survives on the Savill Group's goodwill, and local artists, curators and University Art Department support.

The Trianon's most recent exhibition is 50/50, a show of sculptures by Robin Peck and Glen MacKinnon. Aside from their ages (both are fifty

this year), Peck and MacKinnon share a subtly perverse take on minimalist sculpture and the natural world. Entering the installation is like flying down through A.Y. Jackson clouds and skimming over Lawren Harris icebergs. MacKinnon's clouds are eight white and greyish lumpen things made from various cements and polystyrene. The forms are elevated by roughly made spruce pedestals at slightly varying, eye-level heights. On the other side of the room, and through the clouds, are Peck's familiar sculptures of magnified gypsum crystals carved in plaster but made less familiar by being placed directly on the floor.

I have only ever seen Peck's sculptures on low pedestals, where they looked more gem-like and precious. Here they look at once monumental and yet also intimate. Behind MacKinnon's miniaturized and concretized clouds, Peck's forms appear like massive natural, icebergs or mountains, or like large minimalist sculptures. Up close, some have little chips and dirt marks, indicating their inherent fragility. Unprotected, these apparently handmade geometric shapes — which vary from 2/3rd to 1 1/3rd metres long — invite care, even sympathy. While related to the minimalist heman school of art, they are less insistent on purity and masculinity than their industrially manufactured grandfathers.

The strange twist in the exhibition is *Representation of a Found Stone*, an enlargement of a smooth, almost anthropomorphic rock. While its undulant curves seem antithetical to the adjacent, architectonic gypsum crystals, the organic shape reinforces the other work's cleave from minimalism. Peck has forged a language between minimalism and environmental art, conceptual art and even Pop. His sculptures have



the formal austerity of minimalism with the humour (as blow-ups of natural forms) of Pop art. And being made of the same substance as the "white cube" gallery is a conceptual in-joke. *Representation of a Found Stone* leads the viewer past the dry cleverness to the possibility that Peck is genuinely interested in a close observation of nature, rather than simply in its use as an art world trope.

Glen MacKinnon also has his anomalous pieces. In addition to the mashed potato clouds that are both comic and sincere, like a folk artist's rendering of his beloved, MacKinnon includes two blackish umber forms that seem less like clouds than meteors. Looking back from the meteor/thunderclouds to the cumulus clouds, the white piles begin to morph into seeming castles, figures, faces and landscapes. MacKinnon, too, appears to be playing on minimalism – as in what is the bare minimum that constitutes a creative act – a sculpture, an aesthetic object. These unformed forms recall elemental aesthetic experiences: playing with mud and seeing representations in clouds.

I may be going too far, but these two mid-career, mid-life male artists appear to be playing with ideas about masculinity. While their (the sculptures) white, hard exteriors are tough and austere, even ascetic, they show signs of fragility. And though they appear formal and rigid, there is the possibility of softening. These concrete clouds and gigantic crystals show a balance between self-deprecating humour and more serious interests.

David Garneau

#### HAMISH FULTON: WALKING THE WALK

Hamish Fulton walks. The walk, he says, is his art. The photographs, the text murals, framed drawings, and anything else he puts in the gallery, is not the art. His beautiful catalogues are not the art. The photographs, prints and posters his agents sell over the web or in commercial galleries are not the art either. The art is the walk. For just over three decades, Fulton has been going on walks, ranging from a few hours to several weeks, in various locations around the globe: the Scottish Highlands, near mount Everest, and nearly a dozen in western North America. During his journeys, he takes a few photographs and writes down a few thoughts.

*Magpie, Hamish Fulton: Two River Walks*, the exhibition and catalogue, are traces of two long walks in Alberta, 14 days and nights along the Milk River and seven days and

nights along the Red River. The Hamish Fulton of the gallery, rather than of the walks, is a conceptualist. The main gallery space consists of three huge wall text pieces, each recording an aspect of his trip, for example, "Walking and camping for seven days/downstream returning upstream over sections of badlands/along the north banks of the Red Deer river...." The words are almost billboard sized, visual equivalents of what they describe. They are landscape paintings with words that occupy the space of the things they evoke. This idea is furthered by using the text over photos of the scenes they describe. One signifying system competes or collaborates with another, suggesting how hard it is to see nature or look at the land without an intervening veil of language.

The smaller gallery contains more intimate artifacts: a few photos, simple drawings (outlines of fossilized wood and a cup) and notes. The outline drawings demonstrate Fulton's desire to record but not disturb nature. His notes are the fractured descriptions of a poet-scientist with an ear for language. "Day Four/a cloudless sky/woodpecker/grasshoppers/a bright yellow bird/one small cloud in the sky/sunflowers/cactus/butterfly/a parent bird feeding its young/a deer comes out at dusk to drink from the river/an evening breeze through the cottonwood trees/the sound of fluttering wings." The words record sights, sounds, and time while the photos are iconic, symmetrical, often with a mossy boulder in the foreground and prairie or hills in the background. The only evidence of people is the occasional photograph (in the catalogue, not the show) of a tent where the rock usually is and the fact photos require a photographer.

The Hamish Fulton, again, perhaps of the gallery and catalogue rather than the walk, is a Romantic, a hiker in an edited wilderness. His images and texts avoid the telephone poles, roads, airplanes, buildings, his travelling companions, and nearly every other human trace that might get in the way of his landscape narrative. Like the Group of Seven before him, he records the West as an empty place full of possibility. He is not, like the Group, making images to encourage settlement. Quite the opposite, he appears to want to encourage eco-tourism rather than settlement: "I want to leave the mountain as I found it." Ironically, although he 'honours' First Nations people by placing Native words over a few of his landscape photographs, the text and the absence of real Native folk in the images acts, as did the

Group's paintings, to imaginatively erase the presence of First Nations people from the land.

The gallery experience is a trace, a shadow of the substantial event. It may inspire you to go for a walk but is thin, insubstantial. And that is the artist's point. The walk is the art, not what's in the gallery. Nevertheless, the vision offered here seems a bit old-fashioned. Even though the recent revival of such work has made Fulton and his fellow walker, Richard Long, look more like visionaries than pioneers, the fact remains that claiming that the insubstantial event is the art and that the artifacts are not – even when treated as such – is a semantic game. I'm sure the walk feels more authentic or like art to Fulton than the gallery event. *Magpie* is a stimulating exhibition that may have you reconsider your home and native land – the way it appears to a visitor.

David Garneau

## VANCOUVER

### DAVID CARTER MINIMALER

Or Gallery

November 2000

For his Or Gallery exhibition, David Carter has built a wall that runs the length of the gallery's exhibition space. The wall blocks all access to the wide rectangle of the room beyond, and compresses the gallery's usable space into a thin corridor joining the two small rooms that bracket the exhibition space on either side. On one side, the storage closet (spare track lights, peeking from cube-shaped white boxes; a collapsible aluminum ladder; flats of empty wine and beer bottles, left over the opening; folding tables). On the other side, the gallery office (computers; filing cabinets; a couch and desk; bookshelves crammed with catalogues; a gallery volunteer in a black turtleneck with his back to the door, talking animatedly on the phone).

Carter's work is aggressively prosaic, and does nothing to call attention to itself "as art." Made of the same materials as the back wall of the exhibition space, painted the same flat white, sparsely and arbitrarily illuminated by the entrance foyer lights, Carter's wall seems as one with the rest of the gallery, part of the already extant architecture. By deliberately withholding the directional cues that would enable us to recognize his architectural intervention "as art" – the wall label, directional lighting, interpretive handout

or didactic panel – Carter's work deflects attention from itself onto the spaces that traditionally support art's presentation in the absent exhibition space. The storage closet and administrative office are unavoidably aestheticized, made visible "as environments" much like Peter Fischli and David Weiss' recent sculptural recreations of exhibition installations. At the same time that these typically invisible support mechanisms for the presentation of art are aestheticized, the relationship between them and the absent exhibition space is clarified. Visitors to the gallery presume the space is autonomous from the bridal shop, animation studio, and slick upscale restaurant adjacent to the Or. Carter's intervention makes visible the exhibition's space's implication within this ideological tangle. One reading of the work might be that the white cube of the exhibition space has no aesthetic autonomy or reality of its own.

To be fair, Carter acknowledges his work's quotation and redeployment of preexisting conventions of the minimalism of Carl Andre, Sol LeWitt, and (more to the point) Robert Morris, whose large, geometrical shapes; simple, "basic" forms; cheap materials and "theatricality" and the architectural interventions of artists like Michael Asher and Christopher D'Arcangelo, recently repopularized by critic-historians Benjamin H. D. Buchloh and Thomas Crow. His choice of exhibition title – *Minimaler* – suggests minimalism, as a set of conventions, is like a toolkit of conceptual strategies, ready to be opened and used. The making of large white "specific objects" is just another kind of work, equivalent to that performed by a drywall, stonemason, or plumber. In this way, Carter attempts to overcome charges of minimalist elitism by connecting his practice to the larger world of work. More troubling is his post-Modern insinuation that a particular set of formal effects is equally available to all artists at all times. What this view ignores is that artistic forms and processes precipitate out of cultures, evolve and change like the living systems they emerge from. Carter acknowledges this change in his annexation of the "present day" gallery storage closet and administrative offices to his project, but I hope that his ambitious work will soon proceed even further, by reconfiguring his careful study of minimalism and conceptualism into a more radically innovative program.

Christopher Brayshaw