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# “Arts Once More United”: Bridging Disciplines through Creative Media Research, Toronto, 1953–55

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Résumé de l'article

Durant les années 1953–55, la Ford Foundation a financé, à l'Université de Toronto, une expérience inédite d'études intermédiaires. Le séminaire *Culture and Communication* ainsi que le journal *Explorations* qu'ont dirigés Edmund Carpenter, Marshall McLuhan et Jaqueline Tyrwhitt témoignent ainsi de l'organisation et de l'institutionnalisation des études intermédiaires durant les années 1950 et 1960. Le réseau didactique qui prend forme dans l'orbite du financement de la Ford Foundation jette les bases de la recherche créative sur les médias, maintenant devenue un aspect fondamental des programmes d'éducation en arts et en sciences humaines. Cet article retrace les connexions géographiques, disciplinaires, artistiques et organisationnelles qui ont facilité cette expérience éducationnelle.

# “Arts Once More United”: Bridging Disciplines through Creative Media Research, Toronto, 1953–55<sup>1</sup>

MICHAEL DARROCH

## INTRODUCTION

From 1953 to 1955, a group of scholars and graduate students at the University of Toronto undertook a unique program of intermedial study and education. Led by Edmund Carpenter, Marshall McLuhan, and Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, among others, this team held wide-ranging discussions and conducted a series of experiments on differentiating media forms and related patterns of perception during their Culture and Communications graduate seminar (1953–55), which would extend into their jointly edited journal *Explorations* (1953–1957). The group’s faculty members drew on the rich experimental traditions of their different backgrounds to delineate the characteristics of the then “new” media alongside related interpenetrating patterns of communication networks, forms of behaviour, and arts practices.

52 In keeping with this issue’s focus on mapping intermediality, my goal in this article is to chart the assemblage of geographic, disciplinary, artistic, and organizational connections that facilitated this educational experiment. We might think of these as interpenetrations between the experience of scholars from Canada, the United States, and Europe; between areas of interest ranging from Indigenous art and culture to urban architecture, literature to economic history, geography to linguistics; and between clusters of academic and creative exploration as diverse as Bauhaus, the Congrès internationaux d’architecture moderne (CIAM), Cybernetics, and Fluxus. In particular, I trace the experimental character of the *Explorations* group in its commitment to bridging disciplinary traditions and to challenging silos of university education. In the history of intermedial thinking, the *Explorations* group

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<sup>1</sup> Research for this essay was made possible through the generous support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and a 2015 Visiting Fellowship, Institute for Modern Languages Research, University of London.

stands out as one of the earliest to combine the study of culture and communication and to theorize the boundaries between media and art forms. While intermediality is not a term that these scholars put forward, they nevertheless committed themselves to a comparative framework for considering specificities of different media and art forms (or, in their eyes, media *as* art forms) as well as infrastructures of media and communications and all their attendant implications for human language and behaviours.<sup>2</sup>



Fig. 1. Front cover of *Explorations 2* (April 1954). Courtesy of the Estates of Edmund Carpenter and Marshall McLuhan.

<sup>2</sup> See also Michael Darroch, "The Toronto School: Cross-Border Encounters, Interdisciplinary Entanglements," in David W. Park and Peter Simonson (eds.), *The International History of Communication Studies*, New York, Routledge, 2016, p. 276-301.

**ARTS  
ONCE  
MORE  
UNITED**

Since the rise of science, time-space duality has pervaded every aspect of Western culture, particularly in Protestant countries. Among other things, it destroyed the essential unity of the arts. Music and graphic art became separate creative forms, separate experiences, and the dance and ritual which had once combined the two, along with gesture and language, fell into disrepute. Artistic talent became highly selective.

Leonardo, for all his versatility, was above all a painter; his poetry, from any other pen than the great painter's, would hardly have stood the test of 500 years. Wagner would certainly not have impressed his generation as poet or dramatist without his musical fame. William Blake, equally gifted as poet and painter always comes to mind in this connection just because he was a notable exception. Talent became restricted to one artistic domain.

No matter how positively one proclaimed the identity of all arts, in practice no one turned to Picasso for musical education, nor expected to learn painting from Kreisler, nor studied ballet under Elot. And this was not because the techniques were too specialized for one man to master; painting is technically as different from sculpture as it is from piano playing; but it is near to sculpture and far from piano playing, because the primary illusion it creates is virtual space, while music is a semblance of Time in its passage.

Today the arts have once more been united, not in the primitive ritual or the cathedral, but on the movie and TV screen. Once again the artist must command many fields. The two greatest movie producers, Eisenstein and Griffith, did everything themselves, dominated everything personally; the scenario, music, art, actors. Unity is essential on the screen; it cannot be achieved by a production-line of specialists, however competent.

There have been some successful collective creations: Greek temples, Gothic churches, perhaps the Iliad; but their creators were part of a tradition strong enough to impose unity on their work. We have no such tradition today. The movie or TV show, to be great, must go through a single mind, be structured by one personality; it must be an orchestration of music, art, gesture, language.

**SEEK NEW MODELS**

Anatomists since Vesalius achieved their great discoveries by eliminating the time factor in their data, by dealing with cadavers rather than living organisms. By eliminating the time factor, in this case the changing, moving, growing, decaying, fluctuating organism, and by concentrating on the spatial relationships between static units of the body as they existed at the moment of death, they laid the groundwork for scientific anatomy. But the modern anatomist, wishing to go beyond taxonomy and to study that elusive ideal, the "dynamic model", turned to vivisection, while the social scientist, finding himself unable to describe simultaneously phenomena operating in space and changing in time, now seeks new models.

**EISENHOWER REPLIES TO STEVENSON**

One of the most interesting exchanges of the campaign was that between Mr. Stevenson's Los Angeles speech on corruption and Mr. Eisenhower's reply in Columbia, South Carolina. Governor Stevenson said that the morality of the public official could rise no higher than the morality of the public. He maintained that the final responsibility for corruption rested upon the public in general. General Eisenhower and his speechwriters seized upon this with some glee,

and worked it into the Columbia speech. "Are you to blame for the loss of China?" he asked. "Are you to blame for this treadmill prosperity?" Or for the "Scandal-a-day administration?" The answer in each case was no.

Mr. Eisenhower was encouraging the American public's belief that an individual must bear the whole guilt for social evil, with the public bearing no share of the responsibility.



MELANESIANS WATCH YANKEES JITTER-BUG

**SCIENTISTS USE  
GOBBLEDE - GOOK**

Professor Fox, addressing the American Scientific Association, said today that psychologists were all-too susceptible to the myth that insight into human phenomena can be replaced by indiscriminate measurement, often measuring something that does not contain natural units by creating them arbitrarily and then counting the dubious product. There can be little question, he said, that those who are drawn to the ritual of statistics begin by forsaking insight, hypnotized as they are by the magic of numbers.

He said that those who pin their faith to the power of numbers to replace insight ignore the homely truth that in order to say something, one must have something to say; they trust instead to the adage: Take care of the sound and the sense will take care of itself.

He also accused them of having fabricated a language bearing little relation to the magnificent one they were born with but failed to master. No one, he said, outside of a government bureau in Ottawa ever wrote worse English than these modern psychologists, and they write it out of sheer love of bad English for page after page of it hasn't the slightest excuse for existence. When the thought is simple and the way to brevity open, they take the long way because they prefer it. They remind one of the scene in Moliere's MALADE IMAGINAIRE, where the doctor, discovering that his patient knows no Latin, proceeds to amaze him with high-sounding gibberish.

**IROUOIS HOLD  
RAIN DANCE**

The Iroquois on the Brantford Reserve today will perform an ancient ceremony designed to bring rain. Their approach to reality is synthetic, not analytical; the basis for this magical rite is a two-fold belief: (1) that things once in association remain always in association, and (2) that things which look alike are, in fact, one and the same. Thus there is a conviction in the invariable association of elements in a pattern or gestalt, so that when one element appears, it is believed the remaining elements of the pattern will automatically and invariably follow. To produce this first element, one need only imitate it. For example, in the land of these people the cry of the loon is heard coming out of the swamp just before rainfall. It is believed that this cry is associated with the whole pattern of rain: dark clouds, lightning, thunder, cold air, drops of rain. Just as the modern advertiser creates a pattern of desired things, of which his product is one, visually arguing that possession of this one part will guarantee the whole pattern, so the rain dance is begun by imitating the loon's cry.

The dance is an ancient one handed down from the past, almost unchanged through the years. Its validity lies, not in its results, nor in proof, but in its very being; in the appropriateness of its inheritance, in its place within a patterned activity, in its being performed by the appropriate person, in its realization of its mythical basis. To

**SORCERY -**

a witch is actually unworking. Belief in witchcraft was no way to contradict empirical knowledge of cause and effect. On contrary, natural and mystical causation supplement one another the former explaining HOW, the latter WHY. Most misfortunes are their natural cause; to witchcraft attributed the role usually assigned to fate, coincidence, or accident of our society, that is, selecting sufferer, the occasion and the means. In short, witchcraft explains particular conditions in a chain causation that relates an individual to a natural happening in such way that he sustains injury.

Thus if a hunter stands in the path of fire at the time of an accident discharge or careless shot, the resulting wound or death may be attributed to witchcraft. That a person should go off accidentally is easily intelligible to the nation. They know this was caused by a worn seat, they repair it. That a careless hunter should stand in front of a muzzle is also understandable. But why, natives ask, should these two events occur at precisely the same moment in time and space? Witchcraft of course.

To our mind the only relation between these two independent caused facts is their coincidence in time and space. We offer no explanation of why two chains of causation intersect at a certain time and a certain place, for, unless accept witchcraft or hold that cosmos is controlled by an omnipotent power, we recognize no independence between them.

Witchcraft supplies the missing link. It explains what science cannot. The world known to the senses is as real to witch-believers as it is to us. They are well aware of immediate, natural causes. But they recognize plurality of causes, and they select for emphasis that which to them is the socially relevant one.

Witch-fear is not a "normal" phenomenon. Fundamentally, it is a socially disintegrating phobia, based on a belief in the potential malevolence of other people or reflecting great insecurity in interpersonal relations. It generalizes develops during a period of cultural transition when the old order is lapsing and the new is not yet created. Nevertheless, there is firm claim that the old economic and political structure is infallible and will continue to satisfy all needs unless something goes wrong, if something does go wrong, it is SOMEBODY'S fault. There is concept of impersonal causality but rather a conviction that a serious misfortune is a consequence of someone exerting a malevolent influence. All personal, economic and political misfortunes become the nefarious work of an EVIL WILL.

seek validity through proof is foreign to their thinking. In repetition of the rite, in sameness, they find meaning and satisfaction. Many of these rites include recitation of spells and formal often in an unintelligible language. Again, it is faith in a patterned activity of which this language is a part, not consequences or facts, which validates the act

Fig. 2. Inside front cover of *Explorations 2* (April 1954). Courtesy of the Estates of Edmund Carpenter and Marshall McLuhan.

93 The second issue of *Explorations* (April 1954) (see Fig. 1 and 2) exemplified the intrigue, excitement, playfulness, and the experimental character of their intermedial analyses. The issue’s covers featured the spoof newspaper *Feenicht’s Playhouse* (an overt reference to Joyce’s spin on London’s seventeenth-century Phoenix Playhouse in *Finnegan’s Wake*) with articles detailing their belief that electronic media would lead to a reunification of art forms across genres. Indeed, a discreet entry on the inside back cover announced, “Arts Once More United”:

Since the rise of science, time-space duality has pervaded every aspect of Western culture, particularly in Protestant countries. Among other things, it destroyed the essential unity of the arts. Music and graphic art became separate creative forms, separate experiences, and the dance and ritual which had once combined the two, along with gesture and language, fell into disrepute. Artistic talent became highly selective.

[...]

Today the arts have once more been united, not in the primitive ritual or the cathedral, but on the movie and TV screen. Once again the artist must command many fields. The two greatest movie producers, Eisenstein and Griffith, did everything themselves, dominated everything personally: the scenario, music, art, actors. Unity is essential on the screen; it cannot be achieved by a production line of specialists, however competent.

[...]

The movie or TV show, to be great, must go through a single mind, be structured by a single personality; it must be an orchestration of music, art, gesture, and language.<sup>3</sup>

94 The launch of network television in Canada was a driving force behind the project. To develop a method of comparison between television and other media forms, one year after the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) established its first television stations in Toronto and Montreal in 1952, scholars from five disciplines (anthropology, English, town planning/architecture, psychology, economics) successfully obtained funding from the Ford Foundation, established the two-year Culture and Communications Seminar, and sought a common vocabulary, drawing

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<sup>3</sup> *Explorations: Studies in Culture and Communication*, no. 2, Edmund Carpenter, W. T. Easterbrook, H. M. McLuhan, Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, D. C. Williams (eds.), Toronto, University of Toronto, 1954.

on models from each discipline. These scholars were drawn together by the announcement of a new Ford Foundation program in the Behavioral Sciences Division for interdisciplinary research and study. In many ways, the framework of this program was particularly apt to laying the foundations of intermedial education in postwar Canada. The program was geared specifically to bridging disciplinary traditions and required grant holders to establish a regular, formal, or informal seminar involving scholars and graduate students from different disciplines. Riding a wave of postwar universalist philosophy of education, the Ford Foundation thus set the stage for a founding moment in Canadian media studies and the history of “Toronto School” communications research. The program announcement summarized the basic desire to establish institutional parameters for bridging disciplines from a team approach, each member contributing specialized knowledge and perspectives:

Many scientists and scholars engaged in the study of human behavior have expressed concern in recent years with the lack of sufficient intellectual contact between such behavioral sciences as psychology, sociology, and anthropology on the one hand and such related disciplines as history, social and political philosophy, economics and business, law, and humanistic studies on the other. [...] In the conviction that such an effort would advance the study of human behavior, the Behavioral Sciences Division of the Ford Foundation announces a program of support for interdisciplinary research and training of this kind. The program provides for the support of a small number of interdisciplinary studies by faculty members and graduate students who would undertake research projects necessitating contributions from such different fields and who would engage in joint seminars on the particular and general problems of such collaboration.<sup>4</sup>

The University of Toronto put forward three proposals, two from established scholars, but the only successful one emerged from a group of younger and recently appointed professors eager to challenge the hierarchies and taken-for-granted structures of university education.

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<sup>4</sup> H. Marshall McLuhan Fonds, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), MG 31 156 Volume 204, File 26.

Edmund Carpenter had joined the Anthropology Department in 1948 and would quickly become engaged with CBC radio before participating in some of the earliest CBC television programming in 1953. As Heyer has noted, Carpenter, along with Marshall McLuhan, “gives us the *raison d’être* for medium theory almost 40 years before the emergence of the term.”<sup>5</sup> Carpenter had befriended McLuhan, whose 1951 book *The Mechanical Bride*<sup>6</sup> surveyed the maelstrom of technological change in North America through the lens of advertising and popular culture. They sought out the participation of town planner Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, who had arrived in Toronto from the United Kingdom in late 1951 to take up a Visiting Professorship in the School of Architecture. Tyrwhitt was immersed in the UK’s networks of architects and town planners associated with Bauhaus and the CIAM. McLuhan in particular enthusiastically welcomed Tyrwhitt’s expertise through her affiliation with Sigfried Giedion, CIAM’s General Secretary, with whom McLuhan had corresponded since 1939. Giedion’s 1948 book *Mechanization Takes Command*<sup>7</sup> would become a major focus in the seminar the group proposed to the Ford Foundation.<sup>8</sup> In addition to Giedion, the work of political economist Harold Innis was a singular inspiration in determining the group’s research direction. While Innis had died prematurely in 1952, Thomas Easterbrook, a long-time associate of McLuhan, and a member of the Department of Political Economy, brought Innis’s wide-ranging research interests to

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<sup>5</sup> Paul Heyer, “Live from the Met: Digital Broadcast Cinema, Medium Theory, and Opera for the Masses,” *Canadian Journal of Communication*, vol. 33, no. 4, 2008, p. 594.

<sup>6</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man*, New York, The Vanguard Press, 1951.

<sup>7</sup> Sigfried Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1948.

<sup>8</sup> On the collaborations between Tyrwhitt, Giedion, and the *Explorations* group see also Michael Darroch, “Bridging Urban and Media Studies: Jaqueline Tyrwhitt and the *Explorations* Group, 1951–1957,” *Canadian Journal of Communication*, vol. 33, 2008, p. 147–69; Michael Darroch and Janine Marchessault, “Anonymous History as Methodology: The Collaborations of Sigfried Giedion, Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, and the *Explorations* Group (1951–55),” in Andreas Broeckmann and Gunalan Nadarajan (eds.), *Place Studies in Art, Media, Science and Technology: Historical Investigations on the Sites and the Migration of Knowledge*, Weimar, VDG, 2009, p. 9–27; Michael Darroch, “Sigfried Giedion und die Explorations: Die anonyme Geschichte der Medienarchitektur,” trans. Johannes Passman, *Zeitschrift für Medienwissenschaft* no. 11, 2014, p. 144–54; Michael Darroch, “Giedion and Explorations: Confluences of Space and Media in Toronto School Theorisation,” in Norm Friesen (ed.), *Transatlantic Developments in Media and Communication Studies*, Basel, Springer International, 2016, p. 62–87.

the group. Psychologist David Carlton Williams also joined the initiative, likely at the behest of the then Vice-President of the University of Toronto Claude Bissell, who advocated for the group's proposal and recommended a clear balance between disciplines from the social sciences, humanities, and applied contexts of town planning. (Indeed, Bissell seems to have signed for Williams on the original Ford application.<sup>9</sup>) Thus was initiated the two-year Culture and Communications Seminar, one of the first experimental educational endeavours allowing master's and doctoral students to consider *culture* and *communication* as joint objects of study. The Ford program resonated directly with other postwar calls for unifying higher education in which the Toronto team was immersed.

## INFLUENCES

56 *Explorations* exemplified the group's concern with the biases of specific media, drawn from their close encounters and readings of a range of scholars seeking common problems across disciplines and new forms of unity in educational program development (among others, Innis, Giedion, John Ulric Nef Jr., Karl W. Deutsch, Norbert Wiener, and György Kepes). The journal also featured work by specialists whose studies they believed would lend themselves to the study of new media (for Carpenter these included linguists and anthropologists such as Edward Sapir and A. Irving Hallowell). At the University of Toronto, Innis had clearly shaped the thought of the young group with his work on Canadian economic history and his publications regarding the biases of media forms and communication processes. Inspired by their study of Giedion's histories of space-time across architectural and cultural forms, the group was further concerned with the spatial and temporal conditions in which different media penetrated each other. Giedion in particular was committed to fostering educational environments in which experimentation to test the overlapping boundaries of academic disciplines could take place. In the early 1940s Giedion would seek to connect McLuhan with a range of thinkers, projects, and educational experiments in North America. In a series of letters, Giedion encouraged McLuhan to think broadly, to seek examples in literature and visual arts that define the general cultural trends of their era. Through his histories of architectural space and cultural

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<sup>9</sup> Edmund Carpenter, Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, H. M. McLuhan, W. T. Easterbrook, and D. C. Williams, "University of Toronto: Changing Patterns of Language and Behavior and the New Media of Communication," Grant File PA 53-70, Section 1, New York, Ford Foundation Archives [hereafter FFA], 1953 [held in the Rockefeller Archive Center, New York], p. 11.



production, Giedion had long called for establishing a new equilibrium between "thought and feeling," calling upon educational practitioners to establish "faculties of interrelations" across universities.<sup>10</sup>

97 Giedion intended to support McLuhan by putting him in contact with the University of Chicago economic historian John Ulric Nef Jr., who had co-founded the Committee for Social Thought in 1941. Giedion sought such partners in the United States to establish new programs of scholarly and student exchange between Europe and North America. To Giedion's disappointment, Nef wrote to him that the proposal for "a closer post-war contact between scholars, students and countries" would not be readily feasible as his colleagues were preoccupied with work in Chicago and not in a position to commit themselves to a program yet to be established.<sup>11</sup> Giedion replied that he had not conceived of a commitment to a program. Rather, he suggested that an "outline for reform and international relation[ships] [...] cannot be tackled by more pedagogues and government officials, but only by creative scholars who have shown in their own work that they are capable to think in terms of methods."<sup>12</sup> One such scholar was the young McLuhan, whom he recommended to Nef in the same letter.<sup>13</sup> Although Nef would not be able to provide McLuhan with an academic position, he wrote to him that "I have heard very good things about your work [at Saint Louis University]. I am sure you will agree with me that it is important we should carry on teaching of the kind the Committee on Social Thought sponsors

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<sup>10</sup> Sigfried Giedion, "A Faculty of Interrelations," in D. Huber (ed.), *Wege in die Öffentlichkeit*, Zurich, Institut für Geschichte und Theorie der Architektur, 1987, p. 160-63. Originally published in the *Michigan Society of Architects Weekly Bulletin*, vol. 1, 1943, p. 1-4.

<sup>11</sup> Nef to Giedion, 28 May 1943. Zurich, Institut für Geschichte und Theorie der Architektur [hereafter GTA], 43-K-1943-8-3(G).

<sup>12</sup> Giedion to Nef, 3 August 1943, GTA, 43-K-1943-8-3(G).

<sup>13</sup> Giedion wrote to Nef: "One evening at St. Louis, I met a young scholar of English literature, Mr. H. M. McLuhan. I had an excellent impression of this young man who seems to live rather isolated at St. Louis University. I heard that he made his Ph.D. at Cambridge (England) and that he became there a catholic (as f.i. also T.S. Eliot). I did not read any of his articles, but I shall ask him to send me some fragments of his book on English literature, and when they are all right, I shall try and do my best that they will be published by a good publisher. Perhaps, Chicago University may invite him once for a lecture. [...] I guess Mr. McLuhan would fit into the Chicago environment and I did not find many youngsters of his kind of approach. He asked me in St. Louis where I was going, and I told him that I was on my way to Chicago for some research and to meet some friends, to confer with them about an integrated curriculum." Giedion to Nef, 3 August 1943, GTA, 43-K-1943-8-3(G).

in many places."<sup>14</sup> In 1946, McLuhan would make a similar pitch to the University of Chicago's then president Robert Hutchins.<sup>15</sup>

58         The Toronto team was also actively engaged with the work of historian and political cyberneticist Karl W. Deutsch. In his 1950 treatise on "Higher Education and the Unity of Knowledge," Deutsch discusses a range of themes towards building a cohesive program in undergraduate education bridging histories of "science and thought," advocating in the same way that Norbert Wiener had "dreamed for years of an institution of independent scientists working together."<sup>16</sup> Like Wiener and Giedion, Deutsch viewed the disciplinary specialism championed by current university models to be a threat to establishing peace on an international scale. (In the same year, Deutsch and his colleague Giorgio de Santillana would also join Wiener in proposing a new model of decentralized urbanism to prepare for the potential of atomic warfare.<sup>17</sup>) In his 28 March 1951 letter to Wiener, McLuhan remarked that "as a friend and student of Sigfried Giedion, I have paid special attention to your *Cybernetics* and *The Human Use of Human Beings*," and further that "a recent encounter with Professor Deutsch's discussion of communication and education led

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<sup>14</sup> Nef to McLuhan, H. Marshall McLuhan Fonds, LAC, MG31, D156, Vol. 32, File 32-52. It is interesting to note that some months later, in November 1943, Nef also attempted to bring Harold Innis to Chicago, several years before Innis and McLuhan would become acquainted in Toronto. Nef wrote: "[T]here is a sort of gambler's chance that we may be able to establish in Chicago something resembling the Collège de France, with a great deal of freedom both for the faculty members (in teaching and research) and the graduate students who participated (no course requirements for students at all) and who would necessarily be a rather small group." John Nef, 21 November 1943, Harold Innis Papers, Toronto, University of Toronto Archives, A76-0025, Box 12, File 45. Innis' address at the Collège de France in 1951, "Monopoly and Civilization," was published by Carpenter, McLuhan, et al. in *Explorations* 3 in 1953. See William Buxton, "Harold Innis' 'French Inflection': Origins, Themes, and Implications of His 1951 Address at le Collège de France," *Canadian Journal of Communication*, vol. 29, 2004, p. 171-186.

<sup>15</sup> Philip Marchand, *Marshall McLuhan: The Medium and the Message*, Toronto, Random House, 1989, p. 98-99.

<sup>16</sup> Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*, New York, The Technology Press, John Wiley and Sons, 1948, p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> "Cities That Survive the Bomb," undated draft, Norbert Wiener Papers, Boston, MIT, Box 12, Folder 638. Cited in Reinhold Martin, *The Organizational Complex*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 2005. See also Norbert Wiener, Karl Deutsch, and Giorgio de Santillana, "How US Cities Can Prepare for Atomic War: MIT Professors Suggest a Bold Plan to Prevent Panic and Limit Destruction," *Life*, 18 December 1950, p. 76-86.

me to envisage an experiment in communication."<sup>18</sup> A month earlier, McLuhan had written Harold Innis to criticize the very same "Deutsch-Wiener approach [in] its failure to understand the techniques and functions of the traditional arts as the essential type of all human communication," but that he had been considering an "experiment in communication [...] in suggesting means of linking a variety of specialized fields by what might be called a method of esthetic analysis of their common features."<sup>19</sup> In his "pamphlet" on communication, however, Deutsch outlined an analysis of historical "breakdowns in communication" that currently threaten the growth of science and knowledge. Referring to Arnold J. Toynbee's investigations of "internal breakdowns in many civilizations of the past,"<sup>20</sup> Deutsch argues that the growth of

science depends on a continuing three way flow and re-flow of information: technical, between men and physical operations; social, between men and men; and intellectual, between a man's unanalyzed experiences and his ensemble of secondary symbols derived from them for conscious analysis and recombination, and between his own knowledge and the accumulated knowledge of men before him. Each of these three depends on a set of channels of communication of some kind; and it appears that the breakdown or loss of any one of these three classes of communication can destroy the growth of science.<sup>21</sup>

Placing greater emphasis on the history of communication than Toynbee, Deutsch's analysis of channels and breakdowns, and what he cites as the "growth of secrecy" and the "monopolization of organized knowledge by bureaucratic castes," clearly reverberates with Harold Innis' concern with monopolies of knowledge in *Empire and Communications*,<sup>22</sup> published the same year.

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<sup>18</sup> Marshall McLuhan to Norbert Wiener, 28 March 1951, Norbert Wiener Papers, Boston, MIT Archives, File 135, Box 9.

<sup>19</sup> *Letters of Marshall McLuhan*, Matie Molinaro, Corinne McLuhan, and William Toye (eds.), Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 222-223.

<sup>20</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1934-1961, 12 vol.

<sup>21</sup> Karl W. Deutsch, "Higher Education and the Unity of Knowledge," in Lyman Bryson, Louis Finkelstein, and R. M. MacIver (eds.), *Goals for American Education: 9th Symposium*, New York, Harper, 1950, p. 89.

<sup>22</sup> Harold Innis, *Empire and Communications*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1950.

59 For his part, Carpenter brought a broad range of scholars from the world of anthropology, archaeology, and ethnography to the attention of the group. His connections particularly with the University of Pennsylvania, where he completed his PhD on the prehistory of Northeast Indigenous cultures in 1950 under the tutelage of Frank Speck, himself a student of Franz Boas, became valuable contributors to the journal *Explorations*. As Carpenter determined his interests, he moved squarely towards a cultural interest most strongly focused on art, theatre, and performance: the hallmarks of Boasian cultural anthropology. Over the life of *Explorations*, Carpenter would solicit contributions from other anthropologists who had studied under Speck, including Anthony F. C. Wallace, Melfrod Spiro, and A. Irving Hallowell, and from the broader anthropological community (among others, Dorothy Lee and David Bidney). In fact, with regard to the spoof cover of *Explorations 2*, “New Media Changing Spatial and Temporal Orientation to Self” Carpenter wrote Hallowell on 20 January 1954, “we’re having a lot of fun designing the cover around your article [“The Self in Its Behavioral Environment”].”<sup>23</sup> Hallowell’s article, first published in the April 1954 issue of *Explorations*, would be integrated into his 1955 volume *Culture and Experience*.

510 McLuhan and Carpenter cunningly drew these many threads together for their proposal to the Ford Foundation. In a four-page draft of their proposal, they first describe Innis’ studies of the American Revolution as a “clash between two networks of communication” before arguing—echoing Deutsch—that

the ideal approach to the quest for interdisciplinary rapport is to be found in a multifaceted study of the character of current conditions of communication. The relative breakdown of communication within the modern university is not something that began in the university. But it may well be that the mending of this state of affairs must begin at the university where the necessary habits of inspection and detachment coexist with the historic sense.<sup>24</sup>

In the final version of the proposal submitted to the foundation, the applicants expanded on this line of inquiry:

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<sup>23</sup> Edmund Carpenter to A. Irving Hallowell, 20 January 1954, Alfred Hallowell Papers, The American Philosophical Library, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, no. 26, Series 1.

<sup>24</sup> H. Marshall McLuhan Fonds, LAC, MG 31, D 156, Volume 204, File 26.

It is precisely this possibility of new patterning by juxtaposition of existing knowledge which the current administration of university departments and faculties makes difficult. That is what is meant by “the breakdown of communication within the modern university.” Not only does the university largely fail to communicate with society at large, but its members do not share a common life. The obsession with spatial communication and control in society at large violates the integrity of the university community as well. For this reason alone interdisciplinary projects may be said to act as pilot studies in retracing the course.<sup>25</sup>

911 From the outset, one goal of this research initiative was to respond to the question of whether “arts” are indeed becoming “once more united”—to identify new points of convergence across the arts facilitated by the conditions of new media, and to question whether these conditions have renewed otherwise dormant forms of creative expression. As they would write in the Ford proposal,

[t]he approach to the cultural and social network as itself a work of human art has been signally successful in the work of Burckhardt and Siegfried [sic] Giedion. But today when unlimited physical power has brought the entire global environment, social and physical, within the scope of man’s factive and artistic sense, it would seem to be more than ever timely to draw upon the reservoir of artistic wisdom in solving new problems and creating new vision.<sup>26</sup>

To comprehend the new “language of vision” provided by the increasing mechanization of visual experience (not coincidentally gesturing to György Kepes’ 1944 *Language of Vision*),<sup>27</sup> they required an “orchestration of diverse techniques,” extending the Sapir-Whorf model to observe the new languages of new media themselves “through the combined analysis of the interplay between the visual and the oral at a personal, social, institutional, and cultural level.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Carpenter et al., 1953, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>27</sup> György Kepes, *Language of Vision*, Chicago, Paul Theobald, 1944.

<sup>28</sup> Carpenter et al., 1953, p. 3-4.

¶12 Jaqueline Tyrwhitt's experience at navigating interdisciplinary projects was invaluable. In early 1953, as the group flirted with the new Ford programme proposal as an opportunity to build on the legacy of Innis' communications studies, she noted that "this all sounds a bit like Giedion's Faculty of Inter-Relation,"<sup>29</sup> and reported to Giedion that "there is a short meeting at McLuhan's house at two about a Ford Foundation fellowship. I rather think it is going to be offered to you and that is why I am asked to be there."<sup>30</sup> The Ford proposal represented Tyrwhitt as a "pioneer of interdisciplinary studies in Britain" who has worked with Giedion "specifically on the problem of interdisciplinary study in the university and [who] came to Toronto especially to advance this kind of cooperation between the departments of economics, political science, sociology, social work, anthropology, architecture, and town planning."<sup>31</sup> Ultimately, it was Tyrwhitt's own experimentation with the mediated character of urban environments, placing an emphasis on our emotional responses to urban design, that had the widest influence on the group's approach to urban space.<sup>32</sup>

## EXTENSIONS INTO EXPLORATIONS

¶13 Upon receiving the Ford grant, McLuhan and Carpenter moved swiftly to establish plans for a magazine or journal as a media form that was appropriate for collecting universal approaches to studying new media. On 24 July 1953, McLuhan wrote to Tyrwhitt (who had then undertaken a year-long, UN-sponsored project to develop an exhibition on low-cost housing in India) that "Carpenter is keen to start a mag in connection with the project. So we are exploring possibilities."<sup>33</sup> By 28 July, W. R. Keast, a professor of English at Cornell University and member of the Ford program's Advisory Committee, wrote to program director Bernard Berelson about a letter he had received from McLuhan about their plan "to start a journal, to be called

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<sup>29</sup> Jaqueline Tyrwhitt to Sigfried Giedion, 11 January 1953, Jaqueline Tyrwhitt personal archive, Box 4, Royal Institute of British Architects [hereafter RIBA], London.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 February 1953.

<sup>31</sup> Carpenter et al., p. 9-10.

<sup>32</sup> See Darroch, 2008; Darroch and Marchessault, 2009, p. 22-24; Michael Darroch and Janine Marchessault (eds.), *Cartographies of Place: Navigating the Urban*, Montréal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014, Culture of Cities Series, p. 7-10.

<sup>33</sup> Marshall McLuhan to Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, 24 July 1953, Jaqueline Tyrwhitt Papers, RIBA, TYJ\18\2.

*Explorations*, to publish contributions by various people from various places on the general problems of language, behavior, communications.”<sup>34</sup> McLuhan had reached out to Keast for an opinion “on whether the Division and the Foundation would be receptive to an application for a small addition to their grant—\$2500 a year for two years.” The two also hatched a plan to form a “discussion group on this communication business and study of literature for this year’s Modern Language Association meeting,” and indeed at the MLA<sup>in</sup> December 1953 McLuhan led a discussion entitled “A Role for English in the New Field of Communication Study.”<sup>35</sup> Berelson initially responded (30 July) to Keast that “as for Toronto, I’m afraid not. Support for publications isn’t very favorably received down here.” In October 1953, however, the tides turned. Claude Bissell, then Vice-President of the University of Toronto and a fellow English scholar, intervened to explain that “certain economies” had been effected, including the group’s forgoing of a secretary, which would allow them to “subsidize publication.” Bissell enquired with Berelson about “the general attitude of the Foundation towards the use of their funds for this particular purpose,” to which Berelson responded with a series of questions about the character of the media form appropriate to the problem: “[I]s it proposed to issue a separate printed series of the reports prepared by the seminar or is it simply a matter of mimeographing such reports for submission to interested colleagues? Or another question: Is it inappropriate to publish such reports in the normal scholarly channels?” (4 November 1953). Berelson requested that the group provide more information before he could offer a definitive answer. Bissell quickly responded with a brief prepared by the applicants. This brief explains their proposal “to print a series of small booklets, each containing separate but related papers, in some cases built around either figures (e.g. Innis, Giedion) or subjects”—figures constituting “pioneers in the analysis of non-verbal communication.” The series was initially planned as six issues, three yearly during the life of the grant. As a rationale for the publication, the brief argues that the series could elicit “a fuller co-operative response” and “put the activities of students especially on a professional level,” maintaining the “interdisciplinary approach basic to the whole project,” as opposed to publications in scattered journals, and making the series an “integral part of the seminar.” Essentially,

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<sup>34</sup> FFA PA 53-70, Section 4.

<sup>35</sup> “Conference 8: A Role for English in the New Field of Communication Study. Discussion leader, H. M. MCLUHAN, St. Michael’s Coll., Univ. of Toronto,” *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. 69, no. 2, April 1954, p. 21.

*Explorations* would “extend the range of the seminar on the campus and beyond it.” On 17 November 1953, Berelson transmitted to Bissell the Foundation’s conclusion that “we should more appropriately leave this decision up to you.”<sup>36</sup>

914 The group also sought financial support from the Canadian Social Science Research Council. In a voice that seems to be Carpenter, the application explained that there was a shared desire to create a Canadian journal of anthropology and, having received the Ford Foundation grant, to “conduct a two-year interdisciplinary seminar, particularly in the fields of communications and anthropology, we felt our group might serve as the formal group to launch the desired journal.” The journal would be a new outlet and feedback mechanism to “stimulate more and better articles, above all which will explore new fields, set trends, and communicate findings among that growing body of Canadians who are turning to anthropology and communications as new approaches to human relations.” In a “Tentative Outline” Carpenter indicated that the journal was to be named *Explorations: A Canadian Journal of Anthropology and Communication*.<sup>37</sup> The journal’s final masthead would declare that *Explorations*

is designed, not as a permanent reference journal that embalms truth for posterity, but as a publication that explores and searches and questions.

We envisage a series that will cut across the humanities and social sciences by treating them as a continuum. We believe anthropology and communication are approaches, not bodies of data, and that within each the four winds of the humanities, the physical, the biological and the social sciences intermingle to form a science of man.

915 *Explorations* was not the only project in the postwar period that sought to bridge disciplinary boundaries through universalist approaches. One specific influence on *Explorations* was the short-lived journal *trans/formation: art, communication, environment* (1950–52) (see Fig. 3), initiated by New York-based artist Harry Holtzman and which named both Giedion and Tyrwhitt among its many consulting editors. Indeed, *Explorations*’ masthead tellingly borrowed part of *trans/formation*’s title page, which announced that it “affirms that art, science, technology are interacting components of the total human enterprise...

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<sup>36</sup> FFA 53-70, Section 4.

<sup>37</sup> H. Marshall McLuhan Fonds, LAC, MG 31 D156, Volume 203, File 30.



[*trans/formation*] will cut across the arts and sciences by treating them as a continuum” (*trans/formation* 1-3, 1950-2)—McLuhan and Carpenter notably swapped “arts” for “humanities.” Like *trans/formation*, *Explorations* “was an effort to construct a community around the claim to universality.”<sup>38</sup> Carpenter and McLuhan sought to emulate *trans/formation*—McLuhan asked Tyrwhitt for “any essays of *Transformations* scope” or regarding her “India job and experience.”<sup>39</sup> She would publish her contribution “Ideal Cities and the City Ideal” in *Explorations* 2 (April 1954), a paper that she had first drafted for the by then defunct *trans/formation*.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, as Carpenter wrote A. Irving Hallowell on 9 June 1953, “the closest thing to what we plan is probably *Transformation*.”<sup>41</sup>

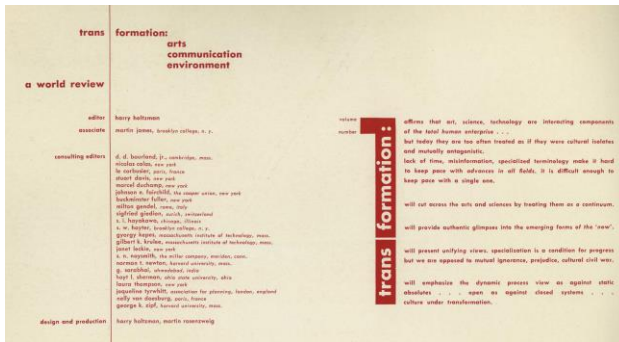


Fig. 3. Masthead of the journal *trans/formation* 1 (1950).

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What is perhaps more important than the editors’ predilection for borrowing mastheads was their quest to find the right template for a journal as a media extension of the seminar and grant. Tyrwhitt would become the most important figure in this regard through her connections to CIAM and other hubs of cross-disciplinary thinking. McLuhan and Carpenter similarly envisaged *Explorations* as an experimental mediator: a translator of ideas across disciplines and a means to connect with other groups studying communication, including those funded by Ford (Claude

<sup>38</sup> Anna Vallye, “The Strategic Universality of *trans/formation*, 1950–1952,” *Grey Room*, no. 35, Spring 2009, p. 31.

<sup>39</sup> McLuhan to Tyrwhitt, 29 October 1953, Jaqueline Tyrwhitt Papers, RIBA, TyJ\18\2.

<sup>40</sup> Ellen Shoshkes, *Jaqueline Tyrwhitt: A Transnational Life in Urban Planning and Design*, Farnham, Surrey, UK, Ashgate, 2013, p. 167.

<sup>41</sup> Carpenter to Hallowell, 9 June 1953, Alfred Hallowell Papers, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Coll. 26 Series 1.

Bissell asked Berelson in early July 1953 if it would be possible to set up "a sort of switchboard which would enable these various groups to exchange information and insights."<sup>42</sup> *Explorations* was devoted to developing a pedagogical approach to studying contemporary convergences between art, culture, science, and technology. While disagreements occurred, the group was guided by the conviction that the postwar new media environment necessitated a new field of study, that new methodologies must be involved.

## EXPERIMENTS IN MEDIA AND PERCEPTION

517 Dialogue and playful experimentation characterized the environment of the Culture and Communications Seminar think-tank from the outset, an early foray in research-creation practices in Canada. The mischievous newspaper pages of *Explorations 2* exemplified the experimental character of the project.

518 As mentioned above, blanketing the inside and outside, front and back covers (see Fig. 4 and 5), the unlikely newspaper carried the title *Feenicht's Playhouse* (or the Phoenix playhouse), gesturing to open-ended creative performance in Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*.<sup>43</sup> As McLuhan would write in "Notes on Media as Art Forms" (*Explorations 2*), Joyce himself provided a model of pedagogical art to test out new media and communication forms: "Joyce was the first to exploit the multiple revolution of telegraph, press, radio, cinema, and TV. *Finnegans Wake* has already begun to appear as an orchestration of all media of communication."<sup>44</sup> The front cover's headline proclaims "New Media Changing Temporal and Spatial Orientation to Self," and is accompanied by an amalgam of hoax articles drawing attention to the rapidly changing media environment, political climate, and artistic scene of the 1950s,

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<sup>42</sup> FFA: PA 53-70, Section 5.

<sup>43</sup> James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* [1939], London, Faber & Faber, 1964, p. 219.

<sup>44</sup> McLuhan relates Joyce's creations in ways that recount the very premise of the Culture and Communications Seminar: "The very process of human communication, Joyce saw, would afford the natural base for all the future operations and strategies of culture. Towards this vivisectional spectacle of the human community in action we have been led ever more swiftly in recent decades by increasing self-consciousness of the processes and effects of the various media of communication. Our knowledge of the modes of consciousness in pre-literate societies together with our sense of the processes of culture formation in many literate societies past and present, have sharpened our perceptions and led to wide agreement that communication itself is the common ground for the study of individual and society. To this study Joyce contributed not just awareness but demonstration of individual cognition as the analogue and matrix of all communal actions, political, linguistic and sacramental." Marshall McLuhan, "Notes on The Media as Art Forms," *Explorations 2*, April 1954, p. 9.

including “Time-Space Duality Goes,” “T.S. Eliot Flies Home,” and “Historic Time Comes to End.” The centrally featured famously falsified image of US Senator Millard Tydings meeting with Communist leader Earl Browder during the 1950 election campaign is captioned “McCarthy’s Photomontage of Communist Browder and Democrat Tydings Kills Senator Tyding’s Politically.” On the back cover, the entry “Hams – Clams” notes that “TV has been desperate for live material ever since the miracle came to pass. But a camera is like a gun: it changes the climate in the room. In many it brings out the ham, in many it brings out the clam.” Three other images, however, gesture to the concomitant seriousness of the project to test out modes of cross-cultural comparison and contrast. In the central space on the back cover is found the photograph *In the Shadow of the Capitol* (ca. 1946) by social documentary photographer Marion Palfi (albeit without credit), featuring three African-American girls in a distressed Washington street scene, the dome of the Capitol Building visible in the background (Palfi’s image is also featured in the first issue of *trans/formation*, p. 43, followed by Piet Mondrian’s 1926 essay “Home – Street – City”). On the inside front cover, a 1944 Marine Corps photo of US soldiers jitterbugging in front of a crowd of smiling Indigenous community members and fellow marines in Talasea, West New Britain, Papua New Guinea (an image also featured in *trans/formation 1*, p. 14). And on the inside back cover, an advertisement for one of the first 3D feature films, Arch Oboler’s *Bwana Devil* (1952) featuring “Natural Vision,” at Toronto’s Loews theatre: “The flat screen is gone! You—not a camera—but you are there!” It is worth keeping in mind that the qualities of 3D film may well have been related to the group by Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, who had worked with Canadian architect Wells Coates in London. In 1951, Coates had designed one of the first 3D cinemas, the Telekinema, for the Festival of Britain—a milestone in both live film and television broadcasting.<sup>45</sup> The covers of *Explorations 2* thus suggest that the all-pervasiveness of new media have transformed all cultural contexts into open laboratories—into classrooms without walls.

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<sup>45</sup> See Janine Marchessault, *Ecstatic Worlds: Media, Utopias, Ecologies*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 2017, p. 87–125.

**MODERN ART  
ALL THE BUNK**

Asked his opinion today about modern art, Harry Truman called it "merely the vapourings of half-baked lazy people" while General Eisenhower, after looking at an abstract mural in the United Nations building, remarked, "To be modern you don't have to be nuts."

Rep. George A. Dondero of Michigan promised to investigate what he called the subversive nature of modern art, and Richard Nixon wrote to the American Legion: "I believe a committee of Congress should make a thorough investigation of this type of art in government buildings with a view to obtaining removal of all that is found to be inconsistent with American ideals and principles."

Addressing the Royal Academy in London Sir Alfred Munnings said, "If you want to paint a tree, for heaven's sake make it LOOK like a tree." For support, he turned to Honorary Academician Extraordinary Winston Churchill who sat with him at the speaker's table. "Not long ago," he recalled, "Mr. Churchill and I were walking together. Mr. Churchill said to me, 'Alfred, if we saw Picasso coming down this street towards us, would you join me in kicking hard a certain part of him?' I said, 'By God, Winston, I would!'"

**STUDENTS SEMI-  
LITERATE SAYS  
FAMED EDUCATOR**

Winnipeg: Dr. Mary Johnson of the University of Ontario today warned that a generation of illiterates was upon us. "Most students are incapable of the most elementary reading and writing," she said, "and when they spell, they follow the pronunciations of the man-on-the-street, with no respect for the printed page. In fact, this homeless creature seems their guide in every way."

This trend is not limited, she said, to English classes, but characterizes the study of foreign languages as well. Although students now learn to speak foreign languages with greater fluency than students of a generation ago, they fall well below them in their ability to read and write in foreign languages.

Dr. Johnson blamed this trend on the impact of the new visual media and recommended that the University Institute a remedial English course to give students a thorough grounding in grammar and correct pronunciation and spelling.

*art, music and drama*

**STIMULATING**

Today the Art Gallery opened a new exhibition of primitive and modern art. Critics were immediately struck by similarities between the two.

In each the heirarchy of size is intimately associated with the heirarchy of power, strength and importance. Renaissance perspective destroyed this structural correspondence of space and symbol by a slavish imitation of the apparent optical image of the three-dimensional object world. The living, fluctuating wealth of the visual field was frozen into a static geometric system, eliminating the time-element always present in the experiencing of space, and thus destroying the dynamic relationships in the experience of the spectator.

After a long eclipse, this structural use of size differences has been rediscovered by contemporary painters, photographers and movie-TV camera men. Advertising art, uninhibited by tradition, also has found a dynamic and structural use of the contrasting size of color surfaces. The fixed horizon has disappeared, and once more art has

**Art Exhibit**

come to life. By multiple perspective, static fixation has been overcome, because simultaneous perspective means moving in space.

Modern painters, like their primitive teachers, have discovered that one observation point is not sufficient to give the spatial essence of an object. So they move around the object, penetrate it, and use all means available to describe the greatest possible number of its relationships to the spectator, and to other objects.

Many of the images are endowed with transparency; that is, they are able to interpenetrate without optical destruction of each other. This transparency implies more than an optical characteristic; it implies a simultaneous perception of different spatial locations. Space not only recedes but fluctuates in a continuous activity.

Clearly, the time-factor has once more been introduced into art, and space is once more becoming respectable.

**A LION in your lap!**

**A LOVER in your arms:**

**NOW!**

**'BWANA DEVIL'**

**3 DIMENSION**

**OPENS DAILY 9:15 a.m.**

**LOEW'S**  
YONGE AT QUEEN

**You have never witnessed anything in the world like this before!**

**The flat screen is gone! You—not a camera—but you are there!**

**THIS IS NATURAL VISION**

Now time has reached the flurrying curtain-fall  
That wakens thought from historied reverie  
And gives the word to uninfected discourse

**TV WALLOPS MS**

The monopoly of knowledge enjoyed by print for centuries was destroyed by the mass media. After a beating by radio and movies, MS was knocked cold by TV. Observers predict that before staging a comeback, book culture must train in a fresh air camp.

The bout was fought in the CBC studios in Toronto. University of Toronto professors from English, Psychology, Town Planning, Political Economy and Anthropology set up the following experiment: Four groups of 30 students each, carefully selected and assigned on the basis of academic standing, either saw in the studio, watched on TV, heard on the radio or read in MS a single lecture on linguistic codifications of reality. Immediately afterwards all wrote an examination testing content and understanding. The medium proved more significant than even previous academic standing. TV was best; radio next; MS last. TV had greatest effect on best students who scored 17% higher than best students who read lecture. Misspellings were far higher on TV-radio papers; the majority were not fortuitous, but dropped specific and regular phonemes, following general changes.

Fig. 4. Inside back cover of *Explorations 2* (April 1954). Courtesy of the Estates of Edmund Carpenter and Marshall McLuhan.

**STRANGE SELF  
NEW SELF**

"This image (seemingly animated) walks with them in the fields in broad Day-light, and if they are employed in delving, harrowing, Seed-sowing or any other Occupation, they are at the same time mimicked by the ghostly Visitant. Men of the Second Sight ... call this reflex-man a Co-walker, every way like the Man, as his Twin-brother and Companion, haunting as his Shadow."

(from Kirk's SCRYPT  
COMMONWALTH, 1691)

**PLOOF BOOK  
SELLS MILLION**

"What were men made of, that they could gaze at one girl with their souls in their eyes one moment -- and turn as he was turning now, to the call of a blonde trollop?" Sabrina Horne's bosom (a prominent feature of this novel) was agitated by this question whenever she saw Sir John Templar, in a bedroom across the street, "take a running jump and land PLOOF" alongside Molly Quin, his doxy. To make matters worse, Sabrina was married to old Sir William Wakefield, "a spent candle." How, Sabrina wondered, could she escape from Sir William and join ardent Sir John?

So much of THE GENERAL'S WENCH is devoted to bedroom doings that it easily gives the impression of being just one more piece of execrably written pornography. It says on the jacket, however, that Rosamond (KITTY) Marshall's real intention is to portray "the fabulously rich 18th century days of the East India Company ... one of the most stimulating periods in all history."

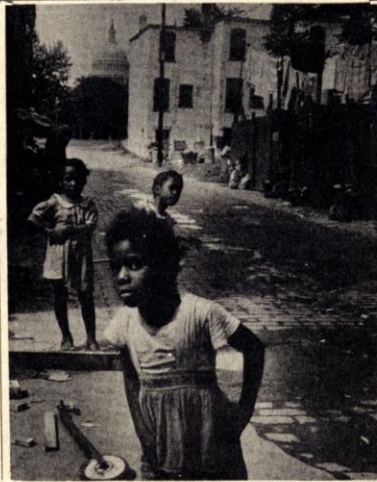
Sabrina's worst troubles begin when she tells her husband that his impotence is quite intolerable. Sir William has been told this by two previous wives and has a rich 18th century answer ready: he locks complainers in a garret until they waste away. Then he buries them in the garden. Luckily, Sabrina does not waste away easily. She is still in fine shape when she is rescued by Sir John Templar's lawyer, who has forethoughtedly dropped poison in Sir William's rum. Indeed, the lawyer is so inflamed by Sabrina that he abducts her to Belgium, where he ties her daily to a bedpost and flogs her. Author Marshall's descriptions of these whippings seem almost pathological -- until it is recalled that she is trying to portray the rich 18th century days of the East India Company, and is bound to take the rough with the smooth.

THE GENERAL'S WENCH has a happy ending. Sir John arrives at the whipping post with his usual proof. The lawyer falls through a trap door; his accomplice is dropped into a pit of lime. There was an "awful sizzling as Alty began to cook."

**PRES. SPEECH WARMLY RECEIVED**

President Eisenhower's address to the nation was warmly received throughout the country. The best techniques of television advertising were employed to bring the President to the people. The Republican Party hired the services of Batten, Barton, Durstine and Osborn, famous New York advertising agency, to create the

character Likeable Ike. It was their decision to have the speech filmed in advance twice, the second time omitting the Civil Rights section. These were then broadcast together, the second one being aimed at the Southern states. TIDE reported the satisfied comment of Bernard C. Duffy, head of B.B.D. & O: "One of our best shows."



**HAMS - CLAMS**

When Al Smith dropped that pungent remark, "Let's look at the record," he had no idea that the record was about to grow into such a big boy. Radio, tape recording, and television have had the effect of vastly expanding the record; there may come a point beyond which the record can be enlarged only to its own detriment and at our peril. Before radio, before TV, the record stayed within the limits of the human voice and the telegrapher's nervous key. Public servants and private individuals did not usually have the record on their minds; they spoke and acted in a somewhat casual and carefree way, and only pulled themselves together and tightened up their syntax and their logic on special occasions. But nowadays, in the electronic atmosphere that charges forums, committee rooms, living rooms and rear platforms, everyone feels the brooding presence of the record. In high circles, caution mounts. In low circles, abandon grows.

The presidential press conference has already been watered down to some extent by the new rule permitting a tape recording

to be made and broadcast, and the full text to be published. The old "off the record" system had great advantages for all concerned; it put the President at his ease, it placed the reporters in a livelier relationship to him, and it created an atmosphere more favorable for turning up information -- which is the true purpose of the meeting. The new rule turns what has been an extremely handy, carefully evolved, semi-official, and unique contrivance into a theatrical performance. The press conference becomes a show.

The temptation to stage a show is strong, particularly in America, land of showmen. TV has been desperate for live material ever since the miracle came to pass. But a camera is like a gun; it changes the climate in the room. In many it brings out the ham, in many it brings out the clam.

To date, congressional hearings have not been staged, but they have shown what could be done to awaken jaded audiences and help a legislator climb life's ladder. Cameramen are notorious rearrangers. It is their first act on entering a room -- rearrange everything. The record, of course, would be of little value if it became merely the work of playwrights and photographers.

**Abandon Alphabet  
Teach Children  
By Pronunciation**

Nova Scotia has taken an important step in the age-old controversy on how children should be taught to read.

A new program has been introduced which teaches children the skill of word recognition through pronunciation and word picture systems and discards the old idea of teaching the alphabet in the primary grades. The plan, being considered for adoption by several other provinces, parts of the U.S. and the U.K., was started three years ago by Harold Nason, chief inspector of schools.

He believes the child should be able to pick out any word, pronounce it by syllables and hereby master the art of word recognition and meaning, rather than by taking a word, learning to spell it by constant repetition and learning only one word at a time in a memory-straining and slow process.

**MODERNS  
ILLITERATE**

One of the universities recently made a survey of the reading habits of the American public: it decided that 48 percent of all Americans read, during the year, no book at all. "I picture to myself," said Randall Jarrell, "that reader -- that non-reader, rather: one man out of every two -- and I reflect, with shame: Our poems are too hard for him. But so are TREASURE ISLAND, PETER RABBIT, pornographic novels -- any book whatsoever. A sort of dream situation often occurs to me in which I call to this imaginary figure: 'Why don't you read books?' -- and he always answers, after looking at me steadily for a long time: 'Huh?'"

**SPACE SOCKS  
PRINTED PAGE**

F. Scott Fitzgerald, interviewed in the city today, said: "I saw that the novel, which at my maturity was the strongest and supplest medium for conveying thought and emotion from one human being to another, was becoming subordinated to a mechanical and communal art that, whether in the hands of Hollywood merchants or Russian idealists, was capable of reflecting only the tritest thought, the most obvious emotion. It was an art in which words were subordinated to images, where personality was worn down to the inevitable low gear of collaboration. As long past as 1890, I had a hunch that the talkies would make even the best-selling novelist as archaic as silent pictures ... there was the rankling indignity in seeing the power of the written word subordinated to another power, a more glittering, a greater power."

Fig. 5. Back cover of *Explorations 2* (April 1954). Courtesy of the Estates of Edmund Carpenter and Marshall McLuhan.

"ARTS ONCE MORE UNITED":  
BRIDGING DISCIPLINES THROUGH CREATIVE  
MEDIA RESEARCH, 1955-1957

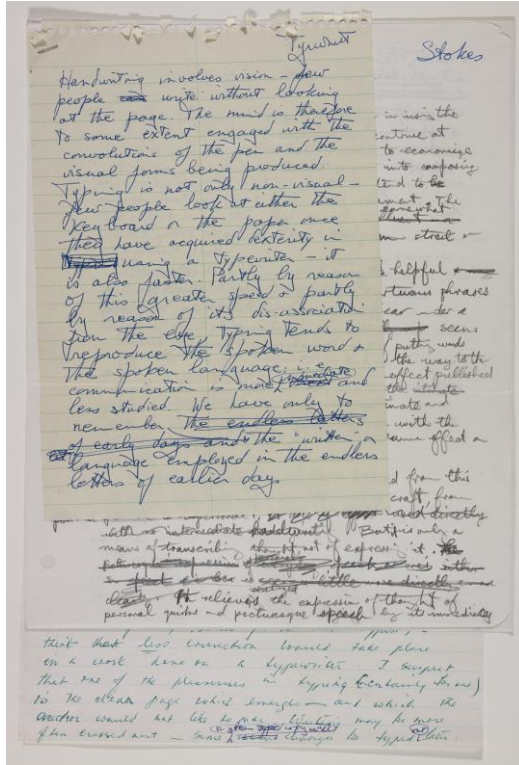


Fig. 6. Jaqueline Tyrwhitt's notes on the difference between handwriting and typewriting. Courtesy of Jaqueline Tyrwhitt Papers, Royal Institute for British Architects, TyJ\17\4, RIBA collections.

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With cinema and TV on their minds, and to test hypotheses generated in class discussions and informal meetings about modes of perception in the context of a changing postwar media environment, they set about testing new and old media by acquiring “the antidote of related media like print,” as McLuhan would later write about the typewriter.<sup>46</sup> In order to copy excerpts and take minutes of their meetings, they purchased a Remington Rand typewriter,<sup>47</sup> and would engage in a robust discussion about the shift from writing to print. Doubts were expressed after one student proclaimed “the typewriter created a mechanical barrier between the writer

<sup>46</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, New York, McGraw Hill Book Company, 1964, p. 287.

<sup>47</sup> The receipt is still preserved amongst Jaqueline Tyrwhitt's papers, RIBA, TyJ\17\4.

and his work, and caused a short, staccato style," and participants were asked to submit reflections on this question.<sup>48</sup> In her own response, Jaqueline Tyrwhitt captured the sentiment that McLuhan would later suggest in "The Typewriter: Into the Age of the Iron Whim," arguing "partly by reason of [its] greater speed + and partly by reason of its dis-association from the eye, typing tends to reproduce the spoken word + the spoken language: i.e. communication is more immediate and less studied."

§20 As the year progressed, seminar presentations became more provocative and the debates more raucous, a dialogue captured in the typeset minutes (prepared by Tyrwhitt, who worked as the Seminar's secretary in 1954/55): anonymous, diffuse, and non-linear amalgams of debated points and counter-arguments separated by ellipses are clustered at the end of later seminar meetings.

§21 More formal experiments followed. Building on their hypothesis that the materialities of distinct media forms are ideally suited to carrying specific ideas or values, the group conducted a "media experiment" in the spring of 1954 at the CBC Toronto studios and later at Toronto's then Ryerson Institute of Technology. Carpenter crafted a script for the show entitled "Thinking through Language," which drew substantially on anthropologist Dorothy Lee's insights into linguistic codifications of reality. The lecture was presented to some 130 students, divided into four groups who received it in person, on television, on the radio, or as a manuscript. The television portion was produced by none other than CBC's Sydney Newman, who allowed the group to try to shape a "neutral" show, to allow for comparison, rather than the most successful strategies of television production. After the CBC released a news bulletin, a *New York Times* headline captured the group's initial surprise at the results: "Video Best Teacher, Researchers Find"; "Television is a first-class teacher, easily surpassing its elder cousin, radio."<sup>49</sup> Students who had participated in the television segment retained the most information, followed by the radio group, the reading group, and finally the studio/lecture hall group. In his review "Certain Media Biases," Carpenter interpreted the results in two significant ways. First, "[i]t became apparent from differences such as these, that it was not simply a question of communicating a single idea over various media, but that a given type of idea or insight belongs primarily, though not exclusively, to one medium, and

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<sup>48</sup> 17<sup>th</sup> meeting; 9 February 1955, see H. Marshall McLuhan Fonds, LAC, M31 D156, vol. 203, File 30; see also Jaqueline Tyrwhitt Papers, RIBA, TyJ\17\4.

<sup>49</sup> "Video Best Teacher, Researchers Find," *New York Times*, 5 March 1954, p. 26.

that it can be gained or communicated best through that medium.”<sup>50</sup> Second, with the televisual, Carpenter believed they had encountered a medium capable of reuniting the arts and overcoming the separation of thought and feeling (a schism that Giedion had long sought to overcome):

Now one of the results of the time-space duality which developed in Western culture from the Renaissance on, was a separation within the arts. Music, which created symbols in time, and graphic art, which created symbols in space, became separate pursuits, and men gifted in one rarely pursued the other. Dance and ritual, which inherently combined them, fell in popularity. Only in drama did they remain united. It is significant that of the four new media, the three most recent are essentially dramatic media, particularly television which combines music and art, language and gesture, rhetoric and colour. They convey emotional tones, not merely “information.” They do not, however, exercise the same freedom with time that the stage practices. An intricate plot, employing flash-backs, multiple perspective, and overlays, intelligible on the stage, might be completely mystifying on the screen.<sup>51</sup>

The group’s psychologist, Carl Williams, would also analyze the results of the experiment, reporting that an experiment was performed on 108 students to test the different effects of discrete mass media on learning. Williams was more hesitant to establish conclusions:

It is fair to conclude that media do make a difference in immediate recognition, using undergraduates as subjects. It is also fair to rank the media from television through radio to reading in terms of their effectiveness *under these conditions*. No conclusion is drawn on the studio group. At this stage of research, generalization is dangerous. The study does not prove that television is “better” than radio or that either is preferable to books, or that “live” audiences learn little.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Edmund Carpenter, “Certain Media Biases,” *Explorations* 3, August 1954, p. 65–74.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> “Mass Media and Learning – An Experiment,” *Explorations* 3, August 1954, p. 75–82, italics in the original. With his then graduate students, he would report the findings again in the *Canadian Journal of Psychology*: D. C. Williams, J. Paul, and J. C. Ogilvie, “Mass Media, Learning, and Retention,” *Canadian Journal of Psychology*, vol. 11, no. 3, 1957, p. 157–163.



922 In an April 1955 letter to members of the seminar, likely in response to Williams’ analysis, Carpenter chastised the group for misrepresenting the purpose of their media experiment conducted at the CBC studios. “My interest was media biases,” he wrote, “I was convinced that the secret of TV was its extreme non-lineality, as opposed to the lineality of the book, so I decided to choose a subject associated with book culture but to present it non-lineally. Thus I hoped to achieve a ‘neutral’ show—and here I was mistaken, we now know, for the content, contrary to expectations, proved as much at home on TV.”<sup>53</sup> The final entry on the inside back cover of *Explorations 2* captured the essence of this first media experiment for Carpenter and McLuhan. “TV Wollops MS,” the entry reports: “The monopoly of knowledge enjoyed by print for centuries was destroyed by the mass media. After a beating by radio and movies, MS was knocked cold by TV. Observers predict that before a staggering comeback, book culture must train in a fresh air camp.”

923 Tyrwhitt, along with Williams, developed a plan to test student perceptions of the urban environment, a pedagogical program derived in part from a proposal for an “intracampus study” mentioned in correspondence between Tyrwhitt and McLuhan in early 1953. The “Perception and Use of the Environment” experiment was conducted before Christmas 1954 with students at Ryerson Institute of Technology. A questionnaire of 24 questions was distributed to some 900 students enquiring into their background and interests (especially their use of various media during the day and as pastimes), perceptions of their own movements in urban space and perceptions of the visual environment in the vicinity of Ryerson. The survey inquired into perceptions of urban structure and objects—street orientation, street furniture, trees, colours—city elements designed to attract their attention, chiefly advertising, and whether they found beauty in any aspects of their urban environment.<sup>54</sup> Faculty and graduate students worked to tabulate the results. Published in *Explorations 5* (June 1955) and elsewhere<sup>55</sup> as “The City Unseen,” the study gestured to the group’s emerging focus on the effects of forms of communication on knowledge systems, and their emphasis on using city spaces as learning environments. In 1956, Tyrwhitt would narrate a segment on the “City

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<sup>53</sup> Jaqueline Tyrwhitt Papers, RIBA, TyJ\17\4.

<sup>54</sup> Jaqueline Tyrwhitt Papers, RIBA, TyJ\18\1; see Darroch, 2008.

<sup>55</sup> Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, “The City Unseen,” *Architecture and Building*, vol. 30, no. 9, September 1955, p. 328–331.

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Unseen” for an episode of CBC’s television production *Explorations* on “The Unseeing Eye” (see Fig. 7).<sup>56</sup>

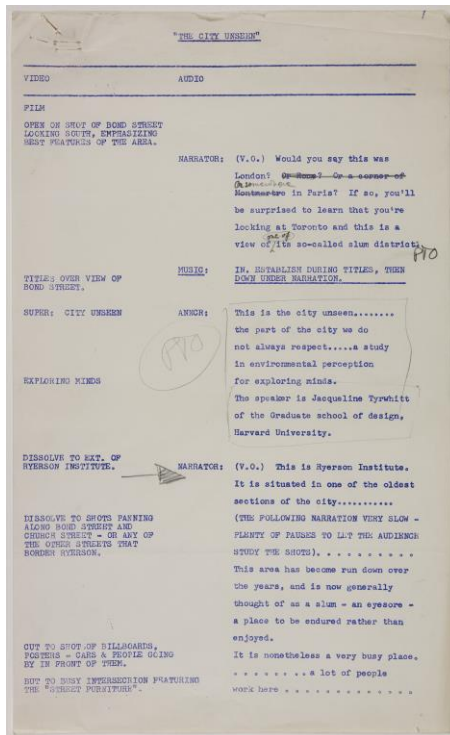


Fig. 7. Draft manuscript of the “The City Unseen,” hosted by Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, for the CBC series *Explorations*’ episode “The Unseeing Eye,” broadcast 9 September 1956. Courtesy of RIBA Collections.

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In many ways, the results became as much a study of the lack of perception of the environment. In their analysis, Tyrwhitt and Carl Williams concluded that there were two major levels of perception at play: “a very low level, a purely sensory level, at which the eye purely records impressions of colour and bulk”; and a second sensory level at which “only vague impressions are retained” such as silhouette and colour. After moving to Harvard, Tyrwhitt would conclude that “we really know very little about how to design so as to rekindle the interest of the public in their visual

<sup>56</sup> See manuscripts in Jaqueline Tyrwhitt Papers, RIBA, TyJ\18\1 and TyJ\48\6.

environment.”<sup>57</sup> Unlike the capacity of a film camera to record everything in front of it, the human eye and mind collected and recollected selectively; “imaginative vision” leaps “ahead of actuality.”<sup>58</sup>

## CONCLUSION

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The many dialogues and experiments that *Explorations* initiated are thus indicative of the ways in which intermedial studies became organized and institutionalized in the 1950s and 1960s, paving the way for future collaborations bridging the arts, humanities, and sciences. In a position that would resonate with McLuhan’s sensibility of the performative qualities of language, and echoing Giedion’s call to re-establish a “dynamic equilibrium” between thought and feeling, Carpenter came to argue that “only in drama did [the arts] remain united” and thus it was the dramatic qualities of live television that were unique in uniting both the senses and the arts: “The cameras lead the spectator from a total view to a close-up, and back again, creating a dynamic picture [...] closer to communicating an unabridged situation than any other medium and involves the direct give and take of a dynamic relationship.”<sup>59</sup> Together, these scholars shared the belief that the new media environment necessitated the reunification of the arts through simultaneity and multisperspective, as reported in the covers of *Explorations 2*’s *Feenicht’s Playhouse*. In the upper right corner of the inside back cover, the “arts, music, drama” section reports that critics were struck by similarities between prehistoric and modern art forms: “Modern painters, like their primitive teachers, have discovered that one observation point is not sufficient to give the essence of an object.” The result is the re-orienting of the time-space duality at the end of the dominance of written history: “Clearly, the time-factor has once more been introduced into art, and space is once more becoming respectable.” Their conclusion was that “Historic Time Comes to End.” To this point, Carpenter subtly included the opening lines of Laura Riding and Robert Grave’s 1930s journal *Epilogue*: “Now time has reached the flurrying curtain-fall / That wakens thought from historied reverie / And gives the word to uninfected discourse.”

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<sup>57</sup> Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, “Across the Street,” in *Mosaic*, Architectural Society of the School of Architecture, Toronto, University of Toronto, 1957, p. 11.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Edmund Carpenter, “Certain Media Biases,” *Explorations 2*, April 1954, p. 66.

Writing for the *Chicago Review* in 1956, in an initial report on their educational experiment entitled “The New Languages,” Carpenter and McLuhan co-announced that “the new mass media—film, radio, television—are new languages, their grammars as yet unknown. Each codifies reality differently; each conceals a unique metaphysics.”<sup>60</sup> As the review’s editor noted, “forced to reach beyond their own classroom walls the members of this Toronto seminar decided to publish a journal, *Explorations*, devoted to a study of media biases.”<sup>61</sup> Carpenter, McLuhan, and Tyrwhitt would incorporate the results of their Culture and Communications Seminar’s experiments into their many future endeavours. McLuhan reproduced the results of the CBC experiment within his 1960 *Project for Understanding New Media*, and he would carry the group’s insights into his preparatory work for both *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962) and *Understanding Media* (1964). The insights and examples that emerged from the discussions and experiments conducted by the group also accompanied Carpenter in his own approach to media anthropology, starting with his reorganization of the journal’s format in *Explorations 9* (1959), subtitled *Eskimo*, which juxtaposed his own writings with film stills by Robert Flaherty and paintings by Frederick Varley. *Explorations 9* reflected Carpenter’s attempt to capture the sense of multiperspective, of objects in motion, that he wished to portray the same year in an unfinished documentary film entitled *Eskimo Art*. In 1958, he wrote to Giedion, “in photograph and in layout we tried to reflect the spirit of Eskimo art: in motion, with multi-perspective. Thus we would take a single ivory carving, and with a black background, get various exposures, at different angles and distances, juxtaposing and superimposing.”<sup>62</sup> These themes resurface in his later publications *They Became What They Beheld* (1970), *Oh What a Blow That Phantom Gave Me* (1972), and *Eskimo Realities* (1973). Carpenter left the University of Toronto in 1959 to initiate an experimental program bridging multiple arts and anthropology at San Fernando Valley State College in Northridge (1959–67). In 1968–69, he further participated in Fluxus artist Robert Watt’s “Experimental Seminar” at the University of California at Santa Cruz. Together with Watts and others, and with support from the Carnegie Foundation, he would co-edit the volume *Proposals for Art Education*,

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<sup>60</sup> Edmund Carpenter and Marshall McLuhan, “The New Languages,” *Chicago Review*, vol. 10, no. 1, Spring 1956, p. 46.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>62</sup> Carpenter to Giedion, 10 November 1958, GTA, 43-K-1958-II-10.

published in 1970.<sup>63</sup> For her part, Jaqueline Tyrwhitt joined Harvard’s Graduate School of Design in 1955 and became, through to her death in 1983, the editor of *Ekistics*, a journal that extended the CIAM notion of “network” as a method of cross-disciplinary comparison.<sup>64</sup> The scholarly network that took shape during these years of Ford Foundation funding at the University of Toronto thus laid the framework in Canada for initiatives in creative media research that have become fundamental aspects of arts and humanities education.

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<sup>63</sup> Edmund Carpenter, Christopher Cornford, Sidney Simon, and Robert Watts (eds), *Proposals for Art Education*, funded by the Carnegie Corporation, New York, 1970.

<sup>64</sup> See Mark Wigley, “Network Fever,” *Grey Room*, vol. 4, 2001, p. 82–122.

## “Arts Once More United”: Bridging Disciplines through Creative Media Research, Toronto, 1953–55

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### ABSTRACT

From 1953 to 1955, the Ford Foundation funded a unique experiment in intermedial study and experimentation at the University of Toronto. *The Culture and Communications Seminar* and the journal *Explorations*, led by Edmund Carpenter, Marshall McLuhan, and Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, are indicative of the ways in which intermedial studies became organized and institutionalized in the 1950s and 1960s. The scholarly network that took shape during these years of Ford Foundation funding laid the framework in Canada for initiatives in creative media research that have become fundamental aspects of arts and humanities education. This article charts the assemblage of geographic, disciplinary, artistic, and organizational connections that facilitated this educational experiment.

### RÉSUMÉ

Durant les années 1953–55, la Ford Foundation a financé, à l'Université de Toronto, une expérience inédite d'études intermédiales. Le séminaire *Culture and Communication* ainsi que le journal *Explorations* qu'ont dirigés Edmund Carpenter, Marshall McLuhan et Jaqueline Tyrwhitt témoignent ainsi de l'organisation et de l'institutionnalisation des études intermédiales durant les années 1950 et 1960. Le réseau didactique qui prend forme dans l'orbe du financement de la Ford Foundation jette les bases de la recherche créative sur les médias, maintenant devenue un aspect fondamental des programmes d'éducation en arts et en sciences humaines. Cet article retrace les connexions géographiques, disciplinaires, artistiques et organisationnelles qui ont facilité cette expérience éducationnelle.

### NOTE BIOGRAPHIQUE

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His research facilitated the republication of the eight collaboratively edited issues of the journal *Explorations* for which he co-authored a new introduction.