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MONTREAL

WHERE DO WE COME FROM?

WHO ARE WE?

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Maison de la culture
Frontenac
2550, rue Ontario Est
January 22 - March 12,
2000



Lili Richard, *Cerne du temps*, colored canvas on canvas.

Where do we Come from? Who are We? Where are we Going? These memorable words associated with Paul Gauguin's famous painting on that title inspired four women artists from Quebec to create works in response to this question. Bonnie Baxter's *États d'âme* has imagery projecting out of a structure with two video monitors that rises and falls. As one image rises, the other descends... This is not a Jane Fonda work out video, more an allusion to the left-brain, right-brain bicameral mind and the inherent limitations to our perception of the world. Forming a backdrop to the two monitors, a larger screen projected similar imagery, most of it related to the body and containment. The images on the large screen appeared abstract, but were actually micro-cosmic close-ups of body fragments: eyes, teeth, hair, skin that created an unreal surface effect. The variations in perspective, texture and colour are interesting: a man hitting his head, a bald headed tattooed man with a ball in his mouth, a child's toy rocker... A sound emits from a speaker like a heart beat. Baxter's introspection suggests the body is a kind of paradise lost, something unfamiliar even to ourselves, but the "search for meaning" remains obscure, perhaps intentionally. Baxter's gadgetry is impressive, but her use of technology verges on adulation. Jean Fabb's *Feast and Famine* was a table on which natural upturned root systems are laid out in a linear fashion. In front, seven rusty metal bowls have ashes, pigment and powder in them, a kind of "ritual offering". These

rituals are metaphoric and enacted for a highly specialized "art audience" and have little to do with holistic culture but remain a poignant reflection on the links between nature and human culture.

Sonia Robertson's *Je te sens concerné* the most naturally eclectic of the works in this show comprised a glass "bowl" with water. The circumference recalls the shape of the eye's surface, and hanging from leather bands, the piece refracts light from the pool of water onto the adjacent gallery walls. A speaker attached immediately beneath the glass, when it emits pre-recorded sounds, causes the water to move ever so slightly, causing the projected light to make ever changing patterns. Mechanical and natural elements interact creating physical effects related to energy. Robertson's metaphysical work sensitizes us to the linkages between all things in the world around us. Lili Richard's *Cerne du temps* is a circle of canvas, with applied strips of canvas that repeat the circular form like the yearly rings on a tree. If we look through central opening in the canvas, we see hand written quotes on the adjacent wall that follow the form of a spiral. The quotes are from various writers: Jean Tardieu, Gaston Miron, Marie-Claire Blais and Jacques Brault that can likewise be found on the other side of Richard's canvas. Richard's work suggests an inter-generational layering or build up process of culture that is poetic and *a propos*. Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going? Who knows! These artists searching works leave the issue open.

Accompanying the show is a room full of Jacques Benoit's large scale micro-biotic pastel on black paper works that include mandala-like forms, landscapes of selected, ambiguous imagery; jumbled letters, a butterfly's wing, swirls, patterns, evanescent biomorphic visual fragments. Behind, slide projections of multiple planet-like images are presented on a darkened wall. Benoit's histology of universal symbols is a child-like, imaginary universe of his own creation.

John K. Grande

JAMES LAHEY
STYLE SYNTHESIZER

Galerie de Bellefeuille
1367, avenue Greene
April 1 - 13, 2000

For his latest show at Galerie Bellefeuille, Peterborough, Ontario-based James Lahey has brought some surprisingly unusual reconfigurations of the landscape to Montreal. Using a digital transfer process

whereby 35mm slide images of natural phenomena are printed in grey scale onto canvas, "part of a deliberate strategy to distance (himself) at the outset from each picture", James Lahey then subtly subverts the photo on canvas image. Painterly effects of structure, line, colour and abstraction begin to engulf and layer on top of the photo. The process is not just a fusion of style, more like the way recording studios mix sound or a graphic artist will build imagery in layers. Such stylistic hybridity can be seen in a triptych titled *Pacific Portrait (Laguna Beach) 9:03.1.0 to 9:03.2.3* where each successive painting shows the exact same scene less than a second apart each time. The same reclamation of numerous styles *within a single painting* can also be found in *Field from Higbuxay 115* (1999) where trees replace the sea, a glowing yellow field the mid-ground. Drips and stains hang like a mirror reflection in the entire lower section of this oil on canvas.

James Lahey's stylistic synthesizing would be balked at by more conventional painters, who might accuse him of abandoning truth by painting in so many styles simultaneously: romantic, abstract, painterly, representational. Such post-Modern borrowing from different periods and epochs of painting would never have occurred in a single work even twenty years ago. It would have been unthinkable in the modernist era when artists adhered to their specific stylistic dogmas and labels like warrior tribes defending their territory!

Field in Late December (2000) and *Ice Forming on a Stream* (2000) form an interesting juxtaposition in this show. Both are vertical arrangements and both project a sentiment that the earth is somehow breathing, a living creature. The gradations that work downwards from sky to earth in these two pieces are subtle, the pastel-like skies are vaporous like a Takao Tanabe or Gordon Smith. Not only is Lahey creating an effect of distance that is mimetic, artificial, but he also builds that distance into an area of resonance that jumps forward from mid-ground to foreground. This is done by working through light-dark colour variation, and equally with the style(s) he uses. From clear crisp painterly, textural focus points within the landscape to more ethereal, misty or abstract grounded areas that are pure painterly, Lahey builds out of the depth into the foreground. The foreground is literally half the painting, and we sense the joy Lahey must feel moving the paint and pigment around in swaths, strokes, thick brush and roller areas. *Ice Forming on a Stream* substitutes drips, but shows them emerging out



Ice forming on a Stream, Oil on canvas
72 x 48 inch

of the watery areas of the piece as if he were unfreezing the stream stylistically, creating a musical atonality out of resonance, brushwork, stylistic devices. Hence the postModern sense of instability, of pushing a subject to its limits, unhinging our sense that the *subject is something we capture in our mind's eye*. Natural phenomena become illusions and cause us to question how we perceive the "subject-ness" of a painting.

Others pieces include *Abstraction* (1999), a mirage-like monochromatic acrylic of still and moving areas like a watery reflection. Debussy comes to mind. We realize we are reading this as a surface, the subject (water) dissipates and the object (a painting) exist in a dualistic interplay. Another abstraction is red, white and black, and plays into the depth of the piece. The surface red colour that covers most of the painting opens up for just one brief interlude, a rectangular section that "uncovers" fluid abstract brush lines varying from white and black. The order of illusion is reversed here, from the object (surface abstract red) to the subject (abstract painterly gestural effect).

James Lahey is part of a new generation of painters less interested in recording and transfiguring "reality" *per se*. His painterly process seeks to break the barriers of style that so entrapped earlier generations of painters. Increasingly removed from so-called "real" experience, the nature Lahey paints is a synthetic, stylistic anachronism. His nomadic use of style(s) is entirely justifiable as a working approach to artmaking, particularly for painters. Many people simply love looking at his paintings, the process, the style(s), are secondary to the overall effect. If these paintings are indeed self-generated illusions, they also evidence a new hybridity and relativistic approach to artmaking being seized on by emerging painters of our times.

John K. Grande

DANA VELAN TRANSFORMATIONS

McClure Gallery,
Visual Arts Centre
350, avenue Victoria
November 4 - 27, 1999



Fire project, 1998, photography.

Fire has long been a phenomenon of great interest to social anthropologists and social theorists including Gaston Bachelard and Joseph Campbell who called fire "One of the earliest signs of a separation of human from animal consciousness". Working in a large scale with oil sticks on transpagra, a translucent material that allows light to pass through the paper, Dana Velan has created a body of large scale works that recreate images of fire as a primal, spiritual force we associate with energy – both creative and destructive. Velan's approach is thoughtful, reflective, a cultural journey of epic dimensions. Through a series of steps that have involved looking at primitive dwellings, natural forms, forms built by animals, forms built by humans and now fire itself, Dana Velan has gradually built a holistic vision of the artmaking process. These large scale drawings are the result of a search within for a greater intuitive sense of our links to the natural world.

Since ancient times humanity has sought to capture fire. Vestiges of fire sites have been found in the caves of Peking man dating from 400,000 B.C. The extensive history of human involvement with fire as a source of sustenance, a subject for storytelling, religious rituals and rites, makes it surprising so few artists chosen to work with fire as a subject. Fire as primordial, intuitive unity links our dreams with the conscious. As Velan states:

"Why fire? Because of its mesmerizing and hypnotic beauty. Because there is nothing as changeable, ever-moving and elusive, yet so present. Fire as a symbol for metamorphosis. Fire as a metaphor for life... Fire connects us to the raw, basic essence of life. Fire is the reminder of where we came from. It makes the mythological stories and ceremonies of some present day tribes alive for us."

Dana Velan's style is immediately expressive, textural, makes use of bold outlining, and earth-based colours. While some of these large scale depictions have a documentary look, others integrate a sense of passage, of a journey, of *things we cannot see* as much as what we do see in them. Velan uses fire as imagery in her artmaking practice much as the "primitives" once captured fire. Thus ritual of re-creation informs her work with a holistic sensibility. Velan's search involves building an environment that celebrates our eternal links to primordial forces. These works do not simply objectify fire, make it a subject. The act of drawing revolves around the dilemma of object/subject, creation and perception, a constant problem in modern and post-Modern art. As the post-Modern re-creates meaning, original meanings are lost, yet they are still as relevant as ever!

The most arresting of images Velan has created for the McClure Gallery show is a 420" x 96" wall drawing of fire. Darkness and light, vivid colours and a sense of unending ritual are evoked in this powerful piece. Both as an environment and as a subject to look at, this expansive work evokes images of reflection, resolution, identification, of universal energy. Other studies are close-up views of fire. As if entering into a dream state we sense a volatility, a mesmerizing force that captured our ancestors imagination in ancient times. Other works display the embers, what remains after a fire has followed its course, the bodies of once living tree trunks amid an array of smoke and embers. Dark, charcoal blacks and greys create intense contrasts with the bright resonating orange and red colours in the live fire works. Photo documents of fire have been brought together into large "books" presented on a table in the McClure Gallery. One opens them to read imagery instead of words. The imagery in these books communicates the feeling that fire is like oral language or legends, something more alive in fluid than solid form. Fire, like art-making as process, is an oracular vestige of primeval life that captures life's mercurial essence. In seeking to recognize these forms of explosive fire, regenerative fire, unending fire, an allusion to the immateriality of form and matter gradually builds up. The message is that the earth is on a journey of transformation just as we are. Notions of civilization become unconscious, conjure up associations that are as illusory and transformative as fire. Dana Velan's art has a handle on this temporal nature of life that fire transmits. Her art raises our

awareness of the linkages between nature and culture, investigates the age-old ties between humanity and nature. At the heart of Velan's art is this sense of endless mercurial movement - like fire - in many directions at one and the same time.

John K. Grande

FRANCESCO CLEMENTE CONTEMPLATIVE VOYEUR

Dominion Gallery
1438 Sherbrooke W.
February 5 - 26th, 2000



Unborn, 1994, aquatint.

In the early 1980s when the art world was buzzing with talk of neo-Expressionism, Francesco Clemente attracted a great deal of attention as one of its leading proponents. At the recent Guggenheim Museum show in New York, Clemente was attacked by critics for exhibiting a "courageous frivolity", lacking any real conviction in his delightful dalliance with artmaking. But his *14 Stations of the Cross* seen at C.I.A.C., Montreal in 1987 and a centrepiece of the Guggenheim show, is nothing less than brilliant, stunning. Clemente's sources range from Tantric symbolism, to Baroque painting, to alchemy, sex, the occult and tarot. An intracultural voyeur who keeps a studio in India, Clemente is part classicist, part contemplative. From a billboard-sized portrait of Grace Jones, to Indian miniatures, to images of death and fecundity, Francesco Clemente is a master appropriator. He has an eye for imagery and symbols, borrows from Asian and Western cultural sources at will, hybridizes these sources, and paints like a lover, not a fighter.

The hybridity and trans-cultural vision that made Clemente a leader of the Italian neo-Expressionist "movement" involves a simultaneous break with tradition and a borrowing from diverse cultural traditions. Clemente's current show comprises a series of stunning large scale print-works pulled in Rome in edition sizes varying from 40 to 70. There is a dreamy character to these works, and an eclectic, nomadic sense that

is sometimes lost, sometimes found. Spiritual and sensual, they recall the influence of Fuseli and Blake, but always have that European sense that one cannot escape history. The vibrant colours and visual analogies display a theatrical interest in eternal themes of life, death and transcendence.

In the aquatint *Unborn* (1994), two figures, that of a male nude and a tiger are fused together. Printed in deep umber, red and yellow colours the bones, fiery matter and dense atmosphere suggests a theocratic cosmology of life. The unborn is neither a monster nor innocent, but instead a fiery force whose fate is inescapable, prescribed by a pre-natural worldview. A couple embraces in a blue sea-like ocean in *Conception* (1987), dwarfed by the curvilinear and fan-shaped shapes of shells placed in an *ad lib* fashion in the foreground. The sky is a collage of toy-like warplanes. Some are blue and others pink. *Friendship* (1987) turns the visual phrase of a black dancer with bandage-wrapped legs, who has three white shoes in his hand into a metaphysical dream reminiscent of Giorgio de Chirico, but the style more fluid is. An almost cartoon-like, reptilian head leaps out of the left side of the composition, directing our attention again to this curious dancer, who sits on classical stone steps. Clemente's grip on allegory is almost feminine, introspective and whimsical.

There is this sense that all events are linked by mysterious forces in *All That Remains* (1990) an etching and aquatint one of the largest pieces in the show. In the lower section, a child clasps a mother whose body is outstretched nearly the full length of the piece. A similar somewhat androgynous body, is linked to, and clasps the mother's legs, repeating the pattern. Geometries arranged in varying linear and cube-like configurations occupy the upper section of the piece. The structures are self-contained studies, while the bodies are inter-dependent, and grasp their way into space. There is a sense of immanent tragedy, of unfathomable events that surround and eclipse these subjects, somehow adding to the sense that Clemente's scope on the human situation is ageless, escapes the bounds of contemporaneity to somehow reform it all into his own, highly eclectic cosmology. Clemente treads through life like an angel on a mission, builds a feeling out of it all, endlessly reinventing the subjects he studies and is drawn to. These works are, to say the least, joyful incantations!

John K. Grande

HALIFAX

EXTENDED VISION THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF THADDEUS HOLOWNIA, 1975-1997

Saint Mary's University Art
Gallery

January 7 - February 6, 2000



Extended Vision is an apt title for this exhibition of photographs by Thaddeus Holownia. He is a photographer whose themes unfold slowly, but with a clarity of vision that is unmatched by other artists who try to keep up with ever changing trends in the art world. Sixteen years ago I wrote an article in *Vie des Arts* titled *La vision tranquille de Thaddeus Holownia*. The word *tranquil* still fits although his work has become stronger in the passing years.

The exhibition chronicles twenty-two years, 1975 to 1997, of Holownia's photography. Arranged in series all of the photographs are contact prints which were taken with large format cameras in both in black and white and colour. He uses something called a banquet camera which was designed, as the name implies, to take photographs of large groups of people at events such as a banquet. He came to this format quite early in his career when he found that 35mm and 6X6cm cameras just did not provide the type of tools he needed for the photographs he wanted to take.

The earliest series in the exhibition, from 1975 to 1977, titled *Headlighting* pre-date Holownia's move to the Maritimes in the fall of 1977 and are the only group of photographs that feature people. They are photographs of people with their vehicles and shows the interesting, and often funny, relationships that have with the things that they drive. They were difficult photographs to take as they required very long exposures, Holownia was using paper negatives cut from photographic paper. Film was, at that time, not being made in banquet camera formats. This meant that the speed or ASA/Din number of the paper was very low and exposures could be in minutes rather than fractions of a second, as is in the case with modern cameras and film. The

resulting photographs have the look of picture taken at the very birth of the medium, but with the very contemporary subject matter of automobiles and trucks. There is an odd stateliness to these photographs which lend dignity to the people in these pictures even if they are bonding with their Volvos or Ford trucks.

Lightning Strike, Sackville, New Brunswick, 1994, gelatin silver print

More central to the exhibition are the photographs taken around Atlantic Canada and, in particular, those very close to his home on the Tantramar Marsh in southeast New Brunswick. These are the most moving to me. Perhaps it is because I live in the same area and am moved by the landscape as well, but Holownia has effectively captured its mood in a way that speaks to me. These three series are *Dykeland*, *Rockland Bridge*, and *Jolicure Pond* which span the period from 1977 to 1997. All of these images were taken within a range of a few miles from Holownia home in Jolicure, New Brunswick. One of the most striking pictures in the large group is titled *Lightning Strike, Sackville, 1994*. A wisp of smoke pours from a strange volcano shape object in the middle of a hay field. What happened was that lightning struck a bale of hay and this is the image of the aftermath. It is a strange surreal image that shows us the power of nature.

Other pictures in these series may be less dramatic, but they nevertheless show the photographer's love affair with the landscape around his home. The six images, all in colour, in the *Jolicure Pond* series were taken right in his back yard and show the passing of the seasons on a pond on his property. They are hauntingly beautiful pictures which demonstrate the truism that beauty can be right under our noses if we only stop to look.

Holownia has gone further afield. There are pictures in this exhibition taken in British Columbia, Newfoundland and, of all places Las Vegas, Nevada. This later series is very different and shows the weird and wonderful Las Vegas architecture

juxtaposed on the landscape of strange fruit blooming under a desert sun. Thaddeus Holownia is a master photographer with a unique vision, but one that is visible to everybody. His physical isolation of nearly a quarter century in rural New Brunswick has been an opportunity rather than a disadvantage because it has allowed him to ignore trends in contemporary photography. Critics have complained that Holownia's pictures lack the post-Modern punch and concerns of other photographers. They miss the point. Holownia is not taking pictures for critics or other photographers. He is taking them for us and we are the richer for his efforts.

This exhibition was organized by the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, part of the National Gallery of Canada, and opened there in 1998. It has since toured to Brandon, Manitoba; Sackville, New Brunswick and Halifax, Nova Scotia. In April of this year it will be shown at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery in Fredericton, New Brunswick and will open at the Centre national d'exposition in Jonquière, Quebec on August 27th.

Virgil Hammock

SUTTON

MARK LANG AND FRANCE-ANDRÉE SÉVILLANO

Arts Sutton

January 6 - 30, 2000



Mark Lang, Untitled, 1995, 181 x 163 cm, oil on canvas.

North America has a long tradition of artists who have painted the urban spectacle from the American painter George Bellows whose paintings of New York City life anticipated the social realism of Thomas Hart Benton in the 1930s through to Charles Sheeler's austere and formal skyscraper paintings, or more recently Eric Fischl, Richard Estes and

Leon Golub. In Canada we had Louis Muhlstock who sketched memorable images of the unemployed and poor in Montreal during the Depression. In an era when so many artists have been drawn to virtual reality and new technology, Montreal-based Mark Lang's realist paintings are something of an anomaly, for they are neither purely formal nor constructed. Instead Lang draws his inspiration from the decaying urban architecture of industrial Montreal and incorporates ordinary people in these scenes. As Lang comments: "A few years ago I began making drawings in my sketchbook of spaces which I regularly passed through, but almost never stopped to observe. These consisted of various passageways and staircases in several Montreal buildings. By stopping long enough in these places to make drawings, I began to realize that they were infused with the presence of all those fragments of lives which had previously passed through them. Though ordinary and functional, they also possessed a significant visual dynamic. I had an intuitive sense that there was some meaning locked in their image which hinted at larger issues, and that it might be possible to extract some of that meaning by transforming their images into works of art."

The angles of the stairways and halls, the derelict spaces and raw fluorescent lighting in Lang's paintings are unsettling, particularly because we know these places were once full of people, thriving hubs of industry. Two canvases that have been placed one next to the other present passages and stairways that simultaneously lead upwards and downwards. There are no people, just angular structures. These scenes are Dantesque and border on madness with an overwhelming sense of abandon heightened by raw colour. The suspense of the moment in many of these paintings is anticipatory. Things happened here in the past but the people, the sounds and sights, the conversations have vanished without a sight. In another painting (they are all untitled), a youngish man dressed formally in Edwardian clothes whom we see from the side stands in front of a doorway entrance. His back is arched upwards as he stretches and looks upwards in a moment of reflection. The hallway he stands in is plain and denuded. He looks incongruous in this place. Light resonates at the end of the hall and emerges from open doors on the side. One painting has a shadowy image of a girl, partially blurred like in a photograph running in a hallway seen from the stairwell below. Her vitality and youth are at odds with the emptiness and disuse this building

bespeaks. One of the most riveting paintings is a scene from a building awaiting demolition. Knots of dis-tended telephone wiring and electric cabling hang in the air and trail off into space. Old bits of tiling and linoleum, a toilet seat and other elements add to the sense of neglect. The light that projects from outside onto a wall resonates with colour offsetting the dull pallor of the piece. This former hub of industry once full of people now stands empty as the technological revolution of the 21st millennium takes its place. (In a few months it may no longer be there). Other scenes are equally incongruous. A middle aged woman stands next to a ghostly muse-like figure of a woman in classical dress. Through an open door we see just a small fragment of a nude figure on a bed through a door. The shadow of another person who *we cannot see* is projected on a wall in the hall. Near the entrance to the show, a small painting shows a man about to go out of his ordinary apartment. He has a goatee and mustache, wears black shoes and is in uniform. There is a night table and mirror that partially reflects his image next to him. Lang's paintings are full of such hidden cues and incongruities.

France-Andrée Sévillano's sculptures are delightful Folon-like imaginary welded metal sculptures that use metal grids as structures on which to build their meaning. One large triptych titled *Jeux 1,2,3*, integrates simple signs, and symbols to tell their tale of urban life. Tiny snakes and ladders, miniature dancers and acrobats hang, walk, dance, climb and swing at various places on the sculpture. One key has been welded onto the piece. Does it unlock the mystery of the meaning of life or is it simply a decorative device? In *L'Usine*, Sévillano has fused a variety of tools and wrenches, along with squares and circles to another structure. Again there are tiny figures sporadically affixed onto this imaginary reflection on modern metropolitan life in a post-Modern era. Sévillano obviously delights in the act of creation.

John K. Grande



Thomas Charles Wood,
*The boarding of
the U-744, 1944, oil.*

HULL - OTTAWA

CANVAS OF WAR

MASTERPIECES FROM THE CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM

Canadian Museum
of Civilization
100, rue Laurier, Hull (Québec)

Until January 7, 2001

At the entrance to the *Canvas of War* exhibit are half-size plaster casts of *The Defenders*, part of the famous monument *The Breaking of the Sword* at Vimy Ridge commemorating the more than 60,000 Canadians who lost their lives in the legendary battle of World War I. Photos in the exhibit show the 100,000 people who attended the unveiling of the monument, a tribute to all who lost their lives in one way or another in the Great War. What is riveting is that the unveiling took place shortly before the outbreak of World War II. It is these kinds of bleak facts that shock us into remembering just how bloody-minded we are despite history's harshest lessons. A generation was lost in the First War, and with barely the time to replenish, the world was once again tragically divided.

The exhibit features paintings by A.Y. Jackson, Frederick Varley, Arthur Lismer, Molly Lamb Bobak, Alex Colville, Lawren Harris and several others who eye-witnessed the ravages of war. The collection began with Lord Beaverbrook's initiative to establish the War Memorials Fund, which enabled prominent Canadian artists to go to Europe and record Canada's contribution to the war effort. The Canadian War Museum's collection now numbers 13,000 works of which seventy-two were chosen to form this premier exhibit which will tour Canada after January 7, 2001.

Perhaps the most important part of this exhibit is the registry book, because in it is *living history*. The first entry is that of an ex-RAF gentleman whose hand must have trembled as he wrote how tears could not express what he felt as he recalled



Robert Stewart Hyndman, *Dive Bombing V-1 Sites, France, 1945, oil.*

both his own experiences and those of his five brothers, one of whom was "KIA" (killed-in-action) August 17th in 1944. RAE, RCAF, KIA—all of these acronyms of war peppered the many emotional testimonials of the survivors who visited this artistic and historical record of two of the most significant events of the 20th century.

Franceska Gnarowski

CHARLES GAGNON OBSERVATIONS

Canadian Museum of
Contemporary Photography

Until May 14, 2000



Carl Mangold, *Philatelist, 1970*
gelatin silver print.

This is the first major survey of Charles Gagnon's photographic works. Gagnon himself personally selected these nearly 100 photographs from his collection and assembled them according to the visual motifs they create. The artist's work as an experimental painter, photographer and filmmaker spans over forty years, so it is no wonder that in 1995 he was awarded Quebec's highest distinction in the visual arts, the Paul-Émile Borduas prize, in recognition of his unique contribution to the Quebec arts scene. During a stay in New York from 1955 to 1960, Gagnon was exposed to Expressionist painting, social documentary photography, jazz, John Cage's music, beat literature, and Zen Buddhism. On returning to Montreal, he developed

a personal, sensitive approach situated at the confluence of most of the artistic movements that have marked the past four decades.

This exhibit provides an unprecedented opportunity to see the world as Gagnon does, capturing the *here and now* of the urban and natural environment. Gagnon's lens is at times unforgiving as when he focuses distantly on a couple in the artificial glow of an arcade. Yet in another he captures the witty minimalist and starved look of the *Diet Lunch Restaurant*, an unappetizing place if ever there was one. His works visually probe underlying structures, exposing strong lines and planar effects but Gagnon's aesthetic also implies a state of consciousness beyond the frame. A broader implied reality pervades these works that hints at the metaphysical lives of people, places and things. This is a world that transcends time and space. The photos are unbelievably still, almost eerie in the sense of mystery and silence they project. Gagnon's subjects are seldom shown looking at the camera, rather they are caught searching in the distance for some point of focus. The photographs offer the possibility



Dinosaur National Park—Alberta, 1981,
gelatin silver print.

of accessing another world through a passage of some kind, or hint at how difficult such a passage might be. The viewer is captivated in a sort of trance until he comes upon a self-portrait of the artist. Here, Charles Gagnon is captured in front of one of his paintings, his figure a white blur in motion, as though he were evading the viewer's gaze. As though the stillness lies in the world that surrounds the artist and not within.

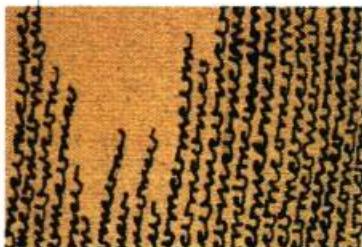
Franceska Gnarowski

TORONTO

**MARIE-CLAUDE
BOUTHILLIER**
GREG STAATS

Mercer Union
37 Lisgar Street

April 13 - May 20, 2000
Opening: April 13, 8 p.m.



Marie-Claude Bouthillier, *mcb 15*, 1999
crayon feutre sur jute.

The new Mercer Union space on Lisgar rocks! Gone is the facade of a possibly commercial space. This baby screams alternative, parallel, artist run culture. Mercer can now be found amidst a line of cinder block commercial units. Tucked away on a small side street just off Queen St. West. Indeed Mercer is now steps away from many of the

most exciting galleries in the city. The space itself is filled with possibilities. The front gallery boldly flaunts a large garage shipping door. How pleasant it is to see the entrance for large crated works as an integral part of the presentation space! What a pleasant discourse the architecture of the space engages the viewer in. It speaks unobtrusively to the eyes as a sub text in every show, about the nomadic movement of art objects, and the artificial construct of a gallery space.

With this said it is somehow fitting that Marie-Claude Bouthillier's paintings act together to convey text obsessed allusions to religious symbols. Bouthillier really is working the fragmentation as a means of building meanings that point at understandings beyond that which language can convey. All the while she teaches us her own visual dialect as a mark making manipulator of paint and creator of shippable objects.

Greg Staats five silver prints in the back gallery directly relate to the repetitive shift and flux of impermanence. He has skillfully captured a variety of natural/unnatural hybrids that occupy the resting place they simultaneously demarcate. Each object is animated by the photo-

graphic process. We must ask the question who left it? Where will it go? And what would it say if it could talk?

The theme of temporary permanence inherent to any artist run center is further emphasized when one flips the exhibition program through to 2001. How many objects, ideas, and artists will be housed in this space? What a transient community of interest we really are!

Elizabeth Fearon

LARRY TOWELL THE MENNONITES

Stephen Bulger Gallery
700 Queen St. W.

May 6 - June 3, 2000

MENNONITES FROM CANADA
TO MEXICO



El Cuervo, Chihuahua, Mexico, 1997, black and white photography.

The Stephen Bulger Gallery, located in the heart of Queen St. West, as a participant in the Contact 2000 Photography Festival presents Larry Towell's fascinating, compassionate, 10 year study of Mennonite communities in Canada (here since the 1870's) and in Mexico, where there are 23 different Mennonite communities to date. The Mexican communities are the result of an exodus from Canada spurred by anti-German sentiment during the First World War. It is precisely this sort of photo journalism that has placed Towell's work in *Life Magazine*, and in many prominent collections here and abroad. Even more significantly, Towell has been associated with Magnum since 1988, an organization of photographers who act as both key witness and interpreters of the world's events. It is in part due to image makers like Towell that tragedies like Hiroshima, child labour, and bread lines have been recorded for posterity. Through the

work of such photographers who confront us with these horrors we are encouraged to learn from the past mistakes of history.

Towell's *Mennonite* series is more anthropological than political and certainly more spiritual and celebratory than critical. None the less it is amazing that in a Much Music, supermarket, credit card, and computer culture that people such as the Mennonites still drive horses and buggies! As they travel in this way they can hear the world our car radios obliterate.

Elizabeth Fearon

¹ Towell Bio courtesy of the Bulger gallery

SEEING THINGS, TOO

Marcia Rafelman Fine Arts
10 Clarendon Ave

April 30 - May 21, 2000
by appointment only

May is *Contact month* in Toronto! Now in its 4th season, *Contact month* is an increasingly significant photography festival. This festival provides a unique opportunity for the public to view an incredibly wide range of contemporary and historical approaches to photographic image making in a variety of venues throughout the city. *Seeing Things, Too* is Marcia Rafelman Fine Arts' contribution to *Contact 2000*.

Marcia Rafelman Fine Arts is housed in a slickly renovated Victorian home. Living areas and gallery blend effortlessly in this highly designed domicile to provide a clean, yet intimate viewing experience. A wide variety of gallery artists are part of *Seeing Things, Too*. A few of the headliners are Steven Evans and Mats Nordstrom. Evans' recent silver gelatin print series explore such sites as Hart House at The University of Toronto and the Gooderham & Worts

Steven Evans, *Molasses Tank*, Gooderham & Worts Distillery, 1999, 51 x 62 cm.



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distillery. The Hart House images let the hallowed halls whisper softly of past academic activity whereas the distillery shots speaks of spent physical labor. Both series explore "peopled places", as Evans lightly puts it, with a reverence for a past that is not our own yet breeds a sense of nostalgia. Photogpraher Mats Nordstrom is also interested in spaces. But his spaces, like his medium (giclee), suggest movement through boundaries. A prime example of this is his *Lyons* image. This view of the underside of a bridge, replete with reflection and shadow, forms an optic intersection between river and bridge structure. Nordstrom's medium is equally a cross-roads where photography, technology, and traditional notions of painting meet.

Other artists in the show include Alan Davis, Linda Rutenberg, David Cowles, Nir Bareket, Steve Eprile, Monty Levy, and Fred Langer. If the principle works don't enthrall you, Marcia Rafelman has been known to walk people through the equally elegant storage room. Such a walk reveals fascinating vintage photographs and interesting works by lesser known photographers. While you won't find anything very conceptually or politically edgy at MRFA you just may see something beautiful!

Elizabeth Fearon

**ALBERTINA MASTER
DRAWINGS FROM
MICHELANGELO TO PICASSO
MASTER DRAWINGS FROM
THE ALBERTINA, VIENNA**

Art Gallery of Ontario
317 Dundas St. W.
January 22 - March 26, 2000



Pierre-Paul Rubens, *Two Young Ladies, the Left One Holding a Lap Dog*, drawing



Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Seated Male Nude & Studies for Two Arms*, drawing

Visitors to Toronto's Art Gallery of Ontario will have the rare opportunity to see some of the finest drawings and watercolours in the world until March 26th. Among the 45 works on view from Vienna's prestigious Albertina collection are Leonardo's *Half-length Figure of an Apostle*, Raphael's fine pen and ink *Madonna and Child*, Albrecht Durer's *The Rider* (1498) and *Madonna with Four Saints* (1511) and Jacques Callot's *The Fair at Santa Maria della Impruneta near Florence*. All of the above works were brought together by Duke Albert of Saxe-Teschen (1738-1822), who purchased some of the greatest private collections of his time, including Emperor Rudolph II's collection of drawings and watercolours by Durer. Indeed, Duke Albert collected some 14,000 drawings and 230,000 prints during his lifetime, with the dowry of his wife the Archduchess Marie-Christine, a member of Austria's ruling family. As Dr. Konrad Oberhuber, former Director of the Graphische Sammlung Albertina commented, the vast sum of money Duke Albert spent on art would be the equivalent of the Canadian government spending one third of its entire budget on the arts!

Duke Albert's eye for collecting the best works on paper is evidenced throughout the show in works by Rembrandt, Rubens, Poussin, Paul Sandby, Claude Lorrain and Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, among others. For visitors interested in 20th century works there is a *Head of a Woman* in black chalk by Pablo Picasso, Chagall's *Lute Player* (1911) in pen, india ink wash and watercolour, Vincent van Gogh's *Country Road near Arles*, Austrian Gustav Klimt's *Lady with a Feather Hat*, a Minotaur ink and wash sketch by Alfred Kubin, and even a contemporary Arnulf Rainer pastel titled *The Clairvoyant*. Others include Jackson Pollock, Frantisek Kupka, Egon Schiele, Max Weiler.

TOM BURROWS

From the Fourth Decade

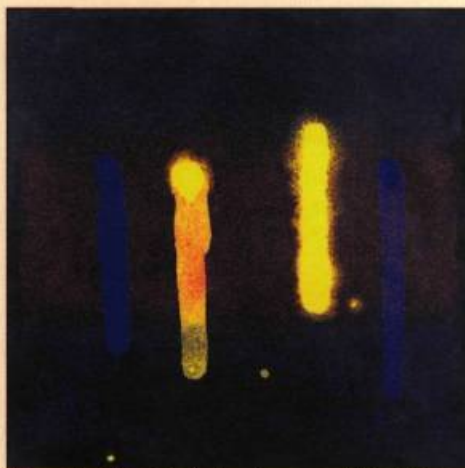


"Hand or Eye" 2000, polymer resin, 24 x 24 inches

ROBERT CADOTTE

Ponds, Streams, and other Abstractions

UPPER GALLERY



"Quarry Pond", 1999, mixed media on panel, 30 x 30 inches

MAY 6 - May 20, 2000

BAU-XI GALLERY

340 DUNDAS STREET, WEST, TORONTO, ONT. M5T-1G5
TUE-SAT 10:00 AM-5:30 PM TEL (416) 977-0600

From Michelangelo to Picasso: *Master Drawings from the Albertina* is a fortuitous opportunity for Canadian viewers to see works from Vienna's Albertina firsthand. Undergoing extensive renovations for the past several years, the Albertina will reopen again in the summer of 2000.

John K. Grande

REGINA

THE SACRED AND THE PROFANE

Neutral Ground
#203, 1856 Scarth Street
January 20 - February 12th,
2000



Reconsidering the Saint
view of the installation.
Photo: Rae Holtsbaum

Fran Benton's installation at Regina's Neutral Ground, *Reconsidering the Saint* is an open work endeavoring to raise questions about faith and religion. But because it is non-committal, suspended between irony and sincerity, the exhibition is its own deconstruction, and becomes less a critique than a symptom of our times.

Perhaps some future art historian will look back on our present moment and divide it into two phases: the ironic and the post-ironic. The first wave of postModernity was characterized by art and criticism that set the world at play. Artists critiqued traditions, institutions, hierarchies, discriminations, boundaries, binaries and meta-narratives of all sorts. Many engaged in this interplay because they enjoyed the complex pleasure of creative deconstruction and some out of a sincere desire to expose unjust power relations and the hope to right historical wrongs. Even while this was going on, other artists and critics were suspicious of wholesale iconoclasm and saw that deconstruction offered nothing in place of the fallen idols/narratives, no plans for a better society. Irony became an institutionalized mode — a form of Maoist "permanent revolution," but without a utopian vision to fuel it.



Reconsidering the Saint
view of the installation.
Photo: Rae Holtsbaum

Among those suspicious of this project have been feminists such as Linda Hutcheon and African American and post-colonial theorists. They recognized that the master narratives behind institutions of power (patriarchy, racism and classism) cannot simply be theorized away because they are illogical, or ridiculed into submission by devastating acts of art. Moreso, a suspicion arose that post-Modernist critiques of lesser narratives may even have been less deconstruction than dissimulation, an ideological extension of existing power relations.

The deconstructive branch of postModernism is based on a materialist philosophy requiring a dismissal of metaphysics. As a result, it counts as absurd or opportunistic, or doesn't even recognize the spiritual. And, if only because the spiritual, metaphysics and sincerity are currently repressed, the second phase of postModernist culture will be driven by a post-ironic re-enchantment of art.

Artists concerned with nature and spirituality — any artist interested in being socially and personally constructive, or who wishes to be sincere, or hold a belief beyond the contingent — has felt their experience ignored by postModernism. It is a treat, then, to see that Fran Benton is tackling not only spirituality, but its embodiment in the experience of a Roman Catholic Saint (St. Theresa of Avila). Two forbidden topics at once.

Reconsidering the Saint consists of a thirteen foot long graphic enlargement of the ecstatic face of Bernini's famous sculpture of St. Theresa, divided into eight framed panels. A row of bronze fingers emerges from the wall just above the floor. On the floor are a pair of shoes painted to simulate

bronze as well as a neat arrangement of over-sized teeth made from glazed and fired clay. Also included are a monumental fibreglass hand and arm held up on a wooden truss and several sets of large eyeballs on low brass stands. Inside these, speakers emit the sound of words spoken in various Romantic languages. The voices may belong to Theresa, God, Bernini or Benton.

The intent, I believe, is to create a sense of the sublime through the enlarged body parts; and to stimulate a feeling of the uncanny through relic fragments. As Linda Giles, the catalogue essayist for the exhibition points out, the viewer is instead more inclined to laugh out loud. "Can a mystical experience be profanely hilarious?" Perhaps. Looking at such a private experience in a public setting from a non-devout point of view might also do it. What makes this all seem so funny is the cheesiness of the props. If the arm was marble instead of thin plastic, or if the "eyeballs" didn't look so obviously like altered lamps, I could have worked myself up into a state of sublime contemplation instead of laughter.

The installation is a jumble of artifacts related to Saints in general, but the visual and tactile quotes are not clear enough in their association to suggest the artist's thesis. Is this a Freudian-inspired poke at religious ecstasy as a form of repressed sexuality or a Surrealist, anti-Catholic, series of jokes? The artist statement and Giles' text are not much help here. Almost accidentally articulating the paradox, Giles suggests that perhaps Benton's "interest in this depiction of devout religiosity is indicative of her own loss of faith and a reflection of society's spiritual bankruptcy." Is Giles looking back to her lost faith with sorrow or irony? How can one both reject faith and deplore its loss? Giles also comments that "Benton reclaims the role of artist as the keeper of mystery, the keeper of the faith." Which faith? Is the artist a shaman?

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The explanations are as confused as the installation, but the desire, the longing for meaning, is not.

This work is indicative of a general suspension between the materialist *status quo* (at least among intellectuals) and the drive to find a meaning beyond the material realm and logic — a re-enchantment of the world through art. As an installation, it feels like a fugitive attempt to negotiate spiritual loss by going through the (religious) motions until a more tolerable spirituality emerges. The problem for viewers is that the religious experience is evoked here using the discursive language and strategies of ironic post-Modernism. They are incompatible. Perhaps Fran Benton needed to make *Reconsidering the Saint* as an intermediate gesture intended to evolve a new vocabulary for our challenging times.

David Garneau

CALGARY

MARY IS HERE

ARLENE STAMP

CONNECTION TO COLLECTIONS
SERIES

Glenbow Museum, Calgary
130-9th Avenue S.E.
March 25 - May 22, 2000

PERSONAL TO PUBLIC
TO PERSONAL

Mary is here.



Mary is Here, photographic artifact.
Collection of the artist.

Arlene Stamp has moved into multi-media installation as a way of exploring issues of personal identity. *Mary is here* says the legend printed in pencil on the 1944 black-and-white photograph. Surrounded by a group of nine men in front of a bomber plane, Mary is part of "the final checking crew" at the London, Ontario production site. As a six-year old child, Stamp drew an arrow to point out Mary; otherwise we might not have noticed her.

Entering the four-room installation, this wall-sized photograph provides a point of departure for Stamp's personal investigation of the changing identity of the 20th century woman through her mother Mary. The project didn't start that way. Stamp, trained as a painter, began with a set of audiotapes she made in 1995 with her 80-year old mother. In response to the artist's request to her dying mother Mary, to tell her stories about her own mother, Stamp is moved by the way "(her) mother reveals some of her most painful memories in what ends up seeming like a cry for forgiveness." These stories have formed the basis of her work since that time.

Mary is Here is the third in the Glenbow's new on-going *Connections to Collections* series, curated by Kirsten Evenden and unique for a Canadian museum. It is here, Evenden says, that the artists are "invited to explore Glenbow's rich collections, and create work based on their exploration." This collaborative exhibition examines history through the eyes of contemporary artists. Stamp notes that she "had the benefit of the professional expertise of the Glenbow staff" in working on this project.

Public and private stories intermingle, how representations from history influence the formation of a personal and group identity are related in *Mary is Here*. Mary is a creative individual who lived through the

20th century when generally, women did not work outside the home. The living room installation recreates Mary's 1920s childhood environment, as does the 1930s kitchen (smells and all). As Mary moves into adulthood and Stamp is born, there is a 1940-50s bedroom and 1950/60s TV room. The rooms are, interestingly, furnished by Stamp from the Glenbow's Cultural History collections. The period is defined with public and private media such as popular music on radio, TV, movies, magazines, pocket books, photo albums and even home movies. The installation is further enriched and personalized with the Glenbow's Mary Smith Collection of objects, papers, photographs and her painted portrait.

The focus for this context, this experimental way of connecting time, is the set of nine audio handset stations of Mary telling her own stories. Evenden has called it an alternative viewpoint. "They are poignant stories of triumph and sadness, the recounting of a woman's

life from her own perspective, told without resentment or remorse, but with a sense of flair." To complement the show, Stamp has created an associated website project at www.glenbow.org under *web site exhibits*. Photographs will accompany excerpts from the *Mum Tapes*, available in both written and audio format, from both the Mary Smith Collection and the Glenbow Photo Archives.

An investigation of how we as a culture document the personal histories of ordinary people, of how the personal becomes public, then becomes personal again, as the individual reinterprets the exhibition for one's self, *Mary is here* is a look backwards, that tries to understand the context that shaped her mother, and eventually, the artist herself. It is up to you, the viewer, to decide who Mary is in the context of a 20th century woman, as well as who you are, as a director of your own future. As Stamp says, "like most artists probably, I am trying to open up a fresh space to push and pull the source materials to find the opening." Stamp's artistic process is to "stand back and observe what it is itself first, then make the choices necessary to present the work in a way that will best reveal the space that I have found."

In our rapidly changing social construct, it seems the people today can look for their own direction and make their own choices, relying less on past traditions and continually more on personal decisions. If we make judgements based on our own experience, then how can we objectively define ourselves to make these choices? Individual identity is formed by the past, and directed towards a future that encourages personal investigation of who we are. We must know who we were first. Stamp's exhibition on personal social change stimulates us to answer this question in terms of our own experience, to listen to the stories and to touch the remnants. As you the viewer step into the past, you look for messages to find answers for the future. As a curator, Evenden is attempting to examine how we as a culture have recorded these experiences, how women's lives have changed over the past 100 years, and to inject the highly personal into public record. Stamp the artist looks "to affirm my (her) own personal reality." As do we all.

Anne Severson

BANFF (ALBERTA)

COLLEEN PHILIPPI

PARALLEL PARKS

Whyte Museum, Banff

February 24 - April 18, 2000

MEASURING NATURE



Versailles, 1999, oil on mirror mounted on wood, 36 x 144 inches

Colleen Philippi examines gardens. They become a metaphor in Philippi's art for the interlacing of art and nature. Despite human attempts to choreograph nature through a controlled garden-like setting, chance and change are an ever present. Philippi's installation examines the nature/culture debate by juxtaposing three attempts to manage the environment through parks in different eras: the artificial 17th century French *Versailles*, the more subtle 18th century English *Hidcote*, and seemingly unmediated 20th century Canadian National Park tradition in Banff.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Catherine and Peter Whyte painted the tourist mecca of Banff. Twenty-five of these lively landscape paintings are in the Whyte Museum art collection. The Whytes tamed the rugged look of Banff park by painting idealized sketches, watercolours and oil paintings, but as Philippi's re-examination suggests, nature is a moving target and cannot *always* be manipulated for our pleasure. Using the Whyte's art as a starting point, Colleen Philippi examines the Banff landscape by looking at the illusive meaning of gardens.

Philippi's Banff paintings are broken up into forty 2 x 2 foot modules with an overview of the famous *Valley of the Ten Peaks at Moraine Lake* once represented on the Canadian \$20 bill and the subject of numerous tourist and travel images over the decades. This part of the installation occupies an impressive wall-space of twelve feet in height and nineteen feet in length. The grid layout reminds us of mapping and arbitrary referencing, the analytical inventory that we use when we manage and categorize wilderness regions. The vacillating pendulums in this installation suggest



Mountain Standard Time, detail, 2000, mixed medi on 40 wood panels (each: 24 x 24 inches), detail: 84 x 84 inches, entire piece: 144 x 228 inches.

the movement of time or of timelessness — and transformations that take place beyond our efforts to control. Attempts to put a fence around this National Park, for example, have proved futile and destructive. While ostensibly seeking to leave nature “untouched”, humans have subverted the mountain jewel, destroying the wildness they tried to cage.

As a contrast to the wild hugeness of Alberta's mountain-scape, the encapsulated 18th century garden at Hidcote in England is a quaint, small-scale, English country-garden. The counterfeit baroque Versailles garden focuses some of the greatest forces used by humans to intimidate nature. The 17th century architecturally landscaped Versailles of Louis XIV contains formal broad avenues of trees with secluded groves and a mile-long canal. Nature, in this case, is controlled for pleasure. The “measured” gardens of Versailles are painted on four 3 x 3 foot connected mirrors that reflect the mountains of Banff seen on the other side of the room, thus linking imagery of Versailles with that of Banff. Despite our efforts to dominate the unbridled forces of the environment, nature may be winning, Philippi concedes.

Uncontainable nature is a constantly moving target. What is real? How much force or power can we use to control nature's riotous anarchy? Philippi's installation suggests we can learn to respect and appreciate the here and now of nature. This show is not about absolutes, but the relativity of nature and culture as constructs. Accepting nature for what it is, we can learn from it.

Anne Severson

VANCOUVER

GATHIE FALK

Vancouver Art Gallery
750 Hornby Street
February 12 - June 11, 2000



The stellar exhibition this season in Vancouver is a retrospective of the career of Gathie Falk organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and the National Gallery of Canada, which will tour Canada until 2002. Do not miss this tribute to a senior Canadian artist, recipient of the Order of Canada and the Gershon Iskowitz Prize. Curator Bruce Grenville selected several major series from throughout Falk's career as thematic nodes for the nearly 80 works on view. The result is one of the finest ever installations on the VAG's second floor.

Gathie Falk's career is in part driven by intense childhood experiences as the daughter of Russian Mennonite immigrants. Early in her career in 1960's Vancouver, Gathie Falk was a pioneer in the apparently disparate practices of performance art and ceramic sculpture. Props were and continue to be integral to Falk's work in other media. Above all an artist who transforms a mundane object into something strange and extraordinary, thereby provoking tension between our experience of the ephemeral and the permanent, the material and the spiritual, Gathie Falk achieves this “epiphany” of the ordinary by means of her intense visual attention and persistent manipulation of materials. They embody an image that comes to her in a moment of compelling intuition.

The show opens with Falk's *Home Environment* (1968). Pink walls enclosing familiar living room furnishings turn strange; a resin-hardened armchair with fish

armrests, a ceramic telephone attached to an oil can, a plucked chicken in a bird cage. It marked Falk's first major show of ceramics, her first installation work and her entry into critical attention and became a seminal beginning in a long career of working across categories of artistic practice, of cutting the distance between art and life and of stimulating viewers' experiences of the everyday.

The 1970's brought Falk renown for her ceramic fruit piles and boot-cases. *Fruit and shoes*, fashioned from enameled and varnished clay exudes a hallucinogenic tactility of voluptuous mass, glossy saturated colour and skin-like surface. The material vitality in Falk's work casts a temporal shadow — suggesting a cycle of life that rises into fecundity and then declines into decay. Red apples or yellow grapefruit appear at that moment of collapsing ripeness; shiny bright shoes sag from wear. Three series of painted canvases from the 1980's shown together with the monumental *Beautiful British Columbia Multiple Purpose Thermal Blanket* form a powerful group in this show. Her *Night Skies*, *Pieces of Water* and paintings of cement



sidewalks are detailed meditations on familiar sights grounded in Falk's daily routine of walking her dog in her Kitsilano neighbourhood. They also extend beyond their frames into sublime infinity.

Falk's less-known recent work likewise receives much deserved exposure. Her *Traces* installation (1998), of freestanding, painted papier-mâché dresses in “classic” styles combine with enigmatic objects such as a small insect collection or the photo of a child. The enhanced materiality of these dress-objects engages the viewer directly, evoking fleeting sensations of body, memory and the passage of time and life. Despite the persistent undercurrent of temporality and decay in her

work, Falk retains an optimism about the natural cycle of life followed by death and redemptive rebirth. In cabbages, hedges, light bulbs, chairs, cement pavement, Falk's attentive, prolonged and loving awareness of the prosaic moment contains a Zen-like wisdom.

Joan Richardson

SELF-CONSCIOUS

GEOFFREY FARMER, GERMAINE KOH, DAMIAN MOPPETT, KELLY WOOD

Catriona Jeffries Gallery
3149 Granville Street
March 17 - April 22, 2000



Damian Moppett, *Untitled*, 2000, gelatin silver print, 61 x 76 cm, edition of 2.

At Catriona Jeffries Gallery, two young curators, artist Kyla Mallett and art historian Melanie O'Brian, invite four artists of their own generation, Geoffrey Farmer, Damian Moppett and Kelly Wood from Vancouver, and Germaine Koh from Toronto. All four transform banal materials into disposable objects whose disintegration they temporarily arrest and document. As the exhibition title *Self-Conscious* suggests, a historical and contemporary self-awareness lies behind the cynical image-making of these and other young artists. From Damian Moppett there are four black and white photographs of “sculpture doodles” in wax molded on flimsy armatures. His commercial photography technique playfully confers ironic prominence on objects that are abject in material, form and content. Kelly Wood was recently in the news when a Reform Party critic used her *Continuous Garbage Project* to pan the Canada Council. Wood's C-print documents a month's garbage compacted into a single mass using technically well executed photographs that turn garbage into art with commercial value, Wood questions both social and artistic practices.

Malaysian immigrant Germaine Koh translates her sensitivity to identity into marginal, minimal images and processes. Koh's *Roll*, ongoing since 1998, is a humble but startling work. A ball of floor sweepings loosely covered by varnish grows as it gradually accumulates debris from each location in which it is exhibited. Koh is fascinated by the shifting tensions between the transient and the enduring, the discarded and the valued. Her dust ball is a truly abject object that appeals to experience on material, psychological and meta-physical levels.

Joan Richardson

RAVEN'S REPRISE CONTEMPORARY WORKS BY FIRST NATIONS ARTISTS

Museum of Anthropology
6393 N.W. Marine Drive
March 15 - January 31, 2001



Mary Ann Barkhouse, Kwakwaka'wakw, *Pelage I, II, III*, 1999, mixed media including fabric, leather, buttons, metal studs. Collection of the artist. Courtesy: Museum of Anthropology

At the Museum of Anthropology *Raven's Reprise* inserts contemporary works by First Nations artists into permanent displays of Northwest coast aboriginal artifacts. The five artists, all of west coast nations, were invited by guest curator Lynn Hill, herself of the eastern Cayuga nation. Hill adopted the mythological Raven, an irreverent trickster who personifies creative force, as her guide for playful and subversive interventions into the museum. Two major issues that emerge in this show are that of rights to ancestral artifacts, and the vitality of indigenous culture as it seeks continuity and innovation in post-colonial urban life.

A remarkable diversity of traditional and contemporary techniques interact in different ways with the museum setting, generally to eloquent effect. Larry McNeil (Nisga'a nation) shows photo and text works from his Raven series that confront indigenous myth with that



Marianne Nicolson, Kwakwaka'wakw, *Waxemedlagin xusbandayu* (Even though I'm the last one, I still count), 2000, mixed media photo-based installation. Collection of the artist. Courtesy: Museum of Anthropology

of popular culture imposed after colonization. Pointed texts employ humour and irony to locate and heal antagonisms. In contrast, Connie Sterritt (Nuu-chah-nulth, Gitksan) uses aesthetic, formal means to whimsically reinterpret traditional figures such as Bear and Raven. By mimicking museum objects — McNeil's prints



John Powell, Kwakwaka'wakw, *Sanctuary*, 2000, mixed media on canvas. Collection of the artist. Courtesy: Museum of Anthropology

resemble didactic panels and Sterritt's sculptures, artifacts — both artists blend with, and disturb, the permanent display, provoking questions and comments. They give a voice to the museum artifacts, as if they, and the past generations of people they represent, were examining us, the visitors, and our dominant museum culture.

In her "pelage" series, Mary Anne Barkhouse pictures Raven in four guises accompanied by cryptic images and texts from popular

entertainment and advertising — Dr. Seuss, the Sex Pistols — to traverse the distances between her own mixed Kwakwaka'wakw and Nova Scotia settler heritages. Migrants between cultures who encounter exceptional fragmentation and alienation, provide special insights into issues that affect us all.

Two works by John Powell and Marianne Nicolson (both Kwakwaka'wakw nation), speak powerfully in this way. Powell's *Sanctuary* is a large canvas that hangs before a display case of ceremonial masks. It partially conceals bird masks of the kind used by his own band that were confiscated when the potlatch was suppressed. Texts, photographs of family elders and colour symbolism explain that the sacredness of these artifacts is to be honoured with a year of seclusion from public view.

Nicolson also considers ancestral rights and ownership with her *Waxemedlagin xusbandayu* (Even though I am the last one, I still count), an installation in the form of a museum display case. It commemorates a ceremony in which children dance like bumblebees and the youngest is "lost" and found again. Nicolson places eight bumblebee masks formerly belonging to her family and now owned by the MOA, in a diorama picturing her land, family and young relatives performing the dance in 1998 with replica masks. She thus substitutes a declaration of privilege in the place of a standard museum display. Nicolson's optimistic work reclaims moral ownership, and inadvertently proclaims her people's resilient continuity.

Joan Richardson

VICTORIA

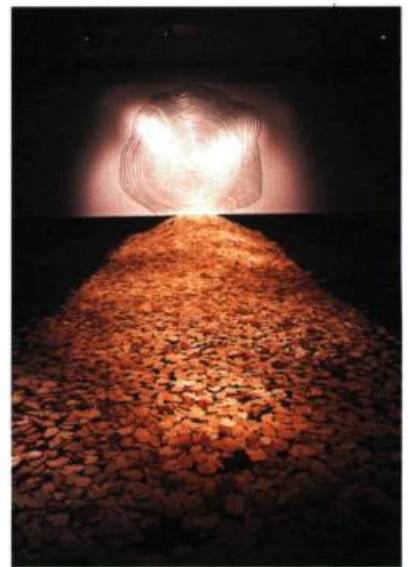
UNNATURAL WORLDS CONSTRUCTING NATURE MARGARET GLAVINA, KEVIN KELLY, ROLAND MARTIN

Open Space
Victoria

March 24 - April 15, 2000

*Sweet is the lore which
Nature brings;
Our meddling intellect
Missbapes the beauteous
forms of things:
We murder to dissect*
-William Wordsworth

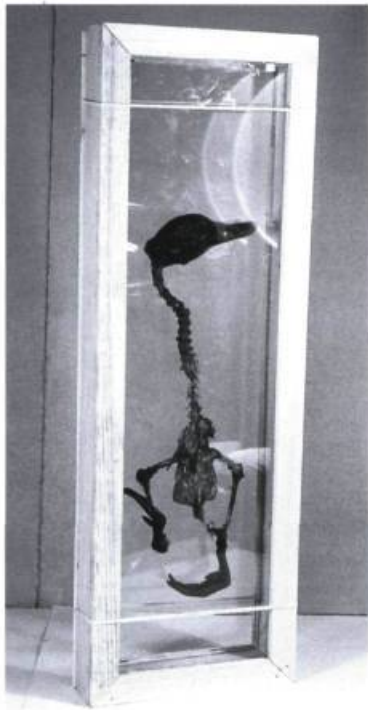
Margaret Glavina's *Natural History* installation is a thoughtfully constructed collection of habitations, a series of narrow floor-to-ceiling



Roly Martin, *Garden*, 1997, installation.

vitrines that enclose objects and specimens devoid of life. Some of the "coffins" contain once live animals preserved in perpetuity by the artist/taxidermist. Within the confines of these enclosures, Glavina imposes her narrative using selected objects she chooses. The implied narrative uses an approach suggestive of multiple, subjective theories of knowledge, rather than the usual "historical" models of discourse propagated by traditional institutions. As Glavina states: "I'm interested in conjuring up the grotesque, beautiful, absurd, humorous, wise, forbidden, and sad qualities connected to natural history museums and the pursuit of knowledge."

In removing himself to the self-imposed confinement of an isolated community in Northern Ontario, Roland Martin was able to develop his interest in the great Canadian tradition of landscape. Martin's recent installations, *Garden* (1997) and *Endangered Species* (1998), reflect this interest in nature and place. The selected elements in Martin's *Garden* are austere: wooden leaves, chainsaw chains and a wooden rake. The process of drawing and cutting approximately 15,000 leaves retraces its history in the reconfigured chain/tree drawing installed on the gallery wall. The rake, an object associated with order and control, occupies a less conspicuous place in this installation which reads like a visual koan. Like a Zen gardener, Martin formalizes the relationship of each part to the whole. His careful placement of understated elements organizes subject, object and signifier into a sophisticated oneness. This brings to his art an expansive, mystical East meets West quality, yet an uncanny sense of de-natured chaos prevails.



Margaret Glavina, *Work in progress*, 1996, duck, pillar, vitrine.

Kevin Kelly's ongoing interest in the decontextualized, urban landscape is again present in *Nowhere II, 2000*. This 3 x 20 foot natural history panorama is based on source material taken with a video camera from a moving vehicle while driving through the suburban decay of the New York City area. Using a complex process of layering, mediating and manipulating visuals with Photoshop — photographed TV images, scanned photographs — Kevin Kelly then reproduces the images with a color jet printer. Sites like the Williamsburg Bridge, the Pulasky Skyway, and the Holland Tunnel are reframed with dystopic grandeur. The distorted images create a dream-like state of unconsciousness Kelly finds pleasurable. As Kelly comments: "These temporary places are some of the most remarkable moments that I revisited again and again (...). They are vistas where there are no signs of Nature (...) rife with a kind of chaotic order that somehow reminded me of being in an uncut forest." For Kelly, *Nowhere II* represents a vision of landscape that questions the collusion of utopic idealism and corporate exploitation. Kevin Kelly revisits these issues again and again.

Bringing together the work of three very different artists, Margaret Glavina, Kevin Kelly, and Roland Martin, *Constructing Nature* evidences how much their art has in common.

Looking at nature and landscape in a subversive way, these artists meddling intellects seek to misshape the beautiful forms of things.

Linda Giles

TIC.TOC FESTIVAL

International Festival of New Performance
Victoria, B.C.

February 18 - 20, 2000

THE LANGUAGE OF SOUND

Technology has irrevocably changed the way in which people think about, listen to, and make music. The musical vocabulary has shifted to a different level, so much so that today's New Music — a contemporary hybrid of acoustic and digital sound installations — are multi-layered in their experimental approach.

The recent *Tic.Toc Festival of New Performance* held in Victoria is one of the repositories of this amazing new language. Tic.Toc, the brainchild of artistic directors Clint Hutzulak, Bonnie Light, and Christopher Butterfield, has its origins in a 1996 project. Their mandate: to produce concerts of experimental music and sound-based performance, and to increase audience awareness of these presentations. The first festival featured German pianist Georg Graewe, Dutch sound poet Jaap Blonk, American pianist Kathleen Supove, and The University of Victoria's Sonic Lab Ensemble, while the second held in November 1997 was much more elaborate.

For this year's 3rd incarnation, of *Tic.Toc*, local audiences feasted for three nights with composers and performers from Europe, Canada, and the United States. The Victoria Symphony under the conductorship of Christopher Butterfield (Victoria), with prepared piano soloist, Tzenka Dianova-Edwards (Bulgaria/Victoria), presented a varied program of works by Udo Kasemets (Canada), John Cage (United States), Darius Milhaud (France) and Galina Ustvol'skaya. The orchestra's interpretation of Ustvol'skaya's *Composition No. 2 (Dies Irae)* used an odd grouping of instruments: eight double basses, a wooden box played with mallets, and a piano used like a percussion instrument. Dianova-Edwards' piano technique displayed a strong, visceral physicality. The percussionist's severity produced a psychological effect akin to violence. The tension, energetically modulated by Director Christopher Butterfield's brought the composer's images of *The Last Judgement* to a final, terrifying close.

Later that same evening, Jacques Dudon, a French composer from Marseilles, presented five improvised pieces for photosonic instruments. Performed in semi-darkness in the "new" Conservatory of Music, a former church, Dudon produced a web of haunting, luminous sound. Dudon's instruments are very simple and include four types of elements: a light source; interchangeable semi-transparent discs (on which he draws opaque sound waveforms); optical filters; an amplified photoelectric solar cell. *Liaison Interplanetaire* was performed on two discs which transpose on an audible scale the exact chords of the revolution of the planets in our solar system. One disc produces the first six varied pitch tones; the other disc adds the last three planets in an interfering polyrhythmic pattern. The resulting music was stunningly beautiful!

The second night, Tic.Toc offered a pair of contrasting concerts at Open Space. Julian Gosper (Victoria), Jeffrey Allport (Vancouver), and Ryan Dworschak (Victoria), played a concert of improvised, sampled music simultaneous with video projections. "We bring into performance nothing which is predetermined or prefabricated. Beginning with an empty slate, the process evolves out of ideas (...) incorporated with incidental sounds and silence, the result is a spontaneous music." Francois Houle's Vancouver-based Electro-Acoustic Quartet took the late night spot. Houle's *Au Coeur du Litige*, a French expression meaning "At the Heart of the Matter" was inspired by the ice storm that paralyzed areas of Quebec and Ontario in 1998. Houle claimed that: "This storm was a catalyst for me to compose work that dealt with the way media transforms our perception of reality, and with the emotional detachment we sometimes experience as we witness dramatic events on television or radio from the comfort of our own homes." This work uses pre-recorded tape realizations manipulated live

by the quartet through various playback units (such as samplers, CD players, tape recorders), and signal processing electronics.

Laetitia Sonami performs electronic music using as her solo instrument, a lycra Lady's Glove wired with ultrasound detectors, motion sensors, and an accelerometer. Developed at STEIM, Amsterdam, the glove tracks the slightest motions of hand, fingers, and arm, thus enabling the performance to become a dance where the movements shape the music. Sonami combines text, music, and "found sound" to create an intimate, spontaneous art form that transcends technology. Her performance at The University of Victoria's School of Music included three new pieces; *She Came Back, Again, Why — Dreams Like a Loose Engine*, and *Has/Had*. Text by Melody Sumner Carnahan accompanied the works. Laetitia Sonami has performed her live electronic solo works for the past twenty years in the United States, Europe, and Japan.

The final concert of the festival was an offering of *musique concrete* by the Quebec's Jocelyn Robert. Robert performed work from his *Le Piano Flou* series designed for the Disklavier. The work uses software that spots mistakes and inaccuracies and turns them into music. Robert believes that musical work that is distanced from the original score enables musical interpretation with a more "human touch" to be possible. Robert blurs the boundaries between virtuosity and interpretation. He encourages a fresh take on music that embodies a sense of fragility and a sense of humour.

The *Tic.Toc Festival of New Performance*, like the music it promotes and supports, is a non-linear process. It has taken a tremendous creative effort on the part of its directors, volunteers, musicians, and audiences to make this festival possible. For three nights, the city of Victoria was blessed with the sound and silence of new music. Bravo!

Linda Giles

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