Borderline Research
Histories of Art between Canada and the United States, c. 1965–1975

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Art
University of Toronto

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Abstract
Taking General Idea’s “Borderline Research” request, which appeared in the first issue of *FILE Megazine* (1972), as a model, this dissertation presents a composite set of histories. Through a comparative case approach, I present eight scenes which register and enact larger political, social, and aesthetic tendencies in art between Canada and the United States from 1965 to 1975. These cases include Jack Bush’s relationship with the critic Clement Greenberg; Brydon Smith’s first decade as curator at the National Gallery of Canada (1967–1975); the exhibition *New York 13* (1969) at the Vancouver Art Gallery; Greg Curnoe’s debt to New York Neo-dada; Joyce Wieland living in New York and making work for exhibition in Toronto (1962–1972); Barry Lord and Gail Dexter’s involvement with the Canadian Liberation Movement (1970–1975); the use of surrogates and copies at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (1967–1972); and the Eternal Network performance event, *Decca Dance*, in Los Angeles (1974). Relying heavily on my work in institutional archives, artists’ fonds, and research interviews, I establish chronologies and describe events. By the close of my study, in the mid-1970s, the movement of art and ideas was eased between Canada and the United States, anticipating the advent of a globalized art world.
Acknowledgements

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An earlier version of the first chapter, on Jack Bush, was published to accompany the retrospective exhibition organized by Marc Mayer and Sarah Stanners for the National Gallery of Canada (2014). Chapter two, on Brydon Smith, began as paper for the Association of Canadian Studies in the United States biennial conference (2011), and further research was conducted as part of my successful co-nomination with Sandra Dyck, Director, Carleton University Art Gallery, of Smith for a Governor General’s Award in Visual and Media Arts, Outstanding Contribution Award (2014). I first presented material on Joyce Wieland—subsequently developed into chapter five—for a panel at the conference “This is Paradise: Art and Artists in Toronto,” University of Toronto, and again as a public lecture at the National Gallery of Canada (both 2015). Sections of chapter eight relating to General Idea have previously appeared in an essay on the group’s printed matter for Open Studio’s *Printopolis* (2016), and draws on earlier

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work on Marshall McLuhan and correspondence art in Canada, published in

*Counterblasting Canada: Into the Social and Intellectual Vortex of Marshall McLuhan, Sheila Watson and Wilfred Watson* (2016). Thanks are due to the editors, curators, and conference organizers of these projects for their part in the formation of these chapters.

Earlier still, the prospectus for this dissertation was presented in various talks and conferences, including at the Universities Art Association of Canada, Ottawa (2011), the Bard Graduate Center, New York (2011), the Centre for the Study of the United States Graduate Student Workshop, University of Toronto (2011), the State University of New York Buffalo (2011), and the Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University, Montreal (2012). I am grateful to the organizers of these events and for the feedback received from their participants.

For granting me interviews and corresponding with me, I thank Anna Banana, Roberts Creek, British Columbia; Fern Bayer, Toronto; Robert Bigelow, Vancouver; John Boyle, Peterborough; Hank Bull, Vancouver; AA Bronson, Berlin; Ian Carr-Harris, Toronto; Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge, Toronto; Robert Fones, Toronto; Vera Frenkel, Toronto; Garry Neill Kennedy, Vancouver; Suzy Lake, Toronto; Gary Lee-Nova, Vancouver; Glenn Lewis, Vancouver; Gail Lord, Toronto; Eric Metcalfe, Vancouver; Michael Morris, Vancouver; Robert Murray, Unionville, Pennsylvania; Roald Nasgaard, Toronto; Brydon Smith, Ottawa; Michael Snow, Toronto; Lisa Steele, Toronto; Pierre Théberge, Ottawa; Bill Vazan, Montreal; and Dennis Young, Halifax.

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Some of these interviews were conducted with Barbara Fischer, as part of research toward the exhibition *Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada, 1965–1980* (2010–2012).

In 2014 I began working as the associate curator of Canadian art at the National Gallery of Canada. There, I am indebted to Charlie Hill, curator of Canadian art (retired); Ann Thomas, senior curator of photographs; Paul Lang, deputy director and chief curator, presently director of the Musées de la Ville de Strasbourg; and Marc Mayer, director and CEO. I am particularly grateful to these last two for allowing me an education leave to finish writing this dissertation.

For my final oral examination, Johanne Sloan, Art History, Concordia University, served as my external examiner, and I appreciated her considered questions and thoughts on my project. Steve Penfold, History, University of Toronto, served as a non-supervisory committee member, and it was a pleasure to have Pia Kleber, Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies, University of Toronto, as the examination chair.

I owe much to my generous supervisory committee: Barbara Fischer, Mark Cheetham, and especially Elizabeth Legge, my supervisor. I am grateful for their wise counsel.

This dissertation is doubly dedicated: first, to my parents, Peter and Judy Welch, who introduced me to the pleasures of looking and thinking about art, and who have been a constant source of encouragement.

And at last, after a decade, this is for my loving and patient partner, Adam Meisner, without whose emotional and editorial support I would never have finished, and without whose companionship I would have been a far less contented writer.
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Introduction

In the inaugural issue of *FILE Megazine*—the “transcanada art organ” founded in 1972 by the artist group General Idea (1969–1994)—readers were invited to complete the first of what would prove to be many surveys. While better-known solicitations to their mail network circulated prior to the first *FILE*, including the *Orgasm Energy Chart* (1970), it is telling that the earliest request in the *Megazine* asked readers to “locate and draw from memory the Canadian/American border.”

By invoking memory, General Idea’s “Borderline Research” request also invoked the imaginary: an imaginary that resulted in curious, humorous, and often stridently political responses to their query. Indeed, the range of responses—some eighty-nine are extant in the General Idea archives—tell a far more complex story than the single, overlaid image published in *FILE’s* second issue (Fig. 1.1). Some responses were decidedly conceptual—Sharon Kulik determined the border by the fold line in her submission, while Ian Murray prophetically responded “art knows no national boundaries.” Others were more markedly geopolitical: Californian Robert Cumming, who conceived the project with General Idea, provided what he called a “Chilean national geographic sensibility,” with “a country squashed along a coastline of a major continent.” Cumming imagines an elaborate system of tariffs and tolls to use the ports or traverse the

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“vast inner power.” Others still signal a looming American imperialism: Anna Banana from Vancouver draws a rather accurate borderline, captioned “the maps put it about so,” then an arrow drawn to the furthest north, “but for all practical purposes it’s around here.”

Sorting through the submissions from Canada, the United States, and Europe one finds in addition to these radically revisioned borderlines a nearly equal number of blank entries, or careful, deadpan responses, rendering the border as faithfully as possible. If the solicitation failed to motivate some readers, the large number of responses where the border is exaggerated or reimagined alludes to far deeper politics at play in what at first appears a rather frivolous exercise. In FILE’s second issue, selected submissions were compiled, superimposed, and reprinted as an alternative map of the northern part of North America.

Writing a decade later, AA Bronson in “The Humiliation of the Bureaucrat” (1983) argued that the so-called “parallel” or alternative system that was established in Canada through publications, video distribution, and artist-run centres in the seventies was in fact not a parallel or alternative system at all, but rather the only viable arts infrastructure recognized by artists. In this same spirit, I take the map published in FILE’s second issue not as an “alternative” or “imaginary” cartography, but rather a revisioning of the continent through each contributor’s psycho-geographic whims:

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figments forming a cultural map of the border between two countries. While mapping was a principle strategy of artists during this period—particularly, it seems, in Canada General Idea’s “Borderline Research” evokes another signal preoccupation. This is not any map, after all, and not any border: the complex discourses of Canadian nationalism and American cultural imperialism imbricated in Canadian culture through the late sixties and early seventies find expression in General Idea’s new, radically revisioned, and collaborative, topography.

Following General Idea’s project as a model, this dissertation presents a composite, and so perhaps slightly unresolved, set of histories. Like the submissions to their request, the cases I invoke are varied. Through a comparative case approach, I present eight scenes—to borrow a device from Jacques Rancière’s Aisthesis (2013)—which register and enact the effects of larger political, social, and aesthetic tendencies in art between Canada and the United States spanning the odd decade between 1965 and 1975. These scenes do not always, or even often, centre on encounters on the actual borderlands between Canada and the United States, and in that sense my dissertation’s title is something of a

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5 As Fern Bayer describes it, “borderline cases” occupied the General Idea for several years: “These investigations were of specific biological, geographical and situational ‘borderlines,’ that is, for the artists, the contradictory space between nature and culture. The research involved text sources, inspirational imagery culled from magazines, newspapers and found postcards. The artists kept all this as resource material towards ‘borderline case’ projects.” Fern Bayer, “Project Series, General Idea Fonds,” 2002, Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada, 38.
6 Rancière alludes to Erich Auerbach’s Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature (1946) in both his title and with his decision to write in “a series of short extracts.” He continues, “the scene is not the illustration of an idea. It is a little optical machine that shows us thought, busy weaving together perceptions, affects, names and ideas, constituting the sensible community that these links create, and the intellectual community that make such weaving thinkable.” Jacques Rancière, Aisthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art (London: Verso, 2011), xi.
misnomer. Instead, each operates as an “optical machine,” to again borrow from Rancière, describing an instance where the transnational and artmaking intersect. In this sense, I have conceived of the border as a psychic space, a stage for encounters between Canadian artists and their counterparts in the United States.

This dissertation employs a combination of methodological approaches, though at base it relies heavily on my work in institutional archives, artists’ fonds, and research interviews. I have taken this approach for two reasons: first, with a few notable exceptions given below, art history in Canada has ignored Canadian artists, curators, collectors, and dealers’ relationships with the United States, or at best relegated these relationships to the sidelines of scholarly inquiry. I have relied heavily on primary research in an attempt to record these elided histories. I also agree with Frederic Jameson’s contention that “although all sorts of international, non-national, transnational relations existed before 1980, it is less interesting to say those international movements were just like globalization, and more interesting to see how they are different from each other.” Each of the scenes stages these differences, closely reading and scrutinizing them, with my resistance to naming them done advisedly.

Second, my project has been shaped significantly through my experience as an art museum curator, notably at the National Gallery of Canada, where I first worked in 2007 as a summer student, and where, since 2014, I have been associate curator of Canadian

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7 I also use the terms boundary, frontier, border, border region, and borderland interchangeably throughout this dissertation, however geographers of border studies carefully distinguish between these concepts. Victor Konrad and Heather N. Nicol, Beyond Walls: Re-Inventing the Canada-United States Borderlands (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), 25.

8 Fredric Jameson in James Elkins, Zhivka Valiavicharska, and Alice Kim, eds., Art and Globalization (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 13. Jameson continues, “I think artists work in the situation of the national, so to say they are nationalist or antinational is to remain on a level of ideology, or personal opinion, and so on, which may not be very useful. It may be better to see how they participate in the work of the nation, how they undercut the nation’s ideologies.” Fredric Jameson in Elkins, Valiavicharska, and Kim, 14.
art, responsible for works in the collection from 1945–1995. Throughout this dissertation, I attend carefully to establishing chronologies and describing events. If this emphasis on narrative seems an outmoded approach to the practice of art history, it was largely shaped by my discovery and almost daily use for the last four years of the rich departmental records in Canadian art at the National Gallery of Canada. Beginning in 1972, Charlie Hill, curator of Canadian art (retired), built a remarkable archival depository: placing correspondence, notes, clippings, and often-extensive photocopied extracts of material (much already held in the Gallery’s nearby library), into cabinet upon cabinet of vertical files. Assembling these pieces together in an artist or subject file, however, drew otherwise disparate and perhaps otherwise difficult to find material together in one place. This act of compilation, however modest, struck me as one of his most important research tools during his forty-two year tenure at the Gallery, and among his most enduring legacies, especially to a curator arriving in 2014. Perhaps because Hill’s own archival disposition and astonishingly deep knowledge of late-nineteenth and twentieth-century art impressed me so much, this dissertation is shaped out of admiration for his ability to establish facts through careful research.9

This approach, however, requires certain caveats. As Alexander Alberro, restating Theodor Adorno, wrote in preface to his 2009 anthology of institutional critique, all institutions of art are imbricated within the governing ideology at large. Owing to this,

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9 My interest in chronologies and narrative may also be a response to what Pamela Lee has described in *Forgetting the Art World*: “the art world, as it is generically understood, is both escalating and accelerating, appearing to turn so fast—always on the brink of its next obsolescence—that its maps can no longer be read as fixed or stable, its borders blurred at best.” This is not to feign an “outside” or “distance,” as Lee cautions, but in my case rather to venture further into archives and correspondence as solace. Pamela M. Lee, *Forgetting the Art World* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2012), 2.
museums remain sites of “injustice that characterize existing conditions in society.” As I discuss below, my selection of cases occasionally reflects the collecting history and biases of the National Gallery of Canada, and in some cases chapters have specific originating causes, which account for their scope or character. The origins of these chapters are described in the acknowledgements section above. What is more, an act of compilation akin to maintaining a curatorial department’s records runs the risk of assembling facts that serve only themselves. I have endeavoured to gain access to previously unpublished primary sources, and worked to parse and organize them, and it is my hope that these accounts provide some greater insight into the character of transnational art- and exhibition-making in Canada.

With its eight scenes placed roughly in chronological order, although this dissertation has no encyclopaedic goals and does not pretend a comprehensive account of the period, it does attest to the fragmentation of the frontier that General Idea’s “Borderline Research” request first mapped in 1972. Whether one calls this condition transnationality, cosmopolitanism, or even borderlessness, by the mid-1970s, the movement of art and ideas was eased between the United States and Canada, enacting a situation somewhere between, as Jean Fisher has memorably characterized, “the unpalatable choice between neo-liberal globalisation and ethno-nationalism.”

This dissertation builds on important previous research, and would not have been possible without contributions to the discursive fields within which it is situated:

Canadian cultural history and theory, accounts of nationalism and anti-Americanism in

Canada, comparative studies of Canadian and American art, and border theory. Again, owing perhaps to the misnomer that is the dissertation’s title, the political, geographical, and social theories of borderlands have contributed less to this project than comparative studies of Canadian and American art.

Any discussion of postwar Canadian culture, particularly one focused on its relationship to the United States, necessarily begins with the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences (1949–1951), more commonly known as the Massey Report. The extensive literature in the decades following its release establishes a ground for this dissertation. Though of course, as Dot Tuer argued in 2005, the Commission never served as a crystal ball, and perhaps within a decade even, ceased to relate the direction of Canadian culture. As a settler colony, at the very outset “the assumption that any influence not peculiarly Canadian is inimical to the development of a genuinely Canadian culture,” as summarily described by Charles Comfort, “is fundamentally wrong.” Unflinching in his aspiration for whatever might constitute a “genuine” Canadian culture, Comfort also encouraged his fellow painters to

14 “When Canadian cultural history is viewed as multifaceted, in which regional, racial, and ethnic identities, First Nations self-determination, and colonial injustices are acknowledged as central to the formation of national identity, then perhaps we can move beyond the impasse of an either/or dichotomy that pits subsidized culture for a few against the onslaught of a mass-culture uniformity.” Dot Tuer, “The Art of Nation-Building: Constructing a Cultural Identity for Post-War Canada,” in Mining the Media Archive: Essays on Art, Technology and Cultural Resistance (Toronto: YYZ, 2005), 104.
15 Comfort continues, “Total environment for Canadians has never been confined to experiences originating within their own borders. That is should be so for creative artists any more than for doctors or scientists would seem unreasonable.” Comfort, “Painting,” 410.
look to the United Kingdom rather than to the United States, the latter exhibiting for him a certain “frontierism” exuding that perennial “challenge of a powerful neighbour.”

With the formation of the Canada Council for the Arts in 1957—which followed from a Commission recommendation and named the Commision’s chair, Vincent Massey, as its “first Patron”—Parliament allocated one hundred million dollars to support the development of the arts in Canada. Though Arts Council England, along with the Carnegie, Ford, Guggenheim, and Rockefeller foundations, were all consulted prior to the Canada Council’s formation, the “problems and opportunities in Canada are not precisely the same as the problems and opportunities in the United States or in the United Kingdom.” To this end, the Council sought to “consult our own people.”

Although Canadian cultural nationalism was already flourishing by the 1920s, Comfort’s deference to colonial powers in the late 1940s aligns with what Benedict Anderson characterized in 1986 as nationalism’s “New World origins.” Its creation, toward the end of the eighteenth century, nevertheless found continued expression in forms of arts policy and “political museumizing” in Canada, as elsewhere, throughout the postwar period—into the present. Working from a moment of intense doubt toward nationalist narratives, with their exigencies of xenophobia and racism, particularly in the United States, it bears remembering that left nationalist discourse was a progressive

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16 Comfort, 411–12.
political position through the 1960s and 1970s in Canada. Even so, any reading of historical nationalism must give credence to its violent inheritance in the present.21

The extensive body of literature on Canadian nationalism, particularly that contemporaneous with the period under discussion, has proved remarkably useful in unknitting the often-complex affiliations of artists and activists at the time. George Grant in Lament for a Nation (1965) grieved over the fact that Canada’s ruling class had found “its centre of gravity in the United States.”22 By the 1970s, as artists shared in this grief and began to make work with explicitly nationalist themes, art critics began to assess the role of nationalism in the visual arts.23 Ramsay Cook’s work on cultural nationalism in the mid-1980s heralded even more expansive accounts, particularly as transnational trade agreements began to form through the early 1990s.24 Later still, Eva Mackey, Will Kymlicka, and Ian Angus variously took up nationalism, state-sponsored multiculturalism, and pluralism through their work of the late 1990s.25

Twinned closely with this body of literature on Canadian nationalism are extensive analyses and spirited expressions of anti-Americanism—indeed these two

21 In their introduction, “Idiot Wind,” to e-flux journal’s issue on the rise of right-wing populism from 2011, editors Paul Chan and Sven Lütticken considered the repurposing of nationalism in the United States and Europe in light of recent austerity measures. The right has made recourse to “reassert the will of ‘The People’ in these great times,” claiming the imaginary loss of an “‘original’ commonality at the center of society that must be renewed at the expense of those living at the circumference.” Paul Chan and Sven Lütticken, “Idiot Wind: An Introduction,” E-Flux Journal: Idiot Wind: On the Rise of Right-Wing Populism in the US and Europe, and What It Means for Contemporary Art 22 (January 2011): n.p.
discourses are often imbricated. This was especially the case by the late 1960s, with publications such as Robin Mathews and James Steele’s *The Struggle for Canadian Universities: A Dossier* (1969) and the closely related anthology edited by Ian Lumsden *Close the 49th Parallel, Etc.: The Americanization of Canada* (1970). By the early 1970s, the subject even had a certain popular appeal, as evidenced by magazine pieces such as Barry Lord’s “Living Inside the American Empire of Taste: Canadian Artists are Struggling to Find a Way Out” (1971), and his later textbook with Gail Dexter, the subject of a following chapter, *The History of Painting in Canada: Towards a People’s Art* (1974). Susan Crean’s *Who’s Afraid of Canadian Culture?* (1976) presented her assessment of the systematic exclusion of Canadian culture from arts organizations, educational institutions, and broadcasting by recalling a report she was commissioned to write in 1970 on the state of touring activities in Canada. More broadly, Crean called attention to the insidious role of American business and a deep-seated continentalism in culture, ultimately suggesting that an undefended border has led to “abject cultural defenselessness.” Any national cultural policy, Crean argued, must necessarily begin with anti-Americanism in order to “make room” for Canadian culture. Artists, too, added

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30 Crean, *Who’s Afraid of Canadian Culture?*, 270.
their voices to the fray: Greg Curnoe’s essay for *Canadian Forum*, “Feet of Clay Planted Firmly in USA” (1976), though ostensibly a criticism of the fall 1975 issue of *Artscanada*, summarizes well his own position. Curnoe advocated for regionalism in much of his artmaking and writing—a position he shared with John Boyle, Jack Chambers, and others in London, Ontario. Taken as a bulwark to American influence in the arts, regionalism was subsequently theorized by the likes of Ross Woodman, Christopher Dewdney, George Bowering, Philip Monk, and Dot Tuer, among others. Regionalism in the early 1970s bristles against articulations of provincialism, too, most interestingly with Terry Smith’s 1974 account “The Provincialism Problem.”

Comparative studies across Canadian and American art are relatively few, a symptom, perhaps, shared by the discipline of art history more generally. As Serge Guilbaut remarked in his discussion of postwar connections between Montreal, Paris, and New York, “each capital, discovering and defending its local heroes, produced local histories without any connections—outside of formal ones . . . to the other Western

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33 Terry Smith, “The Provincialism Problem,” *Artforum* 13, no. 1 (September 1974): 54–59. The context for writing the article were debates that “had been raging during the late sixties when I was there as a critic and a curator and a teacher of art history, my mentor was a person named Bernard Smith, who wrote the great histories of Australian art and his approach was that Australian art was a history of dependence on England.” Terry Smith, interview by Adam Welch, November 29, 2010.
centers.” Of the scholarship closest to this dissertation, surprisingly little has explored relations in the visual arts between Canada and the United States. Joseph Baird’s short essay “American and Canadian Art Compared” (1952) is among the earliest of the postwar period. R.H. Hubbard’s essay “Artists in Common: Canadian-American Contacts” (1976) explored late-nineteenth century relationships between Canadian and American painters. Likewise, Ann Davis’s exhibition *A Distant Harmony: Comparisons in the Painting of Canada and the United States of America* (1982) for the Winnipeg Art Gallery took up a similar period and strategy, again limited to a discussion of painting by artists from Joseph Légaré and Paul Kane to Lawren Harris and Carl Schaefer. *Permeable Border: Art of Canada and the United States 1920–1940* (1989), organized by Christine Boyanoski at the Art Gallery of Ontario, while moving the scope forward chronologically provided a rather limited consideration of the interaction between Canada and the United States in the interwar years—and was principally concerned with American works in Canada.

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34 Serge Guilbaut, ed., *Reconstructing Modernism* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), xiv. Guilbaut continues, “and this despite the fact that exchanges among painters, intellectuals, and politicians between the centers were very frequent and important.”


While there have been a considerable number of survey exhibitions of American art in Canada, as exhibition histories of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Vancouver Art Gallery, and Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, all attest, more unexpected perhaps are the number of surveys of Canadian art in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s. That said, in general the accompanying publications did little to unpick the implications of these political, economic, and oftentimes diplomatic, transnational relationships.39 Accounts of Canadian artists living in the United States were a regular feature of magazine and newspaper articles.40 As were profiles of Canadian artists or reviews of their work featured in American publications, particularly those who had moved to the United States.41 By contrast, scholarly monographic studies of Canadian artists living in

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the United States have been relatively few, the most compelling among them François-Marc Gagnon’s many publications on Paul-Émile Borduas’ time in New York.42

Most recently, Sarah E.K. Smith at Carleton University has been researching and writing on the relationship of artists between Canada and the United States around free trade agreements; that is, slightly later than the period I discuss here.43 Lynda Jessup’s forthcoming Soft Power and the State: Art Exhibitions and Canada-U.S. Foreign Policy, 1936-1974, will undoubtedly provide an important account of four decades’ worth of transnational artistic and political exchange.44

With the increasing theorization of borders beginning in the late 1980s, comparative studies gave way to broader investigations of the Canada–United States borderlands. Already by 1997, David Johnson and Scott Michaelson were able to write in their preface to Border Theory, “the idea of the ‘border’ or ‘borderlands’ has also been expanded to include nearly every psychic or geographic space about which one can thematize problems of boundary or limit.”45 In this way, border studies continued the work already begun with many of the comparative studies described above. Border


studies in the United States began—and, indeed, remains to this day largely concerned—with the Mexico–United States borderlands, and the northern border with the United States has been less theorized. There is still, however, a significant body of literature relating to Canada, especially in the last two decades.

In spite of this extensive literature on border studies, with few exceptions, cultural accounts have focused largely on television, film, and literature that themselves address the borderlands as subject. There are a few shorter essays that take up the border as it pertains to visual arts: Anne-Laure Amihat-Szary, for one, has written about exhibitions and works on the borders between Quebec-Vermont and British Columbia-Washington State Cascadia since September 11, 2001 in her essay “The Geopolitical Meaning of a Contemporary Visual Arts Upsurge on the Canada-U.S. Border” (2012). Kate Morris’s “Running the ‘Medicine Line’: Images of the Border in Contemporary Native American Art,” (2011) takes up the period following 1990, with particular interest in spaces where

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Indigenous and settler-colonial conceptions of the border come into conflict.\textsuperscript{50} Work drawing on an Indigenous framework has become more commonplace in the last decade.\textsuperscript{51}

While my dissertation shares a discursive field with these studies and theories of nationalism, anti-Americanism, comparative studies of Canadian and American art, and border theory, in its focus on accounts of the visuals arts between the two countries, it attends more specifically to the practice of working transnationally for artists, curators, dealers, activists, and educators between 1965 and 1975.

I have collated the eight scenes that make up this dissertation into three parts, which are broadly chronological. They share more than periodizing tendencies, however, and I have arranged them to emphasize not only the relationships between the cases within each part, but more broadly, the relationships between the three parts as wholes. Half of the eight chapters—those on Jack Bush, Greg Curnoe, Joyce Wieland, and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design—revisit and rearticulate well-trod territory in the histories of postwar Canadian art. It was difficult for me to imagine a dissertation that took up Canadian-American artistic relations during this period that did not include these three unavoidable artists and one important school. The other cases are intended to bring new subjects to light. These chapters, on Brydon Smith, \textit{New York 13} at the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Canadian Liberation Movement, and the \textit{Decca Dance}, demonstrate that even within well-established histories, there remain paradigmatic curators, exhibitions,


activists, and events that have only been mentioned in passing in the existing literature, if at all.

This project in no way pretends to be a comprehensive account of the many interactions in the visual arts between Canada and the United States from 1965 to 1975. My selection of cases suffers from some of the same biases that characterize other postwar art histories in Canada. To begin, they are exclusively drawn from English Canada, and with the exceptions of Vancouver and Halifax, all centre on Ontario.\(^{52}\)

While earlier proposals for this dissertation included the work of Paul-Émile Borduas as a kind of prehistory to the period under discussion, the variety and complexity of Quebec’s relationships to the United States meant that to discuss only one instance would give it an outsized significance, necessarily standing for histories of artists such as Jean McEwen or Charles Gagnon. These cases alone are deserving of a longer study.\(^{53}\)

With the exceptions of the chapter on Joyce Wieland and discussions of the work of Doris Shadbolt, Lucy Lippard, Gail Dexter, and Charlotte Townsend, the cases I have chosen are also overwhelmingly histories about men. Indigenous histories are also absent, though as recent studies on the Canadian-American border have established, Indigenous geographies provide a compelling prehistory to the formation of colonial nation states, and indeed, continue to provide an alternative to delimited borderlands. That there are no

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\(^{52}\) Other cases from English Canada could very well have been included: for instance, a discussion of the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshop. This was partly excluded from my study given the extensive scholarship, notably John O’Brian’s excellent exhibition and publication, The Flat Side of the Landscape: The Emma Lake Artists’ Workshop (October 5–November 19, 1989, Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon). John O’Brian, ed., The Flat Side of the Landscape: The Emma Lake Artists’ Workshop (Saskatoon: Mendel Art Gallery, 1989). Other studies include John D.H. King, “The Emma Lake Workshops, 1955-1970” (BFA Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1972); Daniel John Currell, “Modernism in Canada: Clement Greenberg and Canadian Art” (MA thesis, Concordia University, 1996); Roald Nasgaard, “Emma Lake and the Regina Five, 1960s,” in Abstract Painting in Canada (Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 2007), 143–64.

\(^{53}\) As with my exclusion of Emma Lake, another part of the reason I set aside Borduas was the extensive body of literature on the artist by François Marc-Gagnon, especially those texts and exhibitions which treated his time in New York, such as Borduas and America (December 9, 1977–January 8, 1978, Vancouver Art Gallery). Gagnon and Grundy, Borduas and America.
artists, curators, or dealers of colour, is another deficit of this dissertation of which I am acutely aware. It would be easy to write that these omissions reveal systemic oppression during the period, and that this sexism and racism is registered in the available institutional records and archival fonds that have served as the basis for my work, but it is also, I fully admit, as a result of my own education and interests that the cases I have selected here neglect such histories.

The three parts, as they proceed, suggest a tendency whereby the nation-state recedes from view, and new transnational identities are formed: this course is, however, hardly unique to the visual arts.\(^5^4\) If part one includes cases where artists and curators showed deference to American models, part two presents spirited responses, instantiated in the practices of Curnoe, Wieland, and the anti-American cultural activism of the Canadian Liberation Movement. Following these crises, part three offers cases which suggest a far more permeable transnational situation. Although this study concludes before the advent, as Fredric Jameson and others have argued, of a globalized art world around 1980, this period and these scenes nevertheless gesture toward far more open networks of exchange.

If the scenes in part one describe a colonial, unidirectional axis of culture from a centre towards a periphery, following the crises in part two, the final part includes cases arising from a much more decentred art world. This trajectory is also concomitant, at least in the scenes I have selected here, with a move away from painting and sculpture, as exemplified by Bush, Curnoe, and to a certain extent Wieland, toward conceptual and language-based practices, as with visiting artists at NSCAD, Image Bank, General Idea,

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\(^{5^4}\) For a discussion of this broader geopolitical tendency, see Masao Miyoshi, “A Borderless World? From Colonialism to Transnationalism and the Decline of the Nation-State,” *Critical Inquiry* 19, no. 4 (Summer 1993): 726–51.
and their cohort at the *Decca Dance*. In other words, these scenes begin with market-responsive work and end with far more oppositional practices.\(^{55}\) The mediums these artists used also, of course, figure significantly in their work’s attendant mobility.\(^{56}\)

In the first chapter, “New York Hot Licks: Jack Bush after Clement Greenberg,” I re-examine Greenberg’s June 1957 visit in Toronto with Bush and their ensuing friendship, using Bush’s unpublished diaries now at the Art Gallery of Ontario as my primary source. I closely scrutinize Greenberg’s advice-giving over the following two decades, ending with Bush’s death in 1977. At the same time, I explore charges of provincialism, especially those levelled by Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge, as well as support for Bush’s deferential stance from curators such as Terry Fenton.

Chapter two, “Brillo Boxes, Fluorescent Light, and the FLQ: Brydon Smith at the National Gallery of Canada,” surveys the first decade of Smith’s curatorial work at the National Gallery of Canada (1967–1975). Prefigured by a discussion of his time at the Art Gallery of Ontario, I take up Smith’s exhibitions in Ottawa of James Rosenquist (1968), Dan Flavin (1969), and Donald Judd (1975), and pay particular attention to moments of transnational crises: his acquisition of Andy Warhol’s *Brillo Soap Pads Boxes* (1964), following their blocked import under *Tariff Item 695c*, and Carl Andre’s

\(^{55}\) Put in another way, these scenes relate aesthetic and anti-aesthetic practices as James Elkins defines them: they are “dichotomies of two different kinds of art . . . artists interested in aesthetics—often, or normatively, painters—who want to continue various twentieth-century practices. On the other hand, there are artists interest in resisting globalization, commodification, or the machinery of the art market.” Elkins, Valiavicharska, and Kim, *Art and Globalization*, 2.

\(^{56}\) In his brief essay for *Information* (1970), Kynaston McShine observed the then-recent tendency for artists to make use of “mail, telegrams, [and] telex machines.” These new media signal a shift toward an increased mobility of artists and their work. He continues, “for both artists and their public it is a stimulating and open situation, and certainly less parochial than even five years ago. It is no longer imperative for an artist to be in Paris or New York. Those far from the ‘art centers’ contribute more easily, without the often artificial protocol that at one time seemed essential for recognition.” Kynaston McShine, *Information* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1970), 140. Among the best known articulations of this phenomenon is Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (New York: Praeger, 1973).
cancelled exhibition (1970), owing to the artist’s insistence on reading the manifesto of the Front de libération du Québec. Throughout, I emphasize Smith’s regular use of delegated fabrication and exhibition copies of minimal sculpture as a means of circumventing difficulties at the border.

The third chapter, “From Metropole to Frontier: New York 13 at the Vancouver Art Gallery,” centres on the exhibition New York 13 (January 22–February 24, 1969). Far lesser known than 955,000 (January 13–February 8, 1970), Lucy Lippard’s celebrated “numbered exhibition” for Vancouver, along with Los Angeles 6 (March 20–April 5, 1968) from the previous year, New York 13 introduced Vancouver to Jasper Johns, Donald Judd, Ellsworth Kelly, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Morris, Barnett Newman, Kenneth Noland, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg, James Rosenquist, George Segal, Frank Stella, and Andy Warhol. I establish the circumstances surrounding the conception and realization of the exhibition, which involved a number of significant curators, dealers, and artists: Alvin Balkind, John Coplans, Douglas Christmas, Tony Emery, Walter Hopps, Lucy Lippard, Michael Morris, Robert Rauschenberg, and Doris Shadbolt, among others. Though his reputation remains controversial, Christmas emerges as a decisive figure in introducing contemporary American art to Vancouver in the 1960s.

Part two, which gathers together a number of cases standing in stark contrast to the enthusiasm shown for American art described above, opens with chapter four, “Go to the Source: Greg Curnoe and New York Neo-dada.” Though art critics often compared Curnoe’s work to American Pop art, the most likely explanation is not imitation but rather a shared source in the early-twentieth-century avant-garde. Introduced to Dada while still in high school, as evidenced by a variety of statements and essays I examine
from the Curnoe fonds at the Art Gallery of Ontario, even more formative was Curnoe’s meeting and friendship with the Dada scholar Michel Sanouillet. Still, I suggest that without the surge of interest surrounding New York Neo-dada, Curnoe may never have attended to its historical precedents. If later in the 1980s Curnoe was regarded as a “rather simplistic nationalist,”57 during his formative years of the late 1950s and early 1960s, Curnoe’s disruptive, montaged images were derived from a far more expansive engagement with the historical avant-garde, as demonstrated by works such as Homage to the R 34 (1967–1968).

Chapter five, “When is a Canadian Not an American? Joyce Wieland from New York to the Isaacs Gallery,” details yet another response to the perceived imperialism of American visual culture. Taking up the decade that Wieland lived in New York (1962–1972), and drawing from correspondence in both the Isaacs and Wieland fonds at York University, I explore her practice of making work in New York for exhibition in Canada. Looking at exhibitions mounted by the Isaacs Gallery around the time Wieland lived in New York, I argue that this condition of producing work in New York for a Toronto audience was integral to Wieland’s engagement with Canadian nationalism, culminating in her National Gallery of Canada exhibition True Patriot Love (1971).

Chapter six, “Toward a People’s Art: Barry Lord, Gail Dexter, and the Canadian Liberation Movement,” looks closely at The History of Painting in Canada: Toward a People’s Art (1974). Conspicuously Maoist in its methodology, the textbook is a selective account of art in Canada that begins with a brief discussion of Indigenous cultures from time immemorial and ends with a lengthy section on Canadian art of the 1960s. Though

signed by Barry Lord, it was equally authored by Gail Dexter, and indeed, was resolutely the product of the Canadian Liberation Movement (CLM; c. 1969–1976)—a significant, if extreme, response to American cultural and capital imperialism in the early 1970s in Canada. Beginning with an account of the book itself, I trace Dexter and Lord’s respective formations, I establish their involvement in the CLM, and following the publication of the book, describe the couple’s subsequent, decisive break with the organization in 1975. Largely unknown, my account is based on the extensive records of the Movement held by the Archives at McMaster University, Hamilton.

In the third and final part of the dissertation, I present two cases which gesture toward a far more globalized situation for artmaking in Canada. Chapter seven, “Surrogates, Copies, and Doubles: The Aesthetics of Distance at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design,” takes up the period 1967–1972, from the arrival of Garry Neill Kennedy as President to David Askevold’s departure for an eight-month sabbatical in London, England. During this period a considerable number of projects were realized at NSCAD where the College’s physical remove was registered. Three larger programs at the school stand out in this regard: Projects Class, the Lithography Workshop, and exhibitions mounted by Charlotte Townsend for the Mezzanine Gallery. Many of these activities employed surrogates, stand-ins, or other forms of delegated labour. These aesthetics of distance—the dependence on surrogates and copies—if first brought about through NSCAD’s geographical distance from established centres, would, in retrospect, be coincident with one of the principal characteristics of conceptual art: namely, its predisposition to easy circulation.
With chapter eight, “Decca Dance: Image Bank and General Idea in Los Angeles,” I establish the organization and realization of the *Decca Dance*, an event held on February 2, 1974 at the Elk’s Building, Los Angeles, that was modelled loosely on the Academy Awards. The event was a rare physical manifestation of the so-called Eternal Network: an informal association of artists working within an international gift economy to exchange images and works of art by mail. At its core, the Eternal Network was premised on the belief that artists could and should be in communication without dependence on conventional art world structures. Organized principally by Lowell Darling, Michael Morris, and Willoughby Sharp, it also involved General Idea, and relates in certain respects to their *Pageants*, drawing on a highly ritualized format lifted from popular culture. In its instantiation of the “subliminal” network that had existed transnationally since at least the founding of *FILE Megazine* (1972), *Decca Dance* also marked the end of a surge in mail art activity in Canada, and its replacement with an embodied network of artists in transit—prefiguring a globalized art world to come.
Part I

Chapter One

New York Hot Licks

Jack Bush after Clement Greenberg

In June 1957, Clement Greenberg (1909–1994) visited eight members of the Painters Eleven. The influential American critic spent a few hours with each artist over his five days in Toronto.¹ Nearly twenty years later, in 1975, Jack Bush (1909–1977) recalled his visit with Greenberg, saying,

I remember well the half-day I spent with him in my studio at home, which is a small one, and I proudly showed him all my new work with abstract expressionist influence . . . He said, “Look what you are doing, my God, you people up here scare the hell out of me, you’re so good but what you’re doing, Bush, is you’re just taking all the hot licks from the New York painters which is so easy to do. Try painting simpler, and thinner, as you have done in these watercolours. If it scares you—good—you’ll know you are onto something that is your true self—you don’t need these New York hot licks.” I tried it, I was scared, but I began to realize in six months that Clem was right—the paintings were better, and I didn’t look back.²

This meeting has achieved mythic status in many descriptions of Bush’s life and work, particularly as known through the above account, based on an interview and published in


² As published in Jack Bush, “Reminiscences by Jack Bush,” in Jack Bush: A Retrospective (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1976), n.p. The original transcript of the video interview, on which the text is based, is Jack Bush, Video Transcript, interview by Leslie Fry and John Newton, March 13, 1975, Jack Bush Artist File, Joan Murray Artists’ Files, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery. Significantly, the section from “trying painting simpler, and thinner” through to the end of the quotation does not appear in the transcript, and must have been added in subsequent editing.
the exhibition catalogue for his 1976 survey at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO). It describes the first of many subsequent visits, letters, and phone calls between the critic and artist, the two maintaining an exceptionally close relationship throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In some discussions of Bush’s work, their meeting reads as fable: the artist, in an instant, turning away from imitation and emerging as an entirely individual painter. This myth of sudden transformation was encouraged by his AGO retrospective, which, as Barrie Hale suggests, “did Bush the disservice of implying (by showing none of his pre-1958 work) that maturity was conferred on Bush by Greenberg during his 1957 visit to Toronto.” While it is the case that his practice changed considerably in the months following Greenberg’s visit, the transformation, as Bush himself suggests, was far from immediate.

This first encounter provided no clear course, but it did offer a series of signs, gradually leading his painting in a new, and likely unforeseen, direction. According to Bush’s published recollection, Greenberg cautioned him against relying on “New York hot licks”—a set of “readymade effects” of “smears, swipes and lumps of paint left by a brush or spatula” derived from abstract expressionism, which by the late 1950s read as unoriginal and uninspired. This was the very mode in which Bush had been working diligently for a number of years. Such derivative painting, Greenberg would argue in his 1964 essay “The ‘Crisis’ of Abstract Art,” “collapsed not because it has become

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dissipated in formlessness, but because in its second generation it has produced some of
the most mannered, imitative, uninspired and repetitious art in our tradition.”5 His
recommendation to paint “simpler and thinner” was to trade these mannered gestures for
a technique premised on pure opticality and a bare minimum of surface incident.

In what follows, I provide a new account of this crucial meeting between the artist
and critic; using Bush’s diaries as my primary source, I venture a significantly more
detailed description of their ensuing relationship. Far from providing uncomplicated
evidence for Bush’s dependence on Greenberg, the painter’s diaries show an ambivalence
toward the critic, with Bush ultimately charting his own, even if apprehensive, course.

Greenberg’s reputation preceded him in Toronto, and Bush knew better than most
his championing of New York School painters and sculptors during the 1940s and early
1950s: advocating for the work of Jackson Pollock, David Smith and Barnett Newman,
among others, at a time when museums and galleries were generally paying little
attention. Revealing an early Marxist (and Kantian) influence, Greenberg argued that
modern painting was ever advancing through self-criticism, refining itself based on
qualities inherent to the medium, and casting aside representation along the way. The
endgame of painting for Greenberg was not illusion but flatness: instead of an aperture
opening onto the world, painting was a contemplation of pigment as applied to its canvas
support. His work was widely read, inspiring a generation of critics and art historians,
and ultimately leading to a postwar preoccupation in the visual arts with “medium

specificity.”6 Even beyond this critical discourse, Greenberg was highly influential, and he regularly advised museum directors, gallerists, collectors and artists.

If by the late 1960s Greenberg’s authority had begun to wane, he was near the height of his influence when he first met Bush in the summer of 1957. His visit to Toronto was arranged through William Ronald, a member of the Painters Eleven who had moved to New York in 1955. Ronald’s New York dealer, Sam Kootz, introduced him to Greenberg, and for the opening of his first-ever solo commercial exhibition in April 1957, fellow member Jock Macdonald flew from Toronto.7 Packed, the party drew Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, and other New York School luminaries. Conversation between Ronald, Greenberg, and Macdonald soon turned to painting in Toronto, and the two invited him to visit. Greenberg agreed, and Macdonald set to work arranging his trip.8

Although Bush’s 1975 recollection is the best-known version of his first encounter with Greenberg, the entries contained in his remarkably detailed diary—which he maintained from 1952 through to January 1977—reveal a different encounter with the critic that afternoon of June 14, 1957.9 The discrepancies between these two accounts

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9 June 14, 1957, Bush, “Diary, January 14-December 16, 1957.” Subsequent quotations refer to this entry. It should be noted that while Bush often quotes others directly in his diaries, the accuracy of his paraphrasing
suggest that his later remembrance was—as one would expect—influenced by intervening years of conversation with Greenberg, betraying a far greater familiarity with his critique of the derivative “Tenth Street Touch” and his preferred technique of thinned, stained pigment on unprimed canvas.\footnote{This was a technique closely associated with post-painterly abstraction, a set of practices coined with Greenberg’s eponymous 1964 exhibition, Clement Greenberg, \textit{Post Painterly Abstraction} (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1964).} Considering their visit in retrospect, Bush casts Greenberg’s critique of late abstract expressionism and reference to a new reductive vocabulary in far plainer terms than in the diary. Having known one account for so long, the far more detailed and proximate diary entries come as something of a revelation.

Although Greenberg and his wife, Jenny (Janice) Van Horne Greenberg, had arrived in Toronto the previous day, and Bush had spent the evening with them, he woke up on the morning of June 14 with “jitters” (Fig. 2.1). He drove to the Windsor Arms Hotel to pick up Jenny Greenberg and from there the two went to the Imperial Oil Building, where they met Greenberg and Macdonald. The group spent the morning going through the building, which was installed with paintings by Bush, Oscar Cahén, Walter Yarwood, and others. Bush recorded in some detail Greenberg’s impressions of each: praising Harold Town, “this boy is a painter & a good one. He’s seen Hofmann,” while less generous with Bush’s close friend William Winter, “we’ve got 20 in NY doing this stuff—it’s junk.” As they approached the rotunda where some of Bush’s paintings were hanging, Greenberg, not knowing they were his, shouted out, “Hey—this boy’s got something!” Bush, somewhat fazed, claimed them as his, and the group “turned on me aghast.” Greenberg was frank, dismissing out of hand a “black square landscape”—“I don’t like that”—but praising \textit{Culmination} (1955; Art Gallery of Ontario, 88/130), which and recollection is difficult to determine. All such quotations should be considered with this proviso in mind.
Bush had shown the previous year as part of the Painters Eleven exhibition with the American Abstract Artists at the Riverside Museum, New York. Still, Greenberg wished that he hadn’t softened the edges: “If you’re going to say something, say it. Don’t blur it up with nice slick edges like N.Y. boys do.”

At half past one, Bush drove the Greenbergs to his home at One Eastview Crescent. Mabel Bush had made lunch, and served it in the garden. Greenberg removed his tie and coat, Jenny kicked off her shoes; Jock and Barbara Macdonald arrived soon after. After lunch, Greenberg made his way to the studio, where Bush began to spread out his paintings. Greenberg’s unrestrained criticism and praise followed in what seems almost equal measure. Certain works were “too tight—held in,” or, more elusively, “not felt.” Greenberg admired Bush’s use of colour in *Summer No. 3* (1956; National Gallery of Canada, 16539; Fig. 2.2), saying, “you’re open—not concerned with fancy strokes. They’re simple. You weren’t afraid here.” In general, he praised simplicity and discouraged the use of “lousy black strokes.” Greenberg continued, “I like this best (*Coup de main*) & wish to God you hadn’t done that (pointing to the left upper corner). The large explosion one—he said ‘The boys in N.Y. would love this—it’s got everything they have and the way they want it. But it’s no good.’”

This comparison to New York painters led the two to a discussion of surface. Bush was proud of his handling of the paint, though Greenberg dismissed it as mannered, the *ductus* borrowed and superficial. In his defence, Bush describes how hard he had

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11 Bush wrote to J. Russell Harper, curator of Canadian art at the National Gallery of Canada from 1959–1963, about the exhibition in 1964: “We were invited to show as guests with the American Abstract Artists in New York, in 1956. This was somehow the first physical contact (which I am now thinking most important) with kindred spirits outside our own parish, or country, for that matter. This sparked the possibility that we lowly Canadians somehow had a real challenge, and a job to do as artists not at all like the local pattern so prevalent for so many years. This is no way made us feel less Canadian. But it was a big job, and lonely, and sure as hell no thanks.” Bush in Hale, “Breakthrough: Jack Bush and Painters Eleven,” 30.
worked to achieve it, and Greenberg responds, “Sure—they (N.Y.) all have, but what is that? Just on the surface & it hurts your painting. Your real feeling can’t come out if you put this surface Jazz on all the time.” Greenberg continues,

You guys are making my job up here difficult. You’re too sophisticated. You know all there is to know about N.Y. You all use the latest tricks. And they’re tricks. Turn your backs on them. Sure—know what’s going on—but do it in your own way. You don’t need to know anything more about painting—just get rid of the looking over the shoulder at yourselves & N.Y. or London. Just paint—no tricks.

After this scolding, Bush writes parenthetically, “I’m bleeding fully by now.”

Greenberg’s advice to paint without regard to other artists, to “go your own way,” underscores his understanding of painting as a solitary pursuit: “don’t pay any attention to artists—they ball you up. They ball themselves up in N.Y. Talk—talk—talk—trying to please one another.”

When Bush brought out his watercolours, of which there were some twenty-five or thirty, Greenberg “reacted to 2 only”—somewhat astonishing given the significance later afforded these works. “Try painting simpler, and thinner,” Greenberg instructed Bush according to his 1976 account, “as you have done in these watercolours.” With one, Greenberg recalled his earlier reproach of Bush’s use of black, praising one painting by saying “Oooh—no blacks—you’re a colorist … you don’t need these blacks that you’re so afraid of.” Of course, many watercolourists avoid black in any event, so the absence in that particular medium may not have been as studied as Greenberg’s comments suggest. The second he responded to, “the last w.c. I showed him” Man +

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Woman #1 (1955; Fig. 2.3), “he loved,” saying “that’s painting!” These two remarks are scant evidence that Greenberg encouraged Bush to continue painting “as you have done in these watercolours,” carefully extracting the characteristics of one medium in order to achieve a less painterly and expressive touch in another.14 Years later, however, Greenberg would refer back to these paintings, saying, “those w.c.’s of yours I saw in 1957 they were so easy, no lines, no concern of butting one colour to another.”15 Perhaps it was this later conversation encroaching on Bush’s memory because, whether intended or not, in emphasizing the importance of the watercolours Bush led some critics astray. Barrie Hale took a common position when he argued, “the watercolours were already there for Greenberg to discover and encourage.”16 If the technique that would come to define his mature style existed already in potential, Bush needed only to elaborate it on Greenberg’s suggestion. A similar argument for precedents appears in critical discussions of a morphological continuity in his work, or as Bush called it “handwriting,” which he and others understood as pervading much of his figurative and abstract work.17

At five o’clock, the Greenbergs and Macdonalds left for Oshawa to meet Alexandra Luke. Bush and Mabel, “sat in the garden & drank as I bled.” He continues, despairingly,

“I’m through”—I said—“I quit—quit cold. I’m through. I won’t paint again.” It felt good to say this—to feel it. M[abel]: “Oh no you won’t. If you do I’ve guessed awfully wrong. You’re not following the wonderful things he told you.” J[ack]: “Yes I am—but I can’t digest it. It feels better to just get mad & quit.” What a relief. I felt fine, chuckling. Lucky

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for me I have been under Dr. Walters’ knife. No wonder Town & Yarwood wouldn’t see him.18

Even if Bush’s diary gives a different impression of his visit with Greenberg than the brief, retrospective, and perhaps misremembered, summary in 1975, it still gives a sense of their meeting as a critical juncture. Indeed, if we take Bush at his light-hearted word, it served as a crisis of sorts, bringing him momentarily to defeat. After the Greenbergs left on June 19, 1957, however, Bush debriefed with Jock Macdonald, who phoned that very night “to tell me the sum total of Greenberg’s opinions.”19 Bush had spoken with Ray Mead, who was elated with the critic’s response to his work and told Bush that Greenberg had singled him, saying, “he was his boy.” Telling Macdonald this, he responded, “‘I want to tell you something Gr. said to me as he was leaving. I haven’t told anyone else & I won’t.’ He said ‘There is more in Bush’s paintings than there is in Hodgson’s, Cahén’s, Yarwood’s or Town’s.’ I was embarrassed—but pretty pleased. Obviously, this was to offset Mead’s lording it a bit. But I’m grateful.”20 This defeat was indeed short-lived: two weeks after Greenberg’s visit, Bush writes that he was looking anew at his paintings “trying to spot the trouble Gr. talked about,” he destroyed some “larger ones,” and started “working on ‘Coup de main’ & I’m beginning to get the feel of it.”21 In the months that followed, Bush gradually began to assemble a new painterly vocabulary.

Yet, in spite of the meeting’s apparent simplicity as a creation myth, Greenberg and Bush’s relationship would come to take on a rather complicated status in much of the

18 Dr. Allan Walters was Bush’s psychotherapist. In a diary entry two weeks after Greenberg’s visit, Bush recalls in a session with him: “Talking about Greenberg’s advice, I expressed astonishment at how similar his advice is to Dr. Walters. The Dr. said ‘Now you can pay attention to Greenberg and me.’” July 6, 1957, Bush, “Diary, January 14-December 16, 1957.”
20 June 19 and 24, 1957, Bush.
21 July 9, 1957, Bush.
critical reception of his work. Bush addresses this complication in the very same 1975 interview quoted previously, however he redacted it from publication in the following year’s catalogue.22 Immediately following his description of this first meeting with Greenberg in the transcript, Bush reflects more generally on their association and its wider consequences:

There was another aspect, and I’m going to stop it but I want it recorded, that I’ve referred to Mr. Greenberg quite a bit thusly—and I discovered some years ago and I was advised by his close friends and the painters that I love in New York, etc. don’t quote Mr. Greenberg. Don’t say anything about him because there’s [sic] so many people in the art world in New York, that are out to get him. I try and give him credit by talking to you for instance, what a great effect he’s had on my development which is true. . . . Anybody that agrees with him or goes along with him and his taste and his judgment, that he’s king and we’re just slaves, you know, that [we] do what he tells us to do. So I stop them ever referring in public to Mr. Greenberg.23

In his reticence to speak publicly, Bush addresses Greenberg’s controversial reputation with artists, but he also alludes to the fact that his connection to Greenberg—and in turn a larger constellation of American painters and dealers—raised questions of allegiance that dogged him throughout the 1960s and 1970s.24 Bush disclaimed his relationship with Greenberg in part because of a strong local resistance to the association. Reviewing an exhibition of Bush’s work at Gallery Moos (February 20– March 4, 1964), Elizabeth Kilbourn wrote,

Mr. Andrew Hudson, Saskatchewan critic who writes about Canadian art for ‘Canadian Art’ and ‘Art International’ thinks that Jack Bush’s work is leading the rest of Canadian painting. The question is where? The answer lies with Clement Greenberg and he calls it

Post-painterly Abstraction. This is the same Clement Greenberg who supplied the theoretical rationale for the abstract expressionist movement . . . In the light of the current exhibition, Bush is doing well as a Greenbergian disciple.25

Indeed, many of these questions continue to inform discussions of Bush’s work. In the critical reception of his work during his lifetime, especially in Canada, observers often ascribed either all or nothing to Greenberg’s role in his development in the years following 1957. For Bush’s detractors, many of whom were cultural nationalists, the critic unequivocally made the artist. Bush’s supporters, by contrast, generally downplayed Greenberg’s role, following the artist’s own lead beginning around the mid-1960s. That Bush’s supporters and critics generally fell into these continentalist or nationalist camps, situates his reception squarely within larger period debates. If he rarely broached these questions in public, Bush was unapologetic when he did talk about national identity: “I was born in a period when the parochial fences in Art were high,” he wrote in an artist’s statement in 1967, “we were ignorant and uniformed about the rest of the world. The desire for a National Art, to show the world how great Canadians were, never got off the ground. And I think it will take another half century to learn that that is not the way to get off the ground.”26

Writing in August 1967, Bush reflects on his career as possible through “two big breaks,” the first, “a psychiatric therapeutic session of many years freed me from the oppression of local rules” and from that, “I saw the outside world—and contact with...

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25 Elizabeth Kilbourn, “Art and Artists: The Greenberg Gospel,” *Toronto Daily Star*, February 22, 1964. Bush was disappointed with the exhibition, as he wrote to Greenberg on March 15, 1964, “I just couldn’t understand, when the show was so beautiful, that the reaction from almost everybody was so nothing. I guess I still haven’t rid myself of the hope of acceptance, even in Toronto. In addition, I had been drinking pretty heavily and was not up to par physically.” March 15, 1964, Jack Bush, “Jack Bush Letters to Clement Greenberg,” 1965, Box 2, Files 2-3 (Bush, Jack/Mabel, 1959-1979), Clement Greenberg Papers, Archives of American Art.

dedicated artists in other countries gave me the courage and encouragement to go on my own way—for broke.”27 Here, Bush implies a connection between finding the psychic space to be freed from “local rules” and a later opening up to the “outside world.” This anti-parochialism—both psychic and actual—is entirely consistent with Bush’s aspiration to be an “international” artist.28

When Dennis Reid asked Bush in 1969 why he chose to remain in Toronto and not move to New York, he replied,

About six years ago I decided to make the effort to be a major-league painter; and it’s necessary to know what’s going on in the major centres. I feed off of my couple of visits each year. Back home by myself I work it all out. I don’t have much connection with the Toronto or Canadian scene, though I’m interested in what is going on, especially with the young people. I want it that way.29

It was this position—affecting distance from Toronto and enthusiasm for New York—that earned Bush’s reputation from his critics not as an international, but rather a provincial, painter.30 These terms, the former affirmative and the latter pejorative, refer, if not to very same relationship of dependence, at least to a similar deference to “an externally imposed hierarchy of cultural values,” as Terry Smith (b. 1944) defined it in his essay “The Provincialism Problem” in 1974.31 For Smith, himself an Australian living in New York, provincialism was not simply a question of geographic location or colonial

27 Bush, 32.
30 “For years, he refused to hold exhibits here because he lacked confidence in Toronto dealers and the idiotic press his shows seem to generate. Some critics accused him then, and even recently, of being too provincial, while others claimed he wasn’t provincial enough.” Bernadette Andrews, “Jack Bush: Famous First Outside Canada,” Toronto Telegram, March 20, 1971, 34.
past, as most of the New York art world was similarly provincial. Those outside the city, however, enthusiastically projected New York as the centre, reasserting their own provincial positions. As Smith recently reflected, in interview, “unless you actually could produce work that is recognized and has an impact on some other of those top group of artists . . . that’s it, you’re out. So you’ve only got the option of joining it, like Jack Bush . . . doing what you’re told to try to get to the top.”

A number of artists, writers and cultural workers in Canada in the late 1960s and 1970s shared a sentiment very close to Smith’s, and were deeply critical of American imperialism in the arts. They asserted a need for cultural autonomy and often, but not always, looked to national identity as a bulwark. This position was long-established in Canadian visual arts, already underway by the 1920s, only later consolidated in Charles Comfort’s cautionary 1951 essay on painting submitted to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, commonly known as the Massey Commission. By the late 1960s, a number of artists had taken up cultural nationalist positions, often working in response to a specific place as a strategy to counter imperialism from south of the border.

Attempts to undermine these provincial tendencies were not always founded in nationalist or regionalist discourses, however. In late January 1976 at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Carole Condé (b. 1940) and Karl Beveridge (b. 1945) opened their exhibition

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32 Smith, 54–55.
33 Smith, interview, November 29, 2010.
. . . *it’s still privileged art* (January 24–February 29, 1976). Bush’s survey would open some months later in September, yet Condé and Beveridge seemed well-aware of the company they kept in the year’s exhibition calendar. The two had moved from Toronto to New York in 1969, and soon became closely associated with the New York Art & Language group, as was Terry Smith. Initially heading south out of the same desire for international recognition that motivated Bush, they soon became disillusioned, and indeed radicalized, by the art world’s imperialism, sexism, and market politics. In the artist’s book of the same title that serves as the catalogue for the AGO exhibition, they called out Bush directly, contending,

> Today the basis of art “knowledge” is market knowledge, with its trade journals and fairs. Only through an understanding of the international art market can you understand recent art. Jack Bush is a “great” Canadian artist because he shows at the Emmerich Gallery, and has been accepted by the “international” cultural powers, but his paintings are nothing more than cosmetics for Canadian cultural dependency.

It was this cultural dependency that Smith, Condé and Beveridge decried and identified in Bush’s work. While all three would soon leave New York and turn to more radical forms of cultural and trade labour activism in Australia and Canada, they remained steadfast in their belief that provincialism led to a provisional and imitative culture.

When they returned to Canada in 1977, the year after their exhibition at the AGO, it was to focus on community arts initiatives, working in particularly close concert with trade labour groups. Other Canadian artists of the 1960s sought to

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undermine precisely this provincial tendency Smith, Condé and Beveridge decried, not through activism, but an emphasis on regional specificity in art making. Many were cultural nationalists who saw such a close working relationship to a place as a viable strategy to counter culture imperialism from south of the border. Nowhere was this strategy more rigorously developed than in London, Ontario, particularly in the work of Greg Curnoe, John Boyle, and Jack Chambers.

Perhaps not incidentally, some of Bush’s most steadfast supporters worked to counter this negative understanding of provincialism, going so far as to argue for it as an ambition for Canadian artists. Terry Fenton, for one, encouraged provincialism with his writing, beginning in the late 1960s and continuing at least through the late 1970s. Fenton was not unique his position, as Andrew Hudson wrote, “I think that the biggest problem confronting Canadian art today is its provincialism . . . In my view, the present emigration of Toronto artists to New York, whether physically or through exhibitions of their work, is a step in the right direction.”37 For a survey of Canadian art in Artforum, Fenton named Art McKay and Bush as having made the most significant work in Canada of the 1960s, continuing, “that they did so only after having radically redirected their art following contact with Americans from New York . . . Bush’s art changed after meeting Clement Greenberg in Toronto in 1959 [sic], McKay’s after meeting Barnett Newman at Emma Lake the same year.”38 Nearly a decade later, Fenton would argue that the strength of visual art in Prairie Canada derives from “its openly provincial relationship to

37 Andrew Hudson, “A Critic from Saskatchewan Looks at Toronto Painting,” Canadian Art 20, no. 6 (December 1963): 339.
mainstream, modernist art and its ensuing avoidance of regionalism.” Here Fenton is very close to Greenberg’s own assessment of art in the Canadian prairies, an account commissioned by Artscanada in 1963, “unlike Podunk or San Francisco, the place does not waste its mental energy in conjuring up illusions of itself as a rival to New York or London; it frankly acknowledges that it is in a provincial situation.”

By advocating for Canadian artists’ closer association with New York, Fenton drew heavily on Bush’s own trajectory and thinking as an artist. However, while he was unapologetic about his international aspirations, Bush always remained sensitive to how he was perceived in Canada. During the early 1970s Barry Lord (1939–2017) was perhaps the most vocal critic of American cultural dependency in Canadian visual arts, and after reading his essay “Living Inside the American Empire of Taste” in Saturday Night, Bush writes in his diary,

Wow—does he attempt to slay Clem [Greenberg] & Me & David Mirvish . . . His whole stance is against American art & its influence on Canadian artists. Completely contrary to my own stance. Clem, Ken [Noland], Jules [Olitski], etc. have had a great impact on Can. art. My hope has always been that more Canadian artists will venture out into the Int. arena and bring credit to Canada. But no—we’ve sold out to the U.S.A. Empire according to Barry Lord.

The charges levelled by Lord, and indeed other critics of cultural imperialism, were not entirely unfounded, as Bush writes, “his facts are right,” even if marshalled to support a politics entirely opposed to his own. Lord’s views, and those similar, were based largely

42 December 17, 1971, Bush, “Diary, May 4-December 17, 1971.”
on an awareness of the more public aspects of Bush and Greenberg’s relationship, and speculation about the rest.

Notable in Bush’s response to Lord is his reference to the influence of Kenneth Noland (1924–2010) and Jules Olitski (1922–2007). Of these two, Noland, some fifteen years younger than Bush, seems to have made more of an impression on the older artist.43 Writing in 1963 to Greenberg, Bush even conceives of him as a kind of surrogate for the critic: “If Ken comes through Toronto on his way to Emma Lake I will show [my paintings] to him—but him only. Not because of anything he may say—but because it will be the closest thing to showing them to you.”44 Critics often compared the work of the two artists, generally signalling the debt owed to the younger artist, but generously setting out Bush’s difference. Lucy Lippard briefly reviewed Bush’s exhibition at André Emmerich (February 1–20, 1966) for Art International, which she opened by writing that “Noland has . . . issued the license for color-band practice and it has flourished in the last two years. Any number of accomplished and not so accomplished artists have used this vehicle for their ideas or lack of ideas.”45 Michael Fried, a few years earlier, was by far the harshest in characterizing Bush’s debt to Noland: “there is an obvious relation

43 Incidentally, Noland also introduced Bush to cannibis. After Bush’s exhibition opening on April 13, 1962, his first show with Robert Elkon, he and Noland went back to Ken’s studio at the Chelsea, where Bush tries pot, and has “no reaction at all.” He did take something away from the visit, however: “Ken showed me the Krylon spray 1301 he used over the Magna paint for protection.” April 17, 1962, Jack Bush, “Diary, April 12, 1962-January 25, 1963,” 1963, Box 3, File 5, Jack Bush fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario. Bush often took advice on materials from Noland, as suggested by a letter he wrote to Jean-René Ostiguy, curator of Canadian art at the National Gallery of Canada, in 1966: “rest assured that some of the very best American painters are painting with Aqua-tec, and no doubt your people will be in touch with Mr. Bobour in New York. Please mention my name, and Kenneth Noland’s.” Jack Bush to Jean-René Ostiguy, November 14, 1966, Jack Bush, Documentation files, Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.
between his work and of painters such as Louis and Noland but it seems to be one of simple dependence and partial misunderstanding."46

Bush’s friendship with Noland, and profound interest in his work, was far less remarked upon than his association with Greenberg, however. Greenberg’s generally controversial reputation with artists, including Noland, was intensified in Bush’s case, owing to the added American imperialist associations. Bush had the misfortune, as it were, of being interested in American art at a time when such an interest was highly suspect among many in the visual arts in Canada; a suspicion fuelled by his close association with Greenberg, who, as Bush readily admitted, played a significant role in his development as a painter.

Greenberg’s support of Bush was indeed extensive. In terms of structural support, he introduced Bush and helped him to navigate the New York gallery system. Much more controversial, however, was the advice he gave Bush about his painting. Of the former, it is not surprising that Greenberg, who had served as a consultant to French and Company from 1958 through 1960, was deeply imbricated in the New York gallery system.47 Not only was Greenberg instrumental in finding Bush representation in New York—his association with Robert Elkon (1928–1983) was crucial in establishing a market for


47 “The appointment put him in a position not only to promote in writing those artists who shared his ideas, but also to get their work exhibited and make it accessible to the commercial market.” Collins, “Clement Greenberg and the Search for Abstract Expressionism’s Successor: A Study in the Manipulation of the Avant-Garde Consciousness,” 40.
Bush’s painting—he then regularly gave the artist advice on how to handle his dealers.  

This advice ranged from general encouragement, as with Walter Moos (“You run Moos” he tells Bush), to negotiating the finer points of his contract with André Emmerich in 1965 (“You tell Andre what you want … Maybe a 60–40 split across the board would be better than 1/3–2/3 & 50% of the left over?”).  

With a gallery secured, Greenberg regularly vetted Bush’s New York exhibitions, and would very often hang them, as well. A number of the critic’s trips to Toronto from 1962 onwards seem to have been with the express purpose of choosing paintings. For his first show with Robert Elkon in April 1962, Greenberg came to Toronto on January 22 to select the works. This manner of choosing exhibitions continued regularly throughout the decade, and on occasion, when Greenberg did not come to Toronto, he would still make recommendations as to what to bring. In March 1972, Bush recorded a now all-too-familiar studio visit, writing, “the operation had begun and went on thru the 29 pictures and I had no anaesthetic!” While Greenberg refused to hang Bush’s first show

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48 In 1961, Bush thanked Greenberg in a letter for approaching Elkon and conveying his interest to show in New York: “I received a letter from Robert Elkon saying you had talked to him about me, and showed him the B&Ws. He asked did I have better photos, and was I interested in showing in N.Y. I wrote him saying simply that I was pleased you had spoken to him, that I was sending you the slides this week and that I would ask you to show them to him. Also that I was interested in being show in N.Y. / Now, what I want to know is: I will send you the whole group of slides and you can edit.” November 5, 1961, Bush, “Jack Bush Letters to Clement Greenberg.”


50 After an afternoon spent culling and selecting, he said to Bush, “they’ll drive NY crazy—6 people … You won’t sell anything, but the artists who count and a few of the cognoscenti will be shaken. That’s what counts.” January 22, 1962, Bush, “Diary, April 12, 1962-January 25, 1963.”

51 Greenberg phoned in February 1963 in advance of Bush’s April exhibition at Elkon: “he told me that when I come to N.Y. ‘don’t come too gay—pick your canvases carefully’ By this he means the canvases should be tough—not to light & happy.” February 3, 1963, Bush, “Diary, January 5, 1963-December 27, 1964.”

at Elkon Gallery, he did handle the installation for most of the artist’s subsequent New
York exhibitions in the 1960s. In fact, he often installed exhibitions without Bush
present, as when Greenberg hangs Bush’s September 1964 show at Bennington College:
Bush arrived on September 13 and had dinner, after which he wrote he “still had not seen
my show—but Clem said—you’ll see it tomorrow—it’s well hung—we took one
painting out—didn’t need it.” Bush appeared happy to leave the hanging to Greenberg,
as with his exhibition at Emmerich in January 1966, writing, “certainly Clem once again
has hung a fantastic show.” By the early 1970s, however, Bush seems to have begun to
install the work himself, though still deferring to Greenberg. In one instance, for his
October 1970 exhibition at Emmerich, after Bush spent the morning hanging, “Clem
came at 12:30 & of course re-hung it, eliminating & bringing back works I’d decided
against.” For his March 1972 presentation at Emmerich, they seem to have settled on a
more collaborative process, working together to arrange the show.

More than arranging gallery representation and exhibition making, perhaps the
most controversial aspect of their relationship was the pervasive assumption that
Greenberg gave Bush specific advice on painting. Indeed, among Toronto artists it was
rumoured that Greenberg was instructing Bush how to paint. This rumour was bolstered

53 When Bush asks if Greenberg will come to help hang his show, he says, “No—hang your own show. I
hung Kenneth’s for him, but said it was the last time. You hang your own.” April 16, 1962, Bush, “Diary,
April 12, 1962-January 25, 1963.”
58 Toronto painter Kate Graham recalls, “once I asked Jack about the rumours that Clem was telling him
how to paint. I knew it wasn’t true, but I wanted to hear it from Jack himself. He said that Clem had just
encouraged him to keep working in this area that was rather unlike anything that was being done around
him. Clem had never told him how to paint, or what to paint. It was just a question of encouraging him.”
Kate Graham in Phyllis Tuchman, “Where Did the Time Go? Interviews with Friends and Colleagues,” in
by the widely held view that rather than responding to works by artists such as Noland, Olitski, and Louis—as Max Kozloff argued in one of the most sustained and earliest attacks on Greenberg’s criticism “the critic leaps ahead of the work of art, prophesying rather than following its objectives.” Reconstructing Greenberg’s advice as recorded in Bush’s diaries gives the sense of a far more collaborative conversation between the critic and artist. The advice he did give Bush varied widely, and was sometimes accepted, sometimes not, depending whether it was to solve certain formal problems, address questions of paint-handling, treatment of ground, or concerned a work’s orientation or cropping.

Perhaps one of the most extreme instances of advice-giving and -taking was during a studio visit in the summer of 1970. While looking through paintings, Greenberg asked Bush to draw over an existing work with chalk, instructing him step by step as Bush carried out the modifications,

On one—stapled up, he said “Try a free hand done color next to this taped area—get your chalks—and put color on there.” I said “Sure” I got out the chalk, chose a color and put in on the canvas. “Yeah—now use the side of the chalk” I did “Now—another color beside it” I did “Now—another over here” I did—a pale blue “Jesus! Look at that! Wow! Don’t be afraid to take chances & ruin the canvas—do it!”

While this direct collaboration was highly unusual, and most of Greenberg’s visits focused instead on far more general recommendations and encouragement, it is

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59 Max Kozloff, “Letter to the Editor,” *Art International* 7, no. 6 (June 1963): 88. This suspicion of the critic’s instruction leading an artist would persist for many years. As Robert Fulford remarked in 1977, “Any independent observer who made a quick survey of Canadian museums would notice immediately that a good deal of the painting during recent years functions as a kind of northern division of what Clement Greenberg termed ‘post-painterly abstraction.’ It is part of Canadian art legend that Greenberg (along with other American figures, notably the late Barnett Newman) exercised a considerable influence on Canadian artists by visiting the country and offering studio criticism a decade and a half ago.” Fulford, “Canada’s Restive Nationalism,” 77.

nevertheless a telling instance of how closely the two were working in studio visits by the early 1970s. The more usual kind of advice had to do with techniques and, in particular, Bush’s handling of paint or treatment of ground. In an October 1964 phone call to Bush, Greenberg said, “do me a favour—Jack—paint more thinly—don’t go back & put on a 2nd coat . . . If it doesn’t work the first time—go on to the next canvas—don’t go back to try & make it work.”61 Sometimes the advice goes undocumented, as in the summer of 1962, when Bush writes to Greenberg, “I went to work on the ‘Bull Fight’ painting, having paid attention to what you had to say, and you wouldn’t know it; now it works.”62 Given Bush’s interest in figure-ground problems, the two often discussed how to treat the latter, as in early 1963, when in a letter to Bush, Greenberg advised he did not need “the raw cotton surface as a pictorial element . . . since you’re so much of a colorist.”63 More than five years later, Bush called Greenberg to ask about tint colours, to which Greenberg replied with similar advice, saying, “sure—try it—using the raw canvas can become a crutch—there’s more challenge with the tinted ground.”64

At times, Bush saw Greenberg’s advice as contradictory, or at the very least muddled. On March 2, 1972, Bush and Greenberg, along with Mabel Bush and Alkis Klonaridis (1943–1993), who was director of the David Mirvish Gallery, and a visitor from New York, “Mrs. Mueller,”65 went to see Richard Serra’s recently completed Shift (1972; Fig. 2.4) in King City, north of Toronto. Mueller was likely Pascal Müller, the spouse of Grégoire Müller (b. 1947), editor of Arts Magazine (1969–1972) and briefly

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Serra’s assistant after arriving in New York in 1969. When Greenberg asked about the work, Bush phoned Alkis, “yes, he knew about the Serra—it belongs to Roger Davidson, who hasn’t even seen it! I briefed him on tomorrow. ‘I’ll take you & phone Roger how to get there.’” That same day, Greenberg looked at paintings in Bush’s studio for a forthcoming exhibition in New York: “Goddamn it, Jack, you’re doing it again! You’ve screwed it up, boxed it in with those awful bars & ruined that beautiful ground! Won’t you ever learn! You’re just like all of them, Ken, Bob Motherwell, etc.” As seemed typical of their visits in the early 1970s, it was a “hit in the face one minute, a pat on the back the next.” The next day, following their visit to King City—where Greenberg concluded of *Shift*, it is “a phenom[en] not art” they drove to the airport, where over lunch Bush recalled,

I got blasted again. I protested a bit, saying that he gives out so much conflicting wisdom in such a short time—it takes me (or us) a week to digest. “I suppose you are right—but what I object to is when artists refuse to listen to what I say. They don’t have to agree—hell, no, but listen to me out! Not cut me off before I’ve said my piece.”

Home from the airport, Bush writes, “Now for the digesting period.” In spite of his reputation, Greenberg could not only give “conflicting wisdom,” but he was far from infallible. In November 1964, during a studio visit, Greenberg suggested that Bush crop

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68 March 1, 1972, Bush.
69 “We had to leave the car at the farm—put on our boots & walk over the snow & plowed fields 1/2 mile to find the sculpture. We found it. I was loving this—such a surprise morning. The sculpture—if you can all it that, consists of six pieces of poured cement, 150’ long, six feet tall, set into the landscape covering at least 2 acres of undulating land—as Clem said—’It’s like the great wall of China—the scale—you see a hundred feet of it, plus the fact of its length—and you know.’ We thugged [?] back—breathing hard. Not much talk. It’s ridiculous, really—but as Clem said ‘a phenomena not art.’” March 2, 1972, Bush.
70 March 2, 1972, Bush.
71 March 2, 1972, Bush.
certain of his canvases. On a visit to Toronto two years later, in May 1966, referring to what must have been yet another recommendation to cut down his work, Greenberg says, “Jack—I made an awful error in N.Y. when I suggested we crop your paintings in sometimes. I can see now—we need all of what you paint, every bit of it. You were right when you painted them & I was wrong.” While in this case, the advice was taken by Bush only to later be regretted by Greenberg, recording guidance in a diary or receiving a letter does not mean that the critic’s suggestions found direct expression in Bush’s practice. Even though Bush often recorded Greenberg’s advice in detail following their studio visits, one occasionally finds in a subsequent day’s entry, notes such as: “my mind has been mulling over all Clem had to say yesterday. I think, to this point, that I know what I’m going to do, some of it against Clem’s advice, some of it with his advice.” By the early 1970s, the studio visits were routine, “same old story—but I listened and learned. My stomach wasn’t bleeding—the scars are tough by now.” Bush continues, “but as the paintings unfolded, Clem softened up & said ‘Man—you are some painter. I learn more every time I come here. I learn where I was wrong years ago, giving you the advice I did.’

It is remarkable, given this close working relationship, that Greenberg wrote practically nothing on Bush’s work during his lifetime. Indeed, Greenberg’s only piece on Bush was a relatively brief introduction to an exhibition at Elkon Gallery held in 1980, some three

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years after his death. While this might seem to derive from the same discretion Bush maintained in speaking publicly about the critic, Bush was keen to have Greenberg write on him, noting in his diary in 1970, “Clem refused to write a piece on me for Artscanada [saying] ‘I’ll write one, some day, but not for Artscanada.”’ That Greenberg mentioned Bush only very briefly in print during his life, is an omission made even more conspicuous in light of the fact that he often wrote about other artists he supported throughout the 1960s, including Louis, Noland, Olitski, even Caro and Truitt.

Greenberg himself offered one possible reason for this in 1980 when he wrote that Bush “put into his pictures such things as travel souvenirs, flags, road signs, emblems, knowing well enough that they weren’t supposed to belong in canonically abstract art.” His disapproval just registers here, however subsequent commentators have elaborated it, suggesting that Bush’s imagist work sits awkwardly in the critic’s favoured canon. As John Elderfield suggested, “from the very beginning, Bush was an imagist painter.” This, in spite of the fact that “American art had reached a level of abstractness unknown to earlier modernism . . . indeed, we can reasonably talk of [Bush] wanting to preserve imagery for painting despite what American art had achieved in its absence.”

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78 Some observers, Nasgaard remarks, “noticed that his work did not quite fit the imperatives of American abstract painting as they had become defined by a more fined down group of Greenberg’s artists, especially Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland and the early Frank Stella. Bush did not adopt the symmetrical holistic look of these artists, the way that they purged imagery from inside their painting, preferring to merge into one perceptible whole the painting’s image and its overall structure, just as Noland did in his chevron and stripe paintings and Stella in his black paintings. Bush in contrast preserved a fondness, even a commitment, to imagery and for a way of drawing that John Elderfield called ‘atavistic’ and that Terry Fenton characterized as ‘archaism.’” Roald Nasgaard, “Toronto: Painters Eleven, 1950s,” in Abstract Painting in Canada (Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 2007), 123.
in fact almost always, making paintings which referred to a world beyond the picture plane—“to flowers, Christmas wrappings, neckties, dresses and costumes, paint splashes on the studio floor, totems, feathers, roadmarks, electrocardiogram blips, and musical notations”\textsuperscript{80}—Bush’s working from “possibilities,” as he called them, was entirely inconsistent with Greenberg’s own thinking.

One of Greenberg’s major criticisms of later New York School painting in “After Abstract Expressionism” (1962) was levelled against what he called “homeless representation.” That is, “a plastic and descriptive painterliness that is applied to abstract ends, but which continues to suggest representational ones.”\textsuperscript{81} This return to illusionistic space, and so to representation, was at odds with what Kozloff calls Greenberg’s “assumption that abstraction and representation are aesthetic polarities, whose violation by each other gravely jeopardizes, or at least minimizes the success of any work.”\textsuperscript{82}

Perhaps it was this “corruption” of abstraction by the barest trace of representation that gave Greenberg pause when it came to writing about Bush’s imagist practice in any sustained way. There was no way for Greenberg to resolve Bush’s own insistence on the worldly sources for his painting and not contradict his own finely argued position of modern painting as autonomous, unknowing of whatever lay beyond the stretcher bar.

If Bush’s work resisted integration into Greenberg’s program in this way, there was a strong personal bond between the two men that sustained their friendship over the

\textsuperscript{80} Fenton, “The Legacy,” 132.
\textsuperscript{82} Kozloff, “Letter to the Editor,” 89.
course of nearly two decades. In a letter to Bush in February 1963, Greenberg wrote: “your being so decent & upright is probably the main reason why I want so much for you to knock them all dead with your painting, just to show that goodness & truth triumph in art as well as elsewhere.” Following Bush’s death, as if to make clear where his ultimate allegiance lay, Greenberg wrote, “I prized the man more than the art.” Their friendship, in other words, smoothed over the considerable inconsistencies between the one’s practice and the other’s theory. Greenberg’s support of Bush, while consequential, did not run nearly as deep as Bush’s detractors have made out. In fact, at the core of Bush’s practice lies this irreconcilable difference.

If Greenberg’s initial advice was for Bush to turn his back on “New York hot licks,” he would ultimately introduce him to a very different set of techniques, which Bush would master but never fully adopt as his own. Writing in 1962, some months after his first New York exhibition, Bush confided, “I do not want to lean on him—but he almost makes it impossible not to do so. There is no doubt that without him and his help I would never be showing in N.Y., or be half the painter I now am.” He realized, however, that “some detachment must be made & its up to me to free him and myself.” By insisting on imagist sources, however much his work looked like that of Noland, Olitski or Louis, his assertion of “possibilities” was always at variance with Greenberg’s tightly conceived system. It was this crucial difference that allowed for some degree of detachment, a difference that maintained Bush’s radical independence from the critic, in

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spite of the support and advice he received. In this way, Bush managed to elude both flag and theory, and his work resists being circumscribed either by politics or polemics.
Chapter Two
Brillo Boxes, Fluorescent Light, and the FLQ

Brydon Smith at the National Gallery of Canada

In February 1965, the Toronto art dealer Jerrold Morris (1911–1984) asked the director of the National Gallery of Canada, Charles Comfort (1900–1994), to certify a group of eighty sculptures by Andy Warhol (1928–1987). As director, Comfort served a particular function regarding the importation of sculpture for the federal government. Under Tariff Item 695c, sculptures could be imported into Canada duty free, however it required that the National Gallery of Canada issue a certificate, a policy implemented in the 1950s in order to “protect Canadian manufacturers [from] cheap, mass-produced reproductions of statuary.”

Accompanying Morris’ request was a photograph of Warhol’s work, which Comfort used to determine that the sculptures were not art but merchandise. His decision was conveyed to Morris in a letter from the Department of National Revenue on March 2, 1965, stating that the “sculptured boxes” were “dutiable according to their composition.” The next day, Morris called Comfort, asking him to reconsider the decision, however Comfort maintained that it was a formality that prevented him from certifying the works:

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1 Barrie Hale, “Comfort Boxed,” *Toronto Telegram*, March 27, 1965. There is scant extant documentation of this episode, aside from contemporary newspaper articles. Files related to Customs and Sales Tax issues during Comfort’s tenure at the National Gallery of Canada are maintained by the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, however only two tenuously related letters regarding Morris and Isaac’s requests for certification in February–March 1965 are present. It seems no Jerrold Morris International Gallery records from the period are extant, either, according to the late dealer’s daughter-in-law. “Customs and Sales Tax - Tariff Item 695c, Vol. 1,” 1964 1969, Box 363, File 4, Former File Number 3-11-1, Series: National Gallery - Administration, National Gallery of Canada fonds (3), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada; “Customs and Sales Tax - Tariff Item 695c, Vol. 2,” 1968 1965, Box 363, File 5, Former File Number 3-11-1, Series: National Gallery - Administration, National Gallery of Canada fonds (3), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada; Eleanor Johnston to Adam Welch, “Morris Gallery,” October 17, 2017.

the Tariff Item did not apply to exhibitions. This contradicted years of successful applications made by gallery owners and museum officials to import works of art expressly for exhibition, including requests from Morris himself, found in National Gallery of Canada records from the period. Incensed, on March 4, Morris held a press conference and a flurry of coverage in national and local newspapers followed. During the conference, Morris “denounced the National Gallery as being anti-Pop art and warned it might become the laughing stock of the art world” as a result. Comfort was “hurt by his friend’s remark” and so held his own press conference, during which he said he was “sure the Gallery trustees would get around to buying pop art in the future.”

Following Morris’ conference, a reporter for the Globe and Mail called Warhol for his comment, “it’s true, eh—I thought they were kidding me,” he said. He told the reporter that his works had previously been imported into England, France, and Germany without incident, however he was generally apathetic to the Canadian situation: “it really doesn’t matter much to me—I don’t care much,” he repeated.

Comfort’s decision to declare the works merchandise subjected them to twenty per cent duty, which was prohibitively high as far as Morris was concerned: eighty boxes at $300 apiece would cost him $4,800 in taxes. “This we could not afford,” Morris said,

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3 Hale, “Comfort Boxed.”
6 Carver, “Explains Custom Tax Stand: Soup, Soap-Pad Cartons ‘Not Sculpture’ – Comfort.”
“I had to telephone New York and cancel shipment of the boxes.” While the exhibition of Warhol’s work went ahead, consisting largely of silkscreen paintings, the eighty works—forty *Brillo Soap Pads Boxes* (1964; National Gallery of Canada, 15298.1-8; Fig. 3.1) and forty *Campbell’s Tomato Juice Boxes* (1964)—were returned to New York, never crossing the border.

Around the same time Morris attempted to import Warhol’s work, Av Isaacs (1926–2016) had also brought in sculptures from New York by Donald Judd (1928–1994) and David Weinrib (1924–2016) for a group exhibition at his gallery called *Polychrome Construction: Judd, Weinrib, Burton, Rayner, Snow, Wieland* (March 12–31, 1965; Fig. 3.2). As the four Judd sculptures (all *Untitled*, 1963–64; DSS 37, 50, 53, 57) and twelve Weinrib sculptures reached the border disassembled—and Isaacs did not have photographs of the assembled works to provide with his application for certification to Charles Comfort—Isaacs paid the $1500 in duty on March 11, confident he would be reimbursed. Isaacs subsequently asked Comfort for the works to be certified, and Comfort saw the works himself on March 17 while in Toronto for a meeting of the Canadian Museum Director’s Association. The day after his visit, on March 18, Comfort called Isaacs and told him he was unwilling to certify either the Judd or Weinrib works. That same day, the Warhol show opened at Jerrold Morris International Gallery

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8 Morris in “National Gallery Refuses to Pass Pop, Dealer Says.”
11 Hale, “Comfort Boxed.”
on Bloor Street, without the eighty boxes, but with the artist in attendance. Comfort may have also been at the opening.

On Friday, March 19, Isaacs petitioned the minister responsible for certification, Maurice Lamontagne. Isaacs spoke with Marcel Joyal, Lamontagne’s assistant, and received a call back from the minister within a half hour, saying, “Dr. Comfort was prepared to give certification of the Weinrib work, but not the Judd.” As Barrie Hale observed, “somehow, part of what wasn’t art on Thursday, became art in 20 minutes of a Friday afternoon.” In those twenty minutes between calls, it is easy to read equivocation in Comfort’s position. Still Comfort was unwilling to revisit the eighty Warhol boxes, or indeed, Judd’s sculpture. When Barrie Hale spoke with Art Gallery of Ontario Director William Withrow (1926–2018) about Comfort’s decision, Withrow replied he would most certainly show Judd’s work at the AGO: “if we had the money, we would definitely have considered purchasing a Judd for our collection.” He agreed, however, that the law was a “ridiculous mess,” putting far too much “onus on the director of the National Gallery.”

By early May 1965, with the passing of a new federal budget, and likely driven by the controversy surrounding Comfort’s decision regarding the works by Warhol, the government made changes that relieved Comfort of his role in assessing works under Tariff Item 695c; it was briefly reported in The Financial Times of Canada that the government enacted “an arbitrary declaration that any sculpture or statue costing more

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13 “Actually, Dr. Comfort said he might be present at the exhibition, ‘if he (Mr. Morris) does not attempt anything physical . . .’” Comfort in Carver, “Explains Custom Tax Stand: Soup, Soap-Pad Cartons ‘Not Sculpture’ – Comfort.”
14 Hale, “Comfort Boxed.”
15 Hale.
16 Hale.
than $75 or tapestry costing more than $20 a square foot is automatically art, and anything cheaper is not.”

These two cases—at the intersection of suspicions of American cultural imperialism, advanced art and what can only be described as censorious state involvement—bear closer consideration. In what amounts to more than simple coincidence, the very same works not certified as art by Comfort in 1965—Judd’s *Untitled* (1964; DSS 57; National Gallery of Canada, 17189; Fig. 3.3) and Warhol’s *Brillo Soap Pads Boxes* (1964; National Gallery of Canada, 15298.1-8; Fig. 3.1)—by 1973 had both been acquired for the National Gallery of Canada by its Curator of Contemporary Art, Brydon Smith (b. 1938).

The following chapter offers a survey of the first decade of Smith’s curatorial work at the National Gallery of Canada (1967–1975), which takes in his acquisition of Warhol’s *Brillo Soap Pads Boxes*, among a number of other highly significant purchases of American art. I preface this with a discussion of his time at the Art Gallery of Ontario, which was formative in many respects, before taking up Smith’s exhibitions in Ottawa of James Rosenquist (1968), Dan Flavin (1969), and Donald Judd (1975). Throughout these case studies, I pay particular attention to moments of transnational crises: his acquisition of the *Soap Pads Boxes*, of course, but also Carl Andre’s cancelled exhibition (1970), owing to the artist’s insistence on reading the manifesto of the Front de libération du Québec. Throughout, I emphasize Smith’s regular use of delegated fabrication and exhibition copies of minimal sculpture as a means of circumventing difficulties at the border.

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The case of the *Brillo Soap Pads Boxes* is perhaps better known than Isaacs’ heavily taxed exhibition *Polychrome Construction*, with the eight sculptures purchased from Leo Castelli among the earliest acquisitions for the national collection that Smith made following his appointment by director Jean Sutherland Boggs (1922–2014) in April 1967. Smith used his discretionary budget to purchase as many boxes as possible, and the budget itself seems to have been a condition of his appointment: with an annual assigned budget of $25,000, the further $2,500 did not require board approval. As he recalls, “because they were $300 each and I remember it came to a total of $2,400 . . . we could move very quickly and decisively.”

The varied receptions of Warhol’s *Brillo Soap Pads Boxes* by consecutive directors at the National Gallery of Canada—and later again in 1973, with Smith’s purchase of Judd’s *Untitled* (DSS 57)—may stand as a kind of litmus test for changing attitudes toward American art at the Gallery. There is something more than varying temperaments or perspectives of two directors at play, however. The cases demonstrate changing attitudes and a willingness to engage with contemporary American art in a way that was, in fact, technically impossible for the institution just a few years earlier.

The National Gallery of Canada’s policy not to acquire works of contemporary American art, which was in effect from 1956 through 1967, stems from a report commissioned by the executive committee of the Gallery Board of Trustees on February 3, 1956. The committee asked W.G. Constable (1887–1976) to author the report; Constable had been inaugural director of the Courtauld Institute of Art (1932–1936), but at the time of writing was curator of paintings at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston (1938–

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1957).\textsuperscript{19} His brief was to provide a comprehensive account of the Gallery’s collection and a guide to future acquisitions, “especially those now under consideration.”\textsuperscript{20} In discussing Constable’s findings, minutes of the Board at their May 23–24, 1956 meeting record that the question of a collection of contemporary United States painting was discussed and it was agreed that while a collection was desirable, it was not recommended unless we could have a large and representative collection. It was pointed out the large American museums have good collections of United States painting as this was their own particular field. It was also noted that there are very few Canadian paintings in the United States galleries and museums.\textsuperscript{21}

The reasons given by the Board for not pursuing a collection were, of course, equally true in the case of contemporary British art, but were more easily overcome, perhaps, in accepting the Massey Collection of English Painting a decade earlier, given not only the importance of the donor but obviously strong colonial ties.\textsuperscript{22} Boggs’ later understanding of the Trustees’ decision in 1956 was, simply put, that Canadians wanting to see American art could simply go to the States.\textsuperscript{23}

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\textsuperscript{21} Minutes, May 23-24, 1956, “Board of Trustees - Minutes, Vol. 6,” 753. Remarkable, too, is the almost punitive charge of an absence of reciprocity with American museums, that is registered in these minutes. Needless to say, the fact that few French, Italian, German, or Dutch institutions held work by Canadian artists did not seem an impediment to building extensive collections of Old Masters paintings.


\textsuperscript{23} Jean Sutherland Boggs, \textit{The National Gallery of Canada} (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1971), 49. Smith’s own characterization of the Gallery’s approach before Boggs’ arrival is remarkably similar, that “anybody interested in American art could cross the border and see it there.” Brydon Smith, interview by Adam Welch, July 17, 2009. Contemporary American art had been exhibited, if not acquired, at the National Gallery in 1963. Programmed by Comfort, the exhibition \textit{Americans 1963} (November 8–December 1, 1963) was organized by the Museum of Modern Art, New York. The exhibition included some fifteen artists, in the New York presentation each was given their own space: Oldenburg, Rosenquist,
Although Comfort was not yet director when the Board of Trustees approved this policy in 1956, it sat comfortably alongside his own views on the relationship between American and Canadian art. Comfort was director from 1960 through 1965, the first—and only—artist to hold the position. Born in Scotland, he immigrated in 1921 to Winnipeg and later studied with Robert Henri in New York (1922–1923). While still chair of the Department of Art History at the University of Toronto, Comfort wrote the section on “Painting” in 1951 for the companion volume to the Massey Report. In this text, Comfort champions Canada as country where “rational modernity” in art should flourish. He encouraged stronger colonial ties in the face of American cultural ascendancy, arguing that “it would be of great value to Canadian painters and sculptors if a closer relationship were maintained with the United Kingdom and with France. Such a policy would be in line with those sympathies and loyalties which are part of our cultural heritage.” The avant-garde, he argued, now “appears to be in the saddle of the United States.” If this was his conclusion in 1951, the ensuing decade and a half would only confirm his view.

Chaired by Vincent Massey, the Commission had a rather specific mandate to investigate sectors such as broadcasting, scholarships, cultural associations, and federal cultural institutions, and as Paul Litt has argued, “it parlayed these instructions into a crusade for Canadian cultural nationalism.” This was particularly true of Comfort’s contribution. Warning of pressing American imperialism in culture, the Report led to

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24 Comfort, “Painting.”

25 Comfort, 411.

26 Comfort, 412.

27 Litt, The Masses, the Muses and the Massey Commission, 3.
recommendations to strengthen cultural life through a “coordinated strategy for state-sponsored Canadian cultural development.”

Comfort’s view, shared by most other contributors to the Report, was that Canadian culture (at that point comfortably conceived in the singular) was under siege, “starved out by the economic clout of the United States.”

When Comfort was empowered by Tariff Item 695c in 1965 with a direct hand in preventing American art from crossing the border, he was clearly willing to exercise his authority. Comfort sought a “regenerated Canadianism” and understood his role as director of the National Gallery of Canada as vital to that task.

The five years of Comfort’s directorship were not without controversy: failing to issue importation certificates for Warhol and Judd’s work was not his first doubtful decision as director—nor was it the first time works of art crossed the American-Canadian border under the threat of seizure. Toward the beginning of his directorship, in 1962, Comfort mounted *The Controversial Century 1850–1950: Paintings from the Collection of Walter P. Chrysler, Jr* (September 28–November 4, 1962; Fig. 3.4). Drawn from the Chrysler (1909–1988) heir’s substantial collection of nineteenth- and early-twentieth century European collection, the exhibition featured a significant number of fraudulent, misattributed or willfully miscatalogued works. By some estimates, nearly half of the 187 paintings were “flagrant phonies masquerading as works by . . . Cézanne, Renoir, Van Gogh, [and] Degas.”

No less a scholar than John Rewald compared attributions in the Chrysler collection with accepted works by the same artist, for an

28 Litt, 3.
29 Litt, 171.
exposé in *LIFE Magazine*.\textsuperscript{32} The exhibition had opened in Chrysler’s own museum in Provincetown, Massachusetts, to generally positive notice—John Canaday first reviewed it favourably for *The New York Times*. There was, however, a skeptical visit to Provincetown from Ralph Colin, a New York attorney and administrative vice president of the Art Dealers Association of America (ADAA). Though Comfort wrote in his preface to the catalogue that “there was no hesitation in our accepting this generous and challenging offer,” and that the organization of the exhibition has been “a most instructive and pleasurable experience for the curators involved,”\textsuperscript{33} as it turns out the ADAA had “a Montreal museum official” warn Comfort personally about the collection in August 1962, a month before the exhibition opened.\textsuperscript{34} It was also reported that “members of the Ottawa staff advised against hanging the dubious paintings.”\textsuperscript{35} This eagerness—in spite of warnings from a colleague at another Canadian museum and the Gallery’s own staff—to effectively validate a private collection through its exhibition betrays something of Comfort’s willingness to seek the approval of a prominent American collector.\textsuperscript{36} While Canaday writing for *The New York Times* had been taken in by the works when he saw them for the first time in Provincetown, after visiting Ottawa he “drastically revised his first judgment,” and the scandal broke.\textsuperscript{37} Following the publicity, the ADAA again intervened, this time notifying U.S. Customs officials, with the hope that they “may seize Chrysler paintings at the Canadian border on grounds that

\begin{footnotes}
\item[32] Gill.
\item[35] Gill, 84.
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they are not what they purport to be.”38 The seizure, however, never took place, and both Comfort and Chrysler moved on.39

“Over the past 30 years, New York has firmly established itself as the art capital of the world. But while the major art movements of three decades swept through its galleries and museums, the National [Gallery of Canada] sat in a kind of xenophobic trance,”40 Barrie Hale wrote in 1968. Comfort retired shortly after the episode with the Brillo Soap Pads Boxes, in July 1965, and curator William Dale (b. 1921) served in the interim as acting director. Jean Sutherland Boggs arrived in spring 1966, quickly signaling a new direction in the activities of the Gallery. Boggs was not only the first woman director at the Gallery, but also the first to hold a doctorate in Fine Art.41 As Boggs recounted in 1971, “perhaps the most radical change in acquisition policy has been the decision to buy contemporary American art. The Trustees revoked its former policy and the Public Service Commission appointed as Curator of Contemporary Art Mr. Brydon Smith.”42

38 Gill, 86.
41 Prior to arriving in Ottawa, from 1948 onwards, she taught at various universities, including Mount Holyoke and the University of California, later taking up the position of curator of the Art Gallery of Toronto from 1962–1964, when she first worked with Brydon Smith. Following her directorship at the National Gallery of Canada, she took up a professorship at Harvard University (1976–79), and subsequently became director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art (1978–82). Later, she would again work in Ottawa, chairing the Canada Museums Construction Corporation (1982–85). “Dr. Jean Sutherland Boggs, Director,” About the People, National Gallery of Canada, accessed October 14, 2011, http://www.gallery.ca/en/about/people.php.
These two facts are deeply imbricated—Boggs knew the only way to show a commitment to American contemporary art was to devote a curatorial position to it, and the person she entrusted was her former colleague from the Art Gallery of Ontario.

While Smith is now best remembered for championing American art while in Ottawa, his work as a curator at the Art Gallery of Ontario was formative in a number of respects. In interview with William Lipke (b. 1936), a professor of art history at Cornell University, conducted around 1967, Smith recounted his early career at what was then called the Art Gallery of Toronto, where he started as an assistant curator, tidily, the day he finished his MA at the University of Toronto, on May 1, 1964. His first project was assisting with the exhibition catalogue for the Canaletto show organized by W.G. Constable and Jean Sutherland Boggs, curator there for a brief two years. The first exhibition Smith organized in his own right was of political cartoons by Duncan McPherson (1924–1993). Smith’s former professor at Toronto, Robert Welsh (1932–2000), was in the process of organizing a major survey of Piet Mondrian for the Art Gallery of Toronto (February 12–March 20, 1966), in collaboration with the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, when Jean Sutherland Boggs left the Gallery in 1964. Smith took on a significant role in the exhibition, and the experience was formative for him: Welsh had, Smith recounted in 2009, “a strong and

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44 However short, the time was remarkably productive for her: “In two incredibly busy years I organized three conspicuous exhibitions, ‘Delacroix,’ ‘Canaletto,’ and ‘Picasso and Man,’ and I began a series of radio broadcasts, ‘Listening to Pictures,’ which made me known throughout Canada.” Boggs, “In Canada, A Place for Women,” ARThurr 73, no. 7 (September 1974): 32.
positive influence on me.”46 In late 1966 or early 1967, Smith was promoted from assistant curator to curator of modern art, which was then the first curatorial section of the Art Gallery of Ontario to have its own head.47

While at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Smith acquired both Canadian and American works for the collection, as was his mandate; these included Kenneth Lochhead’s *Dark Green Centre* (1963), Jim Dine’s *Black Bathroom No. 2* (1962), Joyce Wieland’s *Boat Tragedy* (1964) and *Time Machine Series* (1961), Greg Curnoe’s *Spring on the Ridgeway* (1964); and Les Levine’s *Model No. 5–30* (1965) and *Painting* (1964). From David Mirvish Gallery, he purchased Kenneth Noland’s *C* (1964) and Frank Stella’s *Ossipee* (1965), along with prints by Jack Bush, Robert Rauschenberg, and Jasper Johns. Smith also secured gifts, many with the help of the Women’s Committee: including Morris Louis’ *Lambda* (1960–61), Andy Warhol’s *Elvis I & II* (1964) and George Segal’s *The Butcher Shop* (1965).48 He was so unsure that the committee would accept Oldenburg’s *Floor Burger* (1962)—among the most controversial acquisitions he made—that he asked his father to lend him the money so he could buy it personally if it failed to be approved by the acquisitions committee.49

Crucially, Smith proposed and realized a series of exhibitions in the three short years he was at the Art Gallery of Ontario, including *Zbigniew Blazeje’s Audio-Kinetic*

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46 Brydon Smith, interview by Adam Welch, July 10, 2009.
47 The name of the department later changed to Contemporary art. “Fact Sheet,” 26.
49 Smith, interview, July 10, 2009. He attempted to purchase other work, including Jules Olitski’s *Chemise* (1963) also from Mirvish, however it was declined; only in 1982 would the Gallery purchase an Olitski of the same period, *Patutsky in Paradise* (1966).
By far the most significant exhibition Smith organized while at the Art Gallery of Ontario, however, was *Dine, Oldenburg, Segal* (January 14–February 12, 1967) which, as he explains in interview, came about through a more or less inductive approach. Smith borrowed the art historian and curator Alan Solomon’s (1920–1970) notion of “hot” artists (likely in turn referencing Marshall McLuhan) as his organizing principle for the exhibition and in his preface to the accompanying catalogue discusses at length the shared interests of the three sculptors. “Dine, Oldenburg and Segal share,” Smith wrote in 1967, “as well as an underlying expressionism, a similar development in their art from painting into sculpture.”

*Dine, Oldenburg, Segal* was not the first exhibition of Pop or Neo-dada art in Toronto, though: Jerrold Morris and David Mirvish had both realized exhibitions in 1963. Morris’s *The Art of Things* (October 19–November 6, 1963) had included work by Dine,

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50 Exhibition Committee Meeting Minutes, June 4, 1964, November 15, 1965, April 20, 1966, April 7, 1967, in “Exhibition Committee Minutes.” For difficulties arising from the sponsorship of 11 Pop Artists see the minutes for July 28, 1966. In order “to avoid commercial overtones,” no images of cigarettes were to be included in the exhibition, resulting in the elimination of works by Mel Ramos and Jim Dine. 11 Pop Artists fonds (A-9-8-5), E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario. Smith also proposed exhibitions of work by Clyfford Still and David Smith that were not realized.

51 As Smith told Kitty Scott in 2002, “these were three artists that interested me and I could see that they had started with painting and I thought it was an interesting way to present their work without overdoing the thesis part.” Smith, interview, November 3, 2002, 7.


53 Smith, “Preface.” Smith elaborates in interview with Lipke: “the whole idea of the show came naturally out of exhibitions that I did after the Mondrian on the avant-garde. I’d already done several ‘total environment’ shows including Les Levine’s *Slipcover* which was tremendously exciting . . . the Dine, Segal, Oldenburg show probably grew out of an article which I had done on Dine that was printed in *Canadian Art* . . . What I mean to say is that I didn’t start off with any theory. It sort of grew naturally.” Smith, Brydon Smith and the Avant-garde, 3. The article he mentions from *Canadian Art* is Brydon Smith, “Jim Dine: Magic and Reality,” *Canadian Art* 23, no. 100 (January 1966): 30–34.
Johns, Rauschenberg and Warhol, among others. Mirvish’s exhibition, by one ungenerous but likely accurate contemporary account, was “dull,” including work by Mel Ramos, Herb Hazelton, Pat Jensen, along with two Canadians, Armand Flint and Sinoa. Far more ambitious than these previous encounters in Toronto with Pop art, Smith’s exhibition was memorable: along with the Rosenquist exhibition Smith went on to realize at the National Gallery of Canada, for Barrie Hale, they were “the benchmark museum exhibitions of the decade.” Dine, Oldenburg, Segal was also controversial, the exhibition and subsequent purchase of Oldenburg’s Floor Burger caused a public and media frenzy, which from our present vantage looks rather quaint.

Smith’s evident interest and commitment to contemporary American art did not go unnoticed. Lipke, clearly curious about why a Canadian institution was making such a commitment to contemporary American art, was “amaze[d] . . . that a Canadian gallery should be the moving force behind such an important exhibition.” Smith responded:

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54 The Art of Things (Toronto: Jerrold Morris International Gallery, 1963). In August 1962, Morris announced that “a new gallery will be opened in New York this fall with which we shall be closely associated. It will be called Trabia-Morris Gallery.” Morris continues, “the opportunity of bringing to his [Lanza di Trabia’s] attention the work of Canadian artists, who will for the first time be assured of careful consideration in New York. It will also assist us in developing our international programme here in Toronto.” Jerrold Morris, “Bulletin No. 4” (Jerrold Morris International Gallery, August 30, 1962), Jerrold Morris Gallery, Documentation files, Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada. Writing the following year to Jack Shadbolt, whom he represented, Morris was considerably more non-committal: “the New York gallery is a completely separate entity under the control of its manager, Charles Byron . . . we shall see to it that Byron has an opportunity of getting a look at Canadian art—from there it’s up to him.” Jerrold Morris to Jack Shadbolt, February 6, 1963, Box 7, File 11, Jack Shadbolt fonds, Rare Books and Special Collections, University of British Columbia. In September 1963, Morris announced that “Andrew-Morris Gallery, New York” “which gave Harold Town his first one-man show in New York” was re-opening as Galeria Bonino—again, he stresses that “our connections outside Canada have been greatly extended.” Jerrold Morris, “Bulletin No. 8” (Jerrold Morris International Gallery, September 23, 1963), Jerrold Morris Gallery documentation file, Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.

55 “[Pop Art],” Maclean’s, November 16, 1963.


58 Smith, Brydon Smith and the Avant-garde, 4.
We have a peculiar advantage. The culture is North American, but we’re five hundred miles from the scene where it’s all happening. We have a certain advantage in physical distance. Not that we have a more objective viewpoint, but it takes a little longer time to get here to Toronto. And somehow it goes through a filtering process before it arrives. It is an advantage.\textsuperscript{59}

Smith’s decision to leave the Art Gallery of Ontario, in spite of the number of exhibitions and acquisitions he realized there, had much to do with the invitation from Jean Sutherland Boggs to join her at the National Gallery of Canada, but also relates to a failed acquisition of a Mondrian, following the 1966 exhibition.\textsuperscript{60} For Smith, by passing on the Mondrian the Art Gallery of Ontario signaled its reticence to collect non-objective art: “I’m not going to be able to get support for the kind of art I thought should be proposed and acquired,” he later recalled.\textsuperscript{61} Smith’s desire for a work by the Dutch painter would follow him to the National Gallery of Canada—for a time, he was deeply motivated to bring a work by the neoplasticist to Canada. The search ended when Smith acquired \textit{Composition No. 12 with Blue} (1936–42; National Gallery of Canada, 15911), in 1970.\textsuperscript{62} Given his mandate was as curator of contemporary art, this exceptional purchase belies its significance, even though he would go on as deputy director and chief curator (1979–

\textsuperscript{59} Smith, 4–5.
\textsuperscript{60} Smith, interview, July 10, 2009.
\textsuperscript{61} Smith. Smith’s first attempt in Ottawa, his dogged pursuit of the so-called Beyeler-Pace Mondrian, failed to come to pass after Boggs, Myron Laskin, Jr. and Robert Rosenblum saw the work in Amsterdam. Jean Sutherland Boggs to Brydon Smith, July 8, 1969, Box 29, File 5 of 5, 182.16, Dan Flavin – Other, Exhibition files, Fluorescent Light . . . from Dan Flavin (EX1353), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.
\textsuperscript{62} Shortly after \textit{The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection} (January 17–March 4, 1968) was exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Janis wrote to Smith on October 31, 1969 informing that periodically they were permitted to sell works from the collection. In that letter, Janis told Smith that one of the canvases was soon to be sold, and that he would have first right of refusal. Sidney Janis to Brydon Smith, October 31, 1969, Mondrian, Composition No. 12 with Blue (15911), Curatorial files, National Gallery of Canada.
1994) and later still, as curator of modern art (1994–1999) to acquire early-twentieth-century European and American work for the collection.63

Tellingly, Smith’s appointment in Ottawa seems to have been anticipated by Boggs from the outset of her tenure: during her first meeting with the Board, October 26–27, 1966, in her report she discusses at some length her desire to collection contemporary American art,

I also feel we are going to have to buy American contemporary painting since it is unquestionably the most influential, and probably the most important, school of painting today. Our ignoring it now is like having ignored Impressionism in the 1890s and Cubism in the 1920s. Clearly we have to be selective and pray that we have the genius to choose the Monets rather than the Loiseaus, the Toulouse-Lautrecs rather than the Forains, the Braques rather than the Gleizeses—not that, at times, we cannot be satisfied with the secondary artist’s works. (It is for this reason that I am going to recommend later that we appoint a Curator of Contemporary Art).64


64 Jean Sutherland Boggs, Appendix A - Report of the Director, October 26-27, 1966 “Board of Trustees - Minutes, Vol. 10,” 1967 1965, 1460, Box 345, File 1, Series National Gallery of Canada - Board of Trustees - Minutes of Meetings 1913-1967, Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada. 65 “Mr. Brydon Smith, formerly of the Art Gallery of Toronto, has been appointed Curator of Contemporary Art. He has had considerable success in his previous appointment at the Art Gallery of Ontario, and a major stimulus to contemporary art in Canada is likely to result from his appointment.” R.H. Hubbard, Appendix C - Chief Curator, April 26, 1967 “Board of Trustees - Minutes, Vol. 10,” 1512.
were approved by the Board—evidence that Boggs and Smith had already been working on these acquisitions prior to his appointment. Smith’s deep commitment to the field was connected with the appointment in Ottawa, which was a “specially created curatorship,” coinciding with the decision to rescind the policy against the purchase of American art. As Gail Dexter wrote the following summer, “he is the first person the gallery has ever empowered to buy American art.” In part, because acquisitions of American art were only allowed by a “new policy established by Miss Boggs.” In 1971, as if still defending the decision, Boggs wrote “since I spent so many years in the United States it may be thought that I have been Americanizing the collection.”

At the time, Smith was well aware of the controversy in acquiring American art, but in a prescient observation about the ever-diminishing significance of national boundaries in the visual arts, in 1968 he said,

As long as we still have national boundaries, I think we still have something which can be called Canadian art. I think a problem comes in when some of our artists move out of Canada and are actually working in another milieu. Some of these people are represented in d’Aujourd’hui: Snow, Murray, Levine, Wieland. Whether we can still really claim these people as Canadians I’m not sure at this point.

In retrospect, Smith suggests a few reasons why he felt it important to collect and exhibit American art in the late 1960s. First, there was the undeniable fact “that contemporary

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67 Gail Dexter, “Brydon Got His Jackson Pollock,” *The Toronto Daily Star*, July 6, 1968. Boggs herself preferred the form “Miss Boggs,” as Jean was a common men’s name in French, and given that she he had a Doctorate, the form “Dr Boggs” led to confusion, she felt.


American painting was a thing that many contemporary Canadian artists admired.”

There was also a small but significant base of collectors, many of whom Smith knew in Toronto, the incentive for American artists to show in Canada was, simply, that there was “a market here for their work.” The work was also accessible, “for those of us living and working in Canada, it was very easy to get to exhibitions, to meet the artists.”

At his second Board meeting, September 27–29, 1967, Smith acquired Jackson Pollock’s *No. 29, 1950* (1950; National Gallery of Canada, 15462), a sizable purchase for the Gallery. They paid $81,000 for the work on glass from Marlborough New York, about $10,000 more than they spent at the same meeting for Paul Gauguin’s sculpture *Portrait of Meyer de Haan* (c.1889–1890; National Gallery of Canada, 15310) from the Zurich dealer Walter Feilchenfeldt. Smith also acquired Warhol’s *Brillo Soap Pads Boxes* (1964; National Gallery of Canada, 15298.1-8; Fig. 3.1) at this meeting, from his discretionary fund that Boggs had established—with no committee or board approvals in order to use the funds. At the same meeting, he acquired prints by Robert Rauschenberg, Richard Hamilton, and Frank Stella. By the following summer, he had purchased Robert Morris’s *Untitled* (1967–68; National Gallery of Canada, 15646) and James Rosenquist’s *Capillary Action II* (1963; National Gallery of Canada, 15324), and had exhibited “paintings from private collectors and the David Mirvish Gallery by Frank

70 Brydon Smith, interview by Adam Welch, July 24, 2009.
71 Smith.
72 Smith.
Stella, Jules Olitski, Kenneth Noland, and Morris Louis.”76 Still, Smith was cautious, keen not to court too much controversy—“I don’t want my career to be a series of Hamburger incidents.”77

When Smith arrived, he brought an exhibition of James Rosenquist’s (1933–2017) work with him to Ottawa, and it became the first single-artist exhibition Boggs scheduled.78 The show represented other firsts, as well: it was Rosenquist’s first museum survey, Smith’s first exhibition in Ottawa, and, perhaps most significant of all, it was the first time that the National Gallery of Canada had given an exhibition to a contemporary American artist.79 While Smith had started work on Rosenquist while he was at the Art Gallery of Ontario, “it hadn’t gone that far in Toronto.”80 In fact, he had convened a panel discussion titled “Would you Believe Pop?” with Marshall McLuhan, James Rosenquist, and Gene R. Swenson the previous fall, in connection with 11 Pop Artists: The New Image, on September 28, 1966.81 Later, Smith would invite Swenson to contribute an essay for the catalogue accompanying the Ottawa exhibition.82

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76 Dexter, “Brydon Got His Jackson Pollock.”
77 Gail Dexter, “Brydon Smith and His Little Collection of Artistic Shockers,” The Toronto Daily Star, December 7, 1968. When Smith left the AGO, on March 31, 1967, it was under a cloud of controversy surrounding the purchase of Oldenburg’s work. Withrow denied that the move to Ottawa had anything to do with the acquisition, saying “that was just unfortunate timing.” As Smith wrote to Gene Swenson on February 14, 1967, “our purchase of Oldenburg’s Giant Hamburger has occupied most of my time. I have talked about that Hamburger so much that I shall probably never eat another one.” Brydon Smith to Swenson, Gene, February 14, 1967, Box 509, File 12-4-359 Vol. 1 to 12-4-361 Vol 1., Exhibition files, James Rosenquist (EX1281), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.
78 Malcolmson, “Who’ll Run Canadian Art? Maybe These Brash Young Men.”
80 Smith, interview, July 24, 2009.
82 Ultimately, Swenson’s essay was not published, Boggs felt the scope was too wide-ranging and not suitable for the catalogue. Jean Sutherland Boggs to Gene Swenson, October 31, 1967, Box 509, File 12-4-359 Vol. 1 to 12-4-361 Vol 1., Exhibition files, James Rosenquist (EX1281), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada. The essay was published posthumously, see Gene Swenson, “The Figure a Man Makes,” The Register of the Museum of Art 4, no. 6–7 (1971): 53–82.
Organization for the exhibition seems to have begun in earnest in January 1967, when Rosenquist was in Toronto to install his *Stellar Structure* (1966) in Roger and Miriam Davidson’s house, and Smith began discussing the possibility of an exhibition with him—though he may not yet have anticipated his move to Ottawa that coming April. In an interview in 2009, Smith recalled there was a local collector in Toronto supportive of Rosenquist’s work who was disappointed when the exhibition left the Art Gallery of Ontario; while this is most likely the Davidsons, Ben and Yael Dunkelman also had at least one significant work by the artist. While Rosenquist was in town, he and Smith had breakfast on Yonge Street and began preparations for the exhibition. In mid-February, Smith was in New York and met with Leo Castelli to discuss the show, and on February 22, after getting back from New York, Smith “wrote to Dr Boggs enclosing two photographs of proposed Rosenquist purchases with a special recommendation for the canvas *Painting for the American Negro* (1962–1963; National Gallery of Canada, 15292.1-3), which was still in the artist’s possession.”

From this point on, it is clear that both Smith and the exhibition were heading to Ottawa and that at least one acquisition would be negotiated prior to his starting there on April 17, 1967.

*James Rosenquist* (January 24, 1968–March 3, 1968; Fig. 3.5) opened on January 23, 1968, and starting at 10 p.m., two 45-minute sets were played by the New York-band The Aluminum Dream (afterwards, Dennis Reid and Smith were the DJs, providing

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86 Adamson, 8.
tapes). Iain Baxter, Jack Bush, John Chambers, Greg Curnoe, Charles Gagnon, Yves Gaucher, Les Levine, Guido Molinari, Henry Saxe, Claude Tousignant, Michael Snow, Joyce Wieland, Robert Murray, among other Canadian artists, were in attendance. Earlier that day, at noon, the Gallery had organized a lunch in the New Zealand room of the Parliamentary Restaurant in Centre Block, the party made up of Gallery staff along with Rosenquist and his wife. Both Smith and Rosenquist must have been bleary-eyed. When Rosenquist arrived the night before, at 11 p.m., Smith had already installed the works in roughly chronological order. “The two remained there until 4 a.m., while Rosenquist completely re-arranged the pieces in such a way that focus was upon the interrelationships between individual works,” Jeremy Adamson wrote in 1969. Throughout the night, Rosenquist often repeated to Smith “there are no rules.” The show consisted of some thirty-two works, including a quarter-scale photographic reproduction of the monumental *F-111* (1964–65; Museum of Modern Art, New York, 473.1996.a-w). That night, unhappy with the quality of the reproduction, Rosenquist collaged elements of the photograph together and showed them “in a small enclosed area.” The entire fourth floor, as Barrie Hale described it, was filled with “huge paintings of jet fighters, spaghetti, pocket combs, feet, mouths, parts of old cars and dill pickles, among other things, all mixed up together.” Years later, Smith reflected on the decision to show Rosenquist,

It would have been too much to ask the gallery’s public to begin with an exhibition of purely abstract art. It seemed somehow right to show Rosenquist first, because he’s an

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89 Hale, “At the National Gallery: A New Show Heralds a Bright New Era,” 45.
91 Hale, “At the National Gallery: A New Show Heralds a Bright New Era.”
important artist and because his work is generally accessible—it’s representational, it gives the audience something to grasp, to start with.92

It was through Smith’s work on the Rosenquist exhibition that the twenty-nine-year-old curator expanded his own professional networks: it was Ileana Sonnabend (1914–2007) who introduced him, for instance, to Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo (1923–2010). Smith visited Panza in Milan toward the end of May 1967—before he started at the National Gallery of Canada—along with Gyde Shepherd (b. 1936) then curator of European art at the Gallery. Smith later wrote to thank Sonnabend for putting them in touch, commenting on his remarkable collection of paintings by Robert Rauschenberg.93 He would end up borrowing four Rosenquist paintings from Panza, and was lent a further two from Sonnabend.94 For Smith, however, Rosenquist was “just a beginning.”95

Smith first learned about Dan Flavin’s (1933–1996) work in 1965 from *Artforum*, reading his autobiographical sketch “. . . in daylight or cool white.” In his 2004 “Recollections and Thoughts about Dan Flavin,” Smith recounted for the first time in print how reading about Flavin’s practice prompted his own exploration with fluorescent light as a

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92 Barrie Hale, “Why This Man Thinks These Camels Can Change The Way You See The World: And How He’s Spending Your Money to Prove It,” *Maclean’s*, May 1970, 48. At the time, as Jeremy Adamson wrote for *Artscanada*, “Rosenquist, however, was not the right choice for Toronto with its natural affinity for expressionism . . . Smith realized that Rosenquist was ideal for Ottawa, and ideal as a foundation for future contemporary exhibitions there.” Adamson, “Spaghetti and Roses: A Document of an Exhibition,” 8.

93 Brydon Smith to Sonnabend, Ileana, May 29, 1967, Box 509, File 12-4-359 Vol. 1 to 12-4-361 Vol 1., Exhibition files, James Rosenquist (EX1281), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.


95 Hale, “At the National Gallery: A New Show Heralds a Bright New Era,” 45. “With the Rosenquist exhibition behind him, Smith is preparing a major Dan Flavin exhibition for September—an event which would have been difficult to stage without the Rosenquist precedent.” Adamson, “Spaghetti and Roses: A Document of an Exhibition,” 13.
medium. As there were no works in local collections, and Smith was unsure that works by Flavin would be on view when he was next in New York, he went to his nearest lighting store on Bloor Street and “purchased a 4-foot fixture, the standard of the industry, and a not-so-standard red tube.” Smith continues,

Back home, I fastened it horizontally on a wall, wired it up, and plugged it in, but nothing happened. Then I touched the tube, and it fired a glowing red. After looking at it from many points of view over the next few weeks, I concluded that he medium was both radiant and contemplative.

This trial led Smith to the conclusion, impossible to determine from a photograph alone, that while “it was light, it wasn’t in your face . . . it became a ground or a medium.”

Soon after, Smith wrote to Flavin’s dealer, Jill Kornblee, who provided a list of available works and prices, and also mentioned that monument 4 those who have been killed in ambush (to P.K. who reminded me about death) (1966; National Gallery of Canada, 15902.1-4) was presently included in Kynaston McShine’s exhibition for the Jewish Museum, Primary Structures (April 27–June 12, 1966). Smith made it to New York

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97 Smith, interview, July 31, 2009. Later, Smith also assembled a Duchamp readymade, in order to live with it at home. “It was something I was intrigued with, liked it, and I thought, I think I’m going to fake this, so I got a stool and then went down to a bicycle shop, which was very close to the light shop on Bloor Street, and I went in and talked with the person and told them I’d like to buy the forks and a wheel. I told him how I was going to use it and he was taken back when I selected the wheel, he said, ‘I’m not sure I want to sell you this because you’re not going to use it for it’s intended purpose,’ anyway, he did agree and underneath the stool instead of calling it a Readymade, I called it a homemade. Just so that there was no confusion.” Smith.

98 In 1969, following the exhibition, Smith bought monument 4, as well as icon IV (the pure land) (to David John Flavin 1933–1962) (1962, reconstructed 1969), for the National Gallery of Canada’s collection. The first work by Flavin to enter the collection, however, was the nominal three (to William of Ockham) (1963), purchased in May 1969.
before the exhibition closed, though his overriding recollection of the exhibition was how densely it was installed: the Jewish Museum galleries were not particularly spacious, “and the works were large, there was going to be some visual overlap.” Seeing the exhibition remained an important moment in Smith’s fledgling interest in minimal art practices. In particular, it was the way in which many of the works “incorporated real space and dynamically interacted with the surrounding architectural space” that first appealed to him.

fluorescent light, etc. from Dan Flavin (September 13–October 19, 1969; Fig. 3.6) was opened in Ottawa by Barnett Newman (1905–1970), then traveled to the Vancouver Art Gallery (November 12–December 7, 1969) and closed at the Jewish Museum, New York (January 21–March 1, 1970). Newman’s remarks were followed by a discussion between Flavin and Terry K. McGowan, who was an “illuminating engineer” for General Electric. The show used some 480 fluorescent tubes, and while ambitious in terms of scale, it proved far cheaper than recent exhibitions mounted by the Gallery. The exhibition included early watercolours and drawings, partly in an attempt to introduce Flavin’s particularly austere fluorescent medium to visitors who generally thought “that figuration is somehow the basis for art.” Smith felt it made the work more accessible “to

100 Smith, interview, July 24, 2009.
101 Smith, “Recollections and Thoughts about Dan Flavin,” 132.
102 Newman was so drunk when he gave his remarks in Ottawa that Smith later had to ask back copies of the audio recordings at Newman’s request. In one such request, Smith wrote to Philip Leider of Artforum, “Barnett Newman does not want his remarks for the opening of the Dan Flavin exhibition to be used out of context. I would be very obliged if you would return the tape of the opening to me.” Brydon Smith to Philip Leider, September 22, 1969, Box 29, File 5 of 5, 182.16, Dan Flavin – Other, Exhibition files, Fluorescent Light . . . from Dan Flavin (EX1353), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.
104 “We get the material and labor on a cost basis. It’s an extremely cheap show to install compared with most National Gallery major shows. Compare it with the shipping costs of the Jordans. And the insurance for this is nothing.” Smith in Kay Kritzwiser, “At the Galleries: Fluorescent Tubes, The Pigments on His Palette,” The Globe and Mail, September 13, 1969.
move from recognizable images to abstract works . . . [with] fluorescent light as the medium.” Also included six large “situations”—room-sized installations of sometimes staggering complexity and scale. It was the first museum survey of Flavin’s work, and Smith’s commitment to the artist was unusual at the time. “The work was, I think, for a lot of collectors and museum curators, really radical,” Smith later recounted. “It took some time for it generally to be understood and appreciated.”

For Vancouver, correspondence in spring 1968 between Tony Emery and Jean Sutherland Boggs attests to the idea—later abandoned—to have simultaneous, near-identical exhibitions in Ottawa and Vancouver. Since all of the fluorescent works existed in editions of three, this seemed a distinct possibility. When exactly this plan was abandoned is unclear, however it may have had something to do with the strong presence of pre-fluorescent works, namely Flavin’s early drawings—drawings that by their very nature are, of course, unique. While the plan for simultaneous exhibitions was given up, all of the fluorescent works were constructed anew in Ottawa—General Electric sponsored the exhibition and provided ballasts and tubes in an unusual sponsorship arrangement. The decision seems to have been motivated largely by costs: in a letter from

105 Smith, interview, July 31, 2009. As Smith wrote in 2004, Ira Licht “urged me to consider beginning the exhibition with one of the constructions from about 1960.” Flavin responded to Smith, insisting, “contrary to Ira’s urge, I would prefer to offer a fairly full review of what I have attempted since about 1957. Certainly, the emphasis would be directed to my effort with fluorescent light.” Smith, “Recollections and Thoughts about Dan Flavin,” 132, 134. Jack Burnham agreed with the decision to show early work, “At first it may seem that this retrospective suffers from a certain preciousness and over attention to incidental early works. The viewer is tempted to go straight to the fluorescent arrangements, bypassing everything before as so much biography . . . If he has unnecessarily exposed himself in these tentative beginnings, he has given us the opportunity to learn a great deal from them.” Jack Burnham, “A Dan Flavin Retrospective in Ottawa,” Artnet 8, no. 4 (December 1969): 49.

106 Smith, interview, July 24, 2009.

107 “Brydon Smith also wants me to ask you whether you would be interested in an exhibition of Flavin’s works for October 1969. Brydon thought it might be a good idea to have opening of the exhibition simultaneously in Vancouver and Ottawa. I gather Flavin’s works are in triplicate so the duplication would not be impossible . . . I gather both the artist and his dealer are sympathetic to the project.” Jean Sutherland Boggs to Tony Emery, March 12, 1968, Box 144, File 42, Vancouver Art Gallery Correspondence with National Gallery of Canada File, 1968-1971, Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.
October 11, 1968, Smith writes to Flavin that the budget for his exhibition has been cut back (“along with everything else”) to $4,000, not including the catalogue.108

In spite of the works effectively being exhibition copies, Smith still sought out credit lines for some of them: which would add to the legitimacy and prestige of the works, surely, however a more pragmatic reason is given in the exhibition records. On April 29, 1969 Smith asks whether Boggs “could write to Bates Lowry asking if we could use the Museum of Modern Art’s name as the lender of *untitled (to the ‘innovator’ of Wheeling Peachblow)*, 1968, even though it would not be necessary to ship their construction piece here.”109 Smith continues,

> We would construct a replica which would be cheaper than shipping their original version. Also, their original would not be prone to damage. It is necessary that we have somebody’s name attached to this particular piece as the entire edition of three has been sold.110

In 2009, Smith elaborated that Boggs, Flavin, his dealers, and the nominal lenders all agreed to the fabrication of works in Ottawa, “and at the end we took it apart [and they became] regular light fixtures.”111

This fact that the work was fabricated entirely in Ottawa is not insignificant, nor was it unique to Flavin’s exhibition. Later in 1975, Smith and Donald Judd would undertake the fabrication of a number of sculptures in Ottawa in order to avoid the hassle of making, crating, and shipping works from the United States to Ottawa. As discussed in

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108 In this same letter, Smith mentions the purchase of *nominal three (to William of Ockham)*, which John Weber, Flavin’s dealer, “is happy about . . . but he still holds out for the fabrication in New York . . . Whether the nominal three is fabricated in New York or not, we will still bring you to Ottawa for its installation.” Brydon Smith to Dan Flavin, October 11, 1968, Box 29, File 5 of 5, 184.18, Dan Flavin, Exhibition files, Fluorescent Light . . . from Dan Flavin (EX1353), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.

109 Brydon Smith to Jean Sutherland Boggs, April 29, 1969, Box 29, File 5 of 5, 182.16, Dan Flavin – Other, Exhibition files, Fluorescent Light . . . from Dan Flavin (EX1353), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.

110 Smith to Boggs.

111 Smith, interview, July 31, 2009.
a later chapter on Joyce Wieland’s quilted and textile work—brought from New York, where they were made, to Toronto, where they were exhibited—the presence of a border and the logistics required to move works never seemed far from the minds of curators or artists working transnationally in the period.

Beginning in earnest in September 1968, Smith made frequent trips to see Dan Flavin at his studio in Manhattan and weekend house in upstate New York, on Lake Valhalla.112 Flavin first came to Ottawa on October 8–9, 1968, when he saw the spaces and hit on the idea to install the Tatlin monument works in the double-height “well” space between the fourth and fifth floors.113 By the following May 1969, the checklist was near final, and Smith began working on the catalogue entries.114

By far the most ambitious—and distinctive—aspect of the exhibition was the presence of the seven “situations”: in some instances modifications of previous works, but mostly new works made in response to the gallery spaces.115 In typical fashion, they were named after those close to Flavin, who “were helpful or had organized the show or were perhaps writing something for the catalogue, or any number of things,” as Smith said.116 For the 1969 exhibition, these included Smith and his then spouse, Jane Smith,

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112 Smith, “Recollections and Thoughts about Dan Flavin,” 132. In what may be the first letter between Smith and Flavin, he thanks him for the visit to Lake Valhalla, and for a Czech wooden vehicle Steven Flavin gave Brydon’s son, David, as a birthday present. Brydon Smith to Dan Flavin, September 10, 1968, Box 29, File 5 of 5, 184.18, Dan Flavin, Exhibition files, Fluorescent Light . . . from Dan Flavin (EX1353), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada. In Flavin’s reply, he asks for a copy of the Rosenquist catalogue, and also if Smith can read his handwriting—which suggests it is the first time Smith is reading a letter from Flavin. Dan Flavin to Brydon Smith, September 17, 1968, Box 29, File 5 of 5, 184.18, Dan Flavin, Exhibition files, Fluorescent Light . . . from Dan Flavin (EX1353), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.

113 Smith, “Recollections and Thoughts about Dan Flavin,” 136.

114 Smith, 136–37.


Jean Sutherland Boggs, and another Gallery staff member, identified solely by her initials, with whom Flavin had been having a relationship. Flavin dedicated this work, the very first of his “corridors” and largest of the “situations” Flavin conceived for Ottawa, to Sherrill Moseley, who at the time of the exhibition was the assistant photograph librarian at the Gallery. Unlike other dedications where names were given in full, the dedication was cryptically given as *untitled (to S.M. with all the admiration and love which I can sense and summon)* (1969).\(^\text{117}\)

Diana Nemiroff, interviewing Smith in 2002, asked pointedly, “I somehow get the impression from the letters that [Flavin] was pretty interested in women. Is that true?” Smith replied, “I’ve always thought of him, and this is interesting, as I guess somewhat of a romantic. I think that’s how I would put it.”\(^\text{118}\)

Writing in *Artforum*, critic Jack Burnham praised the exhibition, doubting whether it could have been mounted by any other institution with the same exactitude.\(^\text{119}\) For Burnham, it was “the first time Flavin’s innate complexities began to unravel themselves.”\(^\text{120}\) The sheer number of catalogue requests and letters of appreciation sent from preeminent critics, scholars, curators and artists also demonstrate something of the exhibition’s success.\(^\text{121}\) To be sure, its reception among those in the New York art world suggests something new: the basic awareness that a foreign museum could emerge as a

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\(^\text{118}\) Smith, interview, October 3, 2002, 5. Their relationship seems to have been widely rumoured, making it as far as the Vancouver Art Gallery, where the exhibition travelled, when Tony Emery annotated a letter from Moseley and forwarded it to Doris Shadbolt: “Do you think we have discovered the identity of ‘S.M.’?” Sherrill Moseley to Tony Emery, November 4, 1969, Box 144, File 42, Vancouver Art Gallery Correspondence with National Gallery of Canada File, 1968-1971, Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives. The relationship lasted at least through the summer of 1971, according to correspondence between Smith and Flavin. Brydon Smith to Dan Flavin, June 10, 1971, Box 29, File 5 of 5, 185.19, Flavin Damaged Icons, Exhibition files, Fluorescent Light . . . from Dan Flavin (EX1353), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.

\(^\text{119}\) Burnham, “A Dan Flavin Retrospective in Ottawa.”

\(^\text{120}\) Burnham, 49.

\(^\text{121}\) “Various Correspondence,” 1969, Box 29, File 1 of 5, Exhibition files, Fluorescent Light . . . from Dan Flavin (EX1353), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.
major centre for the exhibition and collection of contemporary American art. Flavin wrote to Smith on September 24, 1969 from New York, the “feedback here over the retrospective is steady and complimentary. I can barely believe what I hear. People, such as Maurice Tuchman, want to know who you are. Incredible!”

With two successful exhibitions behind him, Smith had established for the Gallery a close and generally uncontroversial relationship with contemporary American art by the end of the 1960s. This would be tested, however, in the exhibition planned for the following winter, Sculpture as Place: Carl Andre at the National Gallery of Canada (December 10, 1970–January 10, 1971). Organized by Diane Waldman, an associate curator at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, it was a survey of the artist’s works over a four-year period, from 1966 to 1969, including twenty-five sculptures, ten poems, and “an opera.” Following Ottawa, it was scheduled to continue on to the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Smith had been following Andre’s (b. 1935) career closely—since seeing Primary Structures in 1966—and the Gallery already had two works in the collection by the time the exhibition was proposed: Lever (1966; National Gallery of Canada, 15898.1-137) and 144 Copper Square (1969; referred to at the time as 144 Copper Plates; National Gallery of Canada, 15897.1-144). The exhibition was intended to provide context for these works.

122 Dan Flavin to Brydon Smith, September 24, 1969, Box 29, File 5 of 5, 184.18, Dan Flavin, Exhibition files, Fluorescent Light . . . from Dan Flavin (EX1353), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada. Smith and Flavin continued their work together over the years. In July 1970, just a few months after the exhibition came down at the Jewish Museum, Smith tried to interest the National Capital Commission—the principal planner of federal lands around Ottawa—in a commission. Brydon Smith to Dan Flavin, July 16, 1970, Box 29, File 5 of 5, 184.18, Dan Flavin, Exhibition files, Fluorescent Light . . . from Dan Flavin (EX1353), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.

in the collection, offering “an opportunity to situate the Gallery’s two sculptures within the continuing context of André’s work.” The press release also mentions—crucially, given what would transpire over the weeks leading up to the exhibition—that “the artist will read a selection of his word poems in the auditorium at 8 pm on 10 December.”

During the organization of the exhibition, Smith corresponded with Boggs regarding the fabrication of exhibition copies. Perhaps emboldened by his approach to the Flavin exhibition—where entirely fluorescent works were created through the sponsorship of General Electric, and credit lines affixed to those whose edition was sold out—he wanted to avoid potentially damaging work and so wrote to Boggs the following on April 27, 1970,

I agree to our lending Lever and 144 Pieces of Copper to the Carl Andre exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum. However, I think the copper piece should not travel for more than a year and that the brick piece should be duplicated by the Guggenheim and this replica sent on tour with the exhibition. We would keep our bricks in storage for the duration of the tour. This procedure would have to depend on Andre’s own feelings about this matter.

Presumably Andre agreed, as Lever does have an exhibition copy, which is accessioned in the Gallery’s study collection. It remains common practice that the “travelling” set is used outside of the National Gallery of Canada’s building, and the “original” reserved for display in Ottawa—and practice has it that these two sets are never shown simultaneously. While somewhat analogous to the approach used for Flavin’s exhibition, as Andre’s works are never editioned, the duplication of a given work remains a curious exception devised by Smith to Andre’s usual working method.

124 “Press Release: Sculpture as Place: Carl Andre at the National Gallery of Canada.”
125 “Press Release: Sculpture as Place: Carl Andre at the National Gallery of Canada.”
126 Brydon Smith to Jean Sutherland Boggs, April 27, 1970, Box 40, Vol. 1, Exhibition files, Sculpture as Place: Carl Andre (EX1406B), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.
127 Andre, Lever (15898.1-137), Curatorial files, National Gallery of Canada.
Andre had come to Canada earlier that same year, from October 5–6, 1970, to participate in the Halifax Conference, an international gathering of artists organized by Seth Siegelaub at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.\textsuperscript{128} Midway through his conversation at the Conference, Andre was asked away to take a telephone call; when he returned, he announced that he had been offered a solo exhibition at the Guggenheim. It was this exhibition that the National Gallery of Canada would schedule for 1970.\textsuperscript{129}

The Conference coincided exactly with the start of the October Crisis, which began with the kidnapping of James Cross, British Trade Commissioner in Montreal on October 5, followed five days later by the abduction of Pierre Laporte, both by cells of the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ). Though Andre had since returned to New York he was acutely aware of the suspension of civil liberties through the \textit{War Measures Act} that followed on October 16. Shortly after the close of the Halifax Conference, Smith wrote to Andre in New York, saying that he was “very pleased that you will be able to come to Ottawa to direct the installation of your exhibition here and read on the evening of the very informal opening.”\textsuperscript{130} Along with the letter he provided Andre a copy of the floor plan for the fourth floor, as well as an installation photograph of the Flavin show, “in order to give you a better idea of the floor’s surface properties.”\textsuperscript{131} The plan was to

\textsuperscript{128} Dennis Young accounts for these coincident events in his contribution to a history of conceptual art at NSCAD in 1994: “it is seldom mentioned in the histories, although it is probably to be matched in the twentieth century only by the Weimar Dada/Constructivist Congress of 1922. You may recall that shortly after it, one of the participants, the American Carl Andre, caused an international incident by leaking (but refusing to confirm) his intention to read the prohibited FLQ Manifesto at the opening of his retrospective at the National Gallery of Canada—an exhibition which was therefore cancelled by the gallery.” Dennis Young, “Opening Remarks Addressed to the Members of the Universities Art Association of Canada,” in \textit{Conceptual Art: The NSCAD Connection 1967-1973}, ed. Bruce Barber (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1994), 6.


\textsuperscript{130} Brydon Smith to Carl Andre, October 16, 1970, Box 40, Vol. 1, Exhibition files, Sculpture as Place: Carl Andre (EX1406B), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.

\textsuperscript{131} Smith to Andre.
install the exhibition partly in an Old Masters gallery, with his floor works providing a nice “juxtaposition with earlier work.”  

In the weeks leading up to the opening of his exhibition, Andre made it known to friends, though he never confirmed to Gallery employees, that in lieu of the poetry reading scheduled for the opening of his exhibition at 8 p.m. on December 10, 1970, he intended to read the manifesto of the FLQ. Although the manifesto had been published in various newspapers on October 6, and was broadcast on Radio-Canada on October 8, following the invocation of the *War Measures Act*, it became illegal to distribute or publish the group’s manifesto. A number of student newspapers published or attempted to publish the document, some without reprisals, as censorship was far from systematic. Andre, too, seemed most intent on testing the Gallery’s position on free speech, even if he stopped short of expressing solidarity with the FLQ.  

Smith, having heard of Andre’s plan, possibly through Dan Flavin, notified Jean Sutherland Boggs. Boggs in turn telegrammed Andre on December 3, 1970 informing him that the poetry reading at the opening had been cancelled. Two days later, on December 5, 1970, Flavin wrote Smith a letter, which bears quoting at length, if not in its entirety, recounting a conversation he had with Andre in the offices of Virginia Dwan (b. 1931), their mutual dealer at the time,

Carl returned to the gallery for the first time in about a week . . . [he] was reviewing his mail and returning telephone calls. Early on, he threw your (Jean’s) telegram to me while announcing definitely that if the “poetry” reading was cancelled so would be the exhibition. (Carl sounded like a hurting little boy retaliating.) Thereafter, intermittently, I

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133 Smith also understood Andre’s action more as a statement more about freedom of expression, than any sympathy for the FLQ. Brydon Smith, interview by Adam Welch, August 19, 2009.
134 Jean Sutherland Boggs to Carl Andre, December 3, 1970, Box 40, Vol. 1, Exhibition files, Sculpture as Place: Carl Andre (EX1406B), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.
tried to “disarm” Carl of his armaments and to dissuade him from a summary, hasty, decision against you, Jean, and the Canadian Federal government. I succeeded in the latter (the last Carl said to me after consultation with John [Weber], too, was that he was about to telephone Donald Sutherland, the only politically responsible Canadian whom he knew, before he would decide about complete cancellation) . . . I might not agree with Carl about supporting a divisive provincial terrorist gang as remarkable ideological heroes errant. In fact, I put it to John [Weber] two days ago that instead of an intrusive reading of an FLQ manifesto in your official auditorium Carl might have better publicly offered to substitute himself as willing hostage in place of the reluctant British prisoner, Cross. (Before I could put the attitude to Carl, Cross had been happily freed.) Well, what I did say to Carl was that he had ought to keep in mind that he was an artist invited by you as a curator and that he was also an American invited to Canada. I asked him to consider tempering his possible (perhaps inevitable) political attack with sarcastic international humor if necessary.135

Flavin’s attempt to disarm the situation came to little. On December 7, Andre responded to Jean Boggs’ telegram of December 3, writing: “Rule by fear rumor repression inimical to free art. Regretfully I feel there is no alternative but to cancel show of my works on December 10 / Carl Andre.”136 On December 9, Boggs made a note following a conversation she had with Professor Stephen Vickers (1913–1993), Chair of the Visiting Committee and a Gallery Trustee, that morning. According to Boggs’ note, Vickers “felt the situation was so defensible that there would be no need to fear justifying if before the House if necessary.”137 Smith informed the Gallery staff that the exhibition—completely installed and ready to open the following day—was cancelled.138

135 Dan Flavin to Brydon Smith, December 5, 1970, Box 29, File 5 of 5, 184.18, Dan Flavin, Exhibition files, Fluorescent Light . . . from Dan Flavin (EX1353), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.
136 Carl Andre to Jean Sutherland Boggs, December 7, 1970, Box 40, Vol. 1, Exhibition files, Sculpture as Place: Carl Andre (EX1406B), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.
138 “At the request of the artist, the Carl André exhibition (11 Dec. 1970 to 10 Jan. 1971) has been cancelled.” Brydon Smith, “All Staff Memorandum,” December 9, 1970, Box 40, Vol. 1, Exhibition files, Sculpture as Place: Carl Andre (EX1406B), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada. In 2002, Smith recalled the events differently to Diana Nemiroff, namely that he spoke with Andre directly about his desire to read the Manifesto “He did inform me that he wanted to read the FLQ manifesto and this was all, I think, done on the phone and then I said that that would not be possible and then he said he really felt he
As Smith told Kay Kritzwiser at the time, “we couldn’t resolve the problem so I cancelled the poetry reading. Later Carl wired me something to the effect that repression was inimical to art and he wanted the show cancelled too. So we complied with his wishes. I feel he overstepped his mandate . . . we couldn’t give him the platform he wanted.”

Word travelled quickly, including to General Idea (1969–1994), who telegrammed Boggs with the following on December 16: “Re Carl Andre decisions General worried. Entropic forces and nova conditions imploding. Data forwarded. General idea.” Boggs was left to tidy up the “imploded” arrangements, financial and otherwise, with the Guggenheim Museum. After director Thomas Messer (1920–2013) proposed that they split the $10,600 cost of the exhibition on December 24, 1970, she agreed, if hesitantly, only because the looming end of fiscal year on March 31, 1971: “I am not doing this without a strong sense of protest,” she wrote to Messer, “particularly since the cost of transportation was so much higher than originally anticipated. On the other hand, it has been a difficult situation which I trust we will be able to forget in the future.” She also agreed to buy the copies of the catalogue they had originally committed to purchasing. As the exhibition was scheduled to continue to the Vancouver couldn’t then show . . . I may have forgotten but . . . I don’t think that the FLQ, the reading of the FLQ manifesto, I’m pretty sure that there was a conversation.” Smith, interview, October 3, 2002, 16.


140 Jean Sutherland Boggs to Thomas Messer, January 28, 1971, Box 40, Vol. 1, Exhibition files, Sculpture as Place: Carl Andre (EX1406B), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.
Art Gallery after it closed in Ottawa, director Tony Emery (1919–2016) wrote to Messer on December 14, 1970, to cancel their involvement.142

Andre’s cancelled exhibition began a difficult period for Smith, rife with controversy. Writing in the National Gallery of Canada’s annual report for 1972–1973, Boggs addressed directly the criticism Smith of as being too much “a partisan of contemporary American Art”: unfairly, she felt, as he was after all responsible for “non-Canadian contemporary art.”143 “This past year has been one in which Canadian artists have joined other voices protesting the spread of American influence in Canada,” Boggs wrote. “There was even a march with banners down Elgin Street and a gentle protest against American influence at the opening at the Gallery of, ironically, Toronto Painting: 1953–1965.”144 Boggs obviously felt the need to rebut some of these criticisms, and she detailed a number of activities by way of redressing the imbalance felt by his critics.

Smith integrated Canadian work into the European and American collection as a result of pointed criticism from Barry Lord (1939–2017); he co-organized an exhibition with Pierre Théberge (b.1942) of Canadian work for 1973,

*Boucherville/Montréal/Toronto/London/1973* (July 5–September 3, 1973); in answer to criticism that he was “working only within the framework of a New-York dominated art world,” he visited artists and dealers in Paris and London on his way back from the

142 Tony Emery to Thomas Messer, December 14, 1970, Box 40, Vol. 1, Exhibition files, Sculpture as Place: Carl Andre (EX1406B), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada. Recalling the episode in the early 1980s, Emery wrote, “I had a very narrow escape from bankruptcy . . . by Carl Andre deciding to read the FLQ Manifesto at the opening at the National Gallery, so they cancelled the show, and I didn’t have to pay for it. We were always living on the edge of disaster like that.” Emery in Pierre Théberge et al., “Personal Perspectives,” in *Vancouver Art and Artists: 1931-1983* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1983), 259.


144 Boggs, 171. The exhibition took place September 15–October 15, 1972, then travelled to the Art Gallery of Ontario.
Venice Biennale, buying the now-anomalous *Crocodile in the Bronx Zoo* (1972; National Gallery of Canada, 17114) by Gilles Aillaud; and lastly in February 1973, he travelled to Germany, ultimately resulting in the purchase of Gerhard Richter’s highly important nine-metre-wide triptych, *Cloud* (1970; National Gallery of Canada, 17328.1-3). All that said, Boggs writes,

> Mr Smith remains convinced that much important work is being produced in the United States and that the National Gallery of Canada should confront it, acknowledge it, and represent it strongly, rather than bury its curatorial face in the sand.\(^{146}\)

*Donald Judd* (May 2–July 6, 1975; Fig. 3.7) remains one of the defining exhibitions of Smith’s professional career, tentatively marking an end to the difficult period following Andre’s exhibition. The show was accompanied by a catalogue raisonné co-edited by Roberta Smith (b. 1947), at the time working on her MA thesis on Judd, and Dudley Del Balso, who worked with Judd as an assistant from 1968–1984.\(^{147}\) Smith was first introduced to Judd by Flavin, during the organization of his survey in 1969, however unlike that exhibition, there is a dearth of correspondence between Smith and Judd in the National Gallery of Canada’s exhibition records. Much of the coordination for the exhibition seems to have taken place over the telephone.\(^{148}\)

\(^{145}\) Boggs, 172. “Accepting as reasonable the criticism of Barry Lord that the Gallery has made no effort to integrate Canadian art with other art of the twentieth century, Mr Smith hung Borduas’ great 3 + 4 + 1 beside paintings by two of the artists who may have influenced Borduas most—the Dutchman Piet Mondrian and the American Jackson Pollock.” On Richter, see Jean Sutherland Boggs, “Contemporary Painting and Sculpture,” *National Gallery of Canada Annual Review* 6 (1974): 107–8.


\(^{147}\) In 1974, Smith sent Roberta Smith his comments on her MA thesis. Brydon Smith to Roberta Smith, September 27, 1974, Box 71 (1), R. Smith/D. Del Balso, Exhibition files, Donald Judd (EX1503), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.

\(^{148}\) Nemiroff was also curious about the distinct lack of correspondence between Smith and Judd, and she asked him in 2002. Smith replied, we “talked on the phone . . . that’s right and I probably would have written letters as follow-ups to that in terms of any decisions.” Smith, interview, October 3, 2002, 27.
Before working with Flavin, however, Smith had a number of encounters with Judd’s work in Toronto. The very first took place at Isaacs Gallery, during *Polychrome Construction: Judd, Weinrib, Burton, Rayner, Snow, Wieland* (March 12–31, 1965), the exhibition that proved another contentious case of Comfort’s take on border tariffs, as described above. Smith recounted his experience of seeing Judd’s work for the first time in his eulogy for the artist, given in 1994:

In March of 1965 I didn’t know that, when as a curatorial assistant at the Art Gallery of Toronto, I first saw and puzzled over 4 objects by him at the Isaacs Gallery in Toronto. I remember being stopped in my tracks by the 15-1/2 inch high, large, open, metal rectangle, painted red [DSS 50], which was on the floor and looked more like a child’s wading pool with a bottom, than anything I had seen up to that point as art. Complicated welded-steel sculptures, yes, but this was too simple for words. I found the brass-side box with the red-enamelled wooden top more appealing [DSS 57], probably because of the colour and material contrasts. I remember going back for a second look, but I still left feeling perplexed.149

The four works by Judd were all *Untitled* (1963–64; DSS 37, 50, 53, 57).150 While still at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Smith saw Judd’s work again, this time at Hart House, University of Toronto.151 This was part of the *Seventh Annual Summer Exhibition of Sculpture* (July 10–October 1, 1967), organized by Jeremy Adamson (b. 1943), which also included work by David Annesley, Anthony Caro, Robert Morris, Robert Murray, William Tucker and Isaac Witkin.152 Judd’s four cold-rolled steel cubes coated with burnt

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149 This second work Smith describes is the same subsequently traded with Michael Snow and acquired for the national collection in 1973. Brydon Smith, “Some Memories and Thoughts about Donald Judd the Man and His Art on the Occasion of His Memorial Service,” May 12, 1994, Brydon Smith, Documentation files, Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.


151 Smith, “Some Memories and Thoughts about Donald Judd the Man and His Art on the Occasion of His Memorial Service.”

152 Jeremy Adamson, *New Sculpture* (Toronto: Hart House, University of Toronto, 1967). Greg Curnoe may have also seen the exhibition, in an untitled manuscript from around 1967, he lists among his favourite
sienna enamel, *Untitled* (1966; DSS 88), were installed in the quadrangle. They were each roughly a metre cubed, and would have been uncharacteristically subdued by comparison with those he had seen at Isaacs the previous year. Smith would also have seen two other works by Judd in 1966—one floor, one wall, both *Untitled* (1966; DSS 85, 86)—in *Primary Structures* at the Jewish Museum, New York. One last encounter Smith mentions in his eulogy, and far more memorable, was seeing Judd’s survey at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (February 22–March 24, 1968). In particular, he remembers seeing a purple “progression,” *Untitled* (1966; DSS 84): “I couldn’t take my eyes off it.”

Primed by these encounters over four years, a direct connection to Judd came about through working with Flavin on the 1969 exhibition, as mentioned above, particularly as Judd was among the lenders for the show. There was a deep sense of admiration that Flavin expressed about Judd’s work: “Dan always referred to Don as being the artist who [was] really responsible for a big change in art.”

The Ottawa exhibition brought together roughly a hundred works made between 1960 and 1975, “installed in two separate areas on the ground floor of the National

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154 Smith recounted in 2002, “I got introduced to Judd because when I was working on Flavin’s show there were works of Flavin’s that he would be lending.” Smith, interview, October 3, 2002, 4.

155 Smith, 23.
Gallery, as well as in the temporary exhibition area on the fourth floor.”156 Dan Flavin opened it on May 23, 1975 followed by a selection of Pibroch—for which Judd had a particular appreciation—by Pipe Major Cairns of Ottawa and Pipe Major Brady of New York.157 The earliest works in the show were paintings, and although the majority of the show consisted of Judd’s so-called “specific objects,” the exhibition also included “prints, drawings, posters, and supplementary photographic material.”158 The work Smith purchased from Michael Snow in 1973, Untitled (1964–65; DSS 57; National Gallery of Canada, 17189; Fig. 3.3), was also included, installed in the first of the two front rooms on the ground floor alongside a second box painted in ultramarine blue. On the fourth floor, there were a further eight galleries, including the earliest paintings and works on paper and photographs, as well as works demonstrating forms which Judd elaborated later in the decade as “stacks, progressions, and cantilevered boxes.”159

Significantly, Judd had a number of works for the exhibition made in Ottawa—consistent with Smith’s approach to Flavin’s exhibition, where all of the ballasts and fluorescent bulbs were donated by General Electric and assembled by Gallery technicians. In the case of Judd’s show, delegated fabrication at the National Gallery of Canada allowed for exhibition copies and minimized the expense and complication of bringing works across the border. Perhaps far in the background of these repeated instances of delegated fabrication in Ottawa, we might read Smith’s early awareness of the difficulty in bringing Warhol’s Brillo Soap Pads Boxes (1964) across the border.

156 “The exhibition was divided between these two floors because the low ceiling of the fourth floor made it impossible to effectively install the three vertical rows of boxes.” Brydon Smith, “A Brief Guide,” 1975, Box 71, File 1 of 3, Exhibition files, Donald Judd (EX1503), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada. Brydon Smith, “Press Release,” May 8, 1975, Box 71, File 1 of 3, Exhibition files, Donald Judd (EX1503), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.

157 Smith, “Press Release.”

158 Smith, “A Brief Guide.”

159 Smith.
More proximate, and likely, was the New York warehouseman’s strike that took place following the dispersal of his Rosenquist exhibition in 1967, leaving works from the exhibition in a warehouse in New Jersey for the better part of a month, and resulting in much grief from lenders.160

Two sets of works were made entirely in Ottawa: Judd’s large plywood constructions and the so-called “light cadmium red” works. This is an unusual exception to Judd’s practice, given his tendency to work exclusively with certain “preferred fabricators” from 1964 onwards.161 As Smith described them, “the six very large plywood boxes in the central well area of the fourth floor were specially made for this exhibition. They confront the series of six parallelogram-based boxes [DSS 280] purchased by the National Gallery in 1973.”162 The latter work, purchased by the Gallery in 1973, was, in fact, originally five boxes. With Judd’s consent, a sixth was made in 1975 so that the overall scale of the work would relate better to the dimensions of the gallery space.

Three of four “light cadmium red oil on wood” works included in the exhibition, all Untitled (DSS 35, 36, 38, and 41; Fig. 3.7), either had components or were entirely made in Ottawa. For Untitled (1963/1975; DSS 35; National Gallery of Canada, 18477), the wooden sides were made and painted and the aluminum tube was painted in Ottawa;163 for Untitled (1963/1975; DSS 36; National Gallery of Canada, 18476) the

162 Smith, “A Brief Guide.” Cat. no. 47 was not included in the catalogue raisonné section of the publication, suggesting it was made solely for exhibition and not kept as part of the accepted oeuvre following the exhibition. Smith, Donald Judd: A Catalogue of the Exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 24 May-6 July 1975: Catalogue Raisonné of Paintings, Objects, and Wood-Blocks, 1960-74, 88.
163 Smith sent instructions and specifications to the Gallery’s conservator, Mervyn Ruggles, to spray “Hi-Fi Purple” on an existing aluminum tube that was incorporated into Untitled (1963; DSS 35). Brydon Smith to Mervyn Ruggles, “Memorandum,” November 6, 1974, Box 71, File 1 of 3, Exhibition files, Donald Judd
bottom wooden portion was made and painted in Ottawa; and lastly, for *Untitled* (1963/1975; DSS 38), the entire structure, wood and Plexiglas, was made in Ottawa.

Only *Untitled* (1963/1966; DSS 41; National Gallery of Canada, 18148) had been remade earlier, by Judd’s father, Roy C. Judd, in 1966. Three of the four in this group were subsequently acquired by the National Gallery of Canada, and the fourth, *Untitled* (1963/1975; DSS 38), was given by Judd to Smith.164

While delegating fabrication to the National Gallery of Canada seems to have been successful, straying from his preferred fabricators later led to difficulties for Judd. This was the case with a number of works from Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo’s collection, to whom Judd sold certificates for works later fabricated in Italy without the artist’s supervision. Judd later disowned these works.165 In 2012, two of the six boxes from *Untitled* (1973/1975; DSS 280, National Gallery of Canada, 17236.1-5), one made by Peter Ballantine, his preferred fabricator, and one made in Ottawa by Gallery technicians, were lent by the National Gallery to the Panza Collection Initiative at the Guggenheim, New York, for comparison with an Italian-made example from Panza’s collection.166 As Smith wrote in 1978, “although Judd does not strive for perfection in his art, he insists the pieces be well made by the people he employs, so that poor facture does not detract by adding extraneous meaning.” “Technique for Judd,” Smith adds, “is just a

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164 The accession number for DSS 35 is NGC 18477; DSS 36 is NGC 18476; and DSS 41 is NGC 18148. Other works were specially conceived, if not made in Ottawa. One instance is *Untitled* (1975), no. 48 in the catalogue and unlisted in the catalogue raisonné, suggesting again that the work was not kept as part of the accepted œuvre.


means of arriving at a statement; it must be consistent with the statement and should not confuse or detract from it.” 167 Unlike Panza’s versions, however, Judd was pleased with the results of works made in Ottawa. As described above, two of the “light cadmium” works made in Ottawa entered the Gallery’s collection, another was given to Smith, and the sixth unit of *Untitled* (1973/1975; DSS 280, National Gallery of Canada, 17236.1-5) was kept with the work.

“Cleaning up after the Judd exhibition is a real low,” Smith wrote to Roberta Smith in August 1975.168 Smith would revisit Judd and his work often throughout his time at the National Gallery of Canada, and in summer 1978 organized an exhibition of work drawn from the national collection for the Vancouver Art Gallery (May 5–June 4, 1978). Given a few years’ distance from the Ottawa exhibition, Smith’s observations and reflections on Judd’s practice in the accompanying catalogue are astute. He identifies many of the significant contributions for which Judd is now justifiably recognized: his interest in gestalt forms and the relationships between parts and whole of a given sculpture; the integrated as opposed to mere “surface” colour that is a celebrated characteristic of his work; the use of delegated fabrication and his related understanding of technique as a means to an end. 169 Just as astute was Smith’s decision to reprint an essay Judd wrote on the eve of his 1975 exhibition, “Imperialism, Nationalism and Regionalism” (1975), which may be understood as the artist’s response to preparations

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168 Brydon Smith to Roberta Smith, August 12, 1975, Box 71 (1), R. Smith/D. Del Balso, Exhibition files, Donald Judd (EX1503), Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.
169 Smith, “Donald Judd: Random Thoughts Three Years Later.”
for his major exhibition in Canada. The essay was first published in *Donald Judd: Complete Writings, 1959–1975*.170

In it, Judd holds up the Canadian situation as a model not only for museum practice, but also for the possibility of working free from cultural imperialism—an imperialism that had made working in New York all but impossible for him.171 In the statement, Judd argues that the notion of America’s imperial power being coincident with their artistic influence in the decades following the Second World War has made working in New York exceedingly difficult. Indeed, feeling a kind of necessary collusion with imperial artistic production in the city, Judd relocated to Marfa, Texas in 1971, where he established the Chinati Foundation and continued to divide his time and make his work until his death in 1994. “Very little in recent American art came from the United States,” he argues, “it’s one of the many art historical clichés that the place is responsible for common characteristics.”172

Judd’s text raises crucial connections between imperialism and nationalism, and, more significantly, culture’s service to them both. He draws in part from arguments presented in “Complaints: Part II” (1973), where he rails against the American museum complex as “charities and monuments to the rich,” which serve to principally to “patronize, isolate, and neutralize artists,” calling instead for greater government support of the arts.173 In his 1975 text, which might be read as an implicit, if somewhat naive, reading on the differences between Canadian and American nationalism, he assails

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171 Judd.
172 Judd, 223.
American chauvinism, saying, “only religion is more primitive than nationalism.” But despite his apparent awareness of the problems of nationalism, he casually observes, “thank goodness for Canada and what’s left of Mexico,” as if unaware of the intense patriotism operating in Canada following Expo 67.174 If “art done in New York City is imperialistic”—so much so that he “left legally because it was so awful”—and this imperialism is based in fervent nationalism, then Canada would seem admirable only because it fails to wield influence in the same way. In a rather confusing statement in light of his pending exhibition at the National Gallery, Judd writes,

competent art made in a place should always be shown in that place. It’s absurd to always import art, even from New York to Buffalo. But the work should be shown as simply being done there, as a practical matter, without a lot of nonsense about the spirit of the place.175

Judd’s essay, although he fails to mention it, was written partly in response to an earlier Marxist critique of his practice by Karl Beveridge (b. 1945) and Ian Burn (b. 1939), which appeared in the second issue of The Fox (1975).176 Beveridge had moved from Toronto to New York in 1969 with his spouse Carole Condé.177 In their essay, Beveridge and Burn question Judd’s own critical stance on American imperialism, and attribute much of his market success to the global cultural dominance of the United States. Beveridge was writing from lived experience: his work of the sixties, especially before moving to New York, was derived from a minimalist vocabulary of the type formulated by Judd. In fact, Condé and Beveridge’s move in 1969 was an acknowledged

175 Judd, 223.
attempt “to go to the centre and be where it was happening.”¹⁷⁸ As Beveridge and Burns wrote in 1975, “American artists of the sixties and seventies have [become] the ‘cultural engineers’ of ‘international art.’”¹⁷⁹ In 1976, Beveridge would elaborate his position further, this time in his and Condé’s project for the Art Gallery of Ontario, . . . it’s still privileged art (January 24–February 29, 1976). “We don’t care if Brydon Smith is upset about whether or not it’s art,” they write in the accompanying text, “we want to upset people’s social values, not their ‘art’ values. We don’t care if Brydon Smith or Roald Nasgaard are upset about whether or not it’s art. The important question is whether our work upsets their political consciousness, or makes them question the role of art.”¹⁸⁰

It seems unlikely that Smith would have appreciated Condé and Beveridge’s project in 1976, or especially, as they hoped, that he would question the “role of art” as a result of their practice. Beginning a decade earlier, Smith had committed himself to contemporary American art, and very quickly, to the practices of artists such as Judd, Flavin and Andre. Their work—if not their activism, as we have seen with Andre’s 1970 exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada—stood resolutely apart from the overt political gestures that Condé and Beveridge instantiated with their practices. As Anna Chave formulated in a

¹⁷⁸ Lucy Lippard visited Beveridge and Condé in 1968 in connection with the exhibition Canadian Artists ’68 at the Art Gallery of Ontario, it was during that visit that she encouraged them—specifically Condé—to move to New York. As they later recounted, “Lippard was one of the first people we looked up in New York.” Karl Beveridge and Carole Condé, interview by Adam Welch, October 21, 2009. Perhaps thinking of her recommendation to them, Lippard wrote in 1968 for Artnews, “In spite of the lugubrious conditions, I still find myself recommending New York and its great diversity and intellectual vitality over any art school in the country, and over staying home, wherever home may be. Yet one feels not only chauvinistic but cynical saying this to a Canadian, for Canada does seem to have the seeds of a better system and it seems determined not to become just another America.” Lucy Lippard, “Vancouver,” Artnews 67, no. 5 (September 1968): 26.
¹⁷⁹ Beveridge and Burn, “Don Judd,” 138.
¹⁸⁰ Beveridge and Condé, It’s Still Privileged Art, n.p. For a review of the exhibition, see Walter Klepac, “Review of It’s Still Privileged Art . . .,” Artscanada 33, no. 1 (May 1976): 67. The title, as styled on the publication, is “. . . it’s still privileged art”—the leading ellipses and lower-case text a possible allusion to Flavin’s “. . . in daylight and cool white.”
series of texts beginning in 1990, work by these artists, “generated and occupied a special sphere, aloof from politics and commerce and above personal feeling,” however naively.\footnote{Anna C. Chave, “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power,” \textit{Arts Magazine} 64, no. 5 (January 1990): 44.} Smith ascribed to the belief that this work occupied a “special sphere,” and even pointed criticism as he experienced in the early 1970s, did little to diminish his unwavering support of these artists.

In spite of minimal art’s apparent impermeability, a work such as Judd’s \textit{Untitled} can nevertheless operate in the service of a particular politics. Smith made such a political gesture himself in 1973 when he acquired Judd’s floor piece from Michael Snow (b. 1928), \textit{Untitled} (1964–65; DSS 57; National Gallery of Canada, 17189; Fig. 3.3) for the collection of the National Gallery of Canada—much as he had done when he acquired Warhol’s \textit{Brillo Soap Pads Boxes} (1964; National Gallery of Canada, 15298.1-8) in 1967. Set against Condé and Beveridge’s position, however, Smith was clearly not only making a continentalist gesture, but also advocating for non-objective art derived from a “special sphere.”

Snow, too, was early in his appreciation and defense of minimal art, and seems to have either traded or purchased the work from Judd around the time of \textit{Polychrome Construction: Judd, Weinrib, Burton, Rayner, Snow, Wieland} (March 12–31, 1965) at the Isaacs Gallery.\footnote{“Actually, I traded or bought a piece from him.” Michael Snow, interview by Barbara Fischer and Adam Welch, November 25, 2009. Smith recalls Snow having traded the work, as well. Smith, interview, October 3, 2002, 20. The Judd Foundation, however, has no record of a work by Snow in Judd’s collection at the time of his death in 1994, however it is possible that he had parted with the work during his lifetime. Jana La Brasca to Adam Welch, “Judd and Michael Snow,” November 3, 2017.} Simultaneous to Jerrold Morris’s Warhol exhibition, it was subjected to similar scrutiny by Charles Comfort, as discussed at the opening of this chapter. Snow was not only instrumental in securing Judd’s participation in the exhibition,\footnote{Snow recalled in interview, “I organized that show, or suggested it.” Snow, interview.} but a few
years later after he placed the sculpture on loan to the National Gallery of Canada. When Smith wrote to extend the loan in spring 1972, Snow responded that he “would be pleased to continue to lend it to the National Gallery until further notice.”184 It took some time, but the following February, Smith wrote to Snow that “the National Gallery would like to purchase from you Don Judd’s *Untitled*, 1964, for $14,500.”185 It was the first work by Judd to enter the collection. Years later, Snow recounted in interview that he used the proceeds from the sale to buy a house.186

With the purchase of Judd’s *Untitled* (1964–65; DSS 57), Smith not only began a string of acquisitions of the artist’s work that culminated—and would, indeed, extend beyond—the artist’s 1975 survey exhibition in Ottawa, but he would also draw a close an episode that began a decade earlier. By acquiring the very same work that had, along with Warhol’s *Brillo Soap Pads Boxes* (1964), been refused as sculpture by Comfort, Smith imbued the work with an extra-artistic association: underscoring the profound change in 1967 to the National Gallery of Canada’s policy against acquiring contemporary American art. Enacted by Boggs and realized by Smith over the following eight years, that change resulted in a period of exceptionally prescient collecting and exhibition making. In this way, an elegant but otherwise blank box accrued meaning as a sign of a new transnational—or at the very least, New York-oriented—outlook for a national institution, and perhaps more generally, a complicated deference to American contemporary art in Canada.

184 Michael Snow to Brydon Smith, May 30, 1972, Judd, Untitled (17189), Curatorial files, National Gallery of Canada.
186 “In what year? I forget . . . I bought a house with it.” Smith recalls Snow having traded the work, “And then there was the work that I believe Michael Snow had traded with him, the brass-sided box . . . that was in the show.” Smith, interview, October 3, 2002, 20.
Chapter Three
From Metropole to Frontier

New York 13 at the Vancouver Art Gallery

In 1967, Alvin Balkind (1921–1992), a founder of The New Design Gallery, and from 1962, curator of the University of British Columbia Fine Arts Gallery, reflected on the relatively new situation of Vancouver as a leading centre for contemporary art in Canada:

In this remote, uncrowded, lotus-eating city, seemingly far from many of the world’s agonies and excesses, there is room for art to grow, even in the face of (or perhaps because of) vast public and official indifference. Though isolated, yet there are very strong umbilical cords connecting Vancouver with the artistic “precious bodily fluids” elsewhere. No important exhibition in the “big attack” art world is any further away than a short jet flight (often thanks to Canada Council), or an art publication, or a visiting artist or critic of significance, or a traveling show. There connections are of great consequence to Vancouver’s artists, particularly those bonds that link us to the Los Angeles scene, without the disadvantage to us of having to suffer the Reagan Blues.¹

In the words of two other keen observers of Vancouver’s art history—Ian Wallace and Scott Watson—as a “frontier city” Vancouver’s postwar transformation is all the more remarkable as it “should not have been expected to produce an avant-garde at all.”² At a remove from Eastern Canada’s centres, Vancouver artists were long geographically and imaginatively on the periphery of arts activities in the country. By the 1960s, the city found itself suddenly heralded as the country’s centre of contemporary art.³ While

Vancouver’s visual arts history has been the focus of much scholarship and exhibition making—as Balkind, Wallace and Scott’s observations over some four decades attest—many of the city’s arts activities of the postwar period have been positioned in view of artist-run culture which, quite rightly, actively shaped the cultural landscape of the city, especially through the 1960s and early 1970s.

What has been overlooked in the exceptional attention paid to artist-run activities in Vancouver, however, is role of institutions, which were critical not least in supporting cross-border collaboration and exchange in the city. Even if often—though not always—more cautious in their programming and slower to respond to new tendencies, organizations such as the Fine Arts Gallery at the University of British Columbia and, particularly relevant for what follows, the Vancouver Art Gallery, brought American art to new audiences and introduced artists and casual museum-goers alike to the recent arts practices from New York and Los Angeles. Making a clear distinction between institutional activities and those more closely associated with artist-run culture is difficult, though, given the significant porosity between art institutions in Vancouver and what elsewhere may be characterized as anti-institutions: in one notable example, the Vancouver Art Gallery worked closely with Intermedia (1967–c. 1972) to realize collaborative projects.  

Toward the end of the 1960s, the Vancouver Art Gallery (Fig. 4.1) organized a series of exhibitions, alike in that they all prominently featured American art, and in that numbers were used in their titles—the best known of these is 955,000 (January 13–

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4 For an overview of Intermedia’s activities at the Gallery, see Alvin Balkind, “Body Snatching: Performance Art in Vancouver, A View of Its History,” in Living Art Vancouver (Vancouver: Western Front / Pumps / Video Inn, 1979), 74; Tracy Westell, “Intermedia Society: An Inventory of Their Papers in the Library of the University of British Columbia Special Collections Division,” 1980, Intermedia Society fonds, Rare Books and Special Collections, University of British Columbia.
February 8, 1970), organized by the “critic-historian” Lucy Lippard (b. 1937). Lippard’s so-called “numbers exhibitions,” which she also realized in Seattle, Buenos Aires and Valencia, California, have been much explored in scholarship and exhibitions.

Preceding this landmark show of conceptual and process-based work, however, were two more modestly sized, but no less significant exhibitions in considering the histories of American art in Canada, and particularly Vancouver. A network of curators, dealers and critics helped to realize these two projects: these included Alvin Balkind, John Coplans, Douglas Christmas, Tony Emery, Walter Hopps, Lucy Lippard, Doris Shadbolt, along with artists Robert Rauschenberg and Michael Morris. *Los Angeles 6* (March 20–April 5, 1968) and *New York 13* (January 22–February 24, 1969) remain important, if frequently overlooked, instances of contemporary American art reaching Vancouver audiences—and in the case of *New York 13*, given its extensive tour following its opening in Vancouver—across Canada.

The Vancouver Art Gallery’s role in promoting American art toward the end of the 1960s, and the attention it paid to international programming, coincided with a period of generous funding through the Canada Council for the Arts and the federal government, generally. Following Pierre Elliot Trudeau’s election in 1968, a new policy of democratization and decentralization swept cultural institutions, and the Vancouver Art Gallery under the directorship of Tony Emery (1919–2016; Fig. 4.2) shifted its efforts

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away from ingratiating itself with local benefactors, to seeking out the largesse of the federal government. These numbered exhibitions are important examples of Emery’s attempt—and in the case of both Los Angeles 6 and New York 13, examples conceived and realized largely by Vancouver Art Gallery curator Doris Shadbolt (1918–2013; Fig. 4.3)—to think less of the Vancouver philanthropic establishment, which had long determined the programming and collecting of the Gallery and with the help of public funds, and appeal more broadly to the communities they ostensibly served. Born in Farnham, England, in 1919, Emery was brought up in South Africa and India, eventually returning to England to study with Kenneth Clark, at Oxford University, where he received his MA. Following wartime service, in 1953 he moved with his family to Canada. By the end of the 1950s, he had taken up a teaching position in the Fine Arts Department at the University of Victoria.8 Emery was, according to Alvin Balkind in a sentiment generally shared, “opposed to art galleries as centers for elite and narrow-interest groups alone, and that he wanted to see the Vancouver Art Gallery become a ‘people place.’”9 Ultimately, this mandate would see him coming to blows with the Gallery’s Board and result in Emery tendering his resignation in 1974.10

Organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery, where it opened on January 22, 1969, New York 13 travelled to The Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina (March 10–April 21, 1969), the Art Gallery of Ontario (May 8–21, 1969), and closed at the Musée d’art

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8 Kevin Griffin, “Art from the Archive: Tony Emery Opens the VAG to the Community,” Vancouver Sun, March 18, 2015.
contemporain, Montreal (June 3–July 5, 1969). Emery, in his brief preface in the accompanying catalogue, describes the exhibition as the third in a series of shows planned with the aim of bringing to Vancouver within a period of less than a year a representative cross-section of the most important work current in the three major capitals of the world of art today: Los Angeles, London and New York City.\footnote{Tony Emery in Lucy Lippard, ed., \textit{New York 13} (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1969), n.p. Or, as he puts it in a letter to Moncrieff Williamson, with the series of exhibitions “we will have covered a great deal of what is exciting on the world scene today. After that it will be nice to go back to something less ‘far out.’” The London exhibition was organized by U.C.L.A. Tony Emery to Moncrieff Williamson, January 16, 1968, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.}

Emery intended for this last of three exhibitions to state his ambitions for the Gallery: it was only the second time in the Gallery’s history that the entire downstairs rooms were given over to a single exhibition.\footnote{“New York 13,” \textit{The Vancouver Art Gallery Bulletin}, February 1969, n.p.} The show included works by, as the title suggests, thirteen New York-based artists: Jasper Johns, Donald Judd, Ellsworth Kelly, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Morris, Barnett Newman, Kenneth Noland, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg, James Rosenquist, George Segal, Frank Stella, and Andy Warhol. In what seemed more an act of showmanship than necessity—and coincided with an ambitious media campaign—the whole of the Vancouver Art Gallery was closed for three weeks leading up to the opening. Emery had arrived as director in summer 1967, and along with Shadbolt, who had already been programming contemporary art during her brief tenure as acting director, the two became a “quietly insistent force for the involvement of the Gallery in contemporary issues.”\footnote{Balkind, “Body Snatching: Performance Art in Vancouver, A View of Its History,” 74.}

A year before the exhibition opened, during the first weeks of 1968, Emery set to work proposing the exhibition to other museum directors, including Moncrieff.
Williamson (1915–1996) at the Confederation Centre for the Arts in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. Emery wrote to Williamson,

Douglas Christmas, our energetic young prodigy of a dealer who runs the Douglas Gallery, successor to the old New Design Gallery, is putting together an exciting show which we provisionally call PAINTED FOR CANADA. By using a personal link with Rauschenberg and Stella, he has persuaded the following New York artists to produce from one to three works specifically for a show to open in Vancouver.14

Emery sketched one possible itinerary for Williamson and mentioned that the works would be available for purchase.15 By April 1968 Emery offered the exhibition to Regina, there was intense curiosity about the relationship the “energetic young prodigy of a dealer” Douglas Christmas had struck with the Vancouver Art Gallery. Terry Fenton (b. 1940), then assistant to the director of the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery, skeptically wrote to Emery on April 26, 1968, asking what conditions Christmas has offered the artists in the exhibition. “I mention this because I had a conversation with Frank Stella when I was in New York recently,” Fenton wrote, flexing his own “personal links,” “Christmas had contacted Frank but I got the impression that he hadn’t contacted many of the others. Frank also expressed doubt as to Noland and Newman participating in the exhibition.”16 According to Fenton, Christmas told Stella the show was travelling to all the major galleries in Canada—“This sounds somewhat misleading, unless there are more major galleries in Canada that I know of,” Fenton writes—and that he guaranteed Stella

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15 “The opportunity that it affords for an assault on our acquisition committees is one that I needn’t labour,” Emery put a similar proposal to William Withrow at the Art Gallery of Ontario. Withrow writes in early January 1968 to decline the show, “The majority of these artists have had more than enough exposure in Toronto and, within our limited . . . schedule, there are a number of other things we would like to do.” The exhibition would ultimately travel to Toronto, however. William Withrow to Tony Emery, January 12, 1968, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.
16 Terry Fenton to Tony Emery, April 26, 1968, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.
sales from the exhibition. “We have not been approached about purchasing from the exhibition,” writes Fenton, “we have a major Stella already and while we’re interested in a Noland or possibly a Newman, we probably can’t afford them.” Fenton continues to build a case against Christmas, citing the fact that David Mirvish (b. 1944) has Stella and Noland under exclusive rights in Canada and that “this looks like a very large, very expensive exhibition, both in terms of catalogue costs and shipping.” “I’m sorry to sound so suspicious,” Fenton closes his letter, “but I have to admit that I am wary of Douglas Christmas. Our dealings with him in the past have been unhappy and his method of approach to this present exhibition seems to have caused a good deal of suspicion.”

In a draft letter addressed to Fenton—it seems never sent—Emery wrote on May 3, 1968, “to be very frank with you we fully share your suspicions about Doug Christmas’ way of operating.” That said, “his certain flair” and the fact that the idea “had sufficient merit to warrant discussion with him.” “Since we question the reliability of Doug’s statements,” Emery continues, “all we are accepting at this point is that he has made an initial approach to the artists. From this point on we are negotiating with them directly and setting our own conditions.” Whether or not this letter was sent, Fenton’s

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17 Fenton to Emery.
18 Fenton to Emery.
19 Emery goes on to write that Christmas’ “name will not appear in the catalogue or any other literature as being connected with the organization of the show . . . he will at most be given credit in the preface as one of the ‘cooperators’ along with whatever other names there should be, such as Leo Castelli, David Mirvish, as required.” Tony Emery, “Draft Letter to Terry Fenton,” May 3, 1968, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives. Shadbolt’s acknowledgement in the exhibition catalogue was sufficiently vague: “Early enthusiasm of Doug Christmas for the idea of the show was effective in eliciting the interest and support of the artists.” Dorothy Shadbolt, “Introduction,” in Lippard, New York 13, n.p.
20 Emery, “Draft Letter to Terry Fenton.”
suspicions must have subsided, Regina ended up scheduling the exhibition, and Christmas went on to play a crucial role in the show.  

Douglas Christmas (b. 1944) was a divisive figure not only in the Vancouver art scene, but as evidenced by Fenton’s letter to Emery, maintained a controversial reputation elsewhere in Canada, as well. Born in Vancouver, he first appeared on the art scene around 1961 as a seventeen-year-old picture framer. By 1967, he was mounting exhibitions of artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, and by the end of 1968, had taken over Virginia Dwan’s Los Angeles gallery and opened a new space with an exhibition of Sol LeWitt’s wall drawings.

Earlier on, however, and crucial to Christmas’ transformation from a local framer to an international art dealer, was his involvement with the New Design Gallery (1955–1966), founded on December 2, 1955 by two recent arrivals to Vancouver, Alvin Balkind and his partner Abraham Rogatnick (1923–2009). Born in Baltimore, Balkind studied at Johns Hopkins University, majoring in drama and literature. After graduating, in 1943 he was drafted into the Navy. In summer 1953, while working in Provincetown, Balkind

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21 In spite of this, Shadbolt and Emery were not keen to have it widely known that Christmas was involved in the organization—perhaps as a result concerns similar to those raised by Fenton. Shadbolt writes to Christmas on July 29, 1968, “The item which appeared in Leisure Magazine … disturbs me a little. If the show is being talked about as arranged by ‘Doug Christmas’ then we will have to consider withdrawing … I hope you will watch this.” Doris Shadbolt to Douglas Christmas, July 29, 1968, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives. The clipping was a brief mention in Leisure: a film by Danny Singer “will tie in nicely with an exhibition in Vancouver of the continent’s leading pop art producers—and their personal appearance here too, arranged by Doug Christmas.” “[Pop Art],” Leisure, July 15, 1968.

22 During the 1960s, in Vancouver, Christmas spelled his name with a “t.” He was born Douglas James Christmas, and has used various spellings of his surname. As Kristine McKenna wrote in a 2003 profile in LA Weekly, “going through court archives dating back only to 1976 turns up documentation for more than 55 lawsuits brought against him … under three different spellings of his surname and nine different business names.” Kristine McKenna, “The Ace Is Wild,” LA Weekly, October 9, 2003.


met Hans Hofmann and his circle, and that fall moved to Boston as a paint-mixer for an artist. In Boston he met Rogatnick, who was studying at Harvard University’s Graduate School of Design with Walter Gropius. Then, as John Bentley Mays wrote in 1992, “Balkind resolved to get as far as their money would take them from McCarthyite America.” They spent 1954 in Europe, where Balkind studied at the Université Paris-Sorbonne, and in 1955 he and Rogatnick moved to Vancouver, first invited by Rogatnick’s classmate from Harvard, Geoffrey Massey (b. 1924). From 1959 through 1989, Rogatnick was a Professor in the University of British Columbia’s Architecture school.

When they arrived at the Canada-U.S. border on October 10, 1955, Balkind and Rogatnick were questioned by the border guard—“with this tiny Volkswagen packed inside and packed on top and they turned us back.” As Massey was on his honeymoon, and they had architect Arthur Erickson’s (1924–2009) telephone number, they asked the guard to call, and Erickson vouched for them. On arriving they noticed “very quickly that there were no art galleries,” with the exception of the Vancouver Art Gallery and The Fraser Gallery. They introduced themselves at the Vancouver School of Art, and soon befriended a group of young artists, including Fred Amess, Jack Shadbolt, John Korner, Peter Aspell, and Lionel Thomas. On December 2, 1955, in an attempt to remedy this lack, they opened the New Design Gallery at 145 Marine Drive, West Vancouver. According to the press release, the Gallery’s “aim is to show the public fine art and good

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26 Mays.
29 Balkind and Rogatnick, 8.
design that can be used in daily life . . . It will bring together specialists in architecture, interior design and crafts to carry out commissions, as well as exhibit their work.”

Divided into two long galleries, side-by-side, their initial space in West Vancouver served as the gallery by day and their apartment by night. In 1958, they moved to a space on Pender Street, and alongside the gallery founded The Arts Club, which organized “theatre evenings, movie evenings, dinners,” and hosted what was likely Marshall McLuhan’s first lecture on the West Coast in 1959. Their stable of artists included Jack Shadbolt, Toni Onley, and Gordon Smith, and they occasionally brought in exhibitions from further afield, including work by Joyce Wieland, Michael Snow, Graham Coughtry and other Toronto artists in either 1960 or 1961. In 1962, Balkind was made curator of the UBC Fine Arts Gallery, and as Rogatnick later recounted, following Balkind’s appointment, “it was getting impossible to run New Design, so we turned it over to board of directors in 1962.” The Board consisted of Balkind and Rogatnick, along with architects Geoffrey Massey, Ian Davidson, and Peter Thornton, and Ron Longstaffe. Mary Goldie handled day-to-day operations until May 1963, when the Board offered the role of manager to Betty Marshall. After Marshall’s health deteriorated, as Rogatnick recalled, “the directors could not bother looking for another

30 “Press Release,” December 2, 1955, Box 9, File 25.5.06, The Design Gallery Correspondence, Alvin Balkind fonds, Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery Archives, University of British Columbia.
34 Alvin Balkind to Betty Marshall, May 2, 1963, Box 9, File 25.5.06, The Design Gallery Correspondence, Alvin Balkind fonds, Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery Archives, University of British Columbia.
director, so they turned the whole stable over to Doug Christmas.”\textsuperscript{35} According to later accounts, the sale took place in 1966; in exchange for the New Design Gallery premises and stable, Balkind, Rogatnick, and other board members received “future credit on purchases at his Douglas Gallery.”\textsuperscript{36}

On December 7, 1966, Christmas announced the merger of his framing business and occasional gallery—rather grandly styled The Studio Art Gallery International—with the New Design Gallery.\textsuperscript{37} The former “came into being on July 1, 1961, under the direction of it’s [sic] owner Douglas Christmas.” In reality, Christmas’ gallery was “small framing shop, where he had organized sporadic shows.”\textsuperscript{38} The new entity was known as The Douglas Gallery Ltd.\textsuperscript{39} For a time, the gallery would continue to exhibit artists associated with the New Design Gallery, such as Michael Morris, Iain Baxter, Gathie Falk, and Glenn Lewis, but beginning in 1967, Christmas slowly began to add high-profile American artists to his stable.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{35} Abraham Rogatnick in Bancroft, “UBC in the Sixties: A Conversation with Audrey Capel Doray, Gathie Falk, Donald Gutstein, Karen Jamieson, Glenn Lewis, Jamie Reid, and Abraham Rogatnick.”

\textsuperscript{36} Balkind used the credit to purchase, among other works, a complete set of Warhol’s Mao series prints (1972). “Gallery Art Purchase Receipts,” c 1972, Box 9, File 6, The Design Gallery Correspondence, Alvin Balkind fonds, Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery Archives, University of British Columbia; Balkind and Rogatnick, “An Aspiration to Get Beyond,” 9–10; Joan Lowndes, “Ace: The West Coast Castelli,” \textit{Vanguard} 6, no. 3 (April 1977): 8.


\textsuperscript{39} Around November 1969, Douglas Gallery began using the name Ace (Canada) or Ace Gallery (Canada). “Ace Gallery (Vancouver) Exhibition Announcements,” c 1969, Ace Gallery (Vancouver), Documentation files, Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.

\textsuperscript{40} Just as Christmas used the purchase of New Design Gallery to build a stable of artists, in 1967 he would purchase Virginia Dwan’s Los Angeles gallery on her relocation to New York, acquiring the representation of artists such as John McCracken and DeWain Valentine. John Steven Harris, “Of Rauschenberg, Policy and Representation at the Vancouver Art Gallery: A Partial History 1966-83” (MA Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1985), 101.
“My advantage,” Christmas wrote to Shadbolt on May 16, 1968, some six months after he first proposed *New York 13* to her, “which I shall utilize to the fullest is a personal contact with the individual artists concerned, and making sure of their intent to supply the show with prime pieces. In this respect, Rauschenberg is a prime mediator.”

Christmas’s association with Robert Rauschenberg (1925–2008) was perhaps the single-most important factor in his conceiving the exhibition. Indeed, when Shadbolt wrote to Emery on November 23, 1967, proposing the exhibition to him, she emphasizes the relationship: “with the cooperation of New York artists, especially ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG, Doug Christmas is proposing a New York show for circulation to four Canadian galleries.” In this early document, Shadbolt lists twelve of the thirteen artists included in the exhibition—she added Ellsworth Kelly later—and each would be represented “approximately three works each, none of which would have been exhibited before.” From the outset, the exhibition was to tour, and she projects that costs could be shared four ways between the participating museums.

Christmas’ connection to Rauschenberg was central not only to the development of *New York 13*, but more broadly to the success of The Douglas Gallery. Their meeting may have first come about through an introduction made by Michael Morris (b. 1942) while he and Christmas were visiting Gemini G.E.L. in Los Angeles in spring or early summer 1967. Morris had spent time at Gemini beginning in 1966, shortly after returning

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43 Significantly, in understanding Christmas’ early role in the development of the show, Shadbolt tells Emery that “Doug working on [a] budget.” Shadbolt to Emery.
from two years spent at the Slade School of Fine Art, London (1964–1966). Morris described in interview an earlier trip to the now-celebrated print workshop and publisher:

I was at Gemini with Ed [Ruscha], and Ken Tyler said you guys hang in because Man Ray is coming over to sign a print, so we did. And Man Ray arrived with Henry Miller, [they] were both [a] couple of icons and we ended up being invited for lunch with [them]. And Man Ray gave Ed and I a print each, and years later Ed did this Mr. Ray thing, and sent that to me, [as] kind of a souvenir.44

The visit with Christmas came about the following year. By Morris' account, Christmas had been pestering him to show with his recently formed Douglas Gallery. Morris had shown with the New Design Gallery in 1964—it was his first single-artist exhibition—and was close with Balkind and Rogatnick.45 That first exhibition took place “just before I went to London” in an attempt to try and “get some money together . . . I had a little scholarship, but I wanted to show.”46 In spite of Christmas’ association with the New Design Gallery, Morris was hesitant to show with Douglas Gallery; he recalls telling Christmas, “you don’t know what my work’s about, and you can’t represent me,” but by his account agreed to show with Douglas Gallery if Christmas came to Los Angeles, “I’ll introduce you to a few people and a few galleries, because, you know, that’s the world I’m in.”47 Christmas agreed. During their visit, according to Morris, Rauschenberg was making his first prints with Gemini G.E.L., the series Booster and 7 Studies: the more modest one-colour lithographs, Test Stone #1–7 (1967) (45.7 x 35.6 cm), and the far more

45 “When I came back from England [1966] almost immediately . . . I connected with Doris [Shadbolt] and Alvin, Abe was in Venice . . . and Alvin said you can stay at my place.” Morris, interview, February 21, 2012.
46 Morris.
47 Morris. A similar account is given second-hand, by Glenn Lewis, see Bancroft, “UBC in the Sixties: A Conversation with Audrey Capel Dorny, Gathie Falk, Donald Gutstein, Karen Jamieson, Glenn Lewis, Jamie Reid, and Abraham Rogatnick,” 27.
complex five-colour lithograph and screenprint, *Booster* (1967) (182.9 x 90.2 cm). At the
time, *Booster* was the largest hand-printed lithograph ever produced.48

In interview, Morris was frank about the introduction—“Rauschenberg liked young men . . . so it was easy”—and over the course of their meeting at Gemini, according to Morris, Christmas eventually asked “Can I show you? Could I show some prints?”49 At the time, Vancouver was increasingly on the radar of artists working in Los Angeles; Iain Baxter (b. 1936) had invited Ken Tyler (b. 1931), who founded Gemini in 1965, to Vancouver shortly before Morris and Christmas’ visit. As Rauschenberg had intended to visit the collectors Virginia Wright (b.1929) and Bagley Wright (1924–2011) in Seattle, he agreed to come to Vancouver and to bring the *Booster and 7 Studies* series with him for an exhibition at The Douglas Gallery. When he arrived, in July 1967, it was “a monster rally,” “an event,” with Rauschenberg and his friends Steve Paxton, and Deborah Hay and Alex Hay staying at Morris’ small apartment.50 “All of a sudden, there was [Artscanada editor] Anne Brodzky on my door, and people from out East because of Rauschenberg, there was this whole buzz around Rauschenberg,” Morris recalls.51

*Booster and 7 Studies* opened at The Douglas Gallery on July 14, 1967, with a “gala

50 Morris.
51 Morris. Marguerite Pinney recalls Rauschenberg’s visit, as well. “Our excitement as we waited for Rauschenberg to show up was intense. We waited with a bottle of bourbon, his favourite drink. He came with Alex Hay and drove up from LA where he had been making the Booster Series on enormous stones at Gemini . . . Rauschenberg was fascinated by westcoast Indian rattles and wanted an ex-RCMP buffalo coat . . . We spent a memorable evening at Aki’s on Pender Street, where Japanese food was wonderfully authentic and cheap, with Rauschenberg, Alex and Deborah Hay, sipping Saki and talking.” Marguerite Pinney, “Voices,” in *Vancouver Art and Artists: 1931-1983* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1983), 179.
party on a yacht rented for the occasion.”52 By one account, after Christmas decided against his initial theme of “Bonnie and Clyde,” he told invited guests to dress in black tie and evening gowns; given instructions to meet at the Birks clock, the guests boarded a bus that took them to English Bay, near the corner of Davie and Denman Streets, where speed boats were “ferrying them out to these two bigger boats in the middle of the bay . . . connected by gangplanks.”53

While Morris’s account of Christmas and Rauschenberg’s meeting seems plausible, there are multiple other versions of how the young dealer first met Rauschenberg. In one, Christmas’ friend Ian Davidson, a Vancouver architect and member of the Board of the New Design Gallery, recounted in 2009 that at some point in the early or mid-1960s, Christmas met Teresa Bjornson, who had danced with Merce Cunningham. They dated and she worked at Christmas’ framing shop, before she went on to open Muckamuck restaurant.54 “Through Merce, Teresa met Bob Rauschenberg and many artists of that generation,” Davidson said, “and Teresa introduced them to Doug. Teresa opened the door for Doug.”55

Perhaps the more plausible account is provided by Robert Bigelow (b. 1940), who printed Rauschenberg’s Booster at Gemini G.E.L. between February and April 1967—an account partly corroborated by Christmas in a 1977 profile written by Joan Lowndes for Vanguard. Though Bigelow worked for Gemini for a little less than a year, he was

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52 Lowndes, “Ace: The West Coast Castelli,” 8.
53 By Bigelow’s account, the Bay was a hangout for hippies, who kept swimming out to the boats and trying to climb on board. The party was “catered by a Greek caterer, lots of booze.” Before the opening, Iain Baxter had hosted a party at his house, where he tried to convince Rauschenberg to erase one of his drawings, alluding to Rauschenberg’s Erased de Kooning Drawing (1953), by then already exhibited at the Guggenheim and Museum of Modern Art, New York. Rauschenberg declined, but said that if Baxter found him a quart of salmonberries—which he had tasted for the first time in Baxter’s back yard—he would consider it. Robert Bigelow, interview by Adam Welch, October 18, 2017.
54 Lowndes, “Ace: The West Coast Castelli,” 8.
55 McKenna, “The Ace Is Wild.”
present for the entire period they printed *Booster* and does not recall Morris and Christmas ever visiting the studio during that time.\(^{56}\) In June 1967, Bigelow moved to Vancouver as a war resister, and soon befriended Iain Baxter. It was, according to Bigelow, Baxter who mentioned the *Booster* prints to Christmas, and Bigelow put the young dealer in touch directly with Ken Tyler at Gemini. The account in *Vanguard* given by Lowndes is slightly different: Christmas sought Alvin Balkind’s advice on how to show works by American artists, and Balkind recommended he get in touch with Tatyana Grosman at Universal Limited Art Editions in New York or Gemini G.E.L. in Los Angeles, in order to secure some prints to exhibit. Lowndes continues,

> Through Bob Bigelow, who had worked at Gemini, [Christmas] learned of the *Booster* series and conceived the audacious idea of bringing them—and Rauschenberg—to Vancouver. He phoned Rauschenberg 19 times in New York, each time intercepted by the answering service. The 20th time Rauschenberg happened to be listening on the extension. The name caught his fancy. ‘Doug who?’ he asked. Breakthrough. Yes, he was coming to Port Ludlow in Washington State with the Merce Cunningham Dance Co. for which he was doing the sets and lighting, and it might be possible to drive up to Vancouver. \(^{57}\)

Christmas’s own account, given in 2003, is simply that he “made contact with New York myself. I heard Rauschenberg was going to be in Seattle and kept calling him until he agreed to meet me while he was there. He finally agreed to see me, we had a great meeting, and I started showing him.”\(^{58}\)

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\(^{57}\) Lowndes, “Ace: The West Coast Castelli,” 8.

\(^{58}\) McKenna, “The Ace Is Wild.” In this profile, Christmas also suggests he moved to Los Angeles in 1966 on the advice of Andy Warhol. Given his first exhibition in Los Angeles was not held until December 1968, however, this seems unlikely. Christmas continued to show Rauschenberg’s work throughout the late 1960s and 70s: the Stoned Moon prints (exhibited 1969), remakes of his earlier White Paintings (1973), the Hoarfrost series (1975), and Jammers (1976). Harris, “Of Rauschenberg, Policy and Representation at the Vancouver Art Gallery: A Partial History 1966-83,” 40.
Although the visit in July 1967 was Rauschenberg’s first time to Vancouver, his work had been shown in the city three years earlier. In 1964, Alvin Balkind organized an exhibition drawn from a single, remarkable, private collection in Seattle, that of Virginia and Bagley Wright. As mentioned above, the Wrights played a chance—but possibly decisive—role in bringing Rauschenberg to Vancouver in 1967, as it was his visit to them in Seattle that made a trip to Vancouver conceivable.

Shown at University of British Columbia Fine Arts Gallery, which then occupied the basement of the library building on the University’s campus, *Art Becomes Reality* was on view for just over a week (January 29–February 8, 1964). In spite of its short run, as Balkind wrote to Virginia Wright, “the public response to this exhibition has been unprecedented in this Gallery and hasn’t caused as big a stir artistically since a Guggenheim exhibition appeared in the Vancouver Art Gallery about ten years ago.”

This was the first in a series of well-received exhibitions Balkind realized for the UBC Fine Arts Gallery. A few years on, he had realized Iain Baxter’s *Bagged Place* (1966), *Joy and Celebration* (1967), and *Random Sample N=42* (1968), prompting Lucy Lippard to write after meeting him in early 1968, during a visit to Vancouver that lasted just 36 hours, that he is “a curator of a caliber rarely found in larger cities.”

*Art Becomes Reality* brought together one or in some cases two works each by Tom Wesselmann, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Indiana, Andy Warhol, Wayne Thiebaud, Ed Ruscha, Bruce Conner, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Ernest Trova, Robert Morris, and Jean Tinguely. Among the works exhibited were Rauschenberg’s *Octave* (1960) and *Manuscript* (1963), Johns’ *Thermometer* (1959), and Lichtenstein’s *Drowning*

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59 Alvin Balkind to Virginia Wright and Bagley Wright, February 7, 1964, Exhibition files, Art Becomes Reality, Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery Archives, University of British Columbia.
Girl (1963; Fig. 4.4). Warhol’s *Do It Yourself* (1961), a characteristic paint-by-numbers work, was also shown, as was Ed Ruscha’s *Box Smashed Flat* (1960–61). While most of the works were two-dimensional—with Rauschenberg’s combine *Octave* one exception—a remarkable object included in the exhibition was Robert Morris’s *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* (1961). Balkind, in the modest pamphlet that accompanied the exhibition, rightly suggested that “the title Pop Art does not fully cover a description of the works in this collection.”

Even if *New York 13* was not the first to bring many of these artists to Vancouver, it was a far more publicized and accessible exhibition of contemporary artists from New York than Balkind had realized five years earlier. Some 21,000 visitors saw the exhibition, exceeding those at the Vancouver Art Gallery for exhibitions of the *Group of Seven* (1954), the *Arts of the Raven* (1967), or *Emily Carr* (1971). Indeed, given the fact that the Gallery was not constrained by a single collection, they managed a more expansive account of 1960s New York arts practices, to a degree, some would argue, that the exhibition lacked focus. The artists chosen had little in common, save for “the achievement of a certain level of reputation.” As John Harris has suggested, there was a certain neutral equality or equivalency to the display of the works, emphasized by Lippard’s catalogue which, save for a brief preface, simply anthologized existing

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61 All of these are now in prominent public collections: the first three were donated by the Wrights to the Seattle Art Museum, the last, the Museum of Modern Art purchased with the Philip Johnson Fund (by exchange) and gift of the Wrights, in 1971.


statements for each artist.\textsuperscript{65} This lack of focus in the selection of artists and their works betrays something of the fraught organizing principle of the exhibition: Christmas not only proposed the show to Shadbolt, as we have seen, but would play an important role in realizing the exhibition. It was Christmas’s leveraging his still rather fresh—months’ old, really—acquaintance with Rauschenberg as an inducement to Shadbolt, after all, that first got the exhibition going in late 1967. Christmas had significant financial interests at stake in proposing the show, and as will be seen, many of the early decisions relate to increasing his returns. Moreover, he stood to benefit from the reputation gained for his fledgling gallery through association, not least with the Vancouver Art Gallery, but with two prominent New York dealers.

The show seems to have been formally approved in early January 1968, with Christmas sending Shadbolt a letter congratulating her for “bringing through the New York show.” “I also want to thank you for the prompt payment of the $1000.00,” which seems to have constituted part of Christmas’ fee for organizing the exhibition.\textsuperscript{66} Strangely, only later, on February 27, 1968, does Emery send Christmas a letter outlining “a flat fee of $1,000 for your services.” Suggesting that the portion already paid now constitutes the whole of the fee. Emery continues,

This is based on the consideration that while the exhibition will be an exciting and important one for us, from your point of view as a commercial dealer, it will serve as a large showcase across the country for a major show of your artists. Since as you say it is likely to sell-out, even smaller commissions than usual should result in a substantial return.

\textsuperscript{65} Harris, 97. This equivalency between works was complemented, as Harris says, a “general spirit of celebration . . . we really were so special to have the work of these foreign masters shown in our own town.” Harris suggests that even works by Warhol, Segal or Morris, which broach darker subjects or advanced a critical politics ended up subsumed by this celebratory display of gratitude.

\textsuperscript{66} Douglas Christmas to Doris Shadbolt, January 18, 1968, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.
There is also the obvious fact that it is going to be an expensive show for us for which we will have to scurry around and raise the money.67

In a document dated February 1968, possibly a draft of the project description provided in the letter to Christmas on February 27, 1968, the outline suggests “all works are being executed especially for this show and will not have been exhibited before. All will be for sale. The Vancouver Art Gallery has the right of first option on any sale.”68 Even at this early stage, Emery seems to be losing patience with Christmas’ demands for higher fees, writing parenthetically that John Coplans “is doing the LOS ANGELES SIX exhibition for us on a very modest fee [and] is not only looking after all the details of loan agreement forms, shipping arrangements with artists, etc., but is actually producing the printed catalogue.”69

As Emery’s mention of Coplans suggests, this early planning for New York 13 coincided with the opening of Los Angeles 6, which ran from March 31 to May 5, 1968. As one of the three exhibitions Emery heralded as a sign of the Vancouver Art Gallery’s new internationalism, it stands as the first, if more modest, venture into representing contemporary American practices in the Gallery’s programming. Just as artists in Vancouver were working at a remove from those in Toronto—as Lippard wrote in 1966, “the heart of the central Canadian art world”70—Los Angeles had at the time, as it still does today, a secondary position to New York. As Coplans wrote in the catalogue accompanying the show, “the exhibition . . . asserts the minimal conditions under which artists of high ambition can flourish outside a ponderously established international art

69 Emery to Christmas, February 27, 1968.
center such as New York.”71 This notion of “minimal conditions,” of course, applies even more to Vancouver than Los Angeles. Although the Festivals of Contemporary Arts “provided a continuing tension and stimulus to the local artist community,”72 as Balkind later suggested, the exhibition was the first modest survey of sculptors from Los Angeles in Vancouver.

While Shadbolt first approached Walter Hopps (1932–2005) to organize the exhibition, it was in fact realized by John Coplans (1920–2003), perhaps now best known either for his role as a co-founder of *Artforum* (1962) or, in fact, for his photo-based work, which he began to show in New York following 1980.73 Born in South Africa, he arrived in California via England, where he had trained as a painter. From 1963 to 1967, Coplans was director of the Art Gallery of the University of California at Irvine, and from 1967 to 1970, a senior curator of the Pasadena Art Museum. It was during this period that Hopps asked him to take over the organization of the exhibition that would come to be known as *Los Angeles 6*. As acting director at the Pasadena Art Museum from 1968 to 1970—once Hopps left to take over the Washington Museum of Modern Art—Coplans organized the exhibition *Serial Art* which he proposed to Shadbolt for the Vancouver Art Gallery.74 Earlier in the decade, Coplans’ first exhibition, *Pop Art USA* (September 7–29,
1963) for the Oakland Art Museum, had brought him into contact with Balkind during his work on *Art Becomes Reality* (1964).\(^{75}\)

In publicity material for the exhibition, *Los Angeles 6* was slated “as a survey of Los Angeles painting and sculpture in the first half of the 1960s;” however as we will see, it was originally intended to survey all of West Coast American art. “This show, under the strict eye and sure hand of our on-the-spot consultant John Coplans,” the entry for the Gallery’s *Bulletin* continues, “has been fined down to a rigorously selected sampling of the best works of six artists.”\(^{76}\) Of the six artists, three showed an overriding concern for colour (Craig Kauffman, John McCracken and Ron Davis), two were interested largely in light effects (Robert Irwin and Larry Bell), and Ed Kienholz’s *The Beanery* (1965), stood as the single, rather anomalous, “tableau of an old-fashioned Los Angeles bar.”\(^{77}\)

Walter Hopps first came to Vancouver in the fall of 1966, just before Richard Simmins (b. 1924) left as director of the Vancouver Art Gallery in December 1966. Following Simmins’ sudden departure, Shadbolt took over as acting director, and that spring, and on March 10, 1967, on the recommendation of Philip Leider at *Artforum*,\(^{78}\) she wrote to Hopps asking if he would be interesting in working on “a major and comprehensive exhibition of west coast contemporary American painting and sculpture.”

Shadbolt continues, “I am thinking of a large exhibition (say, 50 to 70 works) chosen to

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\(^{75}\) John Coplans, *Pop Art USA* (Oakland, California: Oakland Art Museum, 1963); Alvin Balkind to Paul Mills, February 13, 1964, Exhibition files, *Art Becomes Reality*, Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery Archives, University of British Columbia. Mills was the director of the Oakland Art Museum.


\(^{77}\) “Los Angeles 6.”

\(^{78}\) Shadbolt had spoken with Philip Leider the day before she first wrote to Hopps, Leider suggested that Hopps “is probably the only man who could get together such an exhibition but that he should be asked only to make the selection and that the organization, administration, etc. be handled by someone else . . . [at] the Pasadena Art Museum.” Doris Shadbolt, “Note to File,” March 20, 1967, File 2, 136-5, Exhibition files, Los Angeles 6 (EX1475), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives. Leider had been in Vancouver just prior to this exchange with Shadbolt in order to carry out research toward his article “Vancouver: Scene with No Scene.” Philip Leider, “Vancouver: Scene with No Scene,” *Artscanada* 24, no. 6–7 (July 1967): 1–8.
represent the edge of creative vitality during perhaps the last four or five years.”79

Shadbolt seemed keen to capitalize on the opportunity to shape the Gallery’s programming before the next director arrived. Hopps was slow with his response, not uncharacteristically, though Shadbolt finally reaches him by phone on March 27, and he sends a letter on April 11 accepting the project and outlining his early thinking about the exhibition. 80

Even in this earliest contact, however, Hopps introduces Coplans. When Shadbolt writes again to Hopps on May 8, 1967, she references Coplan’s recent exhibition for the Seattle Art Museum, *Ten from Los Angeles* (July 15–September 5, 1966),81 suggesting to Hopps of the Vancouver show, “I see this exhibition as more comprehensive than the one John Coplans organized for Seattle last year and I don’t feel any conflict over this.”82 Of course, at the time she could not have known that *Los Angeles 6* would end up not only being curated by Coplans rather than Hopps, but also included four fewer artists than his earlier Seattle exhibition. It was only in September 1967, following Hopps’ appointment as director at the Washington Museum of Modern Art, that Coplan’s principal role in the exhibition became clear.83 Shadbolt travelled to Los Angeles in early November 1967 to meet with Coplans. On her return from that trip, she describes the exhibition as “six contemporary Los Angeles artists of major creative imagination, chosen strictly as individuals and not as sharing a ‘Los Angeles sensibility.’ Each represented by from one,

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80 Walter Hopps to Doris Shadbolt, April 11, 1967, File 2, 136-5, Exhibition files, Los Angeles 6 (EX1475), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.
two to six works." All of the organization for the show, according to the memo, is by John Coplans and Penny Little, curator and registrar, respectively, of the Pasadena Art Museum. Interestingly, James Turrell—the Californian Light and Space artist—is cited as the designer of the catalogue, however the credit given in the catalogue itself is to Jerry McMillan, a designer and artist associated with Ed Ruscha. The Vancouver catalogue was produced entirely by Pasadena Art Museum, with a budget of $5000 allocated to them.

Significantly, Shadbolt’s reliance on Coplans’ expertise extended beyond the organization of the exhibition, as evidenced by related correspondence between her and the dealer Irving Blum (b. 1930), whom Shadbolt had also visited on her November 1967 trip to Los Angeles. Blum took over Ed Kienholz’s share of the Ferus Gallery in 1957, which he ran until it closed in 1966. From 1966 until his departure for New York in 1972, he ran the eponymous Irving Blum Gallery. Shadbolt wrote to him on November 17, 1967 inquiring about the availability of works by Frank Stella. What is surprising is Shadbolt’s willingness to defer to Coplans and the dealer in making the selection for the Gallery:

I have my committee’s approval to ask if you would let me know when you receive them and place a ‘hold’ on one for us. I do not know at this point whether a quick trip to Los Angeles would be possible on their arrival, or whether I would ask you and John to make a selection for our approval, but I am sure we could work this out. Naturally we want a very

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85 Shadbolt.
86 “I understand from John Coplans that you are expecting some ten Stella canvases in the near future which will be priced in the neighbourhood of $5,000. I am very anxious to have this gallery make what must now be a belated start in the area of Contemporary American.” Doris Shadbolt to Irving Blum, November 17, 1967, File 2, 136-5, Exhibition files, Los Angeles 6 (EX1475), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.
good one! Our usual routine compels me to ask you whether your gallery allows discount for educational purposes?87

The “very good one” was Stella’s *Djarabjerd II* (1967; VAG 68.8), purchased by the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1968.88 Shadbolt’s deference to a dealer and outside curator in making a significant purchase for the Gallery’s collection only reinforces the degree to which she depended on others with her “belated start in the area of Contemporary American.”89

*Los Angeles 6* opened on March 31, 1968, including some twenty-four works: two glass constructions by Larry Bell, five fiberglass sculptures by Ron Davis, four works by Robert Irwin, seven Plexiglas sculptures by Craig Kaufman, Edward Kienholz’s *The Beanery*, 1965, the only work by the artist in the exhibition, and lastly five works, mostly in plywood, fiberglass and lacquer, by John McCracken.90 Kienholz, Irwin, Kaufman, and Bell were in attendance, as were John Coplans and Penny Little. The dinner before the opening was at a tropical-themed restaurant, which Emery refers to as “the Mai-Tai Room of the Bayshore Inn.”91 Following, Alvin Balkind hosted the “post-opening” party for the artists and others up from California, including collectors (Robert Rowan, Thomas Terbell and others), the dealer Irving Blum, and critics Andrée Paradis from Montreal.

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87 Shadbolt to Blum.
89 Shadbolt to Blum, November 17, 1967.
91 Tony Emery to Thomas Maytham, March 18, 1968, File 2, 136-5, Exhibition files, Los Angeles 6 (EX1475), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives. Maytham was the director of the Seattle Art Museum.
and Harry Malcolmson from Toronto. A few days following the opening, on the evening of April 3, Walter Hopps delivered a lecture at the Vancouver Art Gallery, “The Los Angeles Scene.” He also seems to have held a seminar with local artists.

A little over a week after the opening, on April 11, 1968, Emery wrote to Lucy Lippard, explaining how the Canada Council, while paying for the critics from Quebec and Ontario, Paradis and Malcolmson, would not cover her trip from New York, they have “left us to pick up the tab for your visit, which we gladly do because a) we’d like you to see the show here; b) we’d like to talk about the PAINTED FOR CANADA thing; and c) we always wanted to meet you.”

Painted for Canada was, of course, Emery’s preferred title for New York 13. In a letter roughly a month before Lippard’s first trip to Vancouver (Fig. 4.5), on March 19, 1968, Christmas continues to grumble with Emery about his fee, again exercising his social connections to secure artists with “verbal politics and friendly nudgings . . . I cannot emphasize strongly enough the difficulty involved in assembling a show of this type with people who can say no so easily.” While in his correspondence with Emery and

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92 Alvin Balkind to Doris Shadbolt, April 1, 1968, File 2, 136-5, Exhibition files, Los Angeles 6 (EX1475), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.
93 On April 2, 1968 he delivered “The Economics of Art” at Simon Fraser University Theatre, with a related seminar on April 4. On April 3 he gave a talk, “Washington and The East,” at the University of British Columbia, followed by a seminar on the same subject. Doris Shadbolt to Walter Hopps, April 18, 1968, File 2, 136-5, Exhibition files, Los Angeles 6 (EX1475), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.
94 Tony Emery to Lucy Lippard, April 11, 1968, File 2, 136-5, Exhibition files, Los Angeles 6 (EX1475), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.
95 Douglas Christmas to Tony Emery, March 19, 1968, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives. Emery responds a few days later, “we can’t meet the figure of $1,600 you suggest . . . In my view a reasonable figure for a consultant’s fee in this case would be about $750 and expenses (which might reach $250), assuming that the consultant we picked was a) resident in New York b) not handling the catalogue, and c) not standing to make anything but his fee out of the show. Your case, surely, is different. You are going to halve the commission with the New York dealers, so we must assume that you would be disappointed not to clear $5,000 in this way. And you are
Shadbolt, Christmas suggests that these are existing relationships with the individual artists, later correspondence shows it was primarily through his collaboration with two dealers, Leo Castelli (1907–1999) and Sidney Janis (1896–1989), that the show was organized. Christmas used his connection to Castelli—an introduction most conceivably first made through Rauschenberg around the time of the _Booster_ exhibition (1967)—in order to approach Janis. All but three of the artists in _New York 13_ were represented by these two dealers. \(^96\) On March 21, 1968 Emery outlines the benefits to Christmas, demonstrating just how deeply _New York 13_ was conceived as a commercial enterprise orchestrated by Christmas: “You are borrowing the walls of three Canadian galleries, from which to sell works of a size you couldn’t accommodate in your own premises.” Emery continues,

> We, on the other hand, pay you a fee, handle all the arrangements, install, pack and circulate the show, attend to insurance and freight, and customs, and produce the catalogue, and are not expected to ask for the 20% commission we usually charge for works sold in the Gallery. I am sure you will understand how we feel. \(^97\)

Christmas and Emery must have managed an agreement, as Christmas’ first letters to Castelli and Janis were sent around the middle of May 1968. Christmas wrote to Castelli, “the roll of the Douglas Gallery in this project is to formulate (New York Force) and at the appropriate time hand said show over to the direction of the Vancouver Art Gallery.” \(^98\) As Castelli represented eight of the thirteen artists in the exhibition—called

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\(^96\) Those artists not represented by a commercial gallery at the time were Kelly, Newman, and Noland.

\(^97\) Emery to Christmas, March 21, 1968.

by Christmas New York Force—his participation was paramount.99 “All works in the exhibition will be for sale and the Douglas Gallery will handle all sales on a 20% basis, as agreed.”100 Christmas’ financial interests in the exhibition were clear to Emery and Shadbolt from the outset.101 Christmas had spoken with Castelli on April 12 and 13, 1968, to outline his idea for the exhibition of one to three works by each artist, “Needless to say, the works should be choice pieces of each of the individual artists but also pieces that have not yet been exposed. In this way the show will no doubt be of international significance.”102

At the same time Christmas wrote to Castelli and Janis, he also wrote to Shadbolt, who would soon take over the administration of the project. “I believe the primary step would be for you to establish a strong relationship with these two gentlemen,” Christmas advises her, “the role of the Douglas Gallery is to obtain choice pieces for the show. I can do this with all artists except Judd & Warhol, in which case it is more advantageous for

99 Judd, Johns, Morris, Rosenquist, Lichtenstein, Stella, Warhol, and Rauschenberg were represented by Castelli at the time.
100 Christmas to Castelli, May 15, 1968.
101 As Emery wrote to Fenton, “Doug says he has worked out the commission-sharing with Castelli and I believe one other New York dealer involved.” Emery, “Draft Letter to Terry Fenton.” The other New York dealer was Sidney Janis, and in a letter from Conrad Janis to Shadbolt on May 27, 1968, he wrote “As Vancouver Art Gallery does not wish to participate in either sales or commissions due from sales, we shall pass the usual 10% museum commission to Mr. Christmas.” Sidney Janis to Doris Shadbolt, May 27, 1968, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives. On December 9, 1968, Conrad Janis wrote again to Shadbolt, this time rather cryptically, suggesting a change in the arrangement between Christmas and his gallery: “we now must revise this paragraph which deals with sales and commissions as follows . . . With respect to making of sales and commissions on such sales, since you have asked not to be involved with such sales, these shall be handled strictly by ourselves only. We do not in any case wish to involve others outside of the Vancouver Gallery either on sales or on commissions.” Sidney Janis to Doris Shadbolt, December 9, 1968, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.
102 Christmas to Castelli, May 15, 1968. Christmas wrote a similarly worded letter to Sidney Janis, looking to secure the participation of Oldenburg and Segal, with Douglas Gallery handling “all sales on a split commission basis. They should be choice pieces which have not yet been exposed.” “I believe Mr Castelli phoned and informed you of his co-operation with this exhibition in February. At that time I met with your son and discussed it in further detail with him.” Douglas Christmas to Sidney Janis, May 15, 1968, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.
Leo to contact them personally.”

Sure enough, Shadbolt writes to both Castelli and Janis within a day, introducing herself “in connection with the exhibition . . . proposed by Douglas Christmas.” “Though having originated in this way,” Shadbolt continues, “and though the contacts up to this point have been through Mr. Christmas, we would like to make it clear that The Vancouver Art Gallery is the organizer of this exhibition and that the agreement to participate and the terms of participation are to be made with this institution and not with Mr. Christmas.” Shadbolt similarly wrote to artists, including Johns, Rauschenberg and Judd, all care of Castelli, and all within a few days of first writing their dealer. With some, she arranged studio visits during her trip to New York the week of June 17, 1968, accompanied by Lucy Lippard, whom she had first met in Vancouver for a brief thirty-six hours, when Lippard had seen the *Los Angeles 6* exhibition, as discussed below. With the mantle having passed from Christmas to Shadbolt, she quickly reiterated the terms of the exhibition and clarified the role of the Vancouver Art Gallery with each artist. While perhaps Shadbolt is just being conscientious, there is the overriding sense in her insistence with each letter of clearing

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103 Christmas to Shadbolt, May 16, 1968. Elsewhere in the letter, Christmas writes, “Re Janis [struck out and “Castelli” inserted by hand] stable—Rauschenberg of course is 100%, Stella, Lichtenstein, Rosenquist & Morris are all 100%. Johns? Touchy, however I definitely feel Rauschenberg will handle the situation. Warhol & Judd are being handled personally by Castelli. Newman is 100% and an individual you would contact directly.”

104 Doris Shadbolt to Leo Castelli, May 16, 1968, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives. She continues, “The rationale for the show is simply that the twelve are artists of major creative imagination—at the core of the New York art scene.” The letter to Sidney Janis is nearly identical, with an additional section, however: “this institution will have no responsibility with regard to sales which will be handled by and through the dealers involved. (I understand the Douglas Gallery has worked out the sharing of commissions with the New York dealers involved.)” Doris Shadbolt to Sidney Janis, May 17, 1968, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.


up any misconceptions possibly arising from Christmas’ previous conversations—suspicions fueled by Terry Fenton’s comments to Tony Emery, as quoted above.  

“I am very pleased,” Shadbolt wrote to Lippard in May 1968, in advance of her visit to New York, “that you are willing to work on the catalogue and grateful for your suggestion that we might be able to visit artists together.” There is little extant of her exact itinerary for the trip, however Shadbolt ran into John Coplans, and seems to have visited Robert Morris’s studio with him. During the visit, Shadbolt also proposed to Lippard that they add Ellsworth Kelly to the exhibition, underscoring how closely she valued Lippard’s involvement in matters beyond the scope of the catalogue. In any event, it seems that she was unable to make it to all of the artists, and plans another trip that fall, the second week of October 1968, accompanied again by Lippard. This time, the appointments seem more resolved: “I am glad that you are willing to face a packed schedule of visits this week so that we can accomplish as much as possible in the shortest time that is practicable,” Shadbolt writes to Lippard on September 19, 1968.

That second trip to New York took place roughly from October 7–12, 1968, and included visits with Barnett Newman and Donald Judd, among others, and time spent at

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107 While each letter is phrased slightly differently, the letter to Rauschenberg is indicative, if slightly more personal given the inferred relationship between him and Christmas: “I understand from Doug that you are enthusiastic about the show and have been very helpful in using your persuasiveness with some of the other artists and we are very grateful for your help. You will of course understand that as a public institution which will assume heavy financial, to say nothing of artistic responsibility in connection with this exhibition, The Vancouver Art Gallery is the organizer and the agreement to participate and the terms of participation are made with us and not the Douglas Gallery.” Shadbolt to Rauschenberg, May 22, 1968.


Castelli reviewing photographs of works to borrow.112 Castelli seems to have arranged
the visits for Shadbolt and Lippard.113 Following the trip, she wrote to Castelli again, this
time with a loan request. The exhibition was, at this point at least, to be almost entirely
composed of loans realized through Castelli and Janis galleries.114 As mentioned above,
Sidney Janis provided works by Oldenburg and Segal, and separate arrangements were
made directly with Barnett Newman, Ellsworth Kelly and Kenneth Noland. There is
considerable correspondence back and forth throughout the winter of 1968–69 with both
dealers about the checklist for the exhibition, and in many cases Shadbolt has no choice
but to defer to selections made by Castelli or Janis.115 For instance, Conrad Janis (b.
1928), Sidney Janis’ son, wrote to Shadbolt on December 15, 1968, that “unfortunately,
the Segal, Execution 1967 will not be available in time for your show, however, we are
delighted to have Segal’s consent to lend in its place, a great environmental work, The

112 Shadbolt and Lippard met with Judd and Julie Finch, afterwards she sent him a copy of her Arts of the
Raven (1967) catalogue, which “included several works by Don Lelooaska Smith.” She asks to borrow his
“Ramp” available from Castelli, and a “stainless steel core.” “This piece would be handled through Irving
Blum in Los Angeles, but you might make a new work in New York and include it in the shipment from
there.” Doris Shadbolt to Donald Judd, October 18, 1968, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13
(EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.
113 Leo Castelli to Doris Shadbolt, September 21, 1968, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13
(EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.
114 From Castelli, for instance, Shadbolt initially requested two Judds, a new environment from Rosenquist
(a modification of Horse Blinders, which he had shown at Castelli in fall 1968), seven Rosenquists, a new
commission from Robert Rauschenberg, three works by Robert Morris, two Frank Stella paintings, and
from Johns two sets of lithographs and a painting. Doris Shadbolt to Leo Castelli, November 7, 1968, File
136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.
115 For instance, Shadbolt wrote to Castelli on November 7, 1968, that Johns says that neither Periscope
(Hart Crane) nor Field Painting are available, and suggests “we consult with you about another choice.”
She also asks for introduction to Ed Janss in Los Angeles to borrow Johns’ Landsend (1963), asks whether
a work by Morris is available and also which of the Stellas they may have, “could we have one of the round
10’ diameter paintings?” Shadbolt to Castelli. Shadbolt wrote to Castelli on December 12, 1968, making
slight revisions to the checklist, including requesting a new painting Aluminum Numbers (1968) being
made available by Johns; Rauschenberg is making a new “mirror work”; and substituting the Robert Moses
work by Warhol for the Jackie work. Doris Shadbolt to Leo Castelli, December 12, 1968, File 136-18,
Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.
Movie House 1966–67.” 116 As it turned out, they ended up getting Execution and not The Movie House for the exhibition.

This went on until rather close to the opening of the exhibition on January 21, 1969. Just four weeks before, Shadbolt received a letter from Kay Bearman at Castelli on December 22, 1968, confirming some works, like Judd’s “ramp” (DSS 76), 117 but recommending other possible lenders for Judd’s “stainless steel core” work (DSS 158), including Irving Blum and Douglas Christmas himself. Christmas had purchased the sculpture from Castelli sometime after June 1968. 118 There were still no confirmed works by Rosenquist or Rauschenberg—“Mr. Castelli is working with them to arrange something for you, but so far there is nothing definite to report.” As for Morris, Bearman wrote “we decided on this felt piece rather than the one mentioned in your letter—see photograph. It is multi-colored.” In other instances, Bearman seems hesitant to lend from Castelli’s inventory, suggesting other works already in private collections or with other dealers. 119 All told, the impression of the show as being unfocused is, as evidenced from the correspondence, clearly a result of the heavy involvement from dealers and the complications arising from loans.

118 “About the Donald Judd pieces you were interested in . . . Of course, the red one you reserved is being held for you.” Kate Bearman to Douglas Christmas, June 6, 1968, Box 7, File 34, Christmas, Doug, Series 1: Correspondence, 1948-1999, Leo Castelli Gallery Records, Archives of American Art.
119 For a painting by Stella, “Douglas Christmas has a new work ‘Ctesiphon III’ . . . David Mirvish and Irving Blum also have recent Stellas. If both of them have nothing they are willing to lend, I can let you have ‘Effingham,’ dated 1966.” She continues, referring to a painting by Johns, “You may write for ‘Land’s End’ to Mr. Ed Janss.” Regarding Warhol, Bearman writes, “You may have the Disaster painting to which you refer . . . We will supply you with multiple silkscreen images . . . They do not require framing.” “The Jackies are back from Venice (the ones which belong to Douglas Christmas) so there should be no problem with that. We will be able to loan you Brillo Boxes.” Kate Bearman to Doris Shadbolt, December 22, 1968, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.
This correspondence between Shadbolt, Castelli and Janis suggests that it was either their reticence to lend, or in fact, the sheer demand for these works that made a more critical and finely honed selection of works for the exhibition possible. At first, however, Christmas’ restriction that the works be previously unexhibited and available for sale seemed to be the cause of unfocused selection, and of course the desire for new work available for sale was motivated by the fact that Christmas wanted to increase his chances of a sale and resulting commission. *New York 13* was, in short, a selling exhibition benefitting three dealers: Leo Castelli, Sidney Janis, and most of all, both in financial returns and reputation, Douglas Christmas.

Initially the brief put to the dealers and artists was even more onerous: in a document dated February 1968, possibly a draft version of the project description provided in the letter to Christmas on February 27, 1968, the exhibition outline suggests “all works are being executed especially for this show and will not have been exhibited before. All will be for sale. The Vancouver Art Gallery has the right of first option on any sale.” As it turned out, while the exhibition included a number of recent works, some not previously shown, only two were specially conceived for the exhibition: Oldenburg’s *Giant Saw—Hard Version* (1969; Figs. 4.6 and 4.7) and James Rosenquist’s *Aurora Borealis* (1969). Many artists bristled at this request demand for new work, however it seems to have been keenly supported by Emery, given his early and strong penchant for the title, and underlying conceit, of *Painted for Canada*. The title for the exhibition

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120 Shadbolt, “Painted for Canada (12 Americans) Exhibition.”
121 Not anticipating, perhaps, that a considerable number of the works included in the exhibition would not be paintings, Emery wrote to Christmas, “so far as the name goes, I am not in favour of changing the original title. ‘PAINTED FOR CANADA’ explains itself and distinguishes the show from others, now circulating, which feature many of the same artists. “NEW YORK PAINTS FOR CANADA” or “FOR CANADA FROM NEW YORK” would tell the whole story, but lack economy and punch.” Emery to Christmas, March 21, 1968.
was somewhat contentious. Though Shadbolt wrote to Castelli in May 1968 with the title “New York Twelve,” she only approached certain artists with it in October 1968.\textsuperscript{122} Few seem to have responded, however Oldenburg replied on November 10, 1968, feeling it was overused and “a bit too prosaic.”\textsuperscript{123} As for the request for new, previously unexhibited, work, Shadbolt quickly worked out the impossibility of this request, as she wrote on July 28, 1968 to Oldenburg, “my trip confirmed . . . that while the idea of an exhibition consisting of freshly executed works not previously exhibited and available for purchase is a fine rationale . . . some of the artists will find it impossible to accept such a commitment.”\textsuperscript{124} Shadbolt broached this with Castelli in a letter from early September, saying, “we would have to somewhat modify our original conception of the exhibition in one or two cases, and to include older or borrowed pieces—or to omit an artist from the list of exhibitors.”\textsuperscript{125}

This idea of dropping an artist altogether because new work was not available seems a far stretch, but something that Shadbolt was clearly entertaining; emphasizing just how motivated she, Emery and indeed, Christmas, were to the original premise of the exhibition. The motivations of the Gallery, however, and those of Christmas, were at variance. From Shadbolt and Emery’s perspective, an exhibition composed of “previously unexhibited” work makes for a stronger draw, and supports the early inclination of Emery’s that the artists are making the work specifically for Canada. This also adds, to borrow from Christmas’ rationale for only including new works, a certain

\textsuperscript{122} Shadbolt to Castelli, May 16, 1968; Doris Shadbolt to Donald Judd, October 31, 1968, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.
\textsuperscript{123} Doris Shadbolt to Claes Oldenburg, November 10, 1968, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.
\textsuperscript{124} Shadbolt to Oldenburg, July 28, 1968.
\textsuperscript{125} Doris Shadbolt to Leo Castelli, September 4, 1968, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.
“international significance.” Of course, from his perspective as a dealer, the fact that works are previously unexhibited, and so available for purchase, significantly increases his chances of making a sale from the show, and gaining a commission as a result.

In spite of the difficulty Oldenburg expressed earlier to Shadbolt about making a new work, with the assistance of Vancouver artist Glen Toppings (1930–1972) who fabricated the work, he realized *Giant Saw—Hard Version* (1969) specifically for *New York 13*. This was decided by late October 1968, and Shadbolt asked Oldenburg to send the specifications so Toppings could begin work. The only other work realized expressly for the exhibition was provided by James Rosenquist, *Aurora Borealis* (1969), an installation made of “plastic, neon, and mylar and aluminum foil strips” conceived for the centre court of the Gallery building. It was shown alongside *Ultra-Violet Car Touch* (1966). These new works had the intended effect of piquing the interest of curators elsewhere in the country. On the day of the opening, Dennis Young, the curator of contemporary art at the Art Gallery of Ontario (1967–1972) wrote to Shadbolt saying, “I notice that your press release on your New York exhibition says that several works have been made specifically for your exhibition. I am wondering if any of them are for...
As it turns out, the AGO did not acquire the work from the exhibition, but the Dunkelmans purchased Rosenquist’s *U-Haul-It One Way Anywhere* (1968; Art Gallery of Ontario, L69.1), a three-panel work in acrylic in late 1968 or early 1969, and subsequently donated it to the Gallery.

It is not clear exactly when Christmas opened his gallery in Los Angeles, variously referred to as The Ace or Ace Gallery, however Joan Lowndes wrote in fall 1968 that Michael Morris was preparing work to take to Los Angeles for the opening on October 26, 1968. Lowndes continues, that the “the opening of Douglas Christmas’ new gallery . . . could produce important two-way feedback here and in L.A.” Christmas’ new gallery space was a “raw warehouse below the Factory, a nightclub owned by Sammy Davis Jr. on La Peer Drive.”

That Christmas’ new gallery in Los Angeles opened around the same time as the *New York 13* exhibition is hardly coincidental. Organizing *New York 13* brought Christmas into regular and close contact with Castelli, even if they had first connected around Rauschenberg’s exhibition of *Booster and Seven Studies* in July 1967. After *Booster*, Christmas continued to show mostly Canadian artists: including Bodo Pfeifer (September 15–30, 1967), Jack Shadbolt (November 1–10, 1967), Jack Dale (January 16–31, 1968), and Les Levine (March 1–16, 1968), which suggests he had little further

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129 He continues, “The description of the Rosenquist finds me very interested in it. Since it is getting more and more problematic to find a good piece by some of the artists that you show, I would be very grateful to have any information about saleability.” Dennis Young to Doris Shadbolt, January 22, 1969, File 136-19, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.

130 Joan Lowndes, “Multi-Happening of Michael Morris,” *Vancouver Province*, September 27, 1968. While 1967 or even 1966 has been given as the date of the gallery’s first exhibition, a Sol LeWitt wall drawing show, that exhibition in fact did not take place until December 2, 1968–January 11, 1969, according to the now-scarce catalogue. *Sol LeWitt.*
involvement with Castelli’s artists until the arrangements for *New York 13*. The Vancouver Art Gallery exhibition was a decisive project for Christmas and his fledgling gallery, serving to advance his reputation as a dealer of important contemporary American art in Canada. The Douglas Gallery in Vancouver was renamed Ace (Canada) sometime around November 1969, coinciding with a group exhibition of “Sonnier, Cooper, LeWitt, Sandback, André [sic].” By 1970, his reputation as a conduit between Los Angeles and Vancouver—and indeed, New York—was assured. As Shadbolt wrote in 1970 for a survey of Vancouver art for an anthology edited by William Townsend, “the Douglas Gallery with connections in Los Angeles and New York, now shows major American artists in the city.” During the 1970s, he became the dealer for the city’s major collectors, including Ron Longstaffe, Ira Young, Ian Davidson, Geoffrey Massey, Dorothy Austin, and Fred Stimpson, many of whom would participate in the Contemporary Art Council (later Society), which he formed in 1978. As detailed in a profile written by Joan Lowndes for *Vanguard* in April 1977, by the late 1970s Christmas had divided the territory for Rauschenberg, and possibly other artists in Castelli’s stable. New work by the artist would be split between Leo Castelli, who covered New York and the Eastern seaboard, Ileana Sonnabend (Castelli’s former spouse), who handled Europe, and Christmas, who handled Western Canada and the United States. These territories

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131 “Ace Gallery (Vancouver) Exhibition Announcements.”
were respected only during the run of a given solo exhibition by the artist, “when they end, each partner is free to sell world-wide.”

As the date for the opening approached, the discussion around loans and possible works naturally drew to a close. The final checklist included thirty works by the thirteen artists, some only represented by a single work—like Newman, Noland and Rauschenberg—however the majority represented with three works—Johns, Kelly, Lichtenstein, Morris, Oldenburg, Segal and Warhol. There were last-minute attempts to secure other works, including to a Los Angeles collector to lend a Johns from his collection. David Mirvish also provided two works, both for sale through his Gallery, for the show: Noland’s *To Continue* (1967) and Stella’s *Flin Flon* (1967).

According to a price list dated February 5, 1969, which corresponds to the final checklist for the exhibition, of these thirty works roughly a third were not for sale. The same list attributes dealers for certain of the works, and Douglas Gallery is listed outright.

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138 Shadbolt writes to Alkis Klonaridis at the David Mirvish Gallery, “I have been unable to locate a borrowable NOLAND on the westcoast . . . This means that we would like from the Mirvish Gallery then the NOLAND and the FRANK STELLA *Flin Flon* of 1967.” Doris Shadbolt to Alkis Klonaridis, December 12, 1968, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives. Fenton had anticipated this issue over Canadian sales rights for Stella and Noland residing with Mirvish; Emery wrote Christmas “said nothing about Mirvish’s contract with Stella and Noland so obviously this would have to be checked.” Emery, “Draft Letter to Terry Fenton.”
with only three of the thirty: Judd’s *Untitled* (1968; DSS 158), Stella’s *Ctesiphon III* (1968) and Warhol’s *Jackie* (1965; also known as *Thirty-five Jackies [Multiplied Jackies]*, 1964; Fig. 4.8). Earlier, in July 1968, Dayman, an employee at the Douglas Gallery, sent Shadbolt a letter with two lists of works available for loan. Dayman wrote, “Doug has asked me to write and give you a list of those works which we have available for New York 12. If you are interested in having any of these pieces in the show please notify us so that we can hold them.” The first list includes just three works, without prices, the Judd and Warhol mentioned above as well as Stella’s *Isfahan* (1968). The second list of ten works seems to include works consigned or owned by Castelli gallery, and includes an impressive selection of works, many of which ended up in *New York 13*. The other eight works included on the list were all included in the exhibition: Judd’s *Untitled* (1965; DSS 76), Robert Morris’ three untitled works (1967–68), Rauschenberg’s *Axle* (1964), Rosenquist’s *Ultra Violet Cars* (1966), Warhol’s *Race Riot* (1964) and Stella’s *Ctesiphon III*. The fact that this list corresponds exactly to the final checklist for the exhibition demonstrates how closely Christmas was involved in selecting works for the show. Two works from the exhibition were subsequently acquired by the Vancouver Art Gallery, Segal’s *The Execution* and Oldenburg’s *Giant Saw—Hard Version*; the former represented by Janis and the latter by Castelli.

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139 The Warhol is now in the collection of the MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt am Main. Christmas was incensed at the handling of his Judd while on loan to the Art Gallery of Ontario: “Why was it that the Whitney which has, I would say, at least forty times the daily circulation of people, kept the piece in immaculate condition? It’s amazing professional eyes hadn’t spotted it and it makes one question the quality of the Art Gallery of Ontario.” Douglas Christmas to Mario Amaya, June 3, 1969, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.

140 Dayman to Doris Shadbolt, July 18, 1968, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.

141 Dayman to Shadbolt.

142 “You may be interested to know that we found a donor for SEGALS Execution and I am still confident that we will find a way of keeping the Hard Saw.” Doris Shadbolt to Henry Geldzahler, February 17, 1969,
The opening took place January 21, 1969, with Henry Geldzahler (1935–1994), then curator of contemporary art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, as the guest of honour. Shadbolt had invited him in early October 1968.\textsuperscript{143} For his appearance, and a lecture, he received the same $500 fee as Lippard for the catalogue.\textsuperscript{144} Oldenburg also travelled to Vancouver for the opening, however it seems none of the other artists made the trip.\textsuperscript{145}

Lippard missed the opening, but was in Vancouver from February 6–10, 1969, staying with Ingrid and Iain Baxter; she also gave a lecture, on February 7, 1969 at the Vancouver Art Gallery on “Art and Technology.”\textsuperscript{146} While Lippard’s official role was limited to delivering the catalogue—it appears to be all she was paid for by the Vancouver Art Gallery—she was instrumental in introducing Shadbolt to artists, accompanying her on studio visits, and even helping to hone the exhibition checklist and to secure loans.\textsuperscript{147} For instance, on October 10, 1968, she informed Shadbolt that “we have the Warhol Disaster after the Smithsonian,” or a week later, when Shadbolt wrote to Johns saying “Lucy and I spent some time going through the photographic documentation

\textsuperscript{143} Doris Shadbolt to Henry Geldzahler, October 5, 1968, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.
\textsuperscript{145} Emery writes to thank Geldzahler for opening the exhibition: “The fact that you and Claes would be here made all the difference between a so-so success and a run-away hit. So far over 12,500 people have seen the show, which may not be astronomical by Metropolitan standards, but is a pretty solid indication of public interest hereabouts.” Tony Emery to Henry Geldzahler, February 11, 1969, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.
\textsuperscript{146} Lucy Lippard to Doris Shadbolt, January 28, 1969, File 136-19, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives. Lippard was close friends with Ingrid and Iain Baxter, travelling to the arctic with them later in 1969.
\textsuperscript{147} Shadbolt, “Painted for Canada (12 Americans) Exhibition.”
of your work” and would like to ask for a 1963–64 painting.\textsuperscript{148} It seems that it was Christmas who first suggested Lippard as the author the \textit{New York 13} catalogue, as on March 19, 1968, Christmas asked Emery for further details to pass along to Lippard regarding the catalogue length and deadlines.\textsuperscript{149} Lippard had made her first visit to Vancouver on April 22–23, 1968, but would very quickly become closely connected to a number of curators, artists, and indeed, institutions in Vancouver.\textsuperscript{150} In the early 1990s, reflecting back on this period, Lippard recalled, “there was a lot of freedom on the margins.”\textsuperscript{151}

The text for the catalogue, both Lippard’s introduction and the anthologized statements from various sources for each artist, convey well the unfocused quality of the show, betraying the almost arbitrary selection of artists and works (unless, of course, the organizing principle relates to the artists’ gallery representation and available works). As perceptive and astute a critic and curator as Lippard even had difficulty making sense of the selection, if her introduction to the catalogue is any indication. Lippard suggests “there are not many general statements that can be made about this group” and that this motley aspect to the artists brought together by the show relates to the “variety and/or

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{148} Lucy Lippard to Doris Shadbolt, October 17, 1968, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives; Doris Shadbolt to Jasper Johns, October 18, 1968, File 136-18, Exhibition files, New York 13 (EX1494), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.
\item \textsuperscript{149} Christmas to Emery, March 19, 1968.
\item \textsuperscript{150} “If the ‘Los Angeles Six’ exhibition that I saw there is any indication of the quality that can be consistently expected, Vancouver is in many ways luckier than New York.” Lippard, “Vancouver,” 26. Back in New York, on April 26, Lippard sent a postcard to Shadbolt and Emery, with an image of Titian’s \textit{Tobias and the Angel} (1514). Lippard has drawn a speech bubble with the angel saying “And if you behave yourself, someday you can go back to Vancouver!!!” “Home safe . . . [and] am well on the way to becoming the local branch of BC chamber of commerce. Only wish I’d had more breathing time for that superlative oxygen before plunging back into oxenicide.” Lucy Lippard to Tony Emery and Doris Shadbolt, April 26, 1968, File 2, 136-5, Exhibition files, Los Angeles 6 (EX1475), Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives. Lowndes, “View from the East of Our Art Scene.”
\end{itemize}
turmoil of the New York art scene over the past decade,” and that this has informed her “quasi-anthological” approach to the catalogue entries. At best, they are related by “time, place and shared concerns,” but all the same, Lippard ends her text with an uncharacteristically unwieldy attempt to identify some of those concerns and strategies.

“Some of the issues that have dominated the 1960s in New York,” Lippard writes, “WHOLENESS, HOMOGENEITY . . . SHAPE, STRUCTURE . . . THE REAL . . . . STYLE — MANNER — METHOD — PROCESS . . . FLATNESS, FRONTALITY . . . SURFACE, EDGE”—she lists another 32 terms, ending with—“SUBTRACTION / ADDITION; LITERAL / LITERARY; REJECTIVE / INCLUSIVE; ELITE / KITSCH; PURE / IMPURE; MINIMAL / MAXIMAL.”

When Emery showed an early enthusiasm for the exhibition title *Painted for Canada*, it betrayed something of his desire to foreground the relationship between these thirteen disparate, yet high-profile, American artists and his gallery. The title also implies a curious transnational relationship: with Canada as a sort of patron of fresh, advanced practices from south of the border. As Shadbolt wrote to Castelli, early in their correspondence, “it will certainly be an important exhibition for Canada where all the artists are known by reputation but too few actual works have been shown.” This was, to be sure, one goal of the exhibition: to show works that had only previously been known to local audiences through reproduction.

Shadbolt seems to anticipate the charge of provincialism, and addresses the question directly in her short text for the catalogue: “why, at this late date, a mixed-group

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154 Shadbolt to Castelli, May 16, 1968.
show with each artist represented by two or three works, especially when those artists are well-known to the Canadian art public as they are to the art world at large.” Shadbolt gives one reason: “too often our knowledge is of reputations, and our acquaintance with the work second-hand . . . there are major centres in this country—and Vancouver is a prime example—where awareness outstrips experience.” As Philip Leider suggested in his survey of Vancouver art published in 1967, artists in any regional area (and for him “this means any area outside of New York”) are “working in a state of deprivation.” He continues, “the very artefacts which make up his tradition are accessible only in the treacherously imperfect form of reproductions.” Shadbolt shares Leider’s view, and the use value of an exhibition of this kind serves not only the casual museum visitor but in the case of an artist a kind of professional development: “artistic confrontation on home territory has a special value for which there is no substitute,” Shadbolt suggests. She was, in other words, thinking about the exhibition as a service for artists working in such a “deprived” state. Shadbolt would have known firsthand about the use of an exhibition such as New York 13, as evidenced by correspondence with her spouse, the painter Jack Shadbolt. Citing Christmas’ connections to Los Angeles and New York, Shadbolt writes in a text surveying the Vancouver scene in 1969 that “there is a succession of visiting critics, authorities, and artists from America and abroad. The result is a first-hand

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156 Shadbolt.
158 Shadbolt, “Introduction.”
159 When travelling, Doris Shadbolt often described exhibitions she had seen and bought catalogues to take home to Jack Shadbolt. For instance, “Friday night between appointments I have seen the Bacon show which is pretty big—and the Peruvian show at the Guggenheim (will bring catalogues for both).” Francis Bacon, Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York (November–December 1968); Mastercraftsmen of ancient Peru, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (October 19, 1968–January 11, 1969). Doris Shadbolt to Jack Shadbolt, November 26, 1968, Box 1-4, File B.1.3, Doris Shadbolt, 1964-1986, Jack Shadbolt fonds, Rare Books and Special Collections, University of British Columbia.
awareness and a sense of participation in the larger scene and on a more sophisticated level than heretofore possible.”

Related to the notion of patronage is the (now rather cringing) idea that the exhibition was possible because the participating New York artists felt a fondness for Canada. In the Gallery’s Bulletin, the unsigned promotional text reads, “only the real and stated affection that the artists feel for Canada has given Vancouver this opportunity to view at first hand work by artists whose names and achievements are familiar to almost everyone through repeated exposure in the mass media.” This idea was promptly lifted from the release by critics: “what is truly amazing,” Joan Lowndes wrote, “is that these 13 artists of international repute whose work is in constant demand, should have agreed to release recent paintings and sculptures to Vancouver.” “Doris Shadbolt reports that at least half of the artists expressed to her warm feeling for Canada which made her borrowing task easier.”

Fondness or not, New York 13 was a selling exhibition that stood to materially benefit one dealer, by and large, and stands at the outset of a number of close transnational ties between gallerists, artists, collectors, curators, and museums—some of which persist to this day. The compromises needed to realize this exhibition—whether

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160 Shadbolt, “The Vancouver Scene,” 64. For instance, there appears a significant debt owed by artists such as Gary Lee Nova and Glenn Lewis to Los Angeles artists Billy Al Bengston and Larry Bell, respectively. The influence of New York artists is slightly harder to trace, however Kurt von Meier (1934–2011), a friend of Michael Morris, former faculty member in art history at UCLA, and occasional west coast correspondent for Art International reviewed New York 13 for Artscanada and underscored the fact that the show brought to Vancouver “art which has profoundly conditioned the Canadian (and especially British Columbian) aesthetic sensibilities of the present.” Kurt von Meier, “New York 13 Vancouver Art Gallery January-February, 1969 (Art Gallery of Ontario, May, 8-21),” Artscanada 26, no. 2 (April 1969): 35.

161 “New York 13.”
163 Christmas worked closely, for instance, with Brigitte and Henning Freybe, who began collecting contemporary art in the early 1970s and recently, in 2015, founded Griffin Art Projects, Vancouver.
foregoing the museum’s usual commission structure or repeatedly deferring to a dealer’s selection of available works—betrays something of the remarkable power imbalance between a public institution and private individuals, whether critics, outside curators, or, most significantly, dealers. Felt throughout the organization of *New York 13*, and indeed earlier, with *Los Angeles 6*, is a deep reverence for the New York-based artists, dealers and collaborators with whom Shadbolt and Emery worked. At what point this attitude of respect passes over into obeisance was the issue for a number of Canadian artists and critics of American cultural imperialism in the early 1970s. It is to these critical voices we now turn.
“There is much evidence,” Janice Andreae wrote in review of Greg Curnoe’s *The Great Canadian Sonnet* in 1976, of Roy Lichtenstein’s influence in his “comic-book” imagery, which attributes a vulgar and commonplace image to the Canadian urban landscape. Rather than being unique, Mr. Curnoe has presented a Canadian version of Americana depicted by artists of the sixties in the United States.2

Curnoe (1936–1992) responded to this criticism in his local paper with a snide letter to the editor, in which he accused Andreae (b. 1949) of parroting William Withrow (1926–2017), whose book *Canadian Contemporary Painting* (1972), he suggested, Andreae must have received as a Christmas present.3 With a cooler head, David McFadden (b. 1940), who had written the text for *The Great Canadian Sonnet*, also wrote to the editor of the *London Free Press*. He argued that the similarities between Lichtenstein (1923–1997) and Curnoe’s work was a result of a common source in comic books from

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1 Curnoe wrote in 1966: “In the 60s the U.S. influence here is enormous. This is natural. After all, artists can only record and respond to what they are exposed to. That is why I live in London, Ontario. That is why Snow and Levine have moved to New York. You either go to the source of the main influences or to the roots of your own experience.” Greg Curnoe: Ten Artists in Search of Canadian Art,” *Canadian Art* 23, no. 100 (January 1966): 64; in Pierre Théberge, *Greg Curnoe: Retrospective* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1981), 18.


childhood. Andreae’s critique of Curnoe’s work—that it lacked originality and was a poor imitation of Pop from elsewhere—was a common, if not entirely fair, criticism of his work throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Even if mentioned appreciatively, the relationship between American or British Pop art and Curnoe’s practice seemed inevitable and, from Curnoe’s perspective, undesirable.

These comparisons to American Pop art must have doubly stung for Curnoe: not only was he being accused of imitation, but by the mid-1970s he was writing, speaking, and making work in strident opposition to American art. To point out that his strategies were shared with Lichtenstein—indeed, for Andreae and other casual observers, derived from Lichtenstein—seems irreconcilable with his vocal opposition to American cultural influence in Canada. This apparent contradiction surfaces in many discussions of Curnoe’s work: if indebted to American art, how could Curnoe justify such an oppositional politics?

McFadden was right to suggest common sources as an explanation for the similarities between Curnoe and Lichtenstein’s work. While in the case of The Great Canadian Sonnet comic books read in childhood might indeed stand as important graphic precedents, the sources informing not only Lichtenstein’s work, but also that of Robert

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4 David McFadden, “Review of Curnoe Art Termed ‘Clumsy Hatchet-Job Attempt’ (Letter to the Editor),” *London Free Press*, February 2, 1976. McFadden goes on to defend Curnoe: “In my opinion, Curnoe is an artist of heroic proportions, a national treasure that, while not beyond criticism, must be preserved at all costs, and must be protected from irresponsible newspaper reviews.” In a biographical statement from 1967, Curnoe described reading a number of comic books during his childhood, including “The Toonerville Trolley (which my brother and I often reconstructed with Klean Klay), Captain Marvel Jr., The Heap, Alexander Bell Jr., Plastic Man, The Outlaw, Flash Gordon, Early Mickey Mouse, Buck Rogers, Smokey Stover, Super Duck, EC War and Horror Comics, Crime Does Not Pay, World’s Finest Comics.” Greg Curnoe, “Untitled Biographical Manuscript,” 1967, Box 1, File 11, Writings 1967, Greg Curnoe fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario. This was subsequently published as *Statements: 18 Canadian Artists* (Regina: Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, 1967), 42.

5 “Though it has often been mentioned that his work has certain affinities with British Pop art, what has generally been overlooked is that Curnoe has been doing conceptual art and process art since before these terms were coined.” John Noel Chandler, “Sources Are Resources: Greg Curnoe’s Objects, Objectives and Objections,” *Artscanada* 30, no. 176–177 (March 1973): 69.
Rauschenberg (1925–2008), Jasper Johns (b. 1930), Claes Oldenburg (b. 1929), and Andy Warhol (1928–1987), among others, was a renewed interest in the historical avant-garde. This was equally the case for Curnoe.

Beginning with his appreciative text, “In Praise of Dada: The Eternal Gut” (1956), Curnoe engaged with the historical avant-garde in significant ways, and this engagement constitutes a ground on which Curnoe’s work of the early 1960s—and indeed, much of his subsequent practice—should be registered. Alongside the historical example of Dada was the presence of New York neo-avant-garde practices of the late 1950s and early 1960s. While much of the literature on Curnoe would have us understand his practice in opposition to these practices—particularly later, as Curnoe was working willfully against foreign-born strategies and drawing instead, exclusively he suggested, from his immediate surroundings—the renewed interest in Dada during Curnoe’s formative period of the late 1950s owed a great deal to Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns’ attention to the historical avant-garde.

When Benjamin Buchloh interviewed Warhol in 1985, he asked about Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968) and Dada’s influence on New York artists of the sixties, and in particular a stillborn film project from around 1965. At the time, Warhol was making long-duration films such as *Sleep* (1963) and *Empire* (1964), and had wanted to “photograph [Duchamp] for twenty-four hours.” When Buchloh asked whether Warhol knew Duchamp well enough to propose such a collaboration, he says that “no, I didn’t know him that well; I didn’t know him as well as Jasper Johns or Rauschenberg did.

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7 Buchloh, 119.
They knew him really well . . . Rauschenberg went to that great school called Black Mountain College, so they were aware of him.”

The correspondence between Rauschenberg and Duchamp has long been well established, so much so that already in his exhibition catalogue for Robert Rauschenberg (March 31–May 12, 1963) at the Jewish Museum, curator Alan Solomon (1920–1970) was able to observe that “Rauschenberg has often been compared with Duchamp.” He suggested that while Duchamp’s work had some visibility in museums and galleries through the 1950s, it was not until Robert Lebel’s monograph on the artist was translated in 1959 that he achieved wider recognition. More generally, as Hal Foster later suggested, the foundation of MFA programmes beginning in the 1950s brought about a more rigorous engagement with prewar art. Solomon used the relatively late date of Rauschenberg’s homage to Duchamp, Trophy II (1960–1961), to suggest that the French artist’s work was not nearly as formative as others would suggest. Instead, for Solomon, Rauschenberg found in Duchamp “reinforcement and reassurance for his own position,” implying that Rauschenberg’s own project was already well underway before he encountered the French artist’s work.

In surveying Rauschenberg’s practice since 1954, Solomon was more keen to draw connections with Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), yet in spite of Solomon’s best efforts, it is now taken as given that Rauschenberg’s debt is owed to Duchamp. This is in keeping

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8 Buchloh, 119.
13 Pierre Théberge made a similar suggestion of “reinforcement” rather than direct influence regarding Curnoe’s work, as discussed below.
with the broader tendency, as Rosalind Krauss has argued, that by the 1970s Duchamp had eclipsed “Picasso as the most important artist of the century,” principally because the readymade was a basic premise of conceptual art. Though Solomon attempted to create some distance from Duchamp, and argue for a later encounter with his work in the early 1960s, Rauschenberg was likely first exposed to the Dadaist’s work around 1953: some seven years before he rendered homage. Branden Joseph, through his extensive work on the artist, has often reaffirmed the central role of Duchamp in Rauschenberg’s practice.15

Jasper Johns, of course, shared with Rauschenberg a keen interest in Duchamp, as Warhol told Buchloh in 1985. In fact, Leo Steinberg writing in 1962 described the origin myth of “Neo-dada,” and its particular association with Johns:

_Art News_, bold enough to fly Johns’s _Target with Four Faces_ on its January 1958 cover, labeled it “Neo-dada,” and the word untied every tongue. Whoever had been at a loss what to say about Johns could thenceforth recite whatever was remembered of Dada.16

This apparently casual antecedent soon came under criticism, by Tom Hess, John Canaday, Hilton Kramer, and others; Kramer found an irreconcilable difference in that Dada “sought to repudiate and criticize bourgeois values, whereas Johns, like Rauschenberg, aims to please and confirm the decadent periphery of bourgeois taste.”17

Even if Robert Motherwell’s _Dada Painters and Poets_ (1951) had been, as Lucy Lippard suggests as early as the mid-sixties, “overemphasized as a crucial event,” it stands as evidence that beginning in the early 1950s advanced art centred on New York

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16 Leo Steinberg, “Jasper Johns: The First Seven Years of His Art,” in _Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art_ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 23. This version revised and expanded from the original publication in _Metro_, nos. 4/5, 1962.
17 Hilton Kramer, _Arts_, February 1959, 49 in Steinberg, “Jasper Johns: The First Seven Years of His Art,” 23.
was engaging with Dada’s legacies. As Dawn Ades describes it, “Motherwell’s purpose was to by-pass Surrealism and to make a connection between Dada and Abstract art.”

Ades goes on to suggest that Dada was soon “swept into the development of Anglo-American Pop art,” but that its real impact lies in “active engagements in politics and culture,” not least the revolutionary movements of the 1960s. Reviews of Rauschenberg’s work and connections to the historical avant-garde had been circulating in major publications since the early 1950s, and by the mid-1960s, Dada as a moniker was being used freely with his and other artists’ work. Even for an artist as indebted as Rauschenberg, Joseph has argued that the term “Dada” was much overused when it came to describing Rauschenberg’s practice. Particularly after his grand prize for painting at the 1964 Venice Biennale, Rauschenberg assumed a high profile, charting a path away from abstract expressionism; his association with the historical avant-garde was plain. Although his work was not autogenerative, he was prolific, borrowing techniques from his peers, recasting and recombining them in a distinctive way. Crucially, Rauschenberg’s debt to Dada, as we will see, allowed for Curnoe’s own trajectory in the decade to follow.

Dadaist wit and irreverence not only imbued Curnoe’s work of the early 1960s but also served him throughout his practice. One might assume the history of Dada that was available to Curnoe—the set of practices that emerged in Zurich in 1916, and found

20 Ades, 13.
22 Branden Joseph, “Media Player,” *Artforum*, September 2008, 438. When Rauschenberg emerged, his work “could only be labeled as a joke or with the soon-to-be-overused appellation ‘dada.’”
23 Joseph, 438.
expression in autonomous groups in New York, Berlin and Paris—was harder to come by for a young art student in London, Ontario and later Toronto in the 1950s than to his New York contemporaries. It is remarkable, then, that in 1956 Curnoe wrote “In Praise of Dada: The Eternal Gut.” Just twenty years old, the same year he graduated from H.B. Beal Technical School and enrolled in the Doon School of Fine Arts, both in London, Ontario, the typescript runs a single page and is signed “G. Richard Curnoe.” It opens with a rambling description of the sun and its rays:

It was a bright and sunny day. The sun, O that sun—say sun, what did you say your name was? The sun was . . . O well, the sun sate like a huge golden orb, suspended on a spider strand, dig this craaaaazy son; man. And this here sun spewed forth its beams (not wood) unexpectedly, highlight all who came in contact with its rays.25

Later, in 1967, Curnoe recalled his time at the school, which was far more determining than that spent at Doon or, in fact, the Ontario College of Art in Toronto, where at both he “did not get along.”26 As Curnoe recalled,

When I went to Beal Technical London at the end of grade twelve, I took the art course. I was taught by Herb Ariss and John O’Henly—both are artists, through them I became aware of Jackson Pollock, Borduas, Dada, Surrealism, Kokoschka, the art of the insane, children’s drawings, James Joyce, Alberto Moravia (he was horny) etc. This all happened

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24 G. Richard Curnoe, “In Praise of Dada: The Eternal Gut,” 1956, File 1, Box 1, Writing 1956, Greg Curnoe fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario. The text continues by focusing on Mario de Luccio, a citizen of Agalapoca, who is awoken by “a shouting, strangely musical voice broke the dirty silence. It was a child’s voice—for only a child would dare to break the holy silence of siesta.” The child speaks in gibberish: “O fa la meo teladda marrio tatta farmagoleo keebulung gadung.” Luccio’s ink bottle is running dry, and he thinks of smashing it on the floor of his “lonely room.” In the margin is the annotation “8/17,” suggesting that it may have been a school writing assignment.

25 Curnoe.

26 Statements: 18 Canadian Artists, 42. For the manuscript of this statement, see Curnoe, “Untitled Biographical Manuscript.” He failed out from the Ontario College of Art in May 1960, and returned home to London. Sarah Milroy, “Greg Curnoe: Time Machines,” in Greg Curnoe: Life and Stuff, ed. Dennis Reid and Matthew Teitelbaum (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 2001), 22.
at an important time because I started to become aware of what I was rejecting which was my environment. I gradually decided I did not want to leave it.\textsuperscript{27}

Imitative and appreciative in “In Praise of Dada,” Curnoe already knew by 1956 at least something of the movement. Writing to Les Groome, a professor in the Art department at the University of Saskatchewan, on November 17, 1964, Curnoe described his earliest encounters with Dada:

> When I first attended art school (1954) I got involved with Dada (through [Maholy-Nagy’s] Vision in Motion); that could be one of my major “artistic” influences. For example, I bought Motherwell’s anthology of Dada poets and painters in 1960 (I had read it off and on since 1957).\textsuperscript{28}

Around this same time, as evidenced by a flowchart drafted by Curnoe sometime between 1955 and the early 1960s, Curnoe mapped the relationships between abstract expressionist, Ashcan and what he terms “U.S. Dada” artists: Man Ray (1890–1976), Alfred Steiglitz (1864–1946), and Arthur Cravan (1887–1918).\textsuperscript{29} In this same binder, Curnoe diligently transcribed manifestos and poems by Tristan Tzara (1896–1963), Hugo Ball (1886–1927) and Kurt Schwitters (1887–1948), likely from Motherwell’s

\textsuperscript{27} Curnoe, “Untitled Biographical Manuscript.” This was subsequently published as Statements: 18 Canadian Artists, 42.


Dada Painters and Poets (1951). While studying at the Ontario College of Art, he often had it checked out from the College’s library, later saying “I more or less memorized that book.”

The reading that Curnoe did around 1960 was formative, and he would consistently return to texts he first encountered as a student. In 1977, Curnoe wrote that “around 1960 or so [I] read and listened to a lot of different things. That period of activity saddled me for a long time and I can’t say that too many new things have been added to the essential reading and listening of those days.” Among others, as he recounted later still, Curnoe was “looking closely at Marcel Duchamp, Dada, Picabia, and all the anti-culture elements of European art after the first world war.” This reading and listening was done mostly in private, however in late 1961 Curnoe’s interest would be ventured publically in an exhibition at the Isaacs Gallery.

Five years after “In Praise of Dada” (1956), Curnoe declared his interest in the historical avant-garde by participating in two events in quick succession, held in late 1961 and early 1962: first, he included work in the Isaacs Gallery Dada exhibition (December 20, 1961–January 9, 1962) and less than a month later, he organized an

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event himself, *The Celebration* (February 3, 1962). These two instances have often been discussed in accounts of Curnoe’s early practice and his indebtedness to the historical avant-garde, setting a course for much of his work that followed over the 1960s and 1970s. In spite of their extensive treatment elsewhere, they bear brief mention here, if only to better situate Curnoe’s earliest encounters with Dada.34

A group exhibition, *Dada at the Isaacs Gallery* included work by Curnoe alongside that of Dennis Burton (1933–2013), Graham Coughtry (1931–1999), Richard Gorman (1935–2010), Gordon Rayner (1935–2010), Michael Snow (b. 1928) and Joyce Wieland (1930–1998). Curnoe showed *Flashing Sign, Ticket Window, Drawer Full of Stuff, Soothing Watercolour*, and *Art Store Fixture* (all 1961). All assemblages, with varying degrees of complexity, of these five works *Drawer Full of Stuff* was most discussed at the time and best exemplifies Curnoe’s ludic approach around 1960. It was, quite simply, a drawer filled with a jumble of bits of everyday life—with an invitation for the viewer-participant to “re-assemble the objects in the drawer” at will.35 With “odd objects, fabric, material substance” contained by the readymade wooden drawer, Curnoe inventoried the contents on a handwritten list then glued to a piece of wood.36 Each object is numbered one to thirty-two; including, self-referentially, the mounted list itself.

Michel Sanouillet (1924–2015), a crucial figure in encouraging Curnoe’s interest in Dada, as discussed below, reviewed the exhibition, saying, “the artists claim to be unaware of similar agitation taking place elsewhere. Dada, they say, is just being re-

born here, because our world has come to need its ultimate form of revolt again.”37

There is a skepticism registered in Sanouillet’s suggestion that the artists working around Isaacs Gallery were unaware of Neo-dada’s other, quite public, manifestations in New York, and Sanouillet clearly understood Curnoe and his fellow artists as Neo-dadaists, whether they knew it or not. Robert Fulford shared Sanouillet’s doubt about the originality of these artists’ engagement with Dada, as the exhibition fit nicely with “the revived Dadaist tendency which has overtaken a number of younger artists in New York.” Whatever its origins, the connection is salutary, Fulford continues, “it goes much further in the direction of satire, parody and wild hilarity than anything the Toronto artists have attempted before.”38 In spite of the feigned ignorance of the artists at Isaacs Gallery, in interview, nearly two decades later, Curnoe acknowledged that the Isaac Gallery’s Dada exhibition was likely “because of New York.”39

Curnoe realized the second event less than a month after the close of the Isaacs Gallery exhibition: The Celebration took place on February 3, 1962, and it has, in retrospect, been situated as an early instance of a happening in Canada. While AA

38 Fulford, “World of Art: Anarchy.”
Bronson (b. 1946) calls it unequivocally “Canada’s first public happening,” R. Bruce Elder gives precedence to Dennis Burton, who mounted an event in his Huntley Street studio in 1959. Marking forty years since the fining of Lawrence Lee on February 3, 1922 for throwing salt on the sidewalk, the anniversary called up a modest infraction on Richmond Street between Dundas and King in London, Ontario: it was not chosen entirely at random, but almost. After having set a date for his event at the London Regional Art Museum and Library, Curnoe combed through the local papers to find a suitable historical event to recognize. In this case, the oblique reference to Michel Sanouillet’s *Marchand du sel: écrits de Marcel Duchamp* (1958), was too good to pass up. As Pierre Théberge (b. 1942) would later write, “in a gesture reminiscent of the Duchampian ‘ready-made,’ he chose an actual, banal, insignificant event.” The out-of-town guests included Sanouillet, photographer Michel Lambeth (1923–1977), Snow and Wieland, all of whom had travelled by train from Toronto and were met “by a delegation of flag-waving, kazoo-playing revelers dressed in ‘Dadaistic attire’ (which consisted of German First World War uniforms complete with pointed helmets).” This enthusiastic greeting led to a party at London Public Library and Museum.

Of course, as has often been noted in writing on the artist, Curnoe had his own remarkably direct link to Duchamp and Dada in the form of Michel Sanouillet. Sanouillet had been teaching at the University of Toronto since 1955, and in 1965 defended his

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44 For a description of the happening, see Milroy, “Greg Curnoe: Time Machines,” 35.
doctoral thesis, which was published the same year as *Dada à Paris* (1965). His groundbreaking work was largely based on firsthand accounts with artists, and he knew personally André Breton (1896–1966), Francis Picabia (1879–1953), Man Ray, Tzara and Duchamp, among others. Even so, Curnoe’s interest in Dada pre-dates his first meeting with Sanouillet, as evidenced by “In Praise of Dada” and his introduction to the movement while at Beal.

When Curnoe first met Sanouillet, which Curnoe recalls as being in 1959, it was at the Librarie Française—a French-language bookstore which Sanouillet had opened the previous year. At the store, Sanouillet stocked “bizarre magazines,” where Curnoe first learned about Facteur (Ferdinand) Cheval (1836–1924) and Camille Raynaud (1868–1947), but also continued his reading on Moholy-Nagy and first came upon Alfred Barr’s *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* (1936). It was during this first meeting with Sanouillet at Librarie Française that Curnoe discovered he was only moonlighting as a bookseller, and that he worked as a professor in the French department in the University of Toronto. When they met, Curnoe says he “was reading the Motherwell book called *Dada Poets and Painters* . . . they had it in the library there, at the Ontario College of Art, [a] very thin book in a funny way.”

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46 Elder, *DADA, Surrealism, and the Cinematic Effect*, 255.
47 Sanouillet, interview. Elder places the first meeting between Sanouillet and Curnoe in 1958, however does not give a source. Curnoe and Sanouillet’s interview in 1979 establishes the date as 1959, which is used here. Sanouillet; Elder, *DADA, Surrealism, and the Cinematic Effect*, 255.
The most useful account of this first, seminal meeting between Curnoe and Sanouillet is a set of audio recordings made on November 7 and November 18, 1979, when Sanouillet returned to Toronto for a visit—he had left the city in 1969 to take up a teaching position at the Université de Reims.50 Their first conversation opened with Curnoe describing what Théberge would like from the conversation, namely a recollection of their meeting and early exchanges. It is most likely that the material was being asked for by Théberge as research for his exhibition Greg Curnoe: Retrospective held at the Montreal Museum of Fine Art (April 17–May 31, 1981), and organized and shown at the National Gallery of Canada the following year.

Curnoe and Sanouillet begin their discussion with commiseration—“you weren’t very happy about the Ontario College of Art,” Sanouillet recalls, with Curnoe rejoining, “and you weren’t that happy about Toronto, so we had a couple of things to talk about”—but it is clear from the outset that Sanouillet brought a more rigorous analysis to the role of Dada and its near-invisibility in Toronto of the late 1950s. While Sanouillet’s interest in Dada had begun in Paris around the end of the 1940s, and grown particularly strong following his meeting with Duchamp in Paris in 1950, he recalled how in Toronto at the time, “no one was interested.” Curnoe countered that characterization by saying, “well, there was some interest, I think Mike Snow and Joyce Wieland were, but you didn’t know them.” Sanouillet quite rightly countered Curnoe, saying, “out of two or three million people, to have three or four people interested, it’s not really what you call interested.” Curnoe mentions the Dada exhibition at the Isaacs Gallery in late 1961, followed shortly after his The Celebration in February 1962 (at which, Sanouillet ironically and insensitively chanted “Algerie française!” saying to Curnoe later, coolly,

50 Sanouillet, interview. Subsequent quotations are from this interview.
“that was a joke”). These two events, at Isaacs and in London, for Curnoe meant “there was a little bit of interest,” but he said, “that was probably caused by New York.”

Sanouillet, less interested in the specific history of Toronto and far more in the question of artists engaging with the historical avant-garde more generally, draws comparisons between Curnoe and Ben Vautier (b. 1935) in Nice, and reflected, “life is a very persistent affair, and we equate literary and artistic production to rhizomatic production.” He asks Curnoe whether he knows what a rhizome is, and goes on to explain, it is

like asparagus for instance. It’s soft, but it can go through a stone. As long as it remains below the ground it is efficient, it’s almost perfect in its operation. But as soon as it comes out of the ground it becomes lignified, a tree, predictable, you know what it is going to be.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s “image of thought” was developed between 1972 and 1980 in the context of their project Capitalism and Schizophrenia, published in two parts, Anti-Oedipus (1972) and A Thousand Plateaus (1980). Curnoe, out of his depth or disinterested in discussing theory, interrupts Sanouillet, saying he should check the tape recorder, and then asks as a non-sequitur, “OK, how did you start this bookstore?”

From the recording, it is clear that Curnoe was not looking for a philosophical or art theoretical discussion: their conversation is easier when he and Sanouillet talk about shared recollections of the Toronto art scene; when Sanouillet observed that, for instance, “Isaacs Gallery was not connected universally to what people like Ben [Vautier] were doing, but it was basically on the same wavelength.” That there were not direct connections outside the country was consistent with what Curnoe felt, saying, “there is a sense that things don’t go out of this country. Did you feel that at the time?” Sanouillet maintained that “people were not talking about Duchamp, except in New York.” Still,
Curnoe suggests “we were interested in similar things, and we were both running into this lack of interest from other people.” But Sanouillet is insistent, too, that there were “very few people” in Toronto with such interests, “which again from a statistical point of view meant zero: in a town the size of Toronto, when you have ten people interested.”

Later, in 1977, Curnoe recalled this period, lamenting “the difficulty in engaging in serious conversation in Toronto in the early 60s—the artists more interested in James Bond or the Rolling Stones than in talking about writing or Toronto or Painting—to be involved was uncool.” Curnoe continued, this was “not true of Mike [Snow] or Joyce [Wieland] or Michel [Sanouillet] or Graham [Coughtry], or especially Sanouillet—how that had all changed in the late 60s.”

Precisely between the two conversations with Sanouillet— the first recording was made November 7, 1979 at Curnoe’s studio in London, and the second a week-and-a-half later on November 18, at the Andorre Hotel, Toronto—Curnoe rendered homage doubly to the Dada scholar and to Duchamp with a watercolour, Sanouillet #1 (November 15, 1979). An image of Duchamp’s Bicycle Wheel (1913), it signified both Curnoe’s relationships with the scholar and artist, as well as casting a backward glance on the importance of that first meeting between Sanouillet and Curnoe. The bicycle would serve as a current throughout much of Curnoe’s painting, of course: a modest means of transportation that also had allusions to a Duchampian assisted readymade. In some of his

51 Curnoe, “Untitled Manuscript [Shiny Black Notebook].”
52 Curnoe. Indeed, even by the mid-1960s there was far more interest in Toronto in Dada. In 1965, Brydon Smith met Sanouillet, and wrote to Curnoe after they first spoke: “I have just finished a telephone conversation with Michel Sanouillet. He was very impressed that the Toronto Gallery had finally bought a Marcel Duchamp and that we were in the midst of a Schwitters exhibition. It was on this basis that he thought we should meet. I have invited him to a small party at my place tomorrow evening and am looking forward very much to talking with him, particularly since you have whetted my appetite by your own enthusiasm for him.” Brydon Smith to Greg Curnoe, September 24, 1965, Box 5, File 22, Correspondence 1965, Greg Curnoe fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario.
53 Sanouillet, interview.
works, the vehicle is rendered life-sized, the two-dimensional surface leaning against the wall as a three-dimensional object; its scale and lifelikeness blurring the distinction between object and representation, readymade and work of art.

Théberge, who would likely have listened to these recording in preparation for writing his exhibition catalogue on Curnoe in 1981, curiously argued in that text that “intellectually, Curnoe’s discovery of Dada was a determining factor, a confirmation of what he had already felt intuitively.”\textsuperscript{54} This argument is close to Alan Solomon’s suggestion, described above, that Dada was for Rauschenberg merely confirming and not instigating. This attempt to see Curnoe’s first encounter with Dada as simple confirmation is difficult to accept, particularly given his early introduction to Dada at Beal, again as evidenced by “The Praise of Dada” (1956). One senses a strong desire on Théberge’s part to maintain Curnoe’s originality and to see his discovery of the historical avant-garde as corroboration rather than debt.\textsuperscript{55} As Théberge suggested,

\begin{quote}
\textit{on the exterior, the Dada movement was anarchistic, anti-establishment, delinquent, anti-academic, anti-bourgeois, anti-art; it was also very comic. It was the confirmation of Curnoe’s own revulsion from the pretensions of both the local London art establishment and that of Toronto, even more suffocating by the evidence of Michel Sanouillet.}\textsuperscript{56}
\end{quote}

Roughly two years after the first meeting between Curnoe and the Dada scholar, in 1959, Sanouillet managed to conjure Duchamp for Curnoe. As mentioned, Sanouillet had first met Duchamp in 1950, and in 1958 edited and published Duchamp’s collected

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{54} Théberge, \textit{Greg Curnoe: Retrospective}, 11.
\textsuperscript{55} Similar attempts to assert Curnoe’s originality can be found in criticism, as well: “Though it has often been mentioned that his work has certain affinities with British Pop art, what has generally been overlooked is that Curnoe has been doing conceptual art and process art since before these terms were coined.” Chandler, “Sources Are Resources: Greg Curnoe’s Objects, Objectives and Objections,” 69.
\textsuperscript{56} Théberge, \textit{Greg Curnoe: Retrospective}, 11.
\end{footnotes}
writings. On November 28, 1961, Sanouillet made a hasty introduction between Duchamp and Curnoe in Detroit. Tony Urquhart (b. 1934) drove Curnoe to Detroit to hear Duchamp give a lecture at the Detroit Institute for the Arts, where the exhibition *Futurism* (October 16–December 10, 1961) was on view; the show included Duchamp’s third version of *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1916), and Duchamp was speaking in connection both with the exhibition and in anticipation of receiving an honourary doctorate from Wayne State University the following day. “I tried to fight the crowd and managed to introduce Greg to Marcel,” Sanouillet recalled, “but the latter was surrounded by so many worshippers that it was very difficult for the two to engage in any meaningful conversation.” Even if by all accounts unremarkable, Sanouillet was clearly convinced enough by the young artist’s interest and ability to venture an introduction.

In July 1960, Curnoe took his first studio at 432 Richmond Street, London, Ontario in a third floor walk-up. His work at the time consisted of small collages and assemblages of discarded material, mostly printed matter that he and his friends had collected unceremoniously. That he was working at the time in collage and assemblage corresponds, of course, with his reading and evident curiosity with Dada. “He

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60 Earlier that same month, on November 2, 1961, Curnoe had invited Sanouillet to give a talk, titled “Dada’s Eye,” at the London Public Library and Art Museum. It was held in conjunction with Curnoe’s very first single-artist exhibition at the Richard E. Crouch Branch Library, “An Exhibition of Things.” Of the exhibition, Crawford remarked, “some of the spoofs are scarcely worth the effort of moving them into an exhibit, for Curnoe, the producer, has not yet learned all about selection, which a good modern Dadaist should know. In the midst of the spoofs, though—those that have impact and those that don’t—are things that are evidence of a competent craftsman and a sensitive artist.” Lenore Crawford, “Spoofs Reveal Artist: Odd Objects Exhibit Startles Art Lovers,” *The London Free Press*, November 4, 1961.
incorporated the processes of childhood play that had earlier been so satisfactory,” his friend, the artist John Boyle (b. 1941) later recalled,

speech balloons, cartoon-like drawings, rubber-stamp labeling, the keeping of lists of important objects and events, the assignation of importance to such everyday things as O Pee Chee chewing gum wrappers and Bon Ami cleanser labels.\footnote{Boyle.}

As Théberge observed in 1981, by this time the lessons of Duchamp and Schwitters “had already been intelligently grasped and fully assimilated.”\footnote{Théberge, \textit{Greg Curnoe: Retrospective}, 5.}

Curnoe frequently cited Schwitters as an influence throughout this period, writing in 1964 that “Schwitters is the best,”\footnote{Curnoe to Groome, November 17, 1964.} and later that he was “a big hero of mine at the time.”\footnote{Curnoe and Théberge, \textit{Political} (Audio Recording).}

Curnoe was not alone in his appreciation. Especially following the posthumous exhibition of his Merzbau at the Venice Biennale in 1960, his work was heralded as pioneering the technique of collage.\footnote{Lippard, \textit{Pop Art}, 11.}

A few years later, in 1965, his work was the subject of a survey exhibition at the Art Gallery of Toronto (later Art Gallery of Ontario; September 10–October 10, 1965).\footnote{That exhibition was particularly determining for Ron Martin, a few years Curnoe’s junior, who “began with collage, influenced by a Schwitters show in Toronto and by Curnoe’s early work.” Lord, “What London, Ontario, Has That Everywhere Else Needs,” 104.}

Through 1962, Curnoe’s collages were often assembled with more care for a strong outline or contour, rather than relationships formed through montage between individual elements: in fact, many seem to “approximate the kind of disorder in which they were originally found.”\footnote{Théberge, \textit{Greg Curnoe: Retrospective}, 6.} While in outline they might resemble clear geometric shapes, a profile (such as the artist’s father), or body parts (lips, eyes, and ears), the content of the repurposed, found material, was secondary. There was a distinctly workmanlike approach to his collage-making, as Curnoe later told Bruce Kidd, when he

\footnote{Boyle.}
\footnote{Théberge, \textit{Greg Curnoe: Retrospective}, 5.}
\footnote{Curnoe to Groome, November 17, 1964.}
\footnote{Curnoe and Théberge, \textit{Political} (Audio Recording).}
\footnote{Lippard, \textit{Pop Art}, 11.}
\footnote{That exhibition was particularly determining for Ron Martin, a few years Curnoe’s junior, who “began with collage, influenced by a Schwitters show in Toronto and by Curnoe’s early work.” Lord, “What London, Ontario, Has That Everywhere Else Needs,” 104.}
\footnote{Théberge, \textit{Greg Curnoe: Retrospective}, 6.}
asked what painting bicycles has to do with riding them, “it is the same thing. I assemble bicycles, I assemble collages.”

Although following the Second World War Rauschenberg had played a major part in reintroducing montage techniques gleaned from Dada, there is a significant difference with Curnoe’s work of 1960–1962. Clearly unlike Dada, and somewhat unlike Rauschenberg’s collage, Curnoe’s work was primarily concerned with form and colour. There is not yet a clear politics evident in these earliest collages, and the debt is formal, not theoretical; his engagement through these works suggesting a kind of depoliticized neo-avant-garde. As Branden Joseph suggests in relationship to Rauschenberg’s work, often this use of earlier avant-garde strategies nullifies their radical potential.

If these strategies of collage and assemblage were stripped of their potency in Curnoe’s earliest works, within a few years they took on new potent formations. Curnoe would use techniques of the historical avant-garde and redeploy them by the middle of the decade in works such as *The Camouflaged Piano or French Roundels* (1965–1966), demonstrating an urgency and political motivation rare in American expressions of Neo-dada at the same time.

Curnoe’s collages often began by gleaning found materials around London, Ontario, and his daily habits informed not only his work of the early 1960s but his practice throughout his life. “Some of the younger English and American artists,” Curnoe wrote in 1963, “have become more integrated, that is, there is no longer this split between life and work.” This interest in the everyday for Curnoe was indebted to the example of

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71 Curnoe, “The Relation of Art to Politics.” Although difficult to know who these “younger English” artists may be, based on Curnoe’s *About Painters*, which he began in October 1964, they may include R.B.
the historical avant-garde. Benjamin Buchloh, looking to the postwar period, later argued that artists working around the middle of the last century often choose between either Duchamp or Piet Mondrian (1872–1944)—either for an embeddedness in daily life or a mindful distanciation. Ad Reinhardt clearly sided with Mondrian, for instance, saying “I’m against the mixture of all the arts, against the mixture of art and life you know, everyday life.”

Curnoe, as we have already seen, was quite clearly for Duchamp. Not only was the only possible culture that of his immediate surroundings, but as Théberge suggested in 1981, “the only genuine form of art springs from daily expression.”

This embeddedness in daily life is conveyed no more clearly than in Curnoe’s interest in diaries and journals. “Mainly, my life is full and I like so much just to look, listen, read,” Curnoe wrote in 1964, “it doesn’t threaten or seduce; it just is there, and I stand on the ground and look at it.” For Curnoe, there was always continuity between his artistic practice and his family, friends and the social and geographical particularity of his life in London, Ontario. This continuity had important historical precursors, but also suited his temperament. A keen archivist and researcher, “Curnoe created his own changing archive by saving the scraps and pieces that were evidence of a life being lived.”

The use of the minutiae of daily life found expression in many of Curnoe’s projects: his Blue Books, which began in August 1964 and continued until the early 1990s, record personal events but also lists, indices and statements. His first consisted of


Théberge, Greg Curnoe: Retrospective, 2.

Curnoe to Groome, November 17, 1964.

a “list of people he admired.”76 Later books, as in one from 1989, lists a “negative topology of all the things he was not.”77 These lists and diaries were for Curnoe valuable in and of themselves, but also as sources for work. As he told Kidd when asked if he intended to preserve every moment of his life, Curnoe replied, “first of all it’s interesting information in itself, and secondly, I am able to find out things from looking at it. I am able to tell that certain days I walked further than others and I wonder what happened that day, and I’m able to remember.”78

The simple pleasure and value of transcribing information is conveyed in Curnoe’s “Radio Journal” for 20 Cents Magazine (1966–1970), where Curnoe modestly recorded and commented on what he heard on the radio.79 Sometimes, however, these columns morphed into more conventional diary entries, even bordering on a kind of stream-of-consciousness art criticism, as in his column for May 1967:

Went to Detroit two weeks ago and saw work by Don Judd, Robt. Morris, Robt. Smithson, Tony Smith, Tom Wesselmann and a lot of boring paintings including Kitaj, Bannard, Warhol, Frankenthaler, Feeley. Two of the pieces by Don Judd—I really liked them and two pieces by Robt. Morris that I liked as much. They sat there. Some of the Tony Smith pieces were exhibited outside—I like them but not as much as the ones by Judd and Morris.80

Later, this straightforward diary work would be deployed in his painting. For View of Victoria Hospital, Second Series (February 10, 1969–March 10, 1971) (1969-1971), small coloured circles distributed across the surface of the painting call out—in a

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78 Kidd and Curnoe, “Interviews with Canadian Artists,” 22.
79 Théberge, Greg Curnoe: Retrospective, 16.
80 Quoted in Théberge, 16.
technique devised from postcards at the time—moments and aspects of the represented view. Numbered, the circles correspond to a text which, though adjacent to the painting, is integral to the work. These annotations are sometimes perceptual (“Shadow occurs at 4:30 or so E.S.T.,” “Flash of Windshield—Feb.27, 1969 5P.M.”), but also personal (“Dad in observation room waving—Sometime in Apr. 1970”). As Sarah Milroy suggests, these notations were Curnoe “self-consciously and painstakingly . . . loading real time and salvaged scraps of concrete experience into the work of art.”81 Curnoe used this strategy repeatedly in his practice. This was, it should be remembered, effectively the very same method Curnoe used to make an inventory for *Drawer Full of Stuff* (1961).

Curnoe’s work rarely traded in irony or cynicism, even if he often expected a playful attitude on the part of the viewer in their reception of his work.82 As Lucy Lippard noted in her survey *Pop Art* (1964), “by the time of the ‘Assemblage’ exhibition [Museum of Modern Art; 1961] the perceptive observer began to notice a gradual shift from the rusty, peeling, aged, and mellowed surface to a cleaner cut, simpler, more blaring, ordered, and ‘cool’ expression within the assemblage trend.”83 Although Curnoe’s earliest collages of 1960–1962 are indeed rather cool and ordered compared with messier Neo-dada work of the 1950s, his painting of the mid-1960s is a far cry from, say, Warhol’s distant and often ironic approach. Curnoe was from the mid-1960s consistently “hot,” to use the art critical language of the period: engaged, embedded in the world and, more often than not, highly

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81 Milroy, “Greg Curnoe: Time Machines,” 84.
82 Take, for instance, Curnoe’s expectation that the Department of Transport will share his sense of humour regarding the more controversial passages of *Homage to the R 34* (1967–1968), as discussed below.
83 Lippard, *Pop Art*, 76.
This distinction between this cool expression of Pop and his far more engaged interest in Neo-dada was often lost on his critics.\(^\text{84}\)

That is not to say that more perceptive observers did not notice the differences between the distance of Warhol and the intense, politicized closeness Curnoe exacted on his subjects. Barry Lord (1939–2017), beginning in 1967, honed in on the distinction between Pop and Neo-dada when he wrote that with the “new figure painting of Greg Curnoe and John Chambers . . . the source here is not Pop art; it goes farther back in time, to dada and surrealism respectively, with a strong regional or personal reference admixed.”\(^\text{85}\) There may well have been formal similarities, as Lord observed in 1971: even if similar in appearance to Tom Wesselmann’s (1931–2004) work, Curnoe’s content was entirely different.\(^\text{86}\) The comparison came down to this superficial likeness, as Lippard observed in 1964, Curnoe’s “main connection with Pop Art is his flat rendering of figures and the frequent but unobtrusive ‘caption’ across the top.”\(^\text{87}\)

On November 12, 1964, Les Groome from the University of Saskatchewan wrote to Curnoe asking a series of questions, including: “do you consider yourself a Pop artist?” Curnoe, in his response on November 17, 1964 replied, “I do not consider myself to be a Pop artist. I believe that Andy Warhol is the only one around, and he is mainly a watered

\(\text{84}\) Take, for instance, Elizabeth Kilbourn (b. 1926) writing for The Toronto Star in 1963: “Greg Curnoe . . . is one of the best Canadian exponents of Pop art.” Kilbourn continues, “although he uses many tricks and techniques of the Americans, his work is jam-packed with local pride, the artifacts, symbols, flotsam and jetsam of the Western Ontario countryside where he lives.” Elizabeth Kilbourn, “Art and Artists: A Look at This Season,” Toronto Star, December 21, 1963.

\(\text{85}\) Barry Lord, !""Discover Canada!,” Art in America 55, no. 3 (June 1967): 82.

\(\text{86}\) Lord, “Living Inside the American Empire of Taste: Canadian Artists Are Struggling to Find a Way Out,” 33.

\(\text{87}\) Lippard, Pop Art, 198.
down (chic) extension of some of Duchamp’s ideas (except for his movies).”

Curnoe continued,

Jasper Johns’ attitude toward objects has a lot of similarity with mine, that is, the juxtaposition and manipulation of surfaces and meanings—but then so do the modern linguistic philosophers (Wittgenstein, Ryle, etc.) and authors like Michel Butor who writes about surfaces and situations simply.

This interest in montage as a strategy is the crux of what distinguishes Curnoe’s work from that of Warhol. A year earlier, in 1963, Curnoe observed that,

in the U.S. some Pop Art takes a more subtle form. There [are] those painters, specifically Warhol and Rosenquist [inserted by hand: Lichtenstein], [who] concern themselves with the bland acceptance of the inanities of advertising. [Inserted by hand: Warhol Soup Tins / Rosenquist Billboards / Lichtenstein Comics] . . . They are taking a public stand that is too submissive.

Curnoe’s analysis here is blunt, in focusing on the “bland acceptance” of Pop artists in turning to advertising sources for their work, he misses the Dadaist impulse in a work such as Brillo Soap Pads Boxes (1964). In citing Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951), Gilbert Ryle (1900–1976) and especially nouveau roman writer Michel Butor (1926–2016), Curnoe was keen to sketch a larger, extra-artistic field wherein to situate his work. The nouveau roman was a popular reference for artists in the 1960s, and elsewhere Curnoe linked the literary phenomenon with Neo-dada, as when in interview with Théberge in 1977 he spoke about “that business about doing the obvious,” the “beer cans

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88 Curnoe to Groome, November 17, 1964.
89 Curnoe to Groome.
90 Curnoe, “The Relation of Art to Politics.”
of Jasper Johns [are] very similar to . . . Robbe-Grillet . . . that’s something I held onto, I prefer to go about things that way.”

In spite of these statements made between 1963 and 1964, Curnoe was still more often associated with Pop than Neo-dada in the popular press. It was not an affirmation of consumer culture that appealed to him, however, but rather an aesthetic of negation providing a base from which he made work throughout the 1960s and beyond. Whether the association with Pop was simply owing to carelessness or a failure on critics’ part to know the difference, Curnoe’s work sits far more easily in relation to historical avant-garde precedents.

If Curnoe staked out his allegiance to Dada relatively early—and continued to assert it throughout his practice—his work also managed to retain aspects of the historical avant-garde that had generally been lost to postwar Neo-dada artists working in New York. Curnoe’s frequent use, particularly toward the second-half of the 1960s, of strategies of shock and protest distinguished him from the largely depoliticized work of artists such as Johns and Rauschenberg around the same time. Johns and Rauschenberg’s gradual move away from these agitational strategies was concomitant with the institutionalization of the historical avant-garde in the 1950s, as “Dadaist forms of attack were themselves being canonized as legitimate art,” as Andreas Huyssen has argued.

Curnoe’s frequent gestures of re-integrating art and life—his collages of 1960–1962, his diaries, Blue Books and Radio Journal column, even the way in which later he

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attends to the minutiae of the view from his studio window in View of Victoria Hospital, Second Series (February 10, 1969–March 10, 1971)—were an attempt to regain that spirit of avant-garde protest. Far from practicing an affirmative aesthetics without political effect, Curnoe continued to cultivate shock and protest and to resist, even if ultimately unsuccessfully, the inevitable canonization of his own Neo-dada work.

Nowhere is this more evident than in Curnoe’s highly politicized work of the late 1960s, some of which provoked in a way wholly reminiscent of avant-garde strategies. Without the reemergence of montage, shock and protest strategies of the historical avant-garde that took place in New York through the 1950s, however, it seems unlikely that Curnoe could have arrived at his own disruptive collaged images. In a work such as Homage to the R 34 (1967–1968) (Figs. 5.1–5.3), the technique of montage derived from the neo-avant-garde’s deployment of historical techniques, and perhaps even an indebtedness to certain strategies used by Pop artists, as well. If montage served as the single most important technique of Curnoe’s work of the 1960s, the Dadaist spirit of shock and protest came in close second.

“I intended to telephone you about the airport problems,” Jean Sutherland Boggs (1922–2014) wrote on April 3, 1968 to Tony Emery (1919–2016), “Curnoe was very naughty indeed—infuriatingly so—in the Montreal airport.”95 Together, Boggs and Emery had served as jurors in commissioning works of art for a newly constructed Dorval Airport terminal. Along with Gilles Hénault (1920–1996), Director of the Musée d’art contemporain in Montreal, Guy Viau (1920–1971), Director of the Musée du Québec, and

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and Richard Simmins (1924–1999), Director of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Boggs and Emery had awarded Curnoe a mural commission in January 1967.  

On April 19, 1968, Emery replied to Boggs, and recounted a failed attempt to speak with Curnoe and confusion around what exactly took place at the airport, “Could you give us a brief resume of the story to date?” Boggs enigmatically replied on April 24, 1968 “Curnoe was, to put it most kindly, discourteous and, to put it more precisely, quite perverse. My own inclination would be to reject [the mural] completely. Mr. Fitzpatrick is of course far more generous and has asked for revisions in it. I can’t take the time to go into details now but we will telephone you about it.” So what exactly led to this exchange between Boggs and Emery over the mural that Curnoe had installed at Dorval Airport?

Curnoe had submitted an initial proposal for the project on February 15, 1967, which included a sound element emanating from the airship’s engines, later nixed by the jury. The contract he signed on November 22, 1967 stipulated the “production and installation of Pop Art representing gondolas of an airship mounted on the wall opposite the moving sidewalk.” In total, the work was to span 115 feet. The twenty-six panel mural was conceived for a corridor wall adjacent to a moving sidewalk in the airport’s international arrivals tunnel. Prominently situated, many of the passersby would be arriving from the United States. Earlier in the decade, the airport had undergone a thirty-

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97 Tony Emery to Jean Sutherland Boggs, April 19, 1968, Box 144, File 42, Vancouver Art Gallery Correspondence with National Gallery of Canada File, 1968-1971, Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.
98 Jean Sutherland Boggs to Tony Emery, April 24, 1968, Box 144, File 42, Vancouver Art Gallery Correspondence with National Gallery of Canada File, 1968-1971, Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.
million-dollar expansion by Illsley, Templeton, Archibald, and Larose: the addition of a new terminal making it the largest airport in Canada and among the largest in the world at the time.

Curnoe’s mural was to respond not only to its subject’s vast scale, but the airport and city’s aspirations as a major transportation hub. In tribute to a patrol airship, the R 34 was a vast, 643-foot long dirigible celebrated for making a four-day trans-Atlantic crossing, leaving England on July 2, 1919 and arriving on July 6 at Mineola, Long Island, New York. It was the first such east-west journey. In a nod to historical accuracy, Curnoe showed a cat at the fore of the airship, the dirigible’s stowaway mascot, Whoopsie.

The linear arrangement and naturalistic scale of the work meant travelers would encounter face-to-face the blimp’s imagined passengers. This symmetry in terms of scale and siting extends the cast of the painting to the airport’s visitors: implicating viewers in the narrative of the work. Curnoe’s mix of celebrities with ordinary folk as the dirigible’s passengers further reinforces this reading.

Including representations of those in his own social circle was in keeping with a fascination that can be traced to at least the early sixties, and one of Curnoe’s earliest stamped text works: *List of Names of Boys I Grew Up With* (1962; Fig. 5.4). In this work, a two-part composition alluding to a facing-page spread in a notebook, names are registered as individual letters are impressed by hand. Most immediately, it serves as an index of a small social network. But it also charts, more generally, a demographic and cultural history of London, Ontario during his childhood. Pasted onto the work’s support are two pieces of printed ephemera: a transfer from the London Transit Commission and a luggage tag for London from the Canadian Pacific Express. Together, these two items
lend specificity to the names, a precise ground—actual and metaphorical—against which these boys are introduced to us. At the same time, the travel documents suggest a dispersal: while encountered in a corner of southwestern Ontario, these individuals would travel further afield, soon no longer constituting a closed social unit.

Painted in his London, Ontario studio over the winter of 1967–68, Curnoe left for Montreal on March 20, 1968 with his friend Robert Fones (b. 1949) and the individual panels of R 34. When they arrived the following day, George Bowering (b. 1935), and Robert Daudelin (b. 1939)—who worked at Cinématèque québécoise and was a friend of Pierre Théberge—were also there to assist.100 Putting up the first panel, the following text was shown:

Mr Mohammed Ali, formerly Cassius Clay, declined to take an oath for the American army. The American world boxing association stripped him of his title. It is not known on what grounds since his U.S. government sponsored proposed fight is not being fought in a ring with gloves or for any purse or under any rules, Queensbury, or otherwise. —Freedom Anarchist Weekly

During the installation, Curnoe made audio recordings, later titled as Sound Journal (1968), effectively a diary on cassette tape. With this first of the twenty-six panels installed—and on the very first day of working—a Department of Transport employee, Mr. E. Middleton, told Curnoe that an RCMP officer saw the text and made a complaint. Curnoe wrote, “Mr. Middleton verbally requested that in the case of all panels with text printed on them, all texts must be printed out and mailed to Ottawa for approval and that a letter explaining my use of texts also be sent.”101 Later that same day, Middleton told Curnoe that in all likelihood any text would have to be removed, including references to

his wife and son. The following day, on March 21, Curnoe gave copies of all of the text on the mural to Middleton, along with a cover letter, finding it “difficult to work since I was not permitted to install any panels with texts.” This difficulty inspired Curnoe to go to Ottawa to speak directly with those at the Department of Transport, and on March 22 he received permission to continue installing the work, so long as it remained covered until it can be seen by Mr. J. Brown, an architect with the Air Services Division of the Department of Transport. Two days later, on March 24, Curnoe completed the installation; when Brown came to see the installed work, he approved it with the exception of the Ali panel, quoted above, which was to remain covered. This single act of censorship is perhaps surprising, considering the close resemblance of one of the figures to then-President Lyndon Johnson. Lord described him as “flying through the air with bombs falling out of him and exploding below,” however the work actually shows the President falling between the propeller blades. Curnoe returned to London, Ontario on March 27 and the following day, on March 28, Department of Transport staff removed four panels. When Curnoe heard of the removal, he wrote,

The implications in this whole affair suggest that (1) the parts of the mural in question are being judged out of context; (2) the Department of Transport has no sense of humour or irony and will not tolerate work containing the same; (3) all artists who work on government commissions must reflect completely government policy in their work; (4) the Department of Transport has publicly stated that the work I made for Dorval was contrary

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102 Curnoe.
103 Lord, The History of Painting in Canada: Towards a People’s Art, 231. Curnoe reviewed Lord’s book for Books in Canada. Greg Curnoe and Léandre Bergeron, “A Bi-Focus on Barry Lord (Review of The History of Painting in Canada: Toward a People’s Art by Barry Lord),” Books in Canada, December 1974, 20–21, 37. In 1977, Curnoe wrote in a notebook: “I looked at a large art book at my sister’s—a survey of modern art—totally biased—an American book—with most the recent art from the U.S. Big colour plates. [illegible] False view of the world—Barry Lord has been one of the few writers in Canada to say these things out loud [to address this problem]. It is another story when as a result some writers search for a pure Canadian tradition—which is where Barry gets into trouble—he is forced to reject Molinari—Tousignant—the transition from Anti-Americanism Anti-Imperialism—to pro-Canadianism—is where all the problems begin.” Curnoe, “Untitled Manuscript [Shiny Black Notebook].”
to my proposals, which is not true . . . It is unfortunate that the government is taking an emotional position with regard to the mural that in the future will seem out of proportion.\footnote{Curnoe, “Dorval Mural Statement.”}

According to a later account by Barry Lord, “Curnoe asked if he could fix it by stamping ‘CENSORED’ over the offending sections, however the Department of Transportation refused.”\footnote{Lord, The History of Painting in Canada: Towards a People’s Art, 231.} Throughout the negotiations with the Department of Transport, Curnoe sought the advice of his friends, his dealer, Av Isaacs (1926–2016), but also curators at the National Gallery of Canada, including Dennis Reid (b. 1943). As Reid later recounted, Curnoe offered compromise solutions to DOT [Department of Transport], such as blacking out the offending portions in a manner that would acknowledge the censorship of the original concept, but he refused to start over again on the work unless it was treated as a new commission. DOT finally paid the agreed fee, and the mural was sent to the National Gallery on loan in December. It was ultimately transferred to the national collection in 1998.\footnote{Dennis Reid, “Some Things I Learned from Greg Curnoe,” in Greg Curnoe: Life and Stuff, ed. Dennis Reid and Matthew Teitelbaum (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 2001), 115. One contemporary account described the controversy as follows: “The artwork . . . was taken down because of its ‘anti-American’ sentiment, Emile D’Aoust, Ottawa, director of the department’s architectural and construction branch, said yesterday . . . Three of the panels contained written text implying opposition to war and violence. The fourth shows a blood-covered man who ‘bore a good resemblance to President Johnson,’ lying on his back, Mr. D’Aoust said . . . Wording of the objectionable panels was in bad taste and not favorable to international relations, he said. There was no objection to the quality of the art, just its theme.” Helen Wallace, “Curnoe Art Depicts Anti-War Writing, Blood-Spattered Johnson,” The London Evening Free Press, March 29, 1968.}

That the mural was only deposited, remaining as property of the Department of Transport for three decades, and not accessioned to the national collection until 1998, shows something of the work’s lasting bite—and also, perhaps, its inherent resistance to institutionalization.

The mural and its subsequent removal stands not only as an instance of Canadian government censorship in the visual arts in the late 1960s, but also as a condensation...
point of Curnoe’s contestatory practice. As a pacifist, Curnoe was “keen to show that flying machines have their destructive uses.” Charlotte Townsend-Gault, addressing the work some years later, insists that the work does not stand as a “remote protest”: it shows an American President, but also Curnoe’s family, friends and their children riding in the dirigible: “Clearly it is not just somewhere distant in time and space, but his own London, and everyone’s London, which Curnoe believes is at risk.” As an act of protest, by montaging images of his friends and family alongside more recognizable figures Curnoe was aiming for immediacy: making proximate war mongers and resisters, along with portraits of those around him. If this episode is among the better-known examples of Curnoe’s decades-long practice of elaborating and critiquing American influence in Canada, it exists within a larger context of Curnoe’s writing and thinking of the period. The painting, original and strident, developed out of a moment of heated debate as to the value of American art in Canada. These debates were at once critical and artistic; they took place on the pages of newspapers and magazines as well as the panels of murals.

Curnoe’s work has long occupied a central place in many histories of art in English Canada, particularly of the 1960s. His work’s frequent anti-Americanism found a receptive audience in the Canadian art world, and his oft-cited slogans such as “Close the 49th Parallel” gained currency as New Left politics found a wider base. Even today, in

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108 Townsend-Gault.
109 Along with his slogans, some of Curnoe’s more explicit anti-American work includes maps of North America eliminating the United States and showing Canada and Mexico with a common border; a proposal for a mural with a text that tells Canadians to do a good deed by asking an American to go home; or his referendum question, posed to “all citizens of Canada with the exception of residents of the province of
spite of a critical skepticism toward nationalist narratives, his work is often presented as politically progressive. This has something to do with Curnoe’s care in correcting those who conflated a strident anti-Americanism with Canadian nationalism, but it may also have to do with the fact that Curnoe’s anti-Americanism intensified throughout the 1970s. During the 1960s and into the early 1970s, Curnoe was more often than not good-humoured about perceived cultural imperialism in Canada. Nowhere is this friendliness more evident than in his dealings with American artists and curators toward the end of the 1960s. Between 1967 and 1969, Curnoe invited both Robert Morris (b. 1931) and Bruce Nauman (b. 1941) to realize exhibitions at 20/20 Gallery in London, Ontario. Morris was unable to accept the invitation, first owing to the fact that he could not delegate fabrication from drawings in London, Ontario. (He was, at that point, “fabricating in steel, aluminum and plastics . . . I am no longer making things in plywood.”) Secondly, he had two shows scheduled for spring 1968, so making work available in the intervening six months was impossible. In fall 1969, Nauman accepted Curnoe’s invitation, and realized *Audio/Video Piece for London* (February–March 1970).

Quebec: Which nation do you want to be separate from—Québec or the United States?” Théberge, *Greg Curnoe: Retrospective*, 21–22, cat. nos. 88, 116.


111 Morris to Curnoe. Morris closes by writing, Thank you very much for this invitation. I have never had a one-man show in Canada and would like very much to do so. However, I think that this season is pretty much out for such a show.”

112 Christopher Régimbal organized an exhibition in 2011 revisiting this 1970 project by Nauman for Forest City Gallery, the successor to 20/20 Gallery. As Régimbal has suggested elsewhere, “this apparent contradiction between Curnoe’s anti-Americanism and his enthusiasm for working with Nauman indicates that his approach to American artists was more nuanced than his hyper-nationalist work at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s would suggest.” Christopher Régimbal, “Institutions of Regionalism: Artist Collectivism in London, Ontario,” *Fillip* 19 (Spring 2014): 20. Place tape recorder on the floor of the room playing a tape which I will prepare as a continuous loop. Mount the video camera in an upper corner of the room with the line out to the monitor in the other room and seal off the room with the recorder and tv camera. The tape recorder will be loud enough to be heard through the partition between the two rooms.
At the same time as Curnoe was inviting Morris and Nauman, Lucy Lippard (b. 1937) had invited him to participate in the numbered exhibitions she held in Seattle and Vancouver, the latter titled 955,000 (1970). When she wrote to Curnoe, sometime in 1969, she extended the invitation with slight hesitation: “Didn’t know where you stood on showing in the US. I’d like the work to be in it, tho[ugh].”\textsuperscript{113} Curnoe was happy to participate.

Even more telling than these invitations toward the end of the 1960s extended by Curnoe to American artists, and his participation in American exhibitions, is the first volume of bookwork, \textit{About Painters} (1965–1988).\textsuperscript{114} In this long-term project, started in 1965, Curnoe assembled an extensive inventory of artists and devised a grading system, awarding stars to each based on their work. As Philip Monk insightfully suggested, Curnoe’s “secret internationalism is revealed in the lists he composed.”\textsuperscript{115}

While Curnoe may divulge his “secret internationalism” in the very fact he followed the practices of these artists closely enough to rank them, many of the American painters, were subsequently struck out with “CANCELLED” and the date of the cancellation given. Aside from being eliminated entirely from the list, Curnoe also downgraded the star rating of certain artists over the years, also annotated with dates. The scoring system ranges from mere acknowledgement (“o.k.”) to his own page, ironically.

\textsuperscript{113} Lucy Lippard to Greg Curnoe, 1969, Box 7, File 4, Correspondence 1969, Greg Curnoe fonds, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario.
\textsuperscript{115} Monk, “Five Questions of Regionalism,” 96.
plastered full of countless stars; technically, however, the rubric was “the best ***** / terrific **** / very good *** / good ** / o.k. * / special = (brilliant).” These annotated adjustments in ratings provide us with a sense of Curnoe’s changing attitudes not only to specific artists over time, but more generally to contemporary American art. For example, Jasper Johns at one point had two stars, but was cancelled entirely in January 1969. At first Claes Oldenburg was awarded five stars (“the best”), then by April 1966 was downgraded to three and a half stars, only to be further reduced to two stars by January 1969. James Rosenquist began with two stars in October 1965, two more were added in April 1966, and he had five by June 1968. That fifth star was removed on May 1974, the fourth and third on April 20, 1980, and the remaining two stars struck out on September 1986. Remarkably, Robert Rauschenberg received two stars in January 1969 and maintained them until Curnoe set aside the project in 1988.

“It is clear that nationalism is an ugly thing,” Curnoe wrote in an untitled manuscript from 1973,

it is hard to think of anything good that has come from nationalism . . . there is nothing more scary than going to a Ukrainian-Italian football game—to see the ugliness that nationalism generates or to hear the smugness of an Englishman talking of things English to a mere Canadian.117

Echoing this same sentiment, though in even stronger terms, in conversation in 1977 with Théberge, Curnoe said “I’ve always been very suspicious of [nationalism],” citing the National Socialist party in Germany: “that’s always made me very suspicious of monolithic nationalism.”118 While his friend John Boyle took the threat of American

118 Curnoe and Théberge, Political (Audio Recording).
cultural imperialism seriously, Curnoe had a tendency to send up some of the more extreme forms of anti-Americanism and Canadian cultural nationalism circulating late sixties. On March 11, 1970, when Boyle presented his text “Refus Continental,” in Kingston, Ontario, Curnoe offered his “Amendments.” Among the thirty-seven recommendations: close the border to birds, insects and germs, ban Coca-Cola in Canada and declare American art degenerate and auction it off in the United States.119

Curnoe was less light-hearted by the mid-1970s, especially following the publication of a special issue of *Artscanada* in fall 1975. Entitled “The Canadian Cultural Revolution—An Appraisal of the Politics and Economics of Art,” a largely unknown New York-based journalist named Dale McConathy (1940–1988) was commissioned by Anne Brodzky to write the issue. In response, Curnoe wrote an article in *Canadian Forum*, “Feet of Clay Planted Firmly in USA.”120 In his draft manuscript of the article, Curnoe begins “the Autumn 1975 issue of Artscanada is in a word—a piece of shit.”121 The published version omits this punchy opening line, but continues to call out what Curnoe perceives to be only the latest instance of *Artscanada* causing “an important part of Canada’s culture to be locked into a narrow bilateral (unilateral, really) relationship with the US.”122 In addition to hiring McConathy, in 1970 Brodsky asked a Chicago writer to interview a number of artists in the wake of the October Crisis, ostensibly because Chicago had a “colonial relationship with New York” similar to that of French-speaking Montreal. The interviews were, Curnoe adds, of course published in English.

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120 Curnoe, “Feet of Clay Planted Firmly in USA.”


Artscanada’s “frequent use of American authors,” Curnoe suggests, “is always defended by the editor as an attempt to obtain an objective view of the situation in Canada.”

If Curnoe’s anti-Americanism was constant—if handled with more levity in 1970 with his “Amendments” than his 1975 article for Canadian Forum—by 1978 would seem to be even more skeptical of “continentalism,” and perhaps even a little sympathetic to Canadian nationalism. In a notebook from November 1978, Curnoe observed:

A left-wing nationalist political party will be investigated by the Mounties (Waffle) while a continentalist or right-wing group will go untouched (American Friends of Canada).

Culturally, those artists who attempt to gain some influence in our publically owned art galleries are seen to be subversive while the various businessmen and academics who control most boards of our public galleries are seen to be above reproach.

Curnoe continues, “isn’t it crazy that anyone with contacts with communists is suspect and a security risk—while anyone employed or with contacts with a multinational is clean?” While nuanced, it was increasingly the case that Curnoe was associated with these vaguely isolationist politics.

This association contributed, as Katie Cholette has recently argued, to Curnoe’s declining market by the end of the 1970s. Panned by Gary Michael Dault in 1978 for an exhibition of “Curnoe-isms,” Dault concluded from the work on view that Curnoe had

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123 Curnoe, 9. McConathy ends his issue with an astounding fifty proposals. Curnoe ends his with five: 1. Withdraw funding from Artscanada; 2. Set up an external committee to evaluate the performance of Brodzky; 3. “ Declare a national moratorium on the hiring of any American nationals by our public galleries, universities, community colleges, or CEGEPs”; 4. “Increase the available funding available to magazines like Parachute, Only Paper Today, the Canadian Journal of Art History, and other journals that are beginning to appear, many connected with the parallel gallery/space movement emerging in this country (another phenomenon unnoticed by Artscanada and McConathy)”; 5. “Give Canada Council juries full control over funding to The Society for Art Publications (the publishers of Artscanada) and Vie des Arts.” Curnoe, 11.


125 Curnoe.

become a “rather simplistic nationalist.” Against Dault, it is worth recalling Curnoe’s constant distinction between an opposition to the United States and nationalism: “I’m anti-American, so many people assume that makes me a nationalist,” Curnoe said in 1977, “in the sense wanting a monolithic culture and keeping other things out.” If the difference was clear to Curnoe, he failed to convey it through his work.

If this is often how Curnoe was imagined in the 1980s, as a “rather simplistic nationalist,” it bears recalling that in his formative years of the late 1950s and early 1960s, Curnoe’s disruptive, montaged images were derived from a far more expansive engagement with the historical avant-garde. If he went to these sources, through Sanouillet, looking to Schwitters, Duchamp and Dadaist gestures of shock and protest, there remains a debt, however imprecise, to those Neo-dadaists in New York beginning in the 1950s who first attended to early-twentieth-century strategies. As Curnoe admitted later, an exhibition as apparently without precedent as the Isaacs Gallery Dada show in 1961–1962, was because of work of Neo-dada artists in New York such as Rauschenberg and Johns beginning in the 1950s.

Robert Fulford recognized this tendency to disclaim influence when he wrote for *Artnews* in 1974 that, “at times some artists try to deny the existence of these imaginative geographies. There are others who like to ignore the existence of the United States; this position is quite fashionable at the moment.” In spite of this, he suggested, “those who hate America most sometimes find American art fashions creeping into their work.”

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128 Curnoe and Théberge, Political (Audio Recording).
Curnoe depended on Rauschenberg and Johns’ reappraisal and recasting of Dadaist works at the outset of his own project, even if only at first. Once his curiosity was peaked, Curnoe turned to the original source. It was this combinative tinkering of his daily life in London, Ontario with Dada strategies that led to his highly unique, and compelling, practice. This was aided by the presence of Michel Sanouillet in Toronto—a direct and unmediated source of information about the historical avant-garde, and Duchamp in particular.

In the years since his death, Curnoe as a regionalist has come to replace Curnoe as an anti-American—though, of course, the two ideas are twinned. Regionalism developed not as some kind of remote celebration, but rather as a bulwark against the rising tide of American influence in the visual arts. What is missing from too many accounts of Curnoe’s work, with their emphasis on his devout regionalism, is his early and considerable debt to American Neo-dada artists. Without their precedent, the Dadaist wit and irreverence, the attention to everyday life, and even the techniques of shock and protest so highly valued in Curnoe’s practice may never have been.
Chapter Five

When is a Canadian not an American?

Joyce Wieland from New York to the Isaacs Gallery

In an undated letter to her dealer, Av Isaacs (1926–2016), likely from September or October 1963, Joyce Wieland (1930–1998) described how she packed paintings in New York destined for exhibition in Toronto:

Listen—about four of my paintings are too suggestive to send nakedly over the border so I’ve covered them with a second layer of canvas—with shitty paintings on them—you can tell which they are as they are the smallest and are unframed—framed (underneath—though). One painting will have a patch on it to hide a naked breast. Other than that a magnificent show will be on its way soon.2

This strategy of concealing works for shipment across the border, is one of a number of tactics devised by Wieland to bring work from New York, where she had moved in late 1962, north for exhibition in Toronto. In another undated letter from Wieland to Isaacs, likely from March 1967, again in preparation for an exhibition at the Isaacs Gallery, Wieland asks

Av, Can you foresee any reason why it would be illegal to bring my art works on the train (in baggage) with me to Toronto????? Mike [Snow] said I should check with you. If you

1 “I took a picture of the military industrial complex of the Global Village. Last week the quack of a duck made me eat the food the package came in. The swallowing of polluted waterways by babies gives you the sinking sailboats, the bleeding stuffed hearts and the Jane Jacobs. When you sent wheat germ to Biafra, I turned up the radio when they took the draft register upstairs down to the waiting truck. When is an American not a Canadian?” Joyce Wieland, Art Gallery, Glendon College, York University, February-March 1969 (Press Release),” 1969, 3, Joyce Wieland, Documentation files, Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.

send me the papers and I pack up the art works and bring papers don’t I then just get them out of customs in Toronto? ³

She closes, likely alluding to the customs agents, “is that art or what they are sure to have a fit.”⁴

Aside from these actual—that is to say material—instances of border crossing, much has been made of Wieland’s interest in New Left politics toward the end of the 1960s through the early 1970s. Notably, Johanne Sloan and Kristy Holmes-Moss have persuasively argued for a consideration of this larger political discourse informing Wieland’s practice, with both scholars suggesting that this political engagement culminates in *True Patriot Love* (July 1–August 8, 1971), Wieland’s monographic exhibition organized by Pierre Théberge (b. 1942) at the National Gallery of Canada.⁵ In “Joyce Wieland at the Border: Nationalism, the New Left and the Question of Political Art in Canada” (2005) Sloan traces Wieland’s interest in war resistance, Waffle politics, and Canadian cultural nationalism, and sketches a discursive field that quite convincingly structured Wieland’s thinking at the time. The very specific practice, however, of making work in New York for exhibition in Canada, whether at the Isaacs Gallery, as is my focus here, but also at Glendon College at York University, 20/20 Gallery in London, or the Vancouver Art Gallery—is another determining factor, albeit more prosaic, in the

³ Wieland continues, “Am not too clear . . . Could you wire me if it’s ok? Or should I just send them air freight? Altogether it won’t weigh over thirty pounds. Don’t know best way and haven’t got the time to fool with customs here as they fool around. Can’t go after forms as that would require half a day at least . . . do you understand what it’s like?? Here they make problems where you could never imagine they exist . . . . Maybe you could wire as I should know of any problems well in advance. Am I clear? I sure am tired.” Joyce Wieland to Av Isaacs, March 1967, 1996-036/002 (12) Joyce Wieland, Av Isaacs fonds, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University.

⁴ Wieland to Isaacs.

development of her practice during these years. Looking at these exhibitions, notably those mounted by the Isaacs Gallery around the time Wieland lived in New York (1962, 1963, 1967, and 1972), I argue that this condition of producing work in New York for a Toronto audience was integral to Wieland’s engagement with Canadian nationalism. In addition, this transnational condition exerted pressure on the technical supports of her work, with Wieland moving away from painting toward textiles and “hangings,” which could be more easily travel from New York to Toronto. This division between New York and Toronto ultimately led to the radical gestures instantiated in True Patriot Love, as well as her trenchant critique of the “tradition of sensationalism and vulgarity” she encountered in the United States.6

In what follows I will take up Wieland’s time in New York, beginning in late 1962 and leading to True Patriot Love (1971), and then treat as a coda her return to Toronto some months after the exhibition closed. The exhibition itself was discussed extensively in popular press at the time, and since then has remained one of the most discussed aspects of Wieland’s practice in scholarship on the artist.7 How Wieland

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arrived at the work shown in this exhibition is an important question for understanding her larger practice, and while the political and theoretical ground on which she lived and worked is a significant part of that answer, as Sloan and Holmes-Moss have persuasively argued, there is space for another complementary approach. In other words, if New Left politics informed Wieland’s work, the more pragmatic and commonplace experience of her life between Toronto and New York remains to be accounted. Along with tracing the movement of Wieland’s work across the Canada-United States border, I also invoke feminist writers of the period in an attempt to better situate her engagement with feminist politics while in New York.  

This is not necessarily to conflate art and biography in examining Wieland’s work, to bite “the lure of biography” as Kass Banning memorably argued in her critique of Wieland’s retrospective at the Art Gallery of Ontario (1987), but to look more closely at how the circumstances of her life in New York found expression in her work of the same period. Attending to Wieland’s biography has its dangers: much of the popular press—especially articles “relegated to the women’s, entertainment, or ecological news section of the newspaper”—clearly exhibited an “over-attention to biography.” These biographical details, however, often show something of the structural obstacles and

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8 Jayne Wark tidily summarizes the gradual emergence of second-wave feminist politics, particularly as they were centred in New York, in her dissertation on feminism and performance art in the 1970s. Wark suggests that though Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1949) was first translated into English by 1952, only later did it become a key text for feminist artists and thinkers. More immediately influential was Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), which “sought to give voice to the widespread malaise experienced by American women who felt trapped in their homes, isolated from any sense of shared community and constrained by the ubiquitous, stereotypical images of the ‘ideal woman’ in mass media and advertising.” Jayne Wark, “The Radical Gesture: Feminism and Performance Art in the 1970s” (PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 1997), 106; Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949), trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevalier (London: Jonathan Cape, 2009); Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) (New York: Dell Publishing, 1984).


10 Banning, 35.
sexism Wieland faced working in New York: sexism which accounts for the direction of her work after 1968 and partly, it will be argued, for her return to Canada in 1971.

With the inordinate attention to True Patriot Love, less has been said of the preceding decade Wieland spent between Toronto and New York (1962–1971). Writing about Wieland’s painting of the early 1960s, Sandra Paikowsky was among the first to point out that “despite the praise in New York for her films, she exhibited her paintings only in Toronto.”11 This split in Wieland’s practice—making and presenting films in New York, and exhibiting non-film work in Toronto—has been noted often since Paikowsky’s observation in the 1980s.12 Emerging from much of Wieland’s correspondence with her dealer Av Isaacs—now in the Av Isaacs Fonds at the Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University—is how the exhibition and sale of works in Toronto funded her work as a filmmaker.

This may not be especially surprising, but it is telling: through regular correspondence with Isaacs while she lived in New York, it is evident that the sale of non-film works allowed her continued practice as a filmmaker. Take for instance when Wieland asks in an undated letter, likely from December 1963, “when are you sending me my statement? . . . Small as it may be, seems it’s lots to me. (I want to buy [a] piece of film equipment) Two films in progress! Going broke!”13 In another letter, likely from the following year, that is 1964, Wieland asks, “where is statement? Where is a check? . .

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12 Perhaps most recently Sloan, who echoes Paikowsky’s observation that while Wieland’s films were frequently shown in the welcoming New York experimental film scene, the rest of her multivalent practice (assemblages, fabric- and language-based works) was mostly shown back in Toronto. Johanne Sloan, “Joyce Wieland: Life and Work” (Art Canada Institute, 2014), http://www.aci-iac.ca/content/art-books/25/Art-Canada-Institute_Joyce-Wieland.pdf.
13 Joyce Wieland to Av Isaacs, December 1963, 1996-036/002 (12) Joyce Wieland, Av Isaacs fonds, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University.
Hurry! Hurry! Hurry! Need money for film!”

Wieland also sought opportunities for screening her films in Toronto, even going so far as to ask Isaacs—though perhaps half in jest—“when are you going to build [a] theatre? Hurry.”

Even if Isaacs would never build a cinema, he did on occasion organize film screenings and collaborate with the Toronto Film Society. Wieland wrote to Isaacs on January 4, 1964, “in our opinion, Mike’s and mine, there are some extremely important films being made here—you should have the advantage of being their impresario.”

More than this simple split in the exhibition of her non-film work in Canada and screening of film work in New York, the border also exerted forces on the materials of the non-film works Wieland made at the time, as evidenced by a close analysis below of Wieland’s exhibition Hangings (March 22–April 10, 1967) at the Isaacs Gallery.

Toward the end of the 1960s, especially after 1968, as Wieland looked to the issues associated with New Left politics in Canada, parts of the New Left wanted nothing to do with Wieland. In an extensive and systematic criticism of True Patriot Love, a “Canadian art worker” writing in New Canada made the position of the

14 Joyce Wieland and Av Isaacs, 1964, 1996-036/002 (12) Joyce Wieland, Av Isaacs fonds, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University.
16 Wieland continues, “Just a line to warn you that the Toronto Film Society has made great overtures to Bob Cowan re coming to Toronto and bringing New York avant-garde cinema films. They are paying his way too. Now my point is this. You are missing the opportunity of a lifetime. You will be given the greatest credit if you are the first to bring in these films—four of which are truly good films—please do it.” Joyce Wieland and Av Isaacs, January 4, 1964, 1996-036/002 (12) Joyce Wieland, Av Isaacs fonds, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University. Bob Cowan was crucial in organizing the event, which would be realized February 12–20, 1964. Warren Collins later recounted, “In 1964, Av thought it would be great to have some underground film (and music) evenings, a couple of which I helped organize. Check out the program for one such event, with films by Brian Barney, Graham Coughtry, Bob Cowan, Louis DeNiverville, George Dunning, Jack Kuper, Arthur Lipsett, Carlos Marchiori, Grant Munro (NFB), Al Sens, Mike Snow, Joyce Wieland, and myself. Surely such an all-star cast of filmmakers has rarely been assembled in Canada. And the event ran for four days.” Donnalu Wigmore and John Parry, eds., Isaacs Seen: 50 Years on the Art Front: A Gallery Scrapbook (Toronto: Hart House, University of Toronto, 2005), 72.
Canadian Liberation Movement particularly clear. This antagonism became even more pronounced after she returned to Toronto, as Wieland recounted, “I was trying to understand what they were doing and to become part of them. They didn’t like my sense of humor in relation to nationalist politics.” Popularly, however, Wieland came to be regarded for her political activism, her involvement with Canadian Artists Representation (CAR), and campaigning for ecological concerns. “Most critics have mistakenly perceived such works as simple playful representations,” Banning suggested in her 1987 essay “The Mummification of Mommy,” “and have designated Wieland’s role as one of ‘myth maker.’” Anticipating the argument often made by Wieland’s New Left detractors, Banning suggests that Wieland’s enthusiastic support of Pierre Elliott Trudeau was not a “paean of praise” but that rather “putting him on for his Enlightenment-like-over-valuation of reason.” While this may stand as a justifiable reading of the quilted work *La raison avant la passion* (1968–1969), which Wieland gave to the Prime Minister in 1969, it fails to account more fully for Wieland’s own politics in the late 1960s. In fact, Wieland’s earlier enthusiasm for Trudeau quickly shifted and, over the course of just two months, she organized a protest of his government’s consulate in New York, as described below. While Sloan and Holmes have extensively positioned Wieland’s work as in dialogue with New Left politics, her quotation of certain issues associated with the political movement in her

19 Banning, “The Mummification of Mommy: Joyce Wieland as the AGO’s First Living Other,” 33.
20 Banning, 33.
21 Wieland later described the work in the following way: “Eulogizing the leader. I thought it was very funny; but Trudeau, apparently, took it all seriously. Of course, ‘reason over passion’ is the opposite of what I believe: the two should go side by side.” Susan Crean, “Notes from the Language of Emotion: A Conversation with Joyce Wieland,” *Canadian Art* 4, no. 1 (1987): 65.
work can indeed seem instrumental or superficial, as Lord in *The History of Painting in Canada: Towards a People’s Art* (1974) and the “Canadian art worker” writing in *New Canada*—perhaps one in the same—vehemently charge.22

Related to this criticism from the left, Wieland regularly distanced herself from theoretical approaches to her work. This was especially true following a screening of *Rat Life and Diet in North America* (1968) in New York in 1968, where Marxist critics took issue with her, they felt, careless humour in addressing Vietnam War resistance.23 It was also an enthusiasm for film theory among her peers, which took place slightly later, around 1970, that Wieland often credited for her turning away from experimental filmmaking: “intellectual theorizing among the artists was growing; visionary cinema was being overtaken by the film theorists,” Wieland recalled in interview.24 Put less euphemistically, Wieland said in a later interview in discussing her and Shirley Clarke’s (1919–1997) exclusion from the Anthology Film Archives founding collection in 1970, “the theorists arrived, like flies on shit, and built this bastion.”25 Perhaps, then, Wieland’s resistance to political theory and desire to find instead a “language of emotions,” as Leila Sujir put it, explains the animosity toward Wieland’s work from factions of the New Left, including the Canadian Liberation Movement. A decade earlier, however, Wieland was

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22 Barry Lord, *The History of Painting in Canada: Towards a People’s Art* (Toronto: New Canada Press, 1974). As Sloan has suggested earlier, and as I discuss in my subsequent chapter on Barry Lord and Gail Dexter, “This might well have been penned by Lord himself or by his wife Gail Dexter Lord.” Sloan, “Joyce Wieland at the Border: Nationalism, the New Left and the Question of Political Art in Canada,” 97.


24 Rabinovitz, “An Interview with Joyce Wieland,” 11. In interview, when Susan Crean spoke with Wieland about the suggestion that she is “working without theory,” Wieland responded: “Leila Sujir, who is writing a critique of my films, is the one who has put it best. She says that my work is emotionally based, that there isn’t a theory, but there is a language of emotions.” Crean, “Notes from the Language of Emotion: A Conversation with Joyce Wieland,” 65.

still working in Toronto, and her formative exhibitions there bear some mention, informing in significant ways her later practice in New York.

Born in Toronto on June 30, 1930,26 after attending Central Technical School (1944–1948), Wieland worked for a number of years at the commercial art house E.S. and A. Robinson.27 In 1953, after a brief stint at the firm Planned Sales, she took a three-month trip to Europe, and on her return in 1954, started working at Graphics Associates. It was there she met Michael Snow (b. 1929); they later married in September 1956 at Toronto City Hall, with a reception following in the basement of Snow’s parents’ house on Roxborough Avenue.28 She had her first exhibition the following year, a four-person show at the Gallery of Contemporary Art Toronto (1957), followed two years later with an exhibition of her drawings alongside Snow’s at Westdale Gallery, in Hamilton, Ontario (1959).29

That same year, when she participated in another two-person show, this time with Gordon Rayner (1935–2010) at Greenwich Gallery (later Isaacs Gallery). Prefiguring, perhaps, comparisons with Snow that would follow her throughout her life, Wieland remembers overhearing a remark at the opening: “Michael Snow is very, very good, and she’s no slouch either.”30 Wieland understood the comment to imply that “being a woman and an artist you’d have to be inferior, right? But here was someone saying I was no

27 Fleming, Joyce Wieland, 22.
29 Fleming, Joyce Wieland, 206.
slouch and meaning it as a compliment!"31 Later, particularly while living in New York, Wieland would often be labelled as an “artist-wife,” as evidenced by the overheard comment above, but more noticeably, perhaps, in popular press. Betty Friedan, reflecting in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) on her magazine writing of the late 1950s and early 1960s, recalled how pressure from her editor shaped an article about an artist that she had profiled: “I wrote about her cooking and marketing and falling in love with her husband, and painting a crib for her baby. I had to leave out the hours she spent painting pictures, her serious work—and the way she felt about it.”32 Friedan went on to articulate why she felt she had to place emphasis on the artist’s domestic rather than creative life: “you could sometimes get away with writing about a woman who was not really a housewife, if you made her *sound* like a housewife, if you left out her commitment to the world outside the home.”33 Wieland’s frequent association with Snow in the popular press was often sexist, as we will see, and Friedan’s articulation of the pressures she felt to write about a woman artist as a housewife first and foremost gives some sense of why profiles of Wieland from her life in New York privilege her domestic over professional life.

In fall 1960, Wieland had her first single-artist exhibition at Dorothy Cameron’s Here & Now Gallery.34 Following the show, which came down on September 25, 1960, Wieland seems to have hit a dry spell. On June 6, 1961, some seven months later, Cameron wrote to Wieland following a phone call the previous evening:

> when you told me, last night on the phone, that you have completed no new work since your show in September, I was, for the moment, rendered speechless. I can hardly believe that you let all these months go by. I understood that while Mike and you were both trying

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31 Crean, 64.
33 Friedan, 53.
to paint at the apartment, it was very difficult for you, but since Mike has his own studio
now I fail to understand how you can expect to be taken seriously as a painter, unless you
take painting seriously enough to work at it. I believe strongly in your potential and I am
willing to work and fight for you, but I cannot work alone.35

“You have no discipline,” Cameron continues, “it’s all very well to dissipate your
energies in amateur film-making and journalism, for which you have a charming flair, but
you are neglecting your real talent.”36 The experiments in film-making would, of course,
bear fruit following Wieland’s move to New York, however the journalism, some of
which was published in Evidence, did seem something of a diversion for Wieland. These
included cartoons, as with an advertisement for Here & Now Gallery that appeared in
Evidence, as well as a profile of Napoleon Bonaparte in the same pages.37 She also spent
time criticizing Canadian Art, it seems, with a letter to the editor panning the January
1961 issue: “There is too much in it about artists. Give us more issues on cars and
typography.”38

The dry spell looks to have abated by late 1961, and Wieland managed to put
together new work for the landmark Dada exhibition (December 20, 1961–January 9,
1962) at Isaacs Gallery: She Decided to Perform Lexi, Product of an Unhappy Family
Life, Napoleon, Flight to Jordon, Station, and Trouble Afoot (all 1961).39 Until that point,

35 Dorothy Cameron to Joyce Wieland, June 6, 1961, 1993-009/005 (029) Correspondence - Personal (n.d.,
University.
36 Cameron to Wieland.
37 Joyce Wieland, “Advertisement for Here and Now Gallery, Toronto,” Evidence, 1961; Joyce Wieland,
exhibition at Isaacs Gallery (December 20, 1961–January 9, 1962), described as “a monument to Napoleon,
with four candles burning at all hours.” Robert Fulford, “World of Art: Anarchy,” Toronto Star, December
38 Joyce Wieland, “Letter to the Editor,” Canadian Art 28, no. 3 (June 1961).
39 “Price List Isaacs Gallery ‘Dada’ Exhibition,” December 20, 1962, Joyce Wieland, Documentation files,
Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.
Wieland was still mostly drawing and painting; she articulated her interest in Dada, telling a journalist at the time of the exhibition, “it’s not just painting, not just art . . . They’re artistic in a general way . . . anti-romantic. They see things whole. Their jokes are about life.”

The work made for this exhibition anticipates her turn to collage and assemblage that would come to define her practice, beginning with her first single-artist exhibition at Isaacs Gallery (January 31–February 20, 1962). “Technically, she’s a painter,” wrote a critic in the Toronto Star, “but paint itself plays a relatively small role in this exhibition. The emphasis here is on constructions and collages.” Wieland showed works such as Hart News, and the Summer Blues and The Clothes of Love (all 1961; Fig. 6.1). Even in works that did not incorporate collage, the reviewer notes, “the same Dada-ist flavor is carried into her paintings.” With Wieland, this sensibility was combined with an interest in sexuality, sparked in the late 1950s by an encounter with Picasso’s Suite Vollard (1930–1937). Works in the exhibition were shot through with sexual imagery, an erotics not unfamiliar to Pop art of the early 1960s, but realized by Wieland in a far more direct way. Paikowsky has read these works in light of her interest in New York Pop artists, venturing that “perhaps Wieland’s inclination to paint male rather than female genitals suggests she may have been trying to find a way to deal with a style that was very much men’s art.” So-called “central-core” or “vaginal iconology,” however, was still some

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42 The exhibition also included Laura Secord Saves Upper Canada, which ten years later would receive a pendant, of a sort, when Wieland re-enacted Laura Secord’s trip in connection with her exhibition True Patriot Love (1971) at the National Gallery of Canada. Hugo McPherson, “Wieland: An Epiphany of North,” Artscanada 28, no. 4 (September 1971): 19.
43 “Wieland.”
44 Fleming, Joyce Wieland, 23.
45 Paikowsky, Joyce Wieland: A Decade of Painting, 5.
years off."\(^{46}\) Paikowsky only alludes in her observation to the absence of a vocabulary accessible to Wieland in the early 1960s to express her sexuality, needing instead to resort to \textquotedblleft an investigation of the workings and interactions of gender differences rather than the nature of the specifically female,"\(^{47}\) as Patricia Mathews and Thalia Gouma-Peterson have argued elsewhere.

In her 1966 survey of Pop art, Lucy Lippard included a discussion of Wieland’s work, quite rightly situating her on the periphery of the movement, though not on account of her gender. \textquoteleft\textquoteleft If Pop art had not come along,
Lippard wrote, \textquoteleft\textquoteleft Wieland would probably have been using the same devices with the same kind of wit anyway."\(^ {48}\) Lippard picks up on the relationship, beginning later, in 1963, in Wieland’s use of \textquoteleft\textquoteleft compartmented paintings\textquoteright\textquoteright and her filmmaking. And moreover, her interest in disasters and sex—without a slick \textit{facture}, and very much unlike \textquoteleft\textquoteleft hardcore Pop\textquoteright\textquoteright.\(^ {49}\)

\(^{46}\) Patricia Mathews and Thalia Gouma-Peterson, \textquoteleft\textquoteleft The Feminist Critique of Art History\textquoteright\textquoteright, \textit{Art Bulletin} 69, no. 3 (September 1987): 335. See, for instance, Miriam Schapiro’s \textit{Ox} (1968), though even in her discussion of the painting, Linda Nochlin only skirted the strong central-core imagery in the work, writing instead about \textquoteleft\textquoteleft the literal power of the splayed word-image formed by the interpenetrating letters ‘O’ and ‘X,’ heightened by enormous scale,\textquoteright\textquoteright, and only obliquely suggesting \textquoteleft\textquoteleft the tender pink recessive planes of the inner lining of the central image\textquoteright\textquoteright or \textquoteleft\textquoteleft the pathos and mystery of the hole.\textquoteright\textquoteright Linda Nochlin, \textquoteright\textquoteleft Miriam Schapiro: Recent Work,\textquoteright\textquoteright in \textit{Women Artists: The Linda Nochlin Reader}, ed. Maureen Reilly (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2015), 71.

\(^{47}\) Mathews and Gouma-Peterson, \textquoteleft\textquoteleft The Feminist Critique of Art History\textquoteright\textquoteright, 338.

\(^{48}\) Lucy Lippard, \textit{Pop Art} (London: Thames & Hudson, 1966), 196. Wieland was occasionally compared with Pop artists, however most often in ill-informed reviews of her work. Ungenerous comparisons to American Pop artists seem somewhat besides the point, as when David Thompson compares Wieland’s work unfavourably to that of James Rosenquist: Wieland \textquoteleft\textquoteleft comes nowhere near the profundity of an artist like Rosenquist, who was recently given a major retrospective in Toronto [sic].\textquoteright\textquoteright David Thompson, \textquoteleft\textquoteleft A Canadian Scene: 2,"\textquoteright\textquoteright \textit{Studio International} 176, no. 905 (November 1968): 185. Wieland had, however, attended the opening of the James Rosenquist exhibition organized by Brydon Smith for the National Gallery of Canada on January 23, 1968. \textquoteleft\textquoteleft James Rosenquist Opening, January 23rd, 1968, Evening Party,"\textquoteright\textquoteright 1968, \textquoteleft\textquoteleft James Rosenquist: Correspondence, Jan. 1968-Apr. 1969\textquoteright\textquoteright Exhibitions in Canada, 12-4-360, VOL. 3, Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.

\(^{49}\) Lippard, \textit{Pop Art}, 196. Others have subsequently read likenesses between her work and that of New York Pop artists; Marie Fleming sees an indebtedness to Jim Dine in \textit{Heart-Break} (1963); to Warhol in her \textit{Penis Wallpaper} (1962); and to Oldenburg in \textit{Nature Mixes} (1963). Fleming, \textit{Joyce Wieland}, 49, 52. Later, Fleming discusses the significance of Oldenburg’s practice for Wieland: \textquoteleft\textquoteleft her use of stuffing in the 1964-65 assemblages and the plastic hangings of 1966-67 reflected not only Oldenburg’s influence but also her own move into three dimensions. Moreover, the themes and the character of Wieland’s art remain distinctly her own.\textquoteright\textquoteright Wieland herself told Fleming that Oldenburg was \textquoteleft\textquoteleft one of the most important artists in my life . . .
Wieland would show her work for a second time at the Isaacs Gallery in 1962 with an exhibition of fifty-one works on paper, including drawings in pencil, ink, chalk and wax, as well as monoprints and other works (October 9, 1962). Somewhat unaccountably, Wieland told Ardele Lister in the mid-1970s that before leaving for New York in 1962, she “was making things that weren’t getting shown.”

In late fall 1962, Snow and Wieland moved to New York. As Wieland told Lauren Rabinovitz in 1981,

Mike and I were making a lot of trips there. We would go and see shows. I think Mike wanted to be really good, and he felt that he would get really good if he went there. He just felt that’s where he should be, and I certainly felt that what was going on there was incredible—things were really happening. So I went because he wanted to go. I really wanted to be here.

Snow’s strong motivation is given in many of Wieland’s accounts of moving to New York. In the release for her 1963 exhibition at Isaacs Gallery, likely written by her friend Donna Montague, the justification for their move was, similarly, that “Snow felt the need for the stimulation of involvement in New York’s new art movement.”

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52 Rabinovitz, “An Interview with Joyce Wieland,” 8. Wieland continues, “But then I realized New York was such a great center. It scared me to go because I was comfortable [laughs], and I wondered what would happen to us there. I was excited but scared. We found a loft on Greenwich St.—way, way down. The loft was really ancient, and we just used a coal stove. The windows were broken, and we were freezing to death that Winter. There was a loft downstairs that nobody wanted, it was all busted up. Mike used that for a studio; I worked upstairs . . . I’ve always worked at home and Mike always had a studio.”

Before finding two lofts at 191 Greenwich Street in early 1963, Wieland and Snow lived with Betty Ramsaur Ferguson and Graeme Ferguson. The Fergusons were friends from Toronto, and Wieland and Snow stayed from late 1962 through the New Year in their vast five-bedroom apartment on the Upper West Side, on West End Avenue near 105th Street. From early 1963 they lived in the Greenwich Street lofts until they were razed for the World Trade Center—demolition began at the site on March 21, 1965—when they relocated north to Tribeca, at 123 Chambers Street. In an undated letter to a journalist, Wieland excuses the delay in getting photographs for a forthcoming article, writing, “as you probably know moving shop in New York means more than moving simple furniture. Loft life means re-building with each move, cupboards, bathroom, walls, floors, etc., because it’s redevelopment of a warehouse space.” “Like many of their New York artist friends,” Helen Parmelee wrote in 1963, “Joyce and Michael have furnished their two floors of warehouse-cum-studio ‘from the streets.’”

Typically, while living on Greenwich Street, Wieland worked from “two to six hours a day” in the loft which served as her studio and their shared living space, sometimes cooking while she worked. Later, when asked pointedly about their

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58 Leone Kirkwood, “Canadian Artist in New York Excels in Nameless Art Form,” *Globe and Mail*, March 17, 1965. Elsewhere, “what thrills her most about the waterfront art colony that is their temporary community, is the wonderful inter-relationship between all art forms, and interdependence of theatre, music, films and painting. This, she feels, is one of the prime factors of what she calls the ‘New
recurring set-up, with Snow always maintaining a studio apart from their living space and
Wieland working from home, she said, “I didn’t think I deserved any more. But for a
long time I liked the idea of working at home because then I could be involved in
cooking, which I always liked, or just being at home. A lot of things turned up from being
and working at home.”

Wieland’s later reflection of her combined living and working situation while in New York, though prefaced by a recognition of the “deservedness” of a
separate studio for her creative work, echoes observations about the conventional division
of home and working life for women at the time. As Simone de Beauvoir observed in
1949, “because housework alone is compatible with the duties of motherhood, she is
condemned to domestic labour, which locks her into repetition and immanence; day after
day it repeats itself in identical form from century to century; it produces nothing new.”

Even if without the demands of motherhood, Wieland still worked from home, destined
to “care for the home,” as Beauvoir later writes, “which is to say, immanence.”

The neighbourhood provided certain material prompts to her work; she described
a cheese shop in Greenwich Village that threw out wooden boxes: “I need them for my
work. I just take them. I don’t ask permission. Of course it’s daylight and people see me.
I feel like quite a dope.” She also gleaned supplies from the nearby harbour, including
those stamped with “Cooling Room,” which provided the supports for her assemblages of
the same name (1964) (Fig. 6.2). Wieland’s time was busily split between, as she told

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60 Beauvoir, The Second Sex (1949), 75.
61 Beauvoir, 455. Here, Beauvoir is perhaps drawing from Adorno’s dialectical articulation of immanance
and transcendence from the same year. Theodor W. Adorno, “Cultural Criticism and Society (1949),” in
62 Kirkwood, “Canadian Artist in New York Excels in Nameless Art Form.”
63 Fleming, Joyce Wieland, 56.
Isaacs in 1962, “painting disasters and helping to run ‘Phase II’ on weekends—cooking short orders—and hostess sometimes.”64 Phase II was a coffeehouse and music venue at 302 Bleecker Street that Snow began performing at in 1962, along with Billy Higgins and “Thelonius Monk’s gang.”65 Again, as with Wieland’s lack of a studio outside the home, time not spent doing creative work seems to have been consistently domestic: cooking and serving as a hostess. “The feminine mystique says that the highest value and the only commitment for women,” Friedan argued in her 1963 book, “is the fulfillment of their own femininity.”66

Whether at home or on the weekend, when Wieland was not making art it seems she spent a considerable amount of her time supporting Snow through her domestic labour; labour that is registered, however subtly, in her work at the time. In Cooling Room II (1964), the apparently full coffee cup on the left of the assemblage is gradually drained and lipstick marks accumulate on its subsequent incarnations. Beauvoir, reflecting on the differences between the self-presentation of men and women in the world emphasizes that women’s clothes “doom her to impotence,” “stockings run; heels wear down; light-coloured blouses and dresses get dirty.”67 These entropic forces of the domestic sphere might equally be registered in the coffee cups that are marked and smeared, with lipstick, but even so, as cleaning to be done after hosting at home or, in Wieland’s particular case at this time, working at Phase II coffeehouse.

Soon after arriving, Wieland began seeing exhibitions. She wrote to Isaacs after seeing Black and White (March 31–May 8, 1963) at the Jewish Museum: “saw Jewish

64 Joyce Wieland to Av Isaacs, 1962, 1996-036/002 (12) Joyce Wieland, Av Isaacs fonds, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University.
65 Wieland to Isaacs.
66 Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (1963), 43.
Museum black and white beautiful sublime—Jasper Johns, Kline, a [de] Kooning, Ellsworth Kelly, Pollocks, etc. All oils—Christ American painting is a glorious example.” It was primarily as painters, it bears remembering, that Wieland and Snow sought out new work during their first year in the city. In 1964, the couple was featured in a profile of Canadian artists living in New York for Canadian Art. Snow told Jonathan Holstein,

We were living in Toronto and enjoyed it. There were wonderful people there, talented and interesting people . . . and the city is getting better all the time. But there were qualities in American painting which seemed admirable to me, and I thought it would help me to be here. And it has been beneficial to my work to be able to compare it to what others are doing, to see work done.

While we can imagine a similar impulse drew Wieland to see art in the city, she spoke more to the violence she had encountered in New York, telling Holstein, “part of the power here is the tradition of sensationalism and vulgarity, which is the basis of certain kinds of power.” “There is the American fascination with disaster and grotesque happenings,” she continued, “in the newspapers and on TV, for instance, and it has come out in the work I’ve been doing.” This violence, which initially inspired her work, would by 1970 motivate her to leave the city, as will be seen.

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69 Snow continues, “There is a large range of activities here, and everything is interrelated. There is a great sense of power here, a sense of proportion and scale in architecture. If you grew up here, it comes naturally . . . you learn scale here and use it. I noticed a weakness of proportion in Toronto; it seems humble, as if there was an apology for the buildings. There is a possibility of range here . . . range for both work and personality.” Holstein, “New York’s Vitality Tonic for Canadian Artists,” 277–78.
70 Holstein, 278.
By 1965, when living at 123 Chambers Street, near the Bowery, Snow kept a separate studio on Mulberry Street while Wieland continued to work from home. Later, in 1967, Kay Kritzwiser described the loft in the following way: “Joyce, in blue and white striped shirtdress works in a U-shaped kitchen as compactly planned as anything in suburbia, only this kitchen, set in their cavernous brick-walled loft is surrounded by evidence of the blazing ideas that have put this young couple on the New York map.”

She continues,

At one end of the loft is what Joyce calls “my sweatshop” with an ancient Singer sewing machine, now electrified. Bolts of material which she uses to make her psychedelic quilts are stacked nearby. An enclosed cubicle contains the film-making equipment to which both devote increasing time and energy.

“When I went to New York,” Wieland told Adele Lister, “I continued with the serial painting and drawing and then started working in 8 mm film and showing my films there.” While it is true that she continued for a time to make paintings, collages and assemblages, both Wieland and Snow “fell in immediately with the underground film scene,” as Wieland later recalled. By 1962, New York’s avant-garde film scene was at its “apogee of excitement”: they arrived when a highly influential body of experimental films were being completed—including works such as Jack Smith’s *Flaming Creatures* (1963). Seeing *Flaming Creatures* was a defining moment for Wieland, as she later recounted in interview; while she had seen Maya Deren’s films in Toronto, on seeing

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72 Kritzwiser.
73 Kritzwiser. When asked about their social life, Wieland replies that “our friends are not especially Canadians—they’re not especially artists either.” Prior to the formation of Les Activistes Culturels Canadiens, Wieland told Kritzwiser, “We do meet once a year without fail on Canadian Thanksgiving Day. We kid about our ghetto and have a Canadian flag on the table and sing O Canada and act up.”
74 Lister and Wieland, “Joyce Wieland,” 15.
75 Rabinovitz, “An Interview with Joyce Wieland,” 8.
Smith’s film “something went ‘pop.’” At the same time as films like Smith’s were being released, there were also frequent “retrospective exhibitions of the past achievements,” according to P. Adams Sitney, which would have served as necessary primers to both Wieland and Snow.  

Not only was the scene burgeoning, but it was also fairly open, as has often been remarked in literature reflecting on Wieland’s introduction to experimental filmmaking: the “communal spirit at informal, relaxed shows made Wieland feel like she was still at home in Toronto.” Her circle soon included, among others, Ken and Florence Jacobs, George and Mike Kuchar, Hollis Frampton, Betty and Graeme Ferguson, Barbara Rubin and Jonas Mekas, and Shirley Clarke. In addition to Mekas’ midnight screenings at Grammercy Arts Theatre—where filmmakers could show both finished and unfinished work—Wieland and Snow also attended Ken Jacobs’s weekly screenings in his loft under the Brooklyn Bridge.

While the scene they encountered was welcoming, and would allow for Wieland to experiment freely with her filmmaking, there remained a pervasive sexism. Again, like the city’s violence that initially spurred Wieland’s creativity, by the end of the 1960s the structural sexism in filmmaking circles would prove a determining factor in her leaving the city. Interestingly, she felt sexism more strongly in New York than in Toronto, later remarking, “I do know it was worse in New York; here [in Toronto] I was one of the boys, so to speak.”

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77 Rabinovitz, “An Interview with Joyce Wieland,” 8.
78 Sitney, “‘there Is Only One Joyce’ (Htree Si Lyno Neo Ycoje) —Jonas Mekas,” 43.
80 Rabinovitz, 150, 158.
81 Notably, around the formation of Anthology Film Archives in 1970s, as discussed below.
82 Crean, “Notes from the Language of Emotion: A Conversation with Joyce Wieland,” 64.
At the time of Snow’s survey exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario (February 14–March 15, 1970), Wieland took a reporter through his exhibition as she spoke about their relationship, both personal and artistic. “I think we’re both pretty proud of each other’s work,” Wieland said, “when we were first married I used to worry about being dominated by Michael, but now I realize that people are so different that there is no fear of me losing my own individuality.” She continued,

We don’t always understand each other’s work. Sometimes when I see something Michael has done I think it’s just awful. Then after a while I begin to love it. At times we just don’t want to discuss our work with one another. I find more and more that I write down my ideas instead of talking about them. It’s not failure to communicate, just individuality.

The following year, in interview with Kay Armatage, Wieland elaborated on that early influence from Snow:

As I started being an artist I was influenced by many things, artists, etc. and by my husband, who influenced me not so much in style as in having my own well-developed outlook, philosophy and so on. I was on my way in a sense to becoming an artist’s-wife type artist until I got into looking around in history for female lines of influence.

These genealogies included diarists, salonists and writers such as Colette, George Sand and Katherine Mansfield, as well as fictional characters, such as Stendhal’s heroines. “In a sense,” Wieland continued, “my husband’s great individuality and talents were a

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84 Stewart.
catalyst to my development. Eventually women’s concerns, and my own femininity became my artist’s territory.”

On occasion, particularly early in the 1960s, Wieland was actually promoted as an artist’s wife. One particularly cringing press release, for her first exhibition at the Isaacs Gallery since moving to New York (November 20–December 10, 1963), begins “If ever there was a true spokesman for femininity, it is Joyce Weiland [sic]. She paints, draws and constructs art objects in every imaginable feminine mood.” The release continues, “She is a dedicated and talented artist. She is also a dedicated and talented wife who declares that her husband’s work must always take precedence.”

Over the course of 1963, Wieland continued to show her work in Canada, notably in Canadian Art Today at the University of Waterloo and in a two-person exhibition at Hart House, University of Toronto. However she made few inroads in finding a New York gallery to represent her work. As has often been remarked, the welcoming underground film community was far easier for Wieland to access than the rarified and relatively closed network of dealers, galleries, and museums in the city. This does not account, however, for the relative ease with which Snow found gallery representation.

88 Isaacs Gallery (Donna Montague?), “Joyce Weiland [Sic] — Feminine to Her Painter’s Fingertips.” On the relationship between artist couples during this period, including Wieland and Snow, see Catherine Margaret Mastin, “Beyond ‘the Artist’s Wife:’ Women, Artist-Couple Marriage and the Exhibition Experience in Postwar Canada” (PhD dissertation, University of Alberta, 2012).
89 Isaacs Gallery (Donna Montague?), “Joyce Weiland [Sic] — Feminine to Her Painter’s Fingertips.” Years later, afforded some distance, Wieland would say, “I was very competitive with Mike. He was getting a well-earned acceptance in New York. But I felt that there was something—as many, many women artists will say—or missing in me so that I could never be taken seriously or equally. I felt that they were together, all the men, and I could be a part only by being this eccentric or nice little person or something like that.” Rabinovitz, “An Interview with Joyce Wieland,” 11.
90 “If she did not become similarly ensconced in a visual-art community, it must be acknowledged that New York’s institutional network of galleries, museums, dealers and collectors was not easy to penetrate. The people who were making and showing experimental films were, in comparison, much more loosely
Wieland wrote to Isaacs on September 25, 1963 following a visit from Elinor Poindexter (1906–1994), the Montreal-born art dealer with whom Snow would show throughout the sixties in New York:

Poindexter Gallery is the most beautiful in New York very elegant and she’s not a very bad broad, for a business woman—must be cause her husband is so wealthy—that she’s not pushy or bad-mannered—she’s crazy for Mike’s stuff—lucky boy—she thinks I’m a Pop artist and she doesn’t like Pop art. That wraps me up.91

While the excuse Poindexter gave Wieland may very well be the case, more generally we may assume that her gender played into her difficulty in finding a dealer in the city. Few women artists had gallery representation at the time; Miriam Schapiro, a rare exception, showed with André Emmerich throughout the early 1960s, though it was her abstract painting that she exhibited and not yet her better-known femmages she would develop a decade later in 1972.92 It seems that Wieland continued to show Poindexter her work after this first meeting in fall 1963, as she wrote later to Isaacs asking for slides of her most recent Toronto exhibition to show the dealer.93 While Wieland went without representation, even though Snow was already showing with Poindexter Gallery, a couple years later he was offered representation by another: in a letter Wieland wrote to Isaacs,

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91 Joyce Wieland to Av Isaacs, September 25, 1963, 1996-036/002 (12) Joyce Wieland, Av Isaacs fonds, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University.
93 In an undated letter to Isaacs, Wieland wrote: “Also Mrs. Poindexter has asked me twice now to show her slides of the last show . . . I projected them for myself last night and they stink those that were done in Toronto. What can I do?” Joyce Wieland to Av Isaacs, n.d., 1996-036/002 (12) Joyce Wieland, Av Isaacs fonds, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University.
dated January 10, and likely from 1965, she says that “Mike has been asked to join a new Gallery today but said no!”

Snow’s representation by Poindexter would lead to minor complications for Isaacs—he was unwilling to share his mailing list with her, for instance, and devised a cumbersome method of shipping exhibition brochures for both Wieland and Snow back and forth across the border in order to save on postage; though Poindexter did send sales his way on occasion. Isaacs was also keen to know how New York dealers operated, asking Snow, “Would you mind telling me what your arrangement is with Madame P. [Elinor Poindexter] you don’t have to tell me what you don’t want. I’m curious about NY set ups, I know [William] Ronald [at Kootz Gallery] works on a guarantee, but I think he’s the exemption.” Poindexter founded her gallery in 1955, and before closing it in 1978 represented artists such as Julies Olitski and Richard Diebenkorn.

Poor reception in New York for her visual art led, by Wieland’s own account, to more decisive action. Her burgeoning interest and engagement with women’s liberation, prefigured by the subjects of her painting from the late 1950s and early 1960s, would be developed further over the course of the decade. “Getting into the making of quilts as woman’s work was a conscious move on my part,” Wieland suggests. “There was a highly competitive scene with men artists going on [in New York]. It polarized my view

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94 Joyce Wieland to Av Isaacs, January 10, 1965, 1996-036/002 (12) Joyce Wieland, Av Isaacs fonds, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University.
95 “I could either use my envelopes or the Madame P’s [Elinor Poindexter]. If I use mine the brochures will have to be mailed from here and she would send the brochures over to me. If she sends me her envelopes I will address them and then send them back to her. There is no sense in my sending my mailing list (which I’m not willing to openly release) . . . I could check customs and see about allowing printed matter to come into the country without bearing the stamp ‘printed in the USA’ as long as I guarantee its return. This was the big problem I had with Joyce’s brochures.” Av Isaacs to Joyce Wieland, December 1963, 1996-036/002 (12) Joyce Wieland, Av Isaacs fonds, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University.
96 Isaacs to Wieland.
of life; it made me go right into the whole feminine thing.” This makes evident that the difficulty Wieland found in securing gallery representation in New York is more than simply a question of the system’s inaccessibility, and it bears thinking about other obstacles—gender, namely, and a related predisposition against works of art that often broached women’s sexuality.

Shortly after moving to New York, Wieland prepared an exhibition for the Isaacs Gallery that was shown from November 20 to December 10, 1963. It was for this exhibition that she devised, as related at the opening of this chapter, the rather sly method of wrapping framed works in other, innocuous, canvases, or in one case fashioning a patch to cover an exposed breast. The exhibition included some 39 works, all but two were oil paintings (the others were part collage, part painting); all of them were made in 1963.

Which four paintings Wieland concealed remains guesswork, *The New Power* (1963; Fig. 6.3) was included, as was *The First Integrated Film with a Short on Sailing* (1963; Fig. 6.4). While the small (20.5 x 23.0 cm) *Penis Wallpaper* (1962) is not included on the checklist for the exhibition, it would have been the kind of painting that would fit with Wieland’s description: you’ll know which the four paintings are as “they are the smallest,” she wrote to Isaacs. Nature Mixes (1963; Fig. 6.5) is another candidate for disguise; Marie Fleming described it as “an innocent, whimsical transformation (hand

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99 This difficulty has been pointed out in criticism, as in Jay Scott’s observation that alludes to gender difference, although he does not name it outright: “Wieland’s difficulties in gaining critical attention might be ascribed to her penchant for dabbling too promiscuously in too many media but Andy Warhol never had that problem, nor did General Idea in Canada, nor did Wieland’s own husband.” Jay Scott, “Full Circle – True, Patriot Womanhood: The 30-Year Passage of Joyce Wieland,” *Canadian Art* 4, no. 1 (1987): 59.
100 Wieland to Isaacs, October 1963.
That Wieland felt it necessary to conceal these works shares what Hélène Cixous would later call “that stupid sexual modesty.” “We’ve been turned away from our bodies, shamefully taught to ignore them,” Cixous wrote in 1976.102 Wieland’s painting of the early 1960s, in large part because of its persistent phallogocentrism, does not yet approach what Lisa Tickner would argue as the visual corollary of Cixous’ *l’écriture féminine*, what she terms *peinture féminine* in relation to Nancy Spero’s work of the 1970s and 1980s.103 Yet Wieland is hardly to blame for her frequent dependence on phallic imagery; as Mathews and Gouma-Peterson argued “women have no language with which to express their sexuality except the male one.”104

In spite of this, Wieland’s work of the early 1960s remains remarkable in its broaching of sexual politics—phallogocentric or otherwise. In fact, the work teases out the links between “patriarchy as a political situation,” to follow Kate Millett’s pivotal *Sexual Politics* (1970), and Pop art as few before her had articulated.105

Aside from this concealment, there were more mundane considerations for shipping work. This was the first time since moving to New York that Wieland had to coordinate this large a shipment of work. There are, however, suggestions that she sent unstretched canvases to Toronto to Isaacs in 1962, perhaps for exhibitions outside the gallery.106 Shortly before the exhibition opened, Isaacs wrote to Wieland on November 1,

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1963 with detailed instructions on how to fill out the customs forms and he asked her to evaluate the paintings “at about 40% less than the retail price to keep custom charges down. They must have a minimum value of $25.00 each to avoid customs.”

In the press release for the exhibition, Wieland described the works as “semi-realistic, with a group of symbols such as stars, ocean liners, numbers, writing . . . The symbols take on different meaning in relationship to each other and to other subject matter.” It is for this body of work that she coined the term “filmic painting,” “using a kind of movie film technique” drawn from her interest in experimental film-making.

Indeed, this exhibition was the first time Wieland showed paintings organized in grids and filmstrips. Wieland had first written to Isaacs about the new formal direction in her work in 1962,

> my paintings by the way are very interesting large strips—like film or comic strips (much like the style I worked in 3 years ago—showed drawings like this at Dorothy [Cameron]’s [Here & Now Gallery]) . . . I’ll be glad to send one of my “new” disaster paintings to you in the next truckload. They are just like the Flicks. My new paintings are good and I’m afraid somebody might steal their idea before I have a show. I’m just a paranoid New Yorker today. And why not I may ask?

Aside from the strip-like organization of the works, the subjects often centred on disasters; Wieland often alluded to this interest in the popular press following her arrival in New York, suggesting “I guess I’ve been reading too many New York tabloids lately.” These paintings from 1962–1963 were often modestly sized and their factor

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107 Av Isaacs to Joyce Wieland, November 1, 1963, 1996-036/002 (12) Joyce Wieland, Av Isaacs fonds, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University.

108 Isaacs Gallery (Donna Montague?), “Joyce Weiland [Sic] — Feminine to Her Painter’s Fingertips.”

109 Isaacs Gallery (Donna Montague?).

110 Joyce Wieland to Av Isaacs, 1962, 1996-036/002 (12) Joyce Wieland, Av Isaacs fonds, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University.

far more painterly than the cool, commercial surface of work by James Rosenquist or Roy Lichtenstein, for instance. Whereas the later had devised a technical approach that made, in Hal Foster’s words, “distinctions between hand and machine are difficult to recover,” Wieland’s work was painterly, at times even verging on sloppy, she made no attempt to conceal her hand. The grids likely derive, as Fleming has suggested, from Wieland’s “fascination of doing the drawings, the storyboards for animation,” which situates the origin of these works far further back than her arrival in New York, and more frequent first-hand encounters with Pop art.

Following the exhibition, Wieland wrote to Isaacs to ask him to find a “small sailboat painting” in his storage, which if missing, constitutes “an unfortunate loss for me considered the germ painting of all my filmic pictures—a sad unretrievable loss.” She asked for some of the unsold works to be sent back to her in New York,

After the show is all down (mine) I would like a few pictures back—I miss some of them terribly—there isn’t one painting of mine here. Need some of them for dealers, etc. . . .

What do you think about sending back about six paintings to me January when truck comes again—maybe the sex pictures would be best since no one would buy them! Can you send me any further comments on my show? What people said in the following two weeks.

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113 Fleming, Joyce Wieland, 48.
114 As Sloan has suggested, Wieland “explored the ‘cinematic’ through a range of media, both before and after she actually began making films.” Sloan, Joyce Wieland’s The Far Shore, 33.
115 “Donna says you’ve not found small sailboat painting—there are 2 customers for that little inexpensive gem of a painting (It’s been off the market for 2 months) only! Guess you’ve lost it permanently. If so you owe me $100.00 less commission—dig? That was an unfortunate loss for me considered the germ painting of all my filmic pictures—a sad unretrievable loss—Ho! Find it Find it! You bugger or I’ll box your ears! Ears!” Wieland to Isaacs, December 1963, December 1963. There were a number of the nearly forty paintings, all from 1963, which she could have been referring to, including The Ill-fated Crew of 1937 ($90), Captain ($100), Feature Film with a Short on Sailing ($150), Sailing ($150), Sailing Film, Sunrise Film ($200), Boat (Homage to D.W. Griffiths) ($175), or Sailing on the Bay ($150). Isaacs Gallery, “Joyce Wieland: November 20-December 10, 1963 (Checklist).”
116 Joyce Wieland to Av Isaacs, December 1963, 1996-036/002 (12) Joyce Wieland, Av Isaacs fonds, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University.
While public response to the exhibition is not preserved in the Isaacs fonds, the critical response survives. In general there was a welcome interest in a new phenomenon of Pop, however there was at least one ungenerous, dissenting voice.117 Wieland’s “approach to contemporary art’s latest fad” for David Donnell, writing in *Canadian Art*, lacked originality in its use of readymade objects as well as technical insufficiencies: “she paints brightly and simply with few attempts at subtlety or embellishment.”118 Response from museum curators to the work was generally more enthusiastic. In a surprising acquisition for Barry Lord (1939–2017), given his later disapproval of Wieland’s work, while he was briefly assistant curator at the Vancouver Art Gallery (August 1963–September 1964) he brought *Disaster in the Air, or Plane Crash* (later titled *Tragedy in the Air, or Plane Crash*) (1963) into the collection with funds from the McLean Foundation. Unlike Donnell, who felt the work was simply responding to a fad, “Lord said he felt the painting had a lasting value, and was not simply part of a trend.”119

Buoyed by the positive critical response, in 1964 Wieland continued to pursue disasters in her work, but she also ventured away from painting and into other materials. At the time of the Isaacs show in 1963, she discussed on a few occasions a plan for a “book to be published by [Isaacs] Gallery Editions in 1964,” which she discussed at length with Issacs in a letter from September 25, 1963, though deferring its realization: “I

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118 Donnell, “Joyce Wieland at the Isaacs Gallery, Toronto,” 64. Donnell continues, ungenerously, by writing that Wieland “affects a good deal of irony, sometimes brutal, sometimes sophisticated, though the paintings strike me as basically sentimental . . . The feminine point of view one might expect is present more as masochistic resentment, the recurring female breast about to be pinched, or as a projection as in *The First Integrated Film with a Short on Sailing*.” What is more, Donnell sees her technical skills as “unaccomplished,” the work a kind of “self-conscious masquerade” with “Freudian touches which occur are clumsy and forced” Donnell, 64.

am very busy at the present with my show, as you know. So that it will be a while before I can devote my full time to the book.”\textsuperscript{120} Aside from a projected bookwork, Wieland made her first work in fabric in 1964, a development discussed below in connection with her 1967 \textit{Hangings} exhibition at Isaacs Gallery.

Although Wieland participated in a number of group exhibitions over the course of 1964–1965—including at the Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo; a travelling four-person show organized by the Art Institute of Ontario; in \textit{Canadian Art Today} at the University of Waterloo; \textit{Graphics} at the University of Western Ontario; and the biennial painting exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada—she seems to have had few sales in the last months of 1964 and the first months of 1965, with the notable exception being the Art Gallery of Ontario’s acquisition of \textit{Boat Tragedy} (1964) at their Canadian-American Collection Committee meeting on February 26, 1965.\textsuperscript{121} Prior to the sale, however, Wieland asked Isaacs to “send me as much money as you owe me to date?”\textsuperscript{122} On February 15, 1965, Isaacs sent Wieland and Snow a cheque for “$250.00 (Canadian) which pretty well empties your account.”\textsuperscript{123}

Of the numerous group exhibitions around 1965 in which Wieland showed her work, among the most curious contexts for her practice was \textit{Polychrome Construction}:

\textsuperscript{120} Wieland to Isaacs, September 25, 1963.
\textsuperscript{121} “Exhibition Committee Minutes,” October 1961, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario. That the AGO combined acquisitions of contemporary American and Canadian art into the activities of a single collecting committee bears noting, however this act of transnational collecting may have more to do with chronological considerations—a committee whose members specialized in what we would now simply call “contemporary art”—than any perceived or actual distinction between art practices in the two countries.
\textsuperscript{122} Joyce Wieland to Av Isaacs, February 1965, 1996-036/002 (12) Joyce Wieland, Av Isaacs fonds, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University.
\textsuperscript{123} Av Isaacs to Joyce Wieland, February 15, 1965, 1996-036/002 (12) Joyce Wieland, Av Isaacs fonds, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University.
Judd, Weinrib, Burton, Rayner, Snow, Wieland (March 12–31, 1965) held at the Isaacs Gallery. Snow conceived of the exhibition, as evidenced by a letter Isaacs sent to the couple on January 19, 1965: “Mike send me all information as soon as possible, I’m still vague as to even who is in it. Biog’s etc, addresses what I might expect from them. Anyway I shall be in N.Y. before long.” Snow seems to have selected the artists outside of Isaacs’ stable. Interestingly, he originally intended for Ronald Bladen (1918–1988) to be included in the exhibition.

Wieland had two works in the exhibition, which she described, tellingly, as “not painting and not sculpture—it’s in between and I don’t know what you would call it.” Of course, this description strongly echoes Donald Judd’s (1928–1994) own formulation of “specific objects,” as described in his eponymous text written in 1964: “half or more of the best new work in the last few years has been neither painting nor sculpture.” Her works, however, are perhaps the least like a Juddian specific object imaginable, and may even have been intentionally antagonistic to their untroubled clarity: The Passengers.

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127 Kirkwood, “Canadian Artist in New York Excels in Nameless Art Form.” Wieland may have intended a third object, as on March 1, 1065, shortly before the opening, Isaacs wrote to Wieland regarding a damaged work: “I have the other shingle construction that you made quite intact. I believe it was called ‘wall’ I will pay what I would have payed [sic] you had I purchased it from you.” Av Isaacs to Joyce Wieland, March 1, 1965, 1996-036/002 (12) Joyce Wieland, Av Isaacs fonds, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University.
(1965) and Dad’s Dead (1965) “feature stuffed shapes in boxes.” Both works included representations of “hearts and male reproductive organs,” made up of underwear, newspapers, bits of fabric and old dresses, “I encase them in cotton. Then I paint them.” Wieland continues, “it’s very female to put things into other things like boxes—in a way you could say it’s female to limit things.”129 If essentializing, Wieland’s description of her work as delimiting objects in an particularly feminine manoeuvre points to the immanence that Beauvoir and others after her recognized in many a woman’s experience in the decades following the Second World War. Far messier and more haptic than Judd’s work, Wieland’s sculptures are also more psychically complex, as in Dad’s Dead (1965), where Wieland describes the baby dress as standing in for “lost childhood.”130 It is not a far stretch to read these disordered assemblages as bristling purposefully against the ideological clarity of Judd’s objects, and even to position them as antagonistic gestures against what has since been frequently described as the masculinist discourse of minimalism.131 More broadly, even, we might think of this sharp conjunction in light of Griselda Pollock’s later assertion of the discipline of art history as “not just indifferent to women” but properly a “masculinist discourse, party to the social construction of sexual difference.”132 Already, Wieland had been working through more public forms of trauma, with her interest in disasters, as introduced above. As she told Leone Kirkwood, “I’m fascinated by disasters. Here one minute and gone the next. I save pictures of disasters.

129 Kirkwood, “Canadian Artist in New York Excels in Nameless Art Form.”
130 Kirkwood.
When they find bodies from a plane crash, they stuff them in white pillowcases. I made a point of finding out.”

Wieland “doesn’t know if she will continue in the field that has no name. ‘It just came. It may go away. How can I tell,’ she said.”

Set against Judd’s work in this particular exhibition, Wieland’s psychic and erotic assemblages must have stood out in a marked way, suggesting an approach informed by her lived experience as a woman and staging gender against a resolutely masculinist vision of artmaking. In this way, her assemblages included in *Polychrome Construction* not only anticipate her assembled and collaged work later in the decade, but also Miriam Schapiro’s highly politicized and justifiably celebrated *femmages* of the 1970s and 1980s, which she situated within a long history of women’s work, reaching far past Picasso and Braque’s claim to collage in 1912.

It is something of an understatement to say that 1967 was a signal year for Wieland: she realized a highly original exhibition at Isaacs Gallery, made forays into expanded cinema, and participated in a string of exhibitions, many connected, naturally, with the centennial celebrations. Kay Kritzwiser wrote in a year-end recap for the *Globe and Mail* that Wieland was one of the year’s stars. On a minor note, the centenary also brought Wieland and Snow’s work together in an exhibition at the Union Carbide Building in New York. Far more significantly, for us at least, was Wieland’s *Hangings* exhibition,

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133 Kirkwood, “Canadian Artist in New York Excels in Nameless Art Form.”

134 Kirkwood.


137 Wieland wrote to Isaacs in an undated letter, presumably from late 1966, that a curator from the ICA Boston, probably Sue Thurman, the Institute’s Director, had seen their work in the Carbide show and
which was also titled on the accompanying poster as *Joyce Wieland: New Work* (March 22–April 10, 1967). The exhibition included some twenty-two works, from more modest hangings, such as *Eastern Snow, N.U.C.* and *Home Art Totem*, through more ambitious plastic works such as *The Space of the Lama* and *Stuffed Movie*, to quilts and larger plastic hangings such as *Film Mandala Quilt, Purple Altar*, and *Confedspread* (all 1966 or 1967). The most ambitious work, listed last on the checklist and without a title, had an asking price of $1000; the least expensive works were being sold for $75.  

For this second single-artist exhibition at Isaacs Gallery following her move to New York, Wieland devised further techniques for bringing works across the border: no longer concealing paintings with patches or under other innocuous canvases, as recounted at the opening of this chapter, transit across the border was now akin to smuggling. In preparation for *Hangings*, Marlene Markle, who worked at the Isaacs Gallery, wrote to Wieland on March 13, 1967 “your show opens Tuesday night, March 21. Av says ship your things as soon as you get this note. And also that if the small things you mention are ‘what I think they are,’ bring them up in your purse.” So what were the alluded to “small things” that were to be hand-carried across the border? 

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wanted to include it in a forthcoming show. The show was organized by Barry Lord, and later appeared as *Nine Canadians* (May 19–June 21, 1967), however without Wieland or Snow’s work. While Lord had been appreciative of Wieland’s work when he acquired it for the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1965, Wieland was now under the impression that Lord had changed his opinion of her practice, and Snow’s, too. “The point is . . . and you probably know this, is, that Barry Lord had excluded both Mike and I from this show . . . she (Boston Lady) displeased, anyway with his selection. Wants to have free choice. Since he is unstable at best of times what’s the point of saying a thing more. His art show at Expo a disappointment . . . you will likely see what I mean things are hung like a high school art exhibit . . . one wonders if Barry likes art at all . . . I will have to say something to him about shows hanging as it is so unprofessional jammed in like there was no tomorrow. If he doesn’t do anything about the junk shop atmosphere will have to take my piece out.” Joyce Wieland to Av Isaacs, c 1966, 1996-036/002 (12) TIG Correspondence “N” 1971, Av Isaacs fonds, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University.


In Kritzwiser’s review of the exhibition, published in the *Globe and Mail* on March 25, 1967, she describes “a plastic heart dotted with stars . . . filled with clippings full of sick and sorry references to American activities in Vietnam.” Kritzwiser then quoted Wieland, who told her “I sent these airmail to Toronto friends. I didn’t know whether they’d get through customs.” Wieland is describing *N.U.C.* (1966; Fig. 6.6), which likely stands for Navy Unit Citation, a military award that was given during the Vietnam War. In the work, as Sloan has described it, “a plastic dollar sign frames a newspaper image of wounded soldiers in a field, while a dangling star-covered heart can be opened up to reveal additional clippings about Vietnam.” The clippings themselves were neatly folded, and included, perhaps among others, a report on the American federal budget and a plan to destroy crops in Vietnam, along with an account of the trial of a Marine for mutilation and murder. *N.U.C.* was not the only work in the exhibition that incorporated clippings, however: *War and Peace: 8mm Home Movie* (1966) also included newspaper articles. In this work, the hot pink plastic mostly obscures the clippings folded inside.

While the logistics of bringing works across the border may seem prosaic, Wieland gave much thought and effort to these details. In an undated letter, likely from the mid-sixties, perhaps even in advance of her 1967 *Hangings* show at Isaacs, Wieland wrote to Markle, thanking her for sending the copies of the letters from the customs brokers . . . as they scare me and could do something awful like make me make out yards of customs papers and throw me in jail.

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141 Sloan, “Joyce Wieland at the Border: Nationalism, the New Left and the Question of Political Art in Canada,” 85.
142 Sloan, 85.
... taking my freedom from me for allowing illegal and free travel and film felony ... the best thing to tell them is what you did ... other than that you don’t even know who I am. I was just using your address. You know what this means to me.145

In another letter to Isaacs, again undated but likely in preparation for the Hangings show, Wieland asked “would you please send me the forms I need for my stuffings. Will be bringing all the stuff on the train. It will be in cardboard boxes.”146 She had already sent the unstuffed hangings, as she had conveyed to Isaacs in an earlier letter: “left here one o’clock Wednesday assured that it would be in Toronto by Thursday morning. Sent the whole thing collect to you because I did it all in such a rush that couldn’t get to bank so bring cash. Will bring the rest by hand in my bags.”147

In addition to posing challenges for cross-border shipping, both N.U.C. and War and Peace demonstrate a new technical support for Wieland, which she develops around 1966. While over 1962–1963 Wieland was working mostly in painting, by 1966 vinyl and quilted textile hangings predominate in her practice. This shift, while certainly informed by the use of textiles and plastics happening among her peers, may also have a more mundane inspiration. Considered in light of her frequent border crossing, one might consider the ease with which these works could be shipped and assembled, as described above in correspondence with Isaacs. Quilts folded and carried in luggage on the train; plastic sleeves filled with clippings on arrival, stuffed and hung with minimal fuss and no need for framing or crating. “If the hangings were taken off the wall,” Harry Malcolmson wrote in the Telegram, “they would likely fold up like credit cards in a wallet and then

146 Joyce Wieland to Av Isaacs, 1967, 1996-036/002 (12) Joyce Wieland, Av Isaacs fonds, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University.
147 Joyce Wieland to AV Isaacs, March 1967, 1996-036/002 (12) Joyce Wieland, Av Isaacs fonds, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University.
become intimate and personal as the sleeves one by one were opened and explored.”

Malcolmson continues,

She came to use plastic, she says, partly because plastic sheet is rather like the film strip.
Like the film strip, plastic is porous to light and is also a reflective surface. Not only does it have this visual vitality, but it has a marvelous sheen and sensual feel.

Later, Wieland told Marie Fleming in interview: “plastic was so available; it was all around and it was in the air. I like the material; I laminated it, I sewed it, I treated it like a traditional fabric. I started the idea of putting, of pocketing, of enclosing stuff in it.”

If the plastic works were conducive to “pocketing” clippings, *Hangings* was also the first major exhibition of Wieland’s quilted works. Her use of quilting techniques predates the exhibition, however, by roughly three years, and even earlier, if one includes cloth works Wieland made between 1959 to 1962, however those were “just hung or draped on wires” and not sewn. Wieland’s first quilt was conceived in late 1964 and still being made in early 1965; as she wrote to Isaacs on January 10, 1965, telling him about this new direction in her work:

Av did I mention my sister is adapting a design of mine into a quilt? Donna [Montague] commissioned it for her kid [Michael]. It looks simply great so far. Although not completed. After this one Donna hopes to interest other people in them for hanging on

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148 Malcolmson also connects the plastic works with Wieland’s earlier interest in collage: “The sleeves are easier to relate to earlier Wieland than the quilts. In part, they come from her collages, in part they are another side of her tendency to wrap, enclose and stuff things—again in a womanly kind of way.” Harry Malcolmson, “[Joyce Wieland Exhibition Review, Isaacs Gallery],” *Toronto Telegram*, March 25, 1967. His reference to a essential feminine tendency to want to “wrap, enclose and stuff things,” echoes an earlier reading Wieland herself provided of *The Passengers and Dad’s Dead*, her contributions to Isaacs’ Polychrome Construction show, which “feature stuffed shapes in boxes. It’s very female to put things into other things like boxes—in a way you could say it’s female to limit things.” Kirkwood, “Canadian Artist in New York Excels in Nameless Art Form.”
149 Malcolmson, “[Joyce Wieland Exhibition Review, Isaacs Gallery].”
Wieland’s intended use, “for hanging on walls or beds,” underscores the portability and mutability of these works. Wieland seemed comfortable with collapsing the differences between a work of art and an everyday domestic textile, as was later picked up in an article that appeared in the *Star Weekly* called “Art you can use . . . to keep warm . . . to cover a table . . . to hang on a wall.” Isaacs responded on January 19, 1965, and wrote in a joint letter to Wieland and Snow, “the idea of the quilt sounds interesting, I will certainly have a look at Donna’s and see what the possibilities are.”

The unremarkable origins of Wieland’s first quilt—made as a commission for her friend’s child—alludes to the long and important history of needlework by women, but also to a resurgence of interest that took place later in the 1960s, and instantiated in 1972 with the Whitney Museum of American Art exhibition *Abstract Design in American Quilts*. In “Crafty Women and the Hierarchy of the Arts” (1981), Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock give an account of the history of quilts in the United States while also

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152 Wieland to Isaacs, January 10, 1965. From the outset, their portability appealed to Wieland: “And it was a travelling artwork which could be folded and taken anywhere, you see.” Lister and Wieland, “Joyce Wieland,” 15. The earliest quilt Wieland made was intended as a covering for Michael Montague’s crib. Wieland and Snow typically stayed with Michael’s parents, Donna and George Montague, when they visited Toronto from New York. During the mid-1960s, Donna also worked for Isaacs. Donna Montague later catalogued Wieland’s personal archive toward the end of the artist’s life. Jan Allen, *Joyce Wieland: Twilit Record of Romantic Love* (Kingston, Ontario: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen’s University, 1995), 3. At the time of True Patriot Love, the couple owned *Patriotism* (1966). Joyce Wieland, *True Patriot Love* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1971), cat. no. 6. Earlier in the decade, Wieland had stayed at the Montague’s house in the Gatineau Hills, near Ottawa, where she made works for her first single-artist exhibition at Dorothy Cameron’s Here & Now Gallery, held in September 1960. Lind, *Joyce Wieland: Artist on Fire*, 123.

153 January 14, 1967. The following year, in connection with her retrospective at the Vancouver Art Gallery, an accompanying article in the Gallery’s Bulletin used similar terms: “She uses appliquéd cloth to demonstrate the absence of boundaries between art and life. As she says, ‘To create a total environment . . . to make art more accessible to everyone.’ (The hangings could readily be transferred from wall to bed or table-top.)” “New Exhibitions: Joyce Wieland 1957-67,” *Vancouver Art Gallery Bulletin*, January 1968.

cautioning that simply “asserting their value in the face of male prejudice does not
displace the hierarchy of values in art history.”

Indeed, when the *Hangings* exhibition opened, the language used to describe the
works varied—as was remarked on by a reviewer from the *Star Weekly*—described as
quilts, “tapestry-collages,” or “quilts in one breath, collages in the next.” Later, the
“revaluation of quilts” which led to their exhibition in the 1970s in museums such as the
Whitney, similarly struggled with nomenclature, or at least with the frequent, ostensibly
gratifying, comparisons to painting. When, in a related turn, Navajo blankets were
included in major exhibitions in Los Angeles (1972), London (1974), and Amsterdam
(1975), their announcement as works of art required a series of manoeuvres, according to
Parker and Pollock: “the geometric becomes abstract, woven blankets become paintings
and women weavers become nameless masters.”

Unlike works such as *N.U.C.*, which were made by Wieland in New York, the
quilts were already in Toronto, as they were fabricated in Scarborough, by Wieland’s
sister, Joan Stewart. This wrinkle in the authorship of quilted works was mentioned often
in the popular press, and Wieland worked closely with her sister from the outset. Their
collaboration was described in an article that preceded the exhibition:

> To make them, [Wieland] cuts out and pins the pieces of colored cloth to a cotton
> background. Then her sister, Mrs. Joan Stewart of Toronto, appliques the patches to the
> backing. A neighbour, Mrs. Gladys Chambers, helps with the quilting. To meet the

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155 Rozsika Parker and Pollock, Griselda, “Crafty Women and the Hierarchy of the Arts,” in *Old
156 “Mrs. Joan Stewart, who makes them, calls them quilts. Avrom Isaacs, who is devoting a whole show to
them next month, describes them as tapestry-collages. And artist Joyce Wieland, their creator, speaks of
them as quilts in one breath, collages in the next.” “Weekly Art You Can Use . . . to Keep Warm . . . to
Cover a Table . . . to Hang on a Wall . . .,” *Toronto Star*, January 14, 1967.
deadline for the show, Mrs. Stewart must find more quilters . . . not an easy matter since this old fashioned craft is not widely known today.\textsuperscript{158}

Stewart was regularly making quilts during this period, and as Wieland later told Rabinovitz, “she needed work. She didn’t have any money, and I liked what she was doing. I thought maybe I could design a quilt about a person.”\textsuperscript{159} Spurred by this desire to send work her sister’s way, she designed one for Michael Montague based on “the things he liked,” continuing, “I cut things out, basted the quilt, and my sister completed it.”

This collaborative process, which came about organically, might be understood as a kind of delegated fabrication. Considered as such, it prefigures a number of later collaborations, including the quilting party Wieland and Mary Mitchell organized to make \textit{La raison avant la passion} (1968) for Pierre Elliott Trudeau in May 1968, as discussed below. Better known, and involving a team of embroiderers, knitters, rug hookers, bakers, and other artists, were the collaborations connected with \textit{True Patriot Love} at the National Gallery of Canada. For that show, Wieland worked with, among others, Valerie McMillin, of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, to knit \textit{Flag Arrangement} (1970–1971; cat. no. 23); Joan McGregor, Halifax, Nova Scotia, who embroidered \textit{O Canada Animation} (1970; 24), \textit{Montcalm’s Last Letter} (1971; 29) and \textit{Wolfe’s Last Letter} (1971; 36); Louis Philippe Aucoin, from Cheticamp, Nova Scotia, who hooked onto burlap \textit{The Great Sea} (1970–1971; 22); and Jan van Dierendonck, the executive chef of the Parliamentary restaurant, who made \textit{Arctic Passion Cake} (1971; 28).\textsuperscript{160} Wieland again worked with her sister, Joan Stewart, to sew and embroider \textit{The Water Quilt} (1970–1971;

\footnote{\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{158}}\textquotedblleft Weekly Art You Can Use . . . to Keep Warm . . . to Cover a Table . . . to Hang on a Wall . . .\textquotedblright\textsuperscript{.}}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{159}}Rabinovitz, “An Interview with Joyce Wieland,” 10.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{160}}Wieland, \textit{True Patriot Love}.}
26), among “other major works.”¹⁶¹ For our purposes, and in the context of this first exhibition of quilted works, it is significant that the process began in New York, where Wieland herself cut and pinned the cloth, only to have them completed in Toronto.

Other artists in Wieland’s circle were using delegated fabrication around this time, notably Snow himself for works such as *Blind* and *Scope* (both 1967), but also more famously Judd, with whom Wieland had exhibited alongside in *Polychrome Construction* two years earlier. Wieland was quick to acknowledge her collaborators, however, and freely discusses the precise nature of their collaboration, as where she describes pinning or basting the fabric and then conveying it to her sister. More often the case, as in the case of Snow and Judd, artists using delegated fabrication during this period kept their fabricators and working method largely unknown.

“At that time,” Wieland later recounted in interview to Marie Fleming, “I thought they [the quilts] should be used for special occasions like birthdays, anniversaries, that they should have some celebratory use . . . on the first day of spring or for the first snowfall.”¹⁶² Quilt making, aside from arising out of necessity, also had a long history of serving to “punctuate and celebrate pioneer women’s lives,” as Parker and Pollock describe.¹⁶³ In this way, Wieland’s approach to the medium drew heavily on its conventional role. For “a six-year-old friend, Graham, she quilted *The Space of the* 

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¹⁶² Fleming, *Joyce Wieland*, 68.
¹⁶³ Parker and Pollock, Griselda, “Crafty Women and the Hierarchy of the Arts,” 76. Miriam Schapiro reflected in similar terms to Wieland on the use of quilts in her practice, “women are conservators, we collect, we save, we curate our lives, keep our diaries, journals, scrapbooks, so that we can prove we lived. Quilts show us this. Our history of quilts is a record of friendship quilts and commemorative quilts; we’ve commemorated someone’s twenty-first birthday, a woman’s giving birth, a wedding, mourning quilts when someone dies. And now the Names Quilt, made by men as well as women. Here is our symbol of partnership.” Schapiro in Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994), 82.
“Lama,” wrote one reviewer. The reviewer got both the medium and the name wrong, however—it was a plastic wall hanging, not a quilt, and Graham was in fact Munro Ferguson, Betty Ramsaur Ferguson and Graeme Ferguson’s son, with whom Wieland Snow stayed when they first arrived in New York in late 1962, as described above. Wieland and Betty had decided the Munro was the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama; hence the reference in the work’s title.

In spite of this early intention, the “quilted wall hangings” Wieland showed at Isaacs were more often associated by critics with psychedelic experiences than celebrating milestones in her life or the lives of her friends, and often with good reason. Robert Fulford, writing in The Toronto Daily Star, reported that in the last year Wieland has “undergone experiences with LSD . . . [which] she reflects in her art.” Fulford understands the presence of mandalas—which figured in five of the seven larger hangings in the show—as a connected both to her experience with psychedelic drugs and “eastern religion.” It had been four years since her last exhibition with Isaacs, and the works were a marked departure from the previous exhibition, which had consisted largely of paintings.

While mandalas figure prominently in these quilted works, so too do references to filmic apparatus. Much of the non-film work that Isaacs sold during this time, whether

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164 “Weekly Art You Can Use . . . to Keep Warm . . . to Cover a Table . . . to Hang on a Wall . . .” In another review, Kritzwiser wrote, “It’s destined to become a family heirloom from the Sixties, as true a record of Graham’s day as is a quilt from a United Empire Loyalist grandmother. Except that Miss Wieland made Graham a space helmet to match his quilt.” Kay Kritzwiser, “At the Galleries: A Record of the 60s in Colorful Quilts,” Globe and Mail, March 25, 1967.
165 Fleming, Joyce Wieland, 64.
166 Lind, Joyce Wieland: Artist on Fire, 139.
167 Shortly after she arrived in New York, and while still staying with the Fergusons, Wieland wrote to Isaacs sometime in December 1968 that “Betty Ferguson and myself are starting work on a film in about one week. It will be cuts from all her husband’s films, etc., 16mm.” Wieland to Isaacs, December 1963, December 1963.
169 Fulford.
Wieland’s “filmic paintings” from the early sixties, or her later quilts or assemblages make explicit reference to the machinery of cinema.\textsuperscript{170} As Harry Malcolmson noted in his review of her 1967 hanging show at Isaacs, there is a line that can be drawn between Wieland’s “earlier sequence painting,” with “the unfolding of a succession of images in a film strip,” and the plastic hangings, where “instead of representing things by drawing on canvas, she stuffs the things themselves into the pockets of sleeves.”\textsuperscript{171} Most of the plastic works borrow formally from the arrangement of a film strip, yet only three evoke the connection with their titles: \textit{Home Movie}, \textit{Stuffed Movie} and \textit{War and Peace 8mm.} \textit{Home Movie} (all 1966 or 1967). Similarly, only two of the seven quilts, \textit{Film Mandala Quilt} (also titled \textit{Film Mandala}) and \textit{The Camera’s Eyes} (both 1966), name the cinematic allusion, but the sequential grid in a work such as \textit{The Hall of Hearts} (1966) is easily a reference to the film strips used elsewhere. There are evocations of other artist references, \textit{Purple Altar} (1967), for instance, “looks vaguely like either an Albers or a Stella,” according to Fulford.\textsuperscript{172}

Later on, Wieland reflected on these first quilted works. Afforded some distance, she situated them less in light of collaborating with her sister or commemorating a special occasion, and rather as politically motivated. Not that these motivations need be exclusive, only that the more pragmatic and mundane origins would be elaborated and

\textsuperscript{170} Reviewers had identified this relationship between her films and paintings early on: “Joyce describes her latest art phase as ‘filmic painting’ because her interest in New York avant-garde movie making techniques show up in her work. But added to her usual funny-feminine type paintings in this showing are pictures of plane and ship disasters ‘because I guess I’ve been reading too many New York tabloids lately.’” Parmelee, “Joyce Is a Zen Cook.” “My paintings by the way are very interesting large strips—like film or comic strips (much like the style I worked in 3 years ago—showed drawings like this at Dorothy’s) ‘I’ll be glad to send one of my ‘new’ disaster paintings to you in the next truckload. They are just like the Flicks. My new paintings are good and I’m afraid somebody might steal their idea before I have a show. I’m just a paranoid New Yorker today. And why not I may ask?’” Wieland to Isaacs, 1962, 1962.

\textsuperscript{171} Malcolmson, “[Joyce Wieland Exhibition Review, Isaacs Gallery].”

\textsuperscript{172} Fulford, “Now, We Get Psychedelic Quilts.”
later situated in a more politicized account of the development of her practice. As she told Arlene Lister in 1976:

I thought that they wouldn’t like it there [New York], people wouldn’t normally acknowledge it. But it was part of my feminist feelings, too, and my own reaction to the New York art scene, that I had to be myself. There’s two things we’re talking about. The first, interest in doing quilts, and secondly, finding out they could be used for political purposes. But the first idea of using them was that I was involved with feminine work, things that women had done, going through that idea of roots of our own female culture . . . So from there came the *Reason Over Passion, Oh Canada* and four or five other things.173

The political dimension is less present in the quilted works, however, as Wieland did recognize. Those quilts from the *Hangings* exhibition were more often “homages to films,” and only later did Wieland use the medium, as she later recounted, to make “political statements.”174 That is not to say, of course, following Susan Hiller, that “art practice with no overt political content may, nevertheless, be able to sensitize us politically,” and indeed the key tenet of second-wave feminism that “the personal is political, and all representation is political.”175 In this way, Wieland’s burgeoning political engagement registers, albeit subtly, in all of the “plastic pieces,” even those evoking more personal histories and memories—a photograph of Snow, images of her other works, and her cat. The majority were just such “personal” pieces: “vertical collages in which various objects—a photo, a bit of film, a piece of wool, a magazine clipping—are encased in shiny vinyl.”176 Four however explicitly addressed the Vietnam War or national difference: *N.U.C.*, *War and Peace*, 8mm. *Home Movie*, *Patriotism*, and *Betsy Ross, Look What They’ve Done With the Flag That You Made With Such Care* (all

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176 Fulford, “Now, We Get Psychedelic Quilts.”
1966 or 1967).\textsuperscript{177} These works were far smaller, and priced significantly less than the quilts, ranging from $125 to $150; the quilts were priced from $650 to $1000.\textsuperscript{178} 

*Confedspread* (1967) is a hybrid work: combining the overall form and scale of the quilts with the use of plastic as medium. It also, of course, addresses the centenary and national identity, albeit in a more celebratory and innocuous way than the smaller plastic works. 

*Confedspread* also signals the direction Wieland’s work would turn. Taken together, the exhibition was a turning point in other ways, too.

Among the lesser-known projects that Wieland conceived in Toronto was an expanded cinema event known as *Bill’s Hat*. Realized at least three times during 1967, it has received little attention in Wieland scholarship, perhaps because of its ephemerality or, more likely, Wieland’s own disparaging comments about the medium. More than ambivalent, following the third iteration, Wieland told a reviewer that “these things aren’t my scene.”\textsuperscript{179}

Although Kristy Holmes-Moss explored the connections between Wieland and Gene Youngblood’s notion of “expanded cinema” for an essay in the *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, she did not discuss Wieland’s only-known foray into the medium that Youngblood describes—a medium most closely associated, perhaps, with Andy Warhol’s Exploding Plastic Inevitable (1966–1967).\textsuperscript{180} Interestingly, Warhol’s collaboration with

\begin{footnotes}
\item[177] Indeed, as Sloan has suggested, *Patriotism* epitomizes “the consumerist ethos of American society, and Wieland’s use of it here points to how even the horrors of war are inevitably mediated and packaged for consumption.” Johanne Sloan, “The New Figuration: From Pop to Postmodernism,” in *The Visual Arts in Canada: The Twentieth Century*, ed. Anne Whitelaw, Brian Foss, and Sandra Paikowsky (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2010), 260.
\item[178] “Joyce Wieland ‘Hangings’ March 22-April 10, 1967.”
\item[180] Incidentally, Youngblood spent three days in New York with Snow, and then travelled with him to Toronto for the opening of his exhibition “Michael Snow: A Survey” at the Art Gallery of Ontario.
\end{footnotes}
the Velvet Underground had been mounted at McMaster University, in Hamilton, Ontario, less than a year earlier, in November 1966, however Wieland would have had a far more proximate connection to the project.181 The projectionist for Warhol’s multi-screen “expanded cinema” was Wieland’s friend, the Canadian filmmaker Bob Cowan (1930–2011).182 Cowan, Wieland and Snow had known each other while still in Toronto, and after he moved to New York in 1954 at the encouragement of William Ronald, the couple stayed with him when they visited.183 It was Cowan, in fact, who first introduced Wieland and Snow to the filmmaker Ken Jacobs,184 and Cowan may also have made Snow’s introduction to Warhol, which likely took place in 1964 or 1965.185

*Bill’s Hat* was first realized over June 15–17, 1967, for the “Cinethon” at Cinecity, Toronto.186 Cinecity was a converted Post Office on the northeast corner of Charles and Yonge Streets that had been adapted into “the best independent cinema in the

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185 In an undated letter from Wieland to Isaacs, likely from 1964 or 1965, Wieland wrote: “Mike met Warhol. He said, ‘Yes I know you. You do the Walking Woman, etc.’ Nice, aye?” Joyce Wieland to Av Isaacs, 1965 1964, 1996-036/002 (12) Joyce Wieland, Av Isaacs fonds, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University.

city, with seating for 300, air-conditioning, stereo sound and the latest 35mm and 16mm projection equipment.\footnote{Porter, “Consolidating Film Activity, Toronto in the 1960s.”} “I got into this total thing,” Wieland told a reporter for the \textit{Globe and Mail}, “when Cinecity asked me to do one for its festival in June. I don’t know why it asked me. I’d never done one before. But still, I was really excited over it.”\footnote{“Film-Maker Casts Dwight Eisenhower Eating Fish.” Cinethon commissioned the project for $1000. Lind, \textit{Joyce Wieland: Artist on Fire}, 166.} Wieland presented her “three-screen, expanded cinema version of her film Bill’s Hat,” for the festival.\footnote{Porter, “Consolidating Film Activity, Toronto in the 1960s.”} The film itself, \textit{Bill’s Hat} was a shorter version of the ultimate 50-minute version that would be screened subsequently at the Art Gallery of Ontario in July 1967.\footnote{“Bill’s Hat,” \textit{Globe and Mail}, July 8, 1967.} In fact, various iterations of the expanded cinema event seem to have taken place. While it was first conceived for Cinethon in June 1967, when the next iteration was reported in the press, around the time of the July 7, 1967 event at the Art Gallery of Ontario, it was described as the third of these evenings.\footnote{“Film-Maker Casts Dwight Eisenhower Eating Fish.” While the second iteration took place as part of “Cinethon” or elsewhere is unknown.} Yet another version, a fourth, seems to have been scheduled for November 11, 1967, again at the Art Gallery of Ontario.\footnote{“Bill’s Hat.”}

In one of the few reviews of the event, Marilyn Beker described in the \textit{Globe and Mail} the following set-up: five projection screens, featuring four slide-shows and a 50-minute movie, \textit{Bill’s Hat} (1967), which featured shots of various people—including Timothy Leary, Jean Sutherland Boggs, Jack Bush, A.Y. Jackson, and Judy LaMarsh—wearing a “an old fur hat of mine which people have always liked to wear.”\footnote{“Bill’s Hat.”} The raccoon hat, which Wieland found at Hadassah Bazaar for 50 cents, is the loose
organizing principle of the film. Wieland’s statement for the Art Gallery of Ontario release in June 1967 is sufficiently vague:

The opening sequence shows the story of the mythical Birth of Bill’s Hat (the hat of brotherhood and Love). The wood nymphs of the upper Hudson River Region in solemn ceremony bring forth from sylvan glades the wondrous, friendly furry crown—of commonness. The whole film (and slides) are non-art portraits of people in which they do what they want with this hat—and therefore, act or stand in front of my camera. It’s only love: therefore it can’t harm you. The music which surrounds you describes what Paul Harnes tried to tell you when he said “Youth Wants to Know.”

The event, which was variously described as expanded cinema, total theatre, or “theatre of sensation,” was participatory, with the audience involved in sound and visual effects. For the July 7, 1967 iteration at the Art Gallery of Ontario, the press release described “a combination of multiple and superimposed projections from two film projectors and two automatic slide projectors onto three large screens will create the basis of Joyce Wieland’s ‘theatre of sensation.’” The release continued, “sixty candles set in an altar of vinyl and massed flowers will also superimpose diffused images on one of the corner screens.” An account given after the event took place, and so presumably more accurately describing the scene, suggested more candle power and more screens: “smack in front of the audience sat a huge plastic altar covered with pots of flowers and 100 burning candles. Behind that was a movie screen flanked by four white plastic sheets matching the altar.” Wieland handed out incense, and two bands played: The 25th

194 “Film-Maker Casts Dwight Eisenhower Eating Fish.”
196 “Wednesday Open Night: Expanded Cinema at the Art Gallery of Ontario.”
197 “Wednesday Open Night: Expanded Cinema at the Art Gallery of Ontario.”
198 Marilyn Beker, “Expanded Cinema Rocks Gallery,” Globe and Mail, July 8, 1967. Beker begins her review by writing that the first iteration took place at Cinecity “four months ago,” though this would seem an error, as Cinecity took place roughly four weeks earlier than the Art Gallery of Ontario performance.
Hour, made up mostly of teenagers and headed by Wieland’s nephew Keith Stewart, and Stu Broomers’ Kinetic Ensemble, who “played something bordering on raga.” Broomer sported “a shiny third-eye on his forehead and a huge orange paper flower on his lapel.” The music was realized by the Canadian composer Ray Jessel; Snow also accompanied on trumpet.199 From the ceiling hung a heart-shaped pillow, a woman lay on a piano with the raccoon hat on her stomach, and the four accompanying slide shows had images of “hundreds” of people wearing the hat.200 At one point there was a sign circulating the crowd, instructing participants to kiss “someone nice.” There were small, hand-held projects passed through the crowd, as well as strobe lights.201

The film, which ran roughly 50 minutes, was taxing for Wieland, as was the mounting the performance itself: “I’ve never worked so hard in my life . . . That’s a feat for anyone, let alone me.”202 Having worked out how to do it, however, she offered it outside of Toronto, including to the National Gallery of Canada, albeit unsuccessfully.203 Gary Michael Dault, in a review that appeared the following spring, in the April 1968 issue of Artscanada, was unimpressed by the project: “It is . . . as hackneyed to show a sequence of slides in which care has been taken to make sure that no one image has anything to do with any other as it is to show images in a logically progressive way.” It was, he felt, “constricting rather than expanded cinema.”204 Wieland, for her part, seemed

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199 “Wednesday Open Night: Expanded Cinema at the Art Gallery of Ontario.”
200 Lind, Joyce Wieland: Artist on Fire, 167.
201 Lind, 167.
202 “Bill’s Hat.”
almost to agree: “I’m not going to do any more of these total cinemas unless I can get a
marvellous budget.”

While Wieland and Snow were visiting Toronto in early July 1967 for Bill’s Hat, they stayed with Diane Rotstein (1935–2017) and Abraham Rotstein (1929–2015); she was a biologist and he taught political economics at the University of Toronto. They also seem to have stayed with them at the time of Wieland’s Hangings exhibition at the Isaacs Gallery, in March–April 1967. While Wieland and Snow typically stayed with their friends Donna and George Montague, their decision to stay with the Rotsteins may have significantly shaped the course of Wieland’s practice. As Sloan and Holmes-Moss have described in their work on Wieland and the New Left, Abraham Rotstein was by the late 1960s the Editor of Canadian Forum, and in 1970 would go on to found the Committee for an Independent Canada with Walter Gordon and Peter Newman.

If 1967 was a signal year for Wieland, some of the momentum carried through to the next: the Vancouver Art Gallery organized Joyce Wieland Retrospective, 1957 to 1967 (January 9–February 4, 1968) and Wieland’s work was included in Canada: Art d’aujourd’hui at the Musée national d’art moderne, Paris (January 12–February 18, 2018). In spring 1968 she took a trip to Cape Breton. Her filmmaking continued apace,

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205 “Film-Maker Casts Dwight Eisenhower Eating Fish.”
206 Fleming, Joyce Wieland, 71.
207 Lind, Joyce Wieland: Artist on Fire, 165.
208 For a discussion of Wieland’s interest in Rotstein and his work, see Sloan, “Joyce Wieland at the Border: Nationalism, the New Left and the Question of Political Art in Canada,” 89. As Holmes mentions, the Rotsteins owned a drawing by Wieland, The Life and Death of the American City (1967), which they lent to True Patriot Love at the National Gallery of Canada in 1971. It is possible, given the date, that the drawing was given in thanks for their repeated hospitality in Toronto. Holmes, “Negotiating the Nation: The Work of Joyce Wieland, 1968-1976,” 119.
and over two days on June 22–23, 1968, she screened five of her films in New York.\textsuperscript{210} Another retrospective was organized in 1969, this time by Glendon College Art Gallery, at York University. There was a surge of interest and publicity around Wieland’s work, which combined with her burgeoning political engagement.

At nine o’clock on Saturday, November 8, 1969 at their loft at 123 Chambers Street, Wieland and Snow threw an “intimate” party for Pierre Eliot Trudeau.\textsuperscript{211} Guests in attendance, as reported in the same article, were Jonas Mekas, Carl Andre and La Monte Young, the poet Robert Lowell, author Mary McCarthy, architect Constance Abernathy, and nightclub owner Art D’Lugoff.\textsuperscript{212} “The Prime Minister frequently danced with Gloria Steinem,” Stan Fischler wrote in the \textit{Toronto Star}, “an attractive writer with \textit{New York} magazine.”\textsuperscript{213} In 1969, Steinem had yet to found \textit{Ms.} (1972– ), and was perhaps still best-known for her investigative journalism exposé “I Was a Playboy Bunny” (1963).\textsuperscript{214} In her more telling autobiographical essay from 1972, “Sisterhood,” Steinem described herself as “basically—if quietly—opted out of the ‘feminine’ role . . . But that made it all the more necessary to repeat the conventional wisdom . . . I therefore learned to Uncle Tom with subtlety, logic, and humor. Sometimes, I even believed in myself.”\textsuperscript{215} As discussed above, Wieland’s earlier professed interest in cooking and other customs of domestic life

\textsuperscript{211} The night before and after, as was reported in \textit{Toronto Star}, Trudeau went on dates with Barbra Streisand. Stan Fischler, “Pierre’s the Star of an Art Party in New York Loft,” \textit{Toronto Daily Star}, November 11, 1969. On Sunday, “they both went to the avant-garde experimental play Acropolis being performed by the Polish Laboratory Theatre.”
\textsuperscript{212} Fischler.
\textsuperscript{213} Fischler.
while in New York evoke a similar habit to Steinem’s performance of gendered expectations around the same period.

A guest list drafted by Wieland gives a sense of their friends and contacts in New York, though it remains unknown whether they all attended the party: Norman Mailer, George Plimpton, Susan Sontag, George Segal, Claes Oldenburg, Carla Blay, Roy Lichtenstein, Graeme and Betty Ferguson, Les Levine, Philip Roth, Ornette Coleman, Steve Reich, Philip Glass, Nancy Graves, Richard Serra, Meredith Monk, Elizabeth Hardwick, Hollis and Marcia Frampton, Annette Michelson, Robert Morris, and P. Adams Sitney.216

Trudeau wrote on November 12, 1969, thanking Wieland and Snow not only for the party on Saturday, which he appreciated all the more given the “fairly short time and in the midst of busy lives,” but “the debt I had to those of you who worked with such enthusiasm almost two years ago, at the time of the Leadership Contest.”217 At the party, Wieland gave him the quilted work La Raison avant la passion (1969), which “if I estimate correctly, must have taken almost as much work as the organization of the party. It is a very sensitive and thoughtful gift and I am honoured to receive it.”218

The quilt had, in fact, taken much longer to make than Wieland took to organize the party. It began at a party held at 4:30 p.m. on May 21, 1968. As described in a press

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216 Joyce Wieland, “Party List,” November 1969, 1992-018/003 (42) Party for Pierre E. Trudeau, Joyce Wieland fonds, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University. Incidentally, Brydon Smith recounts being introduced to Nancy Graves by Snow and Wieland: “I was with Mike Snow and Joyce Wieland and they said ‘there is an artist who you should see, she is close by’ and again this is off the record I think and I said ‘what kind of work?’ ‘you have to see it.’ We went over and up the three or four flights of stairs and when she opened the door I jumped back because there was a camel coming.” Brydon Smith, interview by Diana Nemiroff, October 3, 2002, 4, Brydon Smith, Documentation files, Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.


218 Trudeau to Wieland.
release from the group Canadians Abroad for Trudeau, signed by Wieland, Mary Mitchell and Valerie Jennings, “many of Canada’s female expatriates will pick up their needles and gather at the New York studio of Canadian artist Joyce Wieland Snow to sew for Trudeau an art quilt.”219 The group was described as a “partisan group of [expatriate] Canadians who organized in New York and Hollywood in support of Mr. Trudeau in his race for the Liberal Leadership in April.”220 Later, in interview with Susan Crean in 1987, Wieland would seem to play down their evident enthusiasm for Trudeau’s leadership campaign, saying,

we invented this mostly bogus group and sent Trudeau missiles on film and letters on all sorts of letterhead which we made up ourselves. Eventually it got into the papers that there was this huge movement in New York and Trudeau was asked about it and he answered, “Reason over passion; that’s the theme of all my writings.” . . . Finally I got this notion that I was a government propagandist and when I thought of Leni Riefenstahl and *Triumph of the Will* I decided that my title was quite compatible.221

While the front of the quilt, of “hand-dyed cotton in bright colours with large pillowed letter[s] spelling out” La Raison avant la passion is often reproduced, less-known is that the “back of the Quilt contains sewn pockets containing private messages from Mrs. Snow to Mr. Trudeau.”222

Later, this group that had supported Trudeau’s leadership bid would morph into another organization, headed by Mitchell and Wieland, called Les Activistes Culturels

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220 Wieland, Jennings, and Mitchell, 1.
222 Wieland, Jennings, and Mitchell, “‘Quilt-in’ for Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau (Press Release),” 1–2. Later, Wieland would reflect, “I think it is very important to have secrets in the work. The first thing I did like that was *Apron* (undated, 1960 or 1961) with written things put in the pocket. Then the large piece called *Heart-On* (1962) has written things hidden inside it. It’s good because no one has to know it; it just might come up some day that these things exist. It’s good to have mystery because people want to explain everything.” Rabinovitz, “An Interview with Joyce Wieland,” 10.
Canadiens. Barrie Hale profiled them in an article for the *Toronto Daily Star* on March 7, 1970, where he described the group as “about a dozen (mostly English-speaking) Canadian artists, writers and filmmakers who live and work in New York but still insist on the values of a Canadian culture free of U.S. domination.” Among their earliest activities was their “New Year’s Greetings to the Canadian Consulate,” which Wieland filmed: a gathering of “35 to 40” artists, writers and filmmakers who briefly occupied the tenth floor offices of the consulate. Brooklynite Aaron Grafstein kept guard, dressed as a Mountie, on the street below. The action was meant to usher in a decade of “independent Canadian culture.” The group’s origins as campaigners for Trudeau, however, and the party organized for Trudeau less than two months before the demonstration, were at odds with their protest, as Hale pointed out: “As their struggle against U.S. imperialism grows tougher, Joyce admits, that kind of fraternization with continentalist-minded Canadian government leaders may have to stop, and the Activistes’ demonstrations might get to be less amusing.”

This was by no means Wieland’s first contact with the Canadian consulate in New York. In a letter jointly authored by Wieland, Snow, Graeme Ferguson, Marion Grudeff, Raymond Jessel, and Mary Mitchell, on April 16, 1967, they listed a string of “protests” in connection with “Canada Week” and the promotion of “Canada in New York in this Centennial year.” In short, it seems the group was insulted that they had not been asked to participate in the consulate’s activities. This was the issue that some on the far left of

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224 Hale.
225 Hale.
the New Left took with Wieland’s work and activism. That in spite of demonstrations such as “New Year’s Greetings,” at base Wieland remained a keen supporter of the Liberal party. As Barry Lord wrote for Saturday Night, briefly panning True Patriot Love at the National Gallery of Canada, “for the very elected officials who salute our symbols and who smiled on that show (Trudeau himself owns a Wieland quilt) are among those who have presided over the sale of our resources and industry so securely into U.S. control.”

Even more fundamentally, as was pointed out regularly in reviews of the exhibition, “this artist who chants the praises of Canada over the United States in fact lives in New York.”

In March 1970, at the time of Snow’s survey exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Wieland told a critic that while “the States is a vital, interesting place to live . . . it’s just becoming too much of a hassle with crime and violence.” She continued, “We’re gradually phasing ourselves out of New York and back to Canada. We hope to settle on our Nova Scotia property within the next few years where we’ll be able to work in peace.”

That fall Wieland and Snow participated in the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design’s (NSCAD) lithography workshop (1970–1976), living in Halifax for three months. In the first year the school invited only Canadian artists, however as the workshop was intended to be financially self-sustaining, to bring the workshop back into

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229 Stewart, “Art without a Clash of Ego.”
the black they subsequently began to invite American and European artists. Wieland was the first woman to produce a lithograph at the workshop. As Wieland wrote to Isaacs during their stay,

This school [NSCAD] is very good, very well run—overrun with Americans—some, plenty of young kids escaped from oppression to study art. The scene continues to deteriorate in U.S. and had more firsthand info at the conference here—Canada will be more than half American within 3 years—as people from U.S. escape—here. Well this is a pleasant place, lobster good—let’s keep pleasant.

In addition to completing her now celebrated lithograph \(O\) Canada (1970) in December 1970, as Wieland mentioned to Isaacs she also attended the Halifax Conference (October 5–7, 1970). Conceived by Lawrence Weiner and Gerald Ferguson as “opportunity to bring artists together for open dialogue and exchange of ideas,” it included nineteen attendees, such as Carl Andre, Joseph Beuys, Jan Dibbets, Robert Morris, and Robert Smithson. Aside from Ingrid Baxter, the attendees were entirely men; Wieland is not listed among them.

In addition to working on \(O\) Canada, Wieland also used her time in Halifax as an occasion to find collaborators for work on her forthcoming exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada. “When I taught in the Maritimes,” Wieland later recounted, “it was an
opportunity to visit fairs and places like that and find women. I wanted to elevate and
honor craft by joining women together in an exhibition where they would be united and
proud of what they had done.” She attended the Halifax Fall Fair, where Wieland
looked at work of knitters and embroiderers and later also went to Newfoundland. Later, in summer 1971, Wieland and Snow bought a piece of land in
Newfoundland, a one-room cabin without running water or electricity. True Patriot
Love had opened at the National Gallery of Canada on July 1, 1971 and ran through
August 8, 1971. Isaacs, in an attempt to ride the enthusiasm for the exhibition,
mounted an exhibition of the same name at his gallery (October 13–November 1, 1971).
He wrote to Jean Sutherland Boggs (1922–2014) on September 27, 1971,

I have decided to exhibit most of Joyce’s ‘70/’71 works. Aside from my obvious bias, I
found the exhibition at the National Gallery so impressive that I felt I must take the
opportunity to allow a larger portion of the Toronto public to see her works. Would it be
possible to borrow ‘Arctic Day’ for the exhibition, which will run from October 12 until
November 1? Needless to say, both Joyce and I feel this piece is very important.

It was in late 1971 that Wieland and Snow moved back to Toronto. Though they had
been discussing it since at least March 1970, as mentioned above, it was a fraught
decision: “I wanted to go, Mike wanted to stay,” as Wieland told Rabinovitz in 1981,
“although he really didn’t want to come back, he did. Coming back to Toronto was the
beginning of having my own life and the choice of where I would live.”

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236 Lind, Joyce Wieland: Artist on Fire, 190, 199.
237 Lind, 200.
238 For a discussion of this exhibition, see Sloan, “Joyce Wieland at the Border: Nationalism, the New Left
and the Question of Political Art in Canada.”
239 Av Isaacs to Jean Sutherland Boggs, September 27, 1971, 1996-036/002 (12) TIG Correspondence “N”
1971, Av Isaacs fonds, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University.
Wieland’s desire to return to Canada was motivated by a number of factors. While her increasing political engagement is the most obvious, there were also more immediate causes. Notably, there was a sense of increasing violence in New York, beginning around 1970, which she mentioned repeatedly to journalists and in correspondence.\(^241\) This came to a head when Wieland was attacked while opening the door to her loft on Chambers Street.\(^242\) “I was attacked one night, and it was a terrible trauma which lasted for months. I had to go back to Canada, though, to do my work about it,” Wieland later recounted.\(^243\) Before the attack, Wieland had conceived *Design for a Bullet-proof Vest Outfit* (1970), drawn by Sheila Gladstone.\(^244\) Anticipating an act of violence, she told Kay Kritzwiser at the time of *True Patriot Love* that a vest such as this was “a dark possibility while she lives in New York.”\(^245\)

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241 Wieland was not alone in sensing this change: as Isaacs wrote to her, “Spoke to Les [Levine] on the phone and he tells me NY is getting worse every day how is it possible.” Av Isaacs to Joyce Wieland and Michael Snow, November 14, 1970, 1996-036/026 (13) Joyce Wieland -1974/75, Av Isaacs fonds, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University.

242 When she was attacked while opening the door, Wieland yelled and Snow came down and the assailant fled. Wieland said that he got a piece of her hair. She burned the clothes she was wearing. On another occasion their Chambers loft was broken into and equipment stolen. Lind, *Joyce Wieland: Artist on Fire*, 154.


244 Wieland, *True Patriot Love*, cat. no. 16.

245 Kritzwiser, “Wieland: Ardent Art for Unity’s Sake.” Wieland also split with an important part of the experimental filmmaking scene in New York at the time of the founding of Anthology Film Archives in 1970. When the Archives’ inaugural collection was announced, they had excluded her and other women filmmakers, such as Shirley Clarke. Wieland was in Halifax, and when she returned in early 1971, she no longer felt the need either to show her work or to be a part of their community. Rabinovitz, *Points of Resistance: Women, Power and Politics in the New York Avant-Garde Cinema, 1943-1971*, 176. When asked toward the end of the 1980s about the break with the filmmaking scene in New York, Wieland recalled how the collection was decided “by secret ballot and the men kept out women like Shirley Clarke, who had gone around raising money for the project. I had been part of the underground with people who were real artists and free spirits . . . Then suddenly came the invasion of uptown artists, all those guys with very exclusive galleries who came to re-create our cinema.” Crean, “Notes from the Language of Emotion: A Conversation with Joyce Wieland,” 65. This formalization of the scene also coincided with the increasing importance of film theory: “when film got into theory that was the end of vision. I don’t know what the hell theory has to do with seeing.” Scott, “Full Circle – True, Patriot Womanhood: The 30-Year Passage of Joyce Wieland,” 59.
Wieland and Snow took possession of their house at 137 Summerhill Avenue, Toronto on November 16, 1971.246 Reflecting on her time in New York for Barrie Hale, in a profile he wrote of the couple for Saturday Night in June 1974, Wieland said “I guess the best things I did in New York until the last couple of years were the films.”247 It was equally true for both Wieland and Snow that they were known primarily as filmmakers, and not as visual artists, in New York. At a distance, Wieland understood her time in New York as a gradual process of politicization: “we went through all the political stuff in the States and it took a while to connect what was going on there to what was going on here.” Wieland continued,

You couldn’t do a goddamn thing about what was happening there, and then I saw what the power structure of that country was doing here and wow!—you sort of run for the fort. I began grappling with Canadian things when I made Rat Life, reading a lot about Canada and its history. It was about that time that I made a lot of the quilts that had to do with Canadian things, and the bilingual things came into it.248

In articulating the negative definition of woman in The Second Sex, Simone de Beauvoir draws the analogy that, just as there is “an absolute human type that is masculine,” “traveling, a local is shocked to realise that in neighbouring countries locals view him as a foreigner . . . whether one likes it or not, individuals and groups have no choice but to recognise the reciprocity of their relation.”249 Wieland’s decade in the United States allowed for just such an exchange, a gradual realization that both her gender and nationality existed in a “reciprocity,” to follow Beauvoir, and that by the end of her time

246 Lind, Joyce Wieland: Artist on Fire, 195.
248 Hale, 23.
away, she began to articulate her identity more and more authentically as a subject distinct, to put it simply, from men but also from Americans.  

Snow, by contrast, was far less politicized than Wieland in discussing the return to Canada.  If Snow was not enthusiastic about his return, others were: in February 1975, their friend Greg Curnoe wrote that “a lot went out of the Toronto scene when Snow and Wieland went to New York and it has come back to some extent since they have come back.”

In mid-October 1972, roughly a year after returning, Wieland wrote an artist statement titled “Jigs & Reels.” The title is unexplained in her text, however may relate to an encounter Pierre Théberge recorded in print nearly a decade later. In summer 1972 Théberge went with John Boyle and Greg Curnoe to “a small Quebec village on the south shore of the St. Lawrence.” There, they visited a violoneux in an attempt to record his music, however he was less interested in “the traditional reels and jigs” first imported from Ireland and Scotland, than he was in Robert Charlebois. Théberge relates this only to stress that “small localities have no immunity to ‘foreign’ influences.”

251 “I see something in my stuff with a French academic tradition that comes from Ingres and came to French Canada—where I picked it up because I grew up with it and sort of absorbed it by osmosis throughout my childhood. It doesn’t have anything to do with American art, it has to do with a certain weight of things. Even when I do make a big thing it has a certain modesty, different from a sort of megalomaniac thing, the kind of power that American artists partake of, even though they vehemently deny it.” Hale, 23.
255 Théberge, 21.
The visit is related to Curnoe and Théberge’s various road trips in search of vernacular art and architecture, some documented in the first and only issue of *The Review of the Association for the Documentation of Neglected Aspects of Culture in Canada*, which the artist and curator jointly edited.\(^{256}\) Just prior to the opening of *True Patriot Love*, as he records in the *Review*, Théberge took Wieland and Snow on a similar expedition to meet the artist Arthème St. Germain on June 27, 1971, who painted rocks and made lawn ornaments, including whirligigs, birdhouses, and painted plastic jugs. When they arrived, however, they learned that Arthème had died; Théberge subsequently bought all of the available works, kept them with him in his apartment, and in 1973 donated them to the Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau.\(^{257}\) The following summer, on August 16, 1972, Wieland and Snow again joined Théberge and Curnoe on a trip, as Curnoe recorded in his diary.\(^{258}\)

Wieland’s text, “Jigs & Reels,” titled with this possible allusion to imported and local musical traditions, begins by lamenting the dissolution of the experimental film scene she first encountered on moving to New York in 1962.\(^{259}\) The text quickly turns, however, to take up the question of American influence in Canada:

Since 1967 all of my work has been about Canada, a country which has been largely sold out to the U.S. multinational corporations, by visible and invisible Canadians, the American power structure determines the future of this country, by exploitation of our

\(^{256}\) Pierre Théberge and Greg Curnoe, eds., *The Review of the Association for the Documentation of Neglected Aspects of Culture in Canada* 1, no. 1 (December 1974).

\(^{257}\) Théberge and Curnoe, 6.

\(^{258}\) “Sieze Aout . . . Mike and Joyce [Michael Snow and Joyce Wieland] arrived at the stroke of midnight—a green Daison not orange—plain [illegible] we got to Riviere du Loup and 2 rocks 36-135mm “I made a store for the sign”—general laughter—etc.”


\(^{259}\) “We were once very intimate in New York . . . now the group has dispersed to different places. I doubt whether we shall all see each other that much again.” Wieland, “Jigs & Reels.”
minds and resources. They have eternal plans (more damaging than beneficial for us) for power dams, oil, gas, mineral deposits, Indians, Eskimos, re-directing the flow of mighty rivers, the media, and cultural and educational institutions. They would even like to melt the Arctic. All this has disturbed a great many people in Canada, who in the face of this tidal wave, can barely organize to stop or even attempt to humanize some of these catastrophic plans.260

Wieland continues to mention briefly the exhibition *True Patriot Love* and her recent films, but then returns again to a discussion of artists’ responses to American imperialism. It stands as one of the most elaborate statements Wieland made during the period on this question of American imperialism. With herself, she names Curnoe and Boyle—further evidence, perhaps, of the allusion in the title to their trip with Théberge—as those “trying to make art which will help bind people together, without boring them or dulling them.”261 Returning to Canada, Wieland realized that wish, binding people together, her subsequent work hardly boring or dulling.

260 Wieland.

261 Wieland. She also admired Curnoe, along with Jack Chambers, for their part in establishing Canadian Artists’ Representation; as she told Susan Crean, “I had always been impressed by Greg Curnoe staying in London during the time I was in New York. I really admired Greg and Jack Chambers and got such a sense of moral strength from those men. So I wanted to join up with the forces of regionalism and nationalism.” Crean, “Notes from the Language of Emotion: A Conversation with Joyce Wieland,” 65.
Chapter Six
Toward a People’s Art
Barry Lord, Gail Dexter, and the Canadian Liberation Movement

Among the very few surveys of Indigenous and Canadian art of the 1960s and 1970s, *The History of Painting in Canada: Toward a People’s Art* (1974) must stand as the strangest.¹ Conspicuously Maoist in its methodology, evident to even the most casual reader, the book’s selective account begins with a brief discussion of Indigenous cultures from time immemorial and ends with a lengthy section on Canadian art of the 1960s. Although signed by Barry Lord (1939–2017), as he recounted in interview in 2012, “the analysis is something that Gail and I [developed]—and, by the way, Gail had a lot to do with the book (for various reasons her name did not appear on the book, but she was very involved).”² Even knowing Gail Dexter’s (b. 1946) contribution, the text is better understood as the product of a collective political effort rather than the work of a single or set of authors.³ The book’s strangeness is explained, in part at least, by the circumstances in which it was conceived. It was the shared creation of an organization, the Canadian Liberation Movement (c. 1969–1976), a significant, if extreme, response to American cultural and capital imperialism in the early 1970s in Canada. Taken in this larger context, *Painting in Canada* appears almost moderate in its political line when

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² Barry Lord and Adam Lauder, “Energy Trade: Where the Museums Are,” *Canadian Art* 29, no. 2 (June 2012): 104. I am grateful to Gail Lord, who consented to an interview with me, however declined at the time to discuss her involvement with the Canadian Liberation Movement. Gail Dexter Lord, interview by Adam Welch, April 12, 2018.
³ Following their marriage in the early 1970s, Gail Dexter often used the name Gail Dexter Lord or Gail Lord, however for clarity I refer to her throughout this text as Dexter.
compared with the activities of the organization from which it emerged. In April 1975, for instance, the spring after the book was published, the group sent a congratulatory telegram to the Khmer Rouge on behalf of the people of Canada: demonstrating something of their absurd misunderstanding, from today’s perspective at least, of the degree of violence of actual national liberation struggles.4

Effectively formed by group of graduate students at the University of Toronto, aside from Gary Perly (d. 1997) and his wife Caroline Walker Perly, who led the group, Dexter, her younger sister Judy Haiven (b. 1951) and her husband Larry Haiven, were among the most prominent members of the organization, constituting what was called the “national office.” Later, beginning around 1972–1973, Lord would also figure prominently in the group, though less through any formal leadership role and instead through his labour activism.

There is scant scholarship on the Canadian Liberation Movement, save for an admirable essay by Alan Filewod giving an account of the poet Milton Acorn’s (1923–1985) involvement with the group, published in the journal *Works and Days* (2002).5 Beginning in the mid-1980s, the organization’s archives were acquired in a series of accruals by McMaster University, and provide an expansive, if piecemeal, account of the

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5 Alan Filewod, “Maoist Performativities: Milton Acorn and the Canadian Liberation Movement,” *Works and Days* 20, no. 1/2 (January 2002): 97–116. Filewod is a Professor in the School of English and Theatre Studies at the University of Guelph. This essay looks to be anthologized in a forthcoming book, *Vectors of the Radical* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan). It is perhaps the only scholarly work on the Movement, which is surprising given that three accruals of the archive were acquired by McMaster University by summer 1986.
formation, operation, and dissolution of the group. The History of Painting in Canada is the most enduring legacy of the Movement as it relates to the visual arts in Canada, and for Filewod, more generally the book serves as the “most developed expression of the CLM’s theoretical principles.”

As Filewod argued in “Maoist Performativities,” together with the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), the Canadian Liberation Movement was the “most visible of the Maoist tendencies in the Canadian New Left.” Both were student-led, as were many of the issue-based movements which constituted the New Left, and in general these groups sought out a “workable version of Maoist Marxism-Leninism that could adequately account for the cultural and historical conditions of Canada.” According to Filewod, both the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) and the Canadian Liberation Movement arose from the Canadian Universities Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Student Union for Peace Action; as he suggests, these anti-war sentiments combined with a kind of continentalist skepticism and cultural nationalism by the late 1960s. By 1967, however, both remained relatively marginalized groups, which makes it all the more significant, then, that Lord wrote an essay on Cuba and Fidel Castro for Progressive Worker, the paper of a small pro-Maoist party in Toronto, for their July 1967 issue. This contribution signals something of Lord’s interest in Maoist party politics and provides evidence that these interests long predated his involvement with the Canadian Liberation Movement.

6 Canadian Liberation Movement fonds, The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University.
8 Filewod, 98.
9 Filewod, 99, 98.
10 Filewod, 99.
Although the exact origins of the Canadian Liberation Movement are unclear, according to an oral history account given in 1984 by Terry Barker, the Movement’s first chair, the group began to form around 1968 as an outgrowth of the Canadians for the National Liberation Front. According to Barker, the nascent Movement included a larger group comprising Jack Scott, Bill Johnson, Abe Mannheim, Joe Hensby, Don Roebuck, Norman Endicott and his father James Endicott, and Phil Taylor. Also in this short-lived “core discussion group,” according to Filewod but not Barker, were Mel Watkins (b. 1932) and James Laxer (b. 1941), both university professors better known at the time for their roles as Waffle leaders and for writing with Robert Laxer the *Manifesto for an Independent Socialist Canada*, commonly known as the Waffle Manifesto (1969). By the late 1960s it was becoming clear that the various issue-based movements aggregating in the New Left were irreconcilable with the New Democratic Party (NDP). The Waffle showed far greater concern for American political and economic control of Canada than shown by the NDP, and while for a time seemed a more mainstream left alternative, its collapse in 1972 was brought about principally through its inability to consolidate these varying perspectives.

Toward the end of 1969, with the dissolution of the first “core discussion group” Gary Perly and Caroline Perly, with the support of Norman Endicott, took over the leadership and effectively founded Canadian Liberation Movement. Gary Perly

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14 Gary Perly was recent student at the University of Toronto and anti-war activist. Barker donated the second accrual of the Canadian Liberation Movement fonds to McMaster University in 1986. Barker, “The
established himself as the “National Chairman” of the group, and Caroline Perly was styled the “director of education and propaganda.”¹⁵ The collapse of Waffle in 1972, as Filewod has argued, “brought Maoist alternatives out of relative obscurity to greater prominence.”¹⁶ This corresponds to the increasing organization and higher profile of the Canadian Liberation Movement following 1972.

If the Maoist theory structuring Lord’s Painting in Canada accounts partly for the fraught reception of the book at the time, the text’s apparently blind enthusiasm for Mao and the Cultural Revolution seems from today’s perspective astonishingly naive. As Filewod reminds us, however, if by the late 1960s the Cultural Revolution was in its last violent throws, “it was just beginning its life as a cultural export.”¹⁷ Owing in part to the diplomatic recognition given China by the Canadian government in 1970, enterprises like the Great Wall Bookstore in Toronto’s Chinatown “supplied eager Canadian youth with the artifacts of revolution: Mao pins, Little Red Books, scripts, posters and recordings of the Revolutionary Model Peking Opera troupes.”¹⁸ Without accurate accounts of the Cultural Revolution, these cultural exports of propagandized kitsch were eagerly sought out and the corresponding violence effectively unknown.

During the Canadian Liberation Movement’s annual meeting, or congress, in 1974, a brief history of the Movement was recorded in the minutes prepared by Sharon

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¹⁷ Filewod, 101.
¹⁸ Filewod, 101.
Mackinnon. According to this history, the group was founded in late 1969, eliding the presence of the “core discussion group,” including Watkins and Laxer, in 1968.\textsuperscript{19} The founding members came “from a few different directions,” including some progressive workers from Vancouver who had been “expelled from Communist Party of Canada for being pro-China anti-US imperialism,” but also those from the New Left committee who “could all see [the] main problem was US imperialism [and] there was no organisation fighting this.”\textsuperscript{20} While the group was resolutely Marxist-Leninist, the Movement’s membership criteria were only that members be “anti-imperialist, pro-socialist, and ‘not anti-communist.”’\textsuperscript{21}

Beginning with an account of the book itself, in what follows I trace Dexter and Lord’s respective formation in curatorial work, art criticism, and political and trade labour activism. It is my contention that their own trajectories prior to joining the Canadian Liberation Movement inform aspects of \textit{Painting in Canada} as much as the politics of the Movement itself. After the publication of the book, according to the organization’s archive at McMaster University, there followed an intense period for Dexter and Lord, culminating in Dexter’s increasing criticism by the Perlys and other national officers, and the couple’s subsequent, decisive break with the organization and move to Ottawa in late July 1975. Though a coda to the publication itself, this period accounts, I argue, for the subsequent distance enacted between Dexter, Lord, and the

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\textsuperscript{19} “History of the Movement, Notes by Sharon Mackinnon in Spiral Notebook Which Also Includes Notes on 1974 Organizing School,” 1974, File 21, Box 4 Administrative Files, Canron–Court, Canadian Liberation Movement fonds, The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University.

\textsuperscript{20} “History of the Movement, Notes by Sharon Mackinnon in Spiral Notebook Which Also Includes Notes on 1974 Organizing School.”

\textsuperscript{21} Filewod, “Maoist Performativities: Milton Acorn and the Canadian Liberation Movement,” 106.
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Movement, and indeed, the paucity of scholarship on this important chapter of cultural history in Canada.

On October 18, 1974, New Canada Press threw a launch party for *The History of Painting in Canada: Toward a People’s Art*. The festivities took place Friday night at the Three Schools, a cooperative artist- and student-run art school in Toronto, and details of the event were duly reported in the subsequent issue of the Canadian Liberation Movement’s newspaper, *New Canada*.22 The evening began with remarks by Caroline Perly, director of propaganda and education, who described the book as the “co-operative work of many people,” singling out the editorial board who had “continuously assisted the author in revising the book to make it as politically and historically accurate as possible.”23 Next, a lukewarm—perhaps even chilly—telegram from Greg Curnoe was read, simply stating: “thanks to Barry Lord for his appreciation and understanding of CARO [Canadian Artists’ Representation Ontario] and its cause.” (Curnoe’s ambivalent review of the book would appear in *Books in Canada* in December 1974.24) The book had been, according to Lord, the first to pay artists’ fees in advance of publication.

Lord’s own comments, which followed those by Caroline Perly, described the text as a “fighting book—a radical change from the pablum and deliberate distortions Canadians have always been fed by the imperialists.” He continued, “art is a weapon . . .


23 “Building the Fight for a New Democratic Culture: Toward a People’s Art,” 6.

books are weapons. We must use this book to help us build a people’s art.”25 The final remarks were made by Gary Perly, National Chairman, continued to use Lord’s metaphor of weaponry: “the bourgeoisie has promoted the idea that art and culture are separate from the lives of the people, but this period has come to an end. As the struggle for liberation goes forward, more and more will see that culture is a weapon.” He went on to suggest that imperialists have fostered a divide between “intellectuals and working people” that needs to be overcome in the form of “people’s intellectuals”—presumably he would count himself and Lord among these. Perly then suggested that imperialists have become expert at instrumentalizing artists and their art in order to maintain and foster their own political views. It is not the instrumentalization that either Lord or Perly seem to take issue, but rather the fact that imperialists have mobilized art in their favour: “art is so important in maintaining and fostering political views that the imperialists and reactionaries have given a great deal of attention to the art which helps them.”26 Perly and Lord, indeed the Canadian Liberation Movement in general, understood Painting in Canada as an antidote to those imperialist strategies. Following Gary Perly’s speech, with “applause . . . still sounding, the Canadian Liberation Chorus began singing ‘Three Hundred Years a Nation’” (Fig. 7.1). Peter Flosznik, who accompanied the chorus on guitar, wrote the song, reproduced as a frontispiece to Painting in Canada, and “the whole room joined in singing.”27

25 “Building the Fight for a New Democratic Culture: Toward a People’s Art,” 6. Lord used similar language at the close of his introduction to the book, writing “Knowing the history of our art as a part of the heroic struggles of our people is a powerful weapon in the hands of a colonial people. This book is intended as such a weapon.” Barry Lord, The History of Painting in Canada: Towards a People’s Art (Toronto: New Canada Press, 1974), 9.
26 “Building the Fight for a New Democratic Culture: Toward a People’s Art,” 6.
27 “Building the Fight for a New Democratic Culture: Toward a People’s Art,” 6.
The History of Painting in Canada is an expansive, if selective, survey, and draws considerably on Lord’s deep knowledge of historical Canadian art. Though Lord had been publishing art criticism since at least 1963, just after he completed the National Gallery’s museum training program, his more scholarly writing on historical Canadian art seems to have followed a couple years later, around 1965. Among the earliest of these articles was one he wrote for Canadian Art, exploring the relationship between eighteenth- and early-nineteenth century watercolours of Canada and Venetian “urban-view” painting, with examples by Thomas Davies and Richard Short. Though better known for his contemporary criticism at the time, including a number of useful surveys of Canadian art in the mid-1960s—including one connected to Expo 67 for Art in America in 1967—he was equally adept at writing on historical Canadian art: he wrote on Arthur Lismer for the National Gallery of Canada Bulletin in 1967, and in 1972, published another paper in the Bulletin on Robert Field. His experience at the National Gallery of Canada through the Training Program, as well as his later role as director of

28 In the following section, references to Lord as the author of the book are a stylistic choice to avoid complicated syntax; these references should nevertheless be read as shorthand for the collective authorship of Lord, Dexter and the unnamed editorial committee, as discussed above.
31 Barry Lord, “‘Discover Canada!’,” Art in America 55, no. 3 (June 1967): 78–84. While most of the article is confined to a straightforward survey, Lord’s opening is a well-formulated articulation of the state of transnational relations at the time: “It often appears to Canadians that their Dominion is noticed in the United States only when its government disagrees with Washington’s policies. Canada advocates a cessation of bombing and negotiation with the N.L.F. in Vietnam, Canada presses for admission of Communist China to the United Nations, Canada trades with Peking and Havana—and U.S. newspapers take note. This year (although the disagreements will undoubtedly remain) it may be hope that there will also be more news about the land itself, and its people, as Canada celebrates the Centennial of its Confederation with a great many events of local, regional and national interest and at least one major exhibition of international significance—Expo 67 at Montreal.” Lord, 78.
education at the Gallery under Jean Sutherland Boggs, made him well-suited to the task of surveying Indigenous, Quebecois and Canadian art.

In spite of Lord’s strength as a generalist, the structure of *Painting in Canada* betrays something of his own art historical interests, Dexter’s contemporary art criticism, and those of New Canada Press’s broader editorial committee, as well. The book is divided into four sections, each longer than the last: the first, on Indigenous art, takes up ten pages; the second, on painting in Quebec runs to thirty-seven; the third, on painting in Canada under the British is longer still, at seventy-eight pages; and the most space is reserved for the last section, “Painting in the Age of U.S. Imperialism,” at just over a hundred pages. This emphasis not only reflects Lord and Dexter’s own interests, but also available English-language sources from which they drew heavily. While the political analysis used in the book is their own, much of the research is compiled from existing secondary sources, as evidenced by their “Notes for Further Reading.”33 Although Lord suggests it is a “complete history of our painting” suitable for use “as a text for any course on the history of art in Canada,” setting aside the Maoist methodology it is also skewed largely toward the three decades following 1945.34

The book’s structure is consistent with his major thesis, namely, that for three centuries Canada has been subjected to colonial rule: first as New France, then as British North America, and following the Second World War, under the imperialist rule of the United States. “We have always,” Lord writes, “been the No. 1 colony of the world’s

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33 Lord, *The History of Painting in Canada: Towards a People’s Art*, 244–45. His recommendations for further reading are unusual, to say the least, including Mao Zedong’s *On New Democracy*, the English translation of which was naturally distributed by New Canada Press. Lord, 245.
34 Lord, *The History of Painting in Canada: Towards a People’s Art*, 9.
leading imperial system.”35 As a “colonial appendage,” the art of this land since the arrival of Europeans has been “a succession of imported styles.”36 Lord adheres closely to the value of originality throughout the book, and his method in selecting artists and works to champion rests in finding outliers, valuing “independence” and “originality” and artists who depict “a heroic resistance” to these successive imperial powers.37

The first part, “Painting of the Native Peoples,” is clearly directed at a non-Indigenous reader, and while admirable in its open discussion of the brutal colonial oppression faced by native people, the section suffers from a strange conjunction of Indigenous self-governance and Canadian national liberation. This muddled understanding of self-rule fails to recognize that a socialist Canada would remain a settler-colonial structure within which Indigenous people would be subjugated. Lord fails to recognize the incommensurability of their struggle with the establishment of an “independent” Canada as imagined by a group of white settlers.

The Canadian Liberation Movement materially supported Indigenous self-governance, through struggles such as the 1974 occupation of Anicinabe Park, in Kenora, Ontario, by the Ojibway Warriors Society, as reported in New Canada.38 During their 1974 congress, members voted to donate fifty dollars “to support the request of the Ojibway Warriors Society for assistance in their struggle in Anishnabe Park.”39 In spite

35 Lord, 9.
36 Lord, 9.
37 Lord, 9.
38 The Canadian Liberation Movement’s support of the Ojibway Warriors Society may have something to do with their keen interest in the War of 1812 and alliances between Anishnaabeg and British forces. Lord, 12. “Ojibway Warriors Take Up,” New Canada 5, no. 4 (October 1974): 3.
39 The minutes continue, “we support your struggle against prejudice and harassment believing this is part of the attempt to divide and keep divided the people of this country so they cannot effectively fight U.S. imperialism. The U.S. has a history of exploiting the native people at home and in its colonies.” “Decisions of the CLM National Congress, 1974,” 1974, File 17, Box 4 Administrative Files, Canron–Court, Canadian
of this support, there is a similar contradiction at play when members of the Canadian Liberation Movement invoke Quebec liberation as a parallel struggle. There are unacknowledged, radically irreconcilable differences between what Movement wants to achieve (namely an independent Canada), and what Quebecois and Indigenous activists want—but however they are consistently elided in Lord’s text.40

Painting in Canada suffers from other curious qualities: throughout the four sections, there is an inconsistent tone in addressing the reader, strange non-sequiturs, often related to China, and passages where contemporary issues interrupt the discussion of historical events. Most obvious perhaps are the unexpected shifts in register, which become evident from the first part—at times the book reads as a secondary school text and at others as a Marxist class analysis. For instance, in describing the petroglyphs near Sault Ste. Marie, the figure of Misipeshu, or the “Great Lynx,” is described enthusiastically in the following way: “it’s a three-foot-long monster with horns on its back and its tail!”41 These shifts lend a certain composite quality to the book, which may also stem from its collaborative writing, alluded to by Lord in 2012, as recounted above, but also by Caroline Perly in her remarks at the book’s launch.42

The first section also suffers from peculiar and seemingly unsupported theories about the relationship between Indigenous people on Turtle Island and Chinese. “The native peoples,” Lord writes, “had migrated into this country from Asia some 30,000 to

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40 Later, Lord goes so far as to write that “the demand for political power [by Indigenous people] can only be realized in alliance with the anti-imperialist movements of Canadians and Quebecois.” This suggests an imbrication of the three movements that from today’s perspective looks at best naive, at worst, illogical. Lord, The History of Painting in Canada: Towards a People’s Art, 21.
41 Lord, 11.
40,000 years ago.” A couple pages later, he suggests in the context of Northwest Coast Indigenous people’s use of brush painting that “this is one of the many hints that suggests strong Asian influences on them, going back to the Chinese.”43 This sinophilia carries through much of the book. Lastly, in the midst of discussing a Naskapi coat, Lord suddenly switches to an account of contemporary resistance of Consolidated Edison:

Today there are among the native people of northern Quebec who are organising to stop the plans of Consolidated Edison and the collaborating Quebec government to ruin their fishing and hunting grounds near James Bay for the sake of supplying still more electricity the factories of New York State. The attempted annihilation of the native people’s civilisation is continuing in our time, under the direction and for the profit of American imperialists.44

In spite of these stylistic tics and unexpected contemporary references, there is something admirable, as judged from today’s perspective, in Lord’s attention to the relationship between large multinationals, “imperialist oil and gas companies in the north,” and Indigenous self-governance and land claims.45 As he pointedly argues, “people without economic control cannot achieve political power; without political power, they cannot regain their indigenous rights.”46 This argument, and the book more broadly, must stand among the earliest attempts at reconciling Indigenous and settler narratives of art in Canada, anticipating discussions which are only now beginning to inform writing and exhibition-making in Canadian art institutions.

As Lord goes on to discuss the history of painting in Quebec, he establishes a rhetorical pattern used throughout much of the book: he begins each section by

43 Lord, The History of Painting in Canada: Towards a People’s Art, 13, 15.
44 Lord, 18.
45 Lord, 19.
46 Lord, 18. Lord also writes a particularly clear-eyed account of the origins of Inuit art, what he calls the “government exploitation of native peoples’ artistic abilities in a culture project.” He is also highly critical of the relationship of southern markets to Inuit art, and particularly the forces those markets have exerted on an artist’s choice of subject matter. Lord, 20, 21.
describing examples of imperialist art, often corresponding closely to canonical works and received histories, for instance, Frère Luc’s *La France apportant la foi aux Indiens de la Nouvelle-France* (1671). He then introduces a contemporary example of “people’s art,” often, but not always, drawn from vernacular or folk traditions. In this instance, set against Luc’s allegory of divine monarchical power, is an unknown painter’s *Ex-voto des trois naufragés de Lévis* (1754), though for the sake of his argument any votive painting would suffice. Because the former depends on received conventions, it is a nearer expression of colonial power; the latter is unaware of these same conventions, and so is more “original,” nearer the truth and more realistic.47 While Lord’s analysis is ideological, he asserts again and again that the criterion with which he is recasting Canadian art history is by way of realism. This basic pattern carries through much of the book.

As Lord turns to his discussion of Quebec under British rule, he borrows heavily from Léandre Bergeron’s class analysis in *The History of Québec*, its English translation published by New Canada Press in 1971.48 Here the text becomes more explicitly Marxist, and derives its structure largely from what Bergeron perceives to be the four broad classes in Quebec from the eighteenth through early-nineteenth centuries: the British ruling class (bourgeoisie), the seigneurs and clergy (the “comprador class”), the petit-bourgeoisie, and “the working people.”49 In Lord’s corresponding art history, each

47 Lord, *The History of Painting in Canada: Towards a People’s Art*, 30.
49 Lord, *The History of Painting in Canada: Towards a People’s Art*, 28–43. Comprador is a term used throughout the text, and indeed, more broadly by Lord, Dexter, and in articles in *New Canada*. Lord defines it in the following way: “In English we might call them ‘sell-outs.’ In French it’s *vendus*. The Portuguese word *comprador* (meaning buyer) was first used for the Chinese manager or senior employee in Portugal’s commercial establishments in China, and has now come to refer generally to that class of people in a colony who buy status and profit for themselves by helping the imperial power to exploit their fellow colonials.” Lord, 31.
of the four sections organizes artists and sitters according to their class formation, with William Berczy serving the bourgeoisie, Louis-Chrétien de Heen the compradors, and so on.

Where Lord’s analysis begins to waver, however, is with his ambivalent discussion of the petit-bourgeoisie. Lord identified—as did Dexter—as “petty-bourgeois,” particularly those who, in his own terms, “neither owns means of production nor do essential work (students, teachers, civil servants and professionals).”\(^50\) In Lower Canada, following Lord’s analysis, the petit-bourgeoisie opposed both British rule and the comprador class of seigneurs and clergy; Lord takes Louis-Joseph Papineau as his principal focus in this section, and subjects his 1836 portrait by Antoine-Sébastien Plamondon (c. 1804–1895) to particularly close scrutiny. Lord asks, “is this a man of the people, or a man anxious to impress us with his learning and the high office he attained?”\(^51\) Barely registering in Lord’s analysis is a sense of identification or empathy with Papineau, and his admiration, clearly, for his role in the rebellion of 1837–1838.

While Lord’s reading of Plamondon’s portrait of Papineau is ambivalent, drawing perhaps from this sense of class identification, Lord is far less forgiving of the pendant Plamondon realized for Papineau’s wife and daughter, \textit{Julie Papineau and her Daughter} (1836). Looking at the two women, Lord sees their “expensive silk gown[s],” and Ézilda demonstrating her accomplishment at the piano, as contributing to this “picture of


\(^{51}\) Lord, \textit{The History of Painting in Canada: Towards a People’s Art}, 36.
gracious living.”52 It is not Papineau himself, but his wife and daughter who for Lord, “confirm our misgivings” about the sitter and his family. Lord criticises Papineau’s complicity in “working within the system,” and suggests in yet another moment of contemporary politics interrupting a historical account that “when the struggle for national liberation intensifies, the contradiction between the two directions within the petit-bourgeoisie also intensifies.”53 By way of confirming his reading, Lord provides a second portrait, this time by Théophile Hamel (1817–1870) of Papineau around the time he was granted amnesty by the British government and had returned to Lower Canada (1845). Papineau’s acceptance of a seigneury later in life only corroborates Lord’s earlier scepticism: the revolutionary leader had become a feudal lord.

Lord’s third section, “Canadian Painting: The British Regime,” reads far more as a potted history of nineteenth-century painting in Canada than the preceding sections, and corresponds more closely to his own previous work on landscape painting by artists such as Thomas Davies, George Heriot, Robert Whale, and photographer William Notman.54 In all these instances, however, Lord maintains a certain scepticism of their mastery of academic landscape traditions, acknowledging their technique but again suggesting that primitive painters, or folk artists as they are sometimes called . . . usually depend on a direct linear presentation of their subject, with the most important elements clearly emphasized, and fill out the rest of their picture with details of the scene.55

“Artists,” Lord writes, meaning specifically professional artists, “can learn a lot from it, especially about putting subject matter before considerations of style.”56

52 Lord, 37.
53 Lord, 37.
54 Lord, 63–75.
55 Lord, 71.
56 Lord, 71.
In the final section, “Painting in the Age of U.S. Imperialism,” Lord structures his arguments again by beginning with a discussion of imperialist art, then providing a counter-history of people’s art—but here, the discussion of the former is far more detailed than in previous sections. In what seems to be Lord’s own formulation, he identified three phases of American art since 1945: the first is “expansive” (1945–1959), under Presidents Truman and Eisenhower, and corresponds to abstract expressionism; the second is “classic,” (1960–1963) under President Kennedy, and corresponds to color field painting or post-painterly abstraction; and the third and final, which is ongoing, is “decadent,” (1963– ), under Presidents Johnson and Nixon, and takes in Pop art, op art, conceptual art, and other contemporary tendencies. In each of these phases, Lord gives examples of artists in Canada emulating their American exemplars: William Ronald, Jack Bush, and Michael Snow, respectively. As with his previous criticism, Lord reserves special disapproval for Bush, whose large canvases are conceived for a “wealthy patron’s wall . . . safe, conservative, confectionary.”

Responses to the book, both scholarly and popular, were on the whole derisory: Greg Curnoe and Léandre Bergeron wrote a review for *Books in Canada*, Karen Mulhallen reviewed the book in *Canadian Forum*, John Boyle reviewed it for *This Magazine*, Joan Lowndes for *Artscanada*, and Ross Dowson *Forward*. Newspapers also reviewed the text: Robert Fulford in *The Toronto Star*, Harold Town in the *Globe and

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57 Lord, 199.
Mail, Joan Lowndes for the Vancouver Sun, Ann Walker in the Leader Post, Michael Sweeney and Virginia Nixon both in The Montreal Gazette.\(^60\) Painting in Canada was the Canadian Liberation Movement’s bid for “discursive legitimacy,” as Filewod has suggested, “while many agreed with his thesis that Canadian art had been marginalized by the hegemony of the ‘imperial’ art world, his over-the-top rhetoric ruined the effect.”\(^61\)

In a session called “Speak Bitterness” for the Canadian Liberation Movement’s 1974 annual meeting, or congress, Lord made a short biographical statement, which was recorded in the minutes. He described how his parents divorced when he was very young. Wanted to move himself up the class ladder. Got married young been through 3 marriages. Went to Harvard, studied art, saw [it] ruined your ability to care for human beings. Sees he has to fight h[is] egotism and individual[ity].\(^62\)

Born in Hamilton, Ontario in 1939, Lord grew up in a working class family. A writer and poet throughout high school and university, in 1964 he published a short story in The Dalhousie Review called “Howard,” which centres on a childhood friendship between two boys, and would seem to draw on Lord’s own experience. The narrator moves away from the “smoky city” of his birth: “I was at university by this time, while Howard, armed with his single Latin quotation, remained a brick-layer working beside his father


\(^62\) Lord joined the group “as a favour to CLM that [is] how bad his egotism is.” “Congress, 1974 Notes by Sharon Mackinnon in Spiral Notebook Which Also Includes Notes on 1974 Organizing School,” 1974, File 21, Box 4 Administrative Files, Canron–Court, Canadian Liberation Movement fonds, The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University.
and under his brother.”

Howard lives out his life on Sparrow Street, where the boys grew up, where “white collar met blue.”

Lord attended Queen Mary Elementary, and then Delta Secondary School, graduating around 1957. While at McMaster University, studying philosophy, Lord was the first chair of “a short-lived Student Disciplinary Committee.” A later article reported that the Committee was, confusingly, “a group whose formation he bitterly opposed.”

He edited *The Muse*, the student poetry magazine, but also contributed to the student newspaper, all the while acting in productions the University, the Hamilton Players’ Guild and at the Niagara Barn Theatre; later, in summer 1961 he acted in the Stratford Festival. He regularly wrote poetry, some of it published in *The Fiddlehead* and other “little magazines.” Toward the end of his undergraduate degree, during summer 1960, he worked as a summer assistant in the exhibition extension service in the National Gallery of Canada’s national program. After he graduated from McMaster in spring 1961, Lord took up a Woodrow Wilson fellowship and studied at Harvard University in the Centre for Study of World Religions in the Department of Philosophy and Religion.

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64 Lord, 181.
66 “Mac Graduate: Arts Canada Editor ‘Fired.’”
67 “Mac Graduate: Arts Canada Editor ‘Fired.’”
68 Barry Lord, “Poems,” *The Fiddlehead*, no. 42 (Fall 1959): 40. Lord also published his poems in a number of Canadian and American “little magazines,” including Evidence (Toronto), Prism International (University of British Columbia), and Volume 63 (University of Waterloo). His poetry was included in the anthology *New Wave Canada* (Toronto: Contact Press, 1966). “Canadian Art Magazine Announces Important Changes.”
69 Barry Lord to Katie Cholette, “Expo 67,” March 21, 2006; “Canadian Art Magazine Announces Important Changes.”
for the academic year 1961–1962. At the end of his fellowship, he returned again to the National Gallery as a summer assistant, in the national program, which was then responsible for travelling exhibitions, lectures and providing assistance to galleries and museums elsewhere in Canada. In fall 1962, Lord then “stayed on after the summer to become one of two persons taking the only course then available in Museum Studies, the National Gallery’s museum training program.” As part of the programme, he also worked briefly at the Art Gallery of Toronto (later Art Gallery of Ontario) and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

In 1963, Lord published a short story called “A Rose in the Road” for The Dalhousie Review. Far less conventional than “Howard,” the story centres on the erotics of looking at art, going to the theatre, and reading poetry. Lord describes an encounter between the narrator and a stranger met at an exhibition:

“I have the feeling that I am on exhibition too,” she said. “I suppose it is a chance one takes by coming to a gallery,” I answered softly. We continued to stare at each other across “Boundaries.” After a while we began to talk about surrealism.

Following the encounter in the gallery are other, more enigmatic, passages or encounters between the narrator and an unnamed woman (or women), which ends with the two walking down a “dusty sideroad close to her suburban apartment.” “She kept walking, and said quietly, ‘Don’t look back.’ I followed her up the road.”

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70 “Mac Graduate: Arts Canada Editor ‘Fired’”; Lord to Cholette, “Expo 67”; “Canadian Art Magazine Announces Important Changes.”
71 Lord to Cholette, “Expo 67.”
72 Lord to Cholette.
75 Lord, 56. There is perhaps a debt here to André Breton’s Nadja, relatively recently translated into English, which Lord would likely have known. Breton’s interest in disponibilité—his condition of being available to chance or unexpected encounters—particularly with a woman as muse finds resonance in
Lord received a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts to travel to Europe and visit museums in summer 1963, and he also visited New York that summer, as evidenced by a review he published in Canadian Art of an exhibition at Finch College of eighteenth-century French painters. In August 1963, he was appointed assistant curator at the Vancouver Art Gallery. He stayed on at the Gallery through September 1964, and while in Vancouver formed the Now Theatre Company and continued to write criticism, including “Pop Art in Canada” for Artforum in March 1964.

For the July 1964 issue of Canadian Art, Lord wrote “The New Figure,” an essay accompanied by a selection of images with captions by him, titled “In Search of the Figure in Canadian Painting.” The essay conveys something of Lord’s early and strong disinclination to abstraction—he is most interested in exploring tendencies in contemporary art which are “increasingly qualifying or rejecting their modern ‘heritage’ of abstract art.” This interest in figuration makes a great deal of sense in light of his later arguments in Painting in Canada. Though, unlike in his book of a decade later, here he argues here for a certain “anonymity” in figures, as with “Ernest Trova’s Falling Man or Michael Snow’s Walking Woman series.”


76 Lord to Cholette, “Expo 67.”
77 Lord, “The Art Museum of Finch College.”
80 Barry Lord, “The New Figure,” Canadian Art 21, no. 4 (July 1964): 202; Barry Lord, “In Search of the Figure in Canadian Painting,” Canadian Art 21, no. 4 (July 1964): 194. One of the images is of Charles Comfort’s Young Canadian (1932), a portrait of artist Carl Schaefer, though Lord seems not to know it, or to be feigning ignorance: “He must have existed; but if so, whatever became of him?” Lord, 198.
81 Lord, “The New Figure,” 202.
82 Lord, 203.
These ideas were developed further in “After Abstract Painting in Canada,” which Lord published in Canadian Forum the following month, August 1964.83 The essay was written in response to Andrew Hudson’s “Canada’s Place in Abstract Art Today,” published in the same pages in May 1964. Hudson’s essay contends, “abstract painting is the area in painting today where genuine innovations are being made” to which Lord counters, “for my part I am not convinced. The genuine innovations in painting today appear to me to derive from the making of image, often figurative and never essentially abstract.”84 While Hudson champions Barnett Newman and Jackson Pollock, Lord suggests an alternative canon: “Barnett Newman is the painting of ‘only yesterday’ while Jackson Pollock is that of the day before. The painters of today who are on that diamond edge of difficulty and originality are Francis Bacon and Robert Rauschenberg.”85 Lord is clear, however, that he is not allied with “the traditional conservative opponents of non-objective painting . . . the new figure hurts much more explicitly than abstract expressionism ever did.”86

The disagreement with Hudson carried on through the next fall; in all, their exchange took up five articles in Canadian Forum from May 1964 to October 1965.87 In his last article, Lord raised the stakes by situating the tendency toward figuration, and

84 Lord, 104.
85 Lord, 104.
86 Lord, 105. Alongside Lord’s rejoinder in the August 1964 issue was “Canada: Art and the Institution” by Robin Mathews, yet to be associated with the movement to increase numbers of Canadian faculty in University departments. Mathews is however highly skeptical of Hudson’s interest in art from “the U.S.A. for a criterion of excellence.” “Art for the Internationalists, unfortunately, is remarkably like sartorial fashion. Fashion, as we know, must change often. And it must be imported whenever possible.” R.D. Mathews, “Canada: Art and the Institution,” Canadian Forum 44, no. 523 (August 1964): 105–6.
particularly anonymous figures, in light of “push-button obliteration being recklessly threatened over Berlin, Cuba or Viet Nam,” arguing “that contemporary painting is the projection of a public image rather than a personal expression.” He continued,

Hudson and his large academic company—linear thinkers, as McLuhan calls them—have yet to admit that we do indeed live in this world in which the individual has been vanquished, in which we are ruled or misruled not by personal decision (however glamorous the Kennedy-Kruschev myth may have been) but by mass capitalist or state exploitation, mass racial demonstration, mass revolutionary action and the threat of mass destruction embodied in mechanical devices. Many of our artists, writers, musicians and a few of our thinkers are fortunately more honest. As I have written elsewhere, to demand that the contemporary artist create a personal expression or “point of view” is to ask him to be unfaithful to the world he knows.88

This antagonism between Hudson and Lord is significant for understanding Lord’s later, even more energetic championing of figurative, social realist work. More than simply suggesting a “public-image,” a kind of collectivist creative expression in the visual arts, Lord looks to the example of Soviet social realism, even if “execrable,” as “’ripe’ for a resurgence . . . in America today.”89 Against this public-image work or social realism, Lord would later position what he called an “international language of form increasingly devoid of content which can function for Imperialist corporations.”90 It is this privileging

89 “In closing we should note that there is today a fifth alternative, practised execrably in the Soviet Union and temporarily submerged in the history of American painting, that of social realism. The social realist accepts the public-image nature of his medium and his message, but unlike the Pop artist takes an active part in assenting to or dissenting from its values . . . Without attempting to end this descriptive article on a prophetic note, and certainly without condoning any particular social realists today, it may be observed that conditions are probably ‘ripe’ for a resurgence of this style in America today.” Lord, 83.
90 Lord continued, “in painting and sculpture, this had led to non-representational or abstract art, he said. ‘It’s a battle of form versus content. Content is secondary. It leads to the big paintings that fit the walls of big corporation lobbies.’”Ingrid Jaffe, “Art Critic Blasts American Influence,” Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, August 16, 1972.
of form over content, at its simplest, which Lord finds indefensible in Hudson’s position, nowhere better exemplified than in the work of Jack Bush. 

In September 1964, Lord left the Vancouver Art Gallery to become curator of art at the New Brunswick Museum. A year later, in September 1965, he published an otherwise generic survey of printmaking in Canada for *Canadian Art*, save for the fact it is among his earliest explicit uses of Marxism in his art writing. Lord wrote,

> The Marxist points out that no artist in a degenerate and retarded society can honestly approach content, and must increasingly concern himself with form; he might conclude therefore that even without the influence of *bourgeois* capitals like Paris or New York, the print-maker in Saskatoon or Sydney would become the technically-preoccupied craftsman he so often is. Whatever the explanation, there are a great many proficient and interesting but simply vapid prints being pressed throughout the Western world, and provincial Canada could hardly hope to be an exception. 

While still a curator at the New Brunswick Museum, in 1966 the Canadian Commission of Expo 67 gave Lord a part-time contract. Shortly after taking up this role in organizing this exhibition for Montreal, he was named the editor of *Canadian Art*. Around September 1966, The Society for Art Publications, which published *Canadian Art*, announced a number of changes: to begin, Paul Arthur (1924–2001) was named managing director of the Society, a promotion from the position of editor he had held since 1964. From the January 1967 issue, the magazine was to have Lord as its new editor and a new name, it would be published monthly instead of quarterly, and was to be guided by “a new policy that will enable the magazine to give coverage to all the arts,

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91 At base, however, must also be Bush’s close ties with Greenberg, his representation by New York dealers, and the degree to which his career was celebrated triumphantly by Canadians owing to his acceptance by the American market.


while still stressing the visual aspect.” The press release goes on to emphasize Lord’s experiences not only in visual art, but in theatre and poetry—listing some of his high school and university experiences described briefly above—suggesting his suitability for the new, expanded mandate of the magazine as a far more interdisciplinary arts journal: a mandate that was never quite fulfilled during his brief tenure.

Beginning what was by any account an astonishingly productive year for Lord, in January 1967 he published his first issue of Artscanada. Then, within just one month, from late May to late April, he opened four exhibitions, including Painting in Canada, as part of the Canadian Government Pavilion at Expo 67 (opened April 27, 1967); Ten Decades, 1867-1967 for Stratford Gallery, co-curated with Paul Russell (opened April 5, 1967); Eleven Canadian Printmakers at Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire (also opened April 5, 1967); and Nine Canadians at ICA Boston (opened May 19, 1967).

Following this string of openings, on May 31, 1967, Lord was charged in connection with an altercation with U.S. President Lyndon Johnson at Expo 67,
presumably on May 25, 1967, when Johnson was visiting Montreal. Barrie Hale
described how Lord “the 27-year-old editor of the controversial Arts-Canada magazine,
and former director [sic] of the New Brunswick museum, has been charged with ‘not
obeying an order’ as a result of incidents which took place at Expo last week surrounding
U.S. President Lyndon Johnson’s arrival there.” Hale continued,
during the President’s arrival a large crowd gathered, and epithets were spoken. Three
people in all were charged, Lord, and two others who were charged with breaking the
peace, a more serious charge than not obeying an order.
The “epithets,” were later reported as calling Johnson “a murderer and a bloody
butcher.” Lord was the chair of the St. John, New Brunswick Committee to End the
War in Vietnam and had also been active in a number of war resistance groups in
Toronto.
Within a week of being charged, the directors of the Society for Art Publications,
the publishers of *Artscanada*, released a statement on June 7, 1967 that they “had
decided, on the basis of advice given them on May 22 by the Society’s publications
committee, not to renew the contract of Barry Lord, present editor of the magazine.”
The date given in the release conspicuously predates, of course, the incident with

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101 “Lord appears to answer the charges at police headquarters in Montreal tomorrow morning at 10. He
will plead not guilty. Maximum sentence for the charge is two months in jail or $200.” Hale
102 “Mac Graduate: Arts Canada Editor ‘Fired.’” A slight variation on the encounter was recounted by
Lownsbrough, though uncited. Joan Lownsbrough, *The Best Place to Be: Expo 67 and Its Time*, History of
Canada Series (Toronto: Allen Lane, 2012).
103 “Mac Graduate: Arts Canada Editor ‘Fired.’
and Archives, National Gallery of Canada. The statement continues, “Paul Arthur, Managing Director of
the Society and Managing Editor of arts/canada stated Monday that as many of the policies pursued by Mr.
Lord as editor could no longer be endorsed by the Society, the decision had been reached mutually that Mr.
Lord and the magazine should part company.” The statement closes “‘The Society is very conscious of its
responsibilities as publishers of Canada’s only national arts magazine,’ Mr. Arthur said, ‘and it is our
opinion that Mr. Lord’s policies are preventing us from discharging these responsibilities as the public
would wish us to.’”
President Johnson; however, it seems likely that the scandal was the cause of his departure from the magazine.\textsuperscript{105} It is possible, however, that the altercation was simply coincident with the board’s decision not to renew his contract for other reasons: Lord’s editorship had brought about many changes: he renamed it \textit{Artscanada}, had it appear monthly rather than quarterly, and perhaps most controversially, issued the magazine in a plastic bag with various smaller sheets, “flexidisc” 33-RPM records, and occasional editions. May 1967 was Lord’s last issue of the magazine, however he seems to have stayed on through the end of his one-year contract, to September 1967.\textsuperscript{106}

Following his departure from \textit{Artscanada}, Lord went on to work on a new magazine, \textit{Five Cent Review} (1968–1969), beginning as the arts editor for their “forerunner issue” in December 1968, and assuming the role of editor for their first proper issue in June 1969.

It is possible through Lord’s regular “Five Cents’ Worth of Art” section—which always opened with a longer thematic essay and followed with exhibition reviews or notes from across Canada—to chart his increasing politicization. The magazine closed after four

\textsuperscript{105} When a reporter from \textit{The Hamilton Spectator} asked him “if his dismissal were connected with his activities against the war in Vietnam and his recent court appearance in Montreal,” Lord replied “No comment.” “Mac Graduate: Arts Canada Editor ‘Fired.’”

\textsuperscript{106} “Mac Graduate: Arts Canada Editor ‘Fired.’” On July 1, 1967, Anne Brodzky started as \textit{Artscanada}’s new editor. Previously, she had been an assistant curator at the London Public Library and Art Museum, having arrived in London, Ontario in fall 1965. Joan Lowndes, “A New Name on the Arts Scene: Anne Brodzky—Can She Put Humpty Dumpty Together Again?,” \textit{Vancouver Province}, July 21, 1967; “London Art Gallery Curator to Resign,” \textit{London Free Press}, April 10, 1967. “Well, there was a certain discontent with American politics, and I wanted to see what it would be like to live in Canada,” Brodzky told Robert Fulford in October 1967. Robert Fulford, “Black Arts & Instant Movies,” \textit{Toronto Daily Star}, October 6, 1967. “I have no desire to live in the United States. I’m not disaffected entirely—that would be absurd—but I am excited by the possibilities here.” Fulford responded with a typical gratitude: “this time we got one of \textit{their} intellectuals.” Fulford. A little over a year later, Gail Dexter also interviewed Brodzky, now well into her mandate as Editor. “What is happening in Canada is separate and distinct despite the proximity of the United States,” Brodzky told Dexter, “\textit{there is} something distinctly Canadian. For example, we are not producing minimal art here today.” Brodzky continues, “Americans discover Canadian art in the September issues of Arts News and Artforum, which may bear out a little theory I have that major recognition of contemporary Canadian art will come from south of the border.” Gail Dexter, “Editor Dislikes Air of Apology about Our Art,” \textit{Toronto Daily Star}, September 25, 1968.
issues, in October 1969, but not before publishing Gail Dexter’s “The Centre-spread,” an account of her decision to leave the Toronto Star as their art critic, as discussed below.  

For his first contribution to Five Cent, in December 1968, Lord unpicked the relationship of “international art experts” to Expo 67. While typically, he argued, Canada has brought in critics to pass judgement on Canadian art, the model changed with the Montreal international exposition. “This disinterested connoisseur,” Lord wrote, “might occasionally be a continental European, had more often been British, and in recent years was increasingly likely to utter his judgments with a New York accent.” With Expo, however, Lord saw a model for “turning the critical tables,” that is, “making the art international, and the experts Canadian.”

Far from isolationist, Lord still saw value in bringing in art from abroad, and specifically the United States. That Lord still—by late 1968—advocated for the exhibition of American art in Canada, is evidenced in a review of Three Los Angeles Artists at the Dunkelman Gallery, Toronto, an exhibition of Larry Bell, Robert Irwin and Craig Kauffman. Lord wrote that “neither London [Ontario] nor any other Canadian city can develop a significant art in ignorance of developments elsewhere, and in the art world today this means a need to see major original work as soon as possible after it has caught the attention of the art capitals.”

Lord’s next contribution in June 1969, again in the section “Five Cents’ Worth of Art,” but this time writing as editor of the magazine, is far more vehemently anti-American, but in passages oddly ambivalent. His essay treats the appointment of Nicholas Volk, a “Yankee apologist” recently hired as regional administrator of the

109 Lord, 28.
Ontario Council for the Arts (later Ontario Arts Council).¹¹⁰ Lord cites an interview he gave to Gail Dexter for the *Toronto Star* and chides him for explaining that his job is to “find ‘American solutions’ to local cultural hassles.”¹¹¹ Betraying this ambivalence, however, he closes his essay with a short, highly positive, review of *New York 13* (June 3–July 5, 1969), the Vancouver Art Gallery-organized exhibition that had recently opened at the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal, writing,

> We don’t need proconsuls, but we must have first-hand news from Rome . . . New York is no longer even a nice place to visit (and you certainly wouldn’t want to live there), so I suggest you see here what may be some of the last great products of a terminal civilization.¹¹²

This ambivalence was in evidence elsewhere in the early part of 1969: deriding, for instance, Jack Bush at the David Mirvish Gallery but liking Brydon Smith’s survey of Dan Flavin in Ottawa, all the while writing consistently for *Art in America*—he penned four articles for them in 1969 alone.¹¹³ Even as late as 1972, by which time Lord was heavily involved in the Canadian Liberation Movement and often wrote and spoke viciously against Americans and American art, he made a point of distinguishing between “influence and domination.”¹¹⁴ This distinction is useful as it explains partly why in the same text he could castigate a “Yankee apologist” only to subsequently encourage

¹¹⁰ Barry Lord, “Five Cents’ Worth of Art,” *The Five Cent Review* 1, no. 1 (June 1969): 24–29. By 1972, Volk had become the head of public relations at the CBC, as was mentioned in an unsigned article in New Canada: “Meeting Chairman Gail Dexter replied that, on the contrary, the government is filling key posts in the cultural hierarchy with out-and-out agents. The new public relations head of the CBC is an ex-U.S. State Department official, Nicholas Volk, Jr.” “Quotas for Canadian Culture,” *New Canada* 3, no. 2 (May 1972): 1–2.
¹¹² Lord, 24.
¹¹⁴ Jaffe, “Art Critic Blasts American Influence.”
readers to see an exhibition of recent New York art. Domination, for Lord, meant “control of markets, for example, standard[s] of excellence and criteria for the selection of works to be exhibited.” Lord was never much interested in cultural isolation, but rather in what he perceived to be imperial control.

Gail Dexter’s contribution to the second issue of *Five Cent Review*, in August 1969, for which presumably Lord as editor introduced her as “the pretty young 23-year-old, whose thinking and writing had taken a strong turn to the left,” provides an account of why she left the *Toronto Star* earlier in the year. This departure clearly constituted a turning point in her own political activism, leading in less than a year to her involvement in the Canadian Liberation Movement, in late 1969 or early 1970.

Dexter gave a frank account of her family history and political involvement through high school in a “criticism and self-criticism” session in May 1975 during the Canadian Liberation Movement’s so-called “organizing school.” The typescript document is a highly unusual biographical statement in keeping with the Maoist organization of the group. As Lowell Dittmer wrote in 1973 for *The China Quarterly*, criticism and self-criticism, or “inner-party struggle,” became a key mechanism during the Cultural Revolution “of mass mobilization and education.” A kind of mediated conflict between members of a group, it was intended to facilitate an open exchange of grievances, premised on the temporary alienation of an individual member owing to false

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115 Jaffe. In 1967, Lord again pointed to New York, telling the *Toronto Star* that dominant trends in Canadian art “Lord told me, are mostly New York-influenced. Most of the leading, avant-garde artists are following the world’s international art capital very closely. And what is happening in New York is that ‘the artist is now moving into the public sphere.’” Ralph Thomas, “Today’s Upheaval in the Arts Dooms Galleries, Say Expert,” *Toronto Daily Star*, March 8, 1967.

116 Dexter, “The Centre-Spread.”

ideology or poor performance. The reality, for both Chinese party members under Mao and, it seems, for members of the Canadian Liberation Movement, was that these sessions were not simply “exceedingly trying”\textsuperscript{118} but at times terrifyingly abusive.\textsuperscript{119} In the case of the Canadian Liberation Movement, it appears many of these criticism and self-criticism documents—which now exist solely as typescripts in the Movement fonds at McMaster University—were in fact participatory group sessions: one such typescript is accompanied by a shorthand manuscript, suggesting it was first dictated.\textsuperscript{120}

Dexter, however, wrote her criticism and self-criticism over more than forty hours, rather than dictating it in a group session, and it serves as an extremely detailed account of her time with the Canadian Liberation Movement.\textsuperscript{121} It begins, however, with a description of her “bourgeois” class background, her father “is a capitalist who was squeezed out of his own manufacturing business by the U.S. imperialists and spent many years of his life as a senior executive for U.S. imperialist companies both in Canada and the U.S.”\textsuperscript{122} Born in 1946 to Ruth Stern Dexter (1920–2011) and Leonard Dexter (d. 1987), throughout her text, Dexter only briefly mentions her mother, who by

\textsuperscript{118} Dittmer, 709.
\textsuperscript{119} Outside of the criticism and self-criticism sessions, in preparation for the 1973 congress, a document was prepared entitled “How Should We Proceed,” which lists various “methods used against members” in the past: “Mental/Psychological, Humiliation, Dehumanization, Degradation, Inciting to hate, Indentured labour, Extortion, Wrecking of marriage, Coersion [sic], guilt. Physical torture, Starvation, Hair cutting, Restriction in quarters [sic], Tea parties, Goon squads, Beatings, Manual labour.” “How Should We Proceed,” 1973, File 13, Box 4 Administrative Files, Canron–Court, Canadian Liberation Movement fonds, The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University.
\textsuperscript{120} “Bower [Egle], Betty, Self Criticism,” 1974, File 17, Box 3 Administrative Files, A-Canadian, Canadian Liberation Movement fonds, The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University. Filewod also understands the presence of the shorthand manuscript to suggest what he calls the “performativity” of the criticism and self-criticism sessions. Filewod, “Maoist Performativities: Milton Acorn and the Canadian Liberation Movement,” 107.
\textsuperscript{121} “I underestimated the amount of time that would be involved. I had thought 20 hours of writing. In fact it has been more than twice that in writing alone and this is why the self-criticism is two days late. I think that it deals with the main political issues and the main political crimes but there are some important matters left out that I need help with before I write them down.” “Gail Lord Self-Criticism,” 14.
\textsuperscript{122} “Gail Lord Self-Criticism.” Dexter continues, “today he and my mother (who by class background and training is a hard working petty-bourgeois) clip coupons and spend half the year in Arizona which is one of the fascist centres of the U.S.”
one later account materially supported the family with her dental practice through her father’s financial setbacks. According to an obituary written by Dexter’s younger sister, Judy Haiven, who would take over as general secretary of the Canadian Liberation Movement after Dexter was removed from the role on October 27, 1974, Ruth Dexter was the first Jewish woman to graduate from the University of Toronto’s school of dentistry. She maintained a busy practice, first on Bloor Street, and later out of the basement of their home on Bathurst Street. This selective account given by Dexter in her criticism and self-criticism, then, might be understood as an attempt to heighten the sense of her bourgeois formation rather than emphasize her mother’s achievements and public service as a physician.

In high school through the early 1960s, Dexter “fought for various liberal issues like freedom of speech in publishing a little high school newspaper.” Though many of her fellow students were participating in “larger struggles,” these she “avoided because they involved students of a lower social class. All my activities were individualistic, egotistical and not in the least threatening to the bourgeoisie.” By contrast, her younger sister, Judy, was politically active and was involved in “one of the first high school student sit-ins in that period.” Dexter continues,

Through university I was committed to a career in the petty bourgeoisie and wanted one that would make me as famous as possible. This lead to journalism and the arts which were opening up to the young petty-bourgeoisie in the 1960s. At the same time there was a growing political consciousness among students and the intelligentsia: the fight for nuclear disarmament, to support the struggle of blacks for civil rights in the southern U.S., and the fight against the war in Viet Nam. I attended marches and meetings but never joined any of the organisations. I was motivated only secondarily by a sense of social justice; I was

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124 “Gail Lord Self-Criticism.”
125 “Gail Lord Self-Criticism.”
primarily looking about for a little pond in which to be a big fish. In the field of journalism, it was art criticism; in school, it was 16th century history.\textsuperscript{126}

Beginning in 1965, just out of high school and only nineteen years old, Dexter began writing for the \textit{Toronto Star}. “The key to my career,” she wrote, “was to pander to those in authority and to work hard at aping approaches to criticism that were current in the U.S. My life at this time was very selfish and decadent.”\textsuperscript{127} By early 1969, one can sense an increasingly present personal politics in her writing for \textit{The Star}, even if not yet as explicit as in her account for \textit{Five Cent Review} later that summer.

For instance, on January 18, 1969 Dexter wrote a detailed account of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, his uranium mining activities, art collection and Philip Johnson-designed house in Blind River, Ontario, called “The Marble Monument to Hirshhorn” for the \textit{Toronto Star}.\textsuperscript{128} The article typifies her writing in her last six months at the paper, and signals an interest in questions of patronage, influence, and the intersection of capital and art making that inform her later contributions to \textit{New Canada}. With Hirshhorn, the anti-American sentiment is still tempered, as here:

> ours was a country born of compromise, first with the British Empire, then with the American. Although American culture was based on a rejection of the decadent European example, there have been few demands that Canadian artists rebel against oppressive American influence.\textsuperscript{129}

Strongly reminiscent of the analysis of colonialism in \textit{Painting in Canada}—however not yet thinking of New France—foremost in her article, Dexter seems to be lamenting the loss of a great collection “bought with Canadian money”—that is, proceeds from

\textsuperscript{126} “Gail Lord Self-Criticism.”
\textsuperscript{127} “Gail Lord Self-Criticism.”
\textsuperscript{129} Dexter.
Hirshhorn’s extraction of Canadian natural resources: “we’re still waiting for a Canadian [M]edici.”

By 1969, Dexter was involved in the Women’s Liberation Movement, which she described was under pressure from two opposing interests: “[Caroline] Perly was leading the struggle to make it develop into a progressive organisation while the other group was led by Yankee women who opposed even simple democratic reforms.” By Dexter’s own account Perly’s “persistent work (and through her Gary [Perly] and Judy [Haiven, née Dexter] and some others) in trying to win me over to the progressive side was the most decisive influence” in her joining the Canadian Liberation Movement. This seems to have taken place in late 1969 or early 1970.

It was just prior to this moment, however, that Dexter wrote “The Centre-spread” for Lord’s *Five Cent Review*, which describes her move away from a more moderate engagement with Marxism far further left. While rumours circulating in the Toronto art scene suggested that her quitting the *Toronto Star* was as a result of a confrontation in the paper’s pages between her and Harold Town (1924–1990)—she panned his recent work and Town wrote an retaliatory letter to her editor—Dexter begins by dismissing that suggestion. She had started at the *Star* as a “precocious 19-year-old, determined to communicate to the 350,000 readers something of what art meant to me.”

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130 Dexter. Indeed, in another article on Christiane Pflug’s work, Dexter makes favourable references to Rosenquist’s work and relays tendencies in New York painting, writing that “realism has been making a slow but significant comeback in New York during the past few years.” Lord’s championing of realism, it seems, was shared more broadly among politically minded art critics. Gail Dexter, “The Strange Reality of a Housewife’s Paintings,” *Toronto Daily Star*, January 11, 1969.
131 “Gail Lord Self-Criticism.”
132 “Gail Lord Self-Criticism.”
became more professional, she realized that her role brought with it many “commitments to the art community” and that she was serving, more than anything else, “a type of public relations role.”

Dexter had started her career by reading, and imitating, *Studio International*, then *Art International* (“a flak magazine for American Imperial Art”), and eventually *Artforum*, where her “major goal was trying to understand what they were talking about.” For a time, she understood her role primarily as an act of translation, interpreting this most “highbrow and arcane field” for the public; that in and of itself would constitute a public good, Dexter thought. She followed critics such as Barbara Rose and Hilton Kramer as they moved further left: “thinking politically in Marxist terms has become a necessity for intellectuals today.” It was this thinking that led her to feel that “the contradictions in my being an art critic suddenly become impossible to handle.” Even if art critics are “especially parasitical” she was “terrified to leave. I was afraid that I’d cease to be a real person.” Dexter concluded the article by asking

What does it mean to say that art should raise the consciousness of the people who see it and urge them to rebel? It doesn’t mean that art is a picture of Lenin and the red flag. It must be the actual experience of looking at a painting and having the contradictions in your own life heightened so they become unbearable. If life is the rack: then the aesthetic experience is turning the screws. That’s what art in capitalist society must be if it is to be relevant.

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135 Dexter, 16.
136 Dexter, 16.
137 Dexter, 16. From thinking in Marxist terms, Dexter later in the article seems to stand as an apologist for Italian fascism: “One thing that the liberal art critics have never faced is the political nature of much of the important modern art. The surrealists were communists, but the public is never told that. And the futurists were probably fascists. But, more important for Canadian artists, the futurists were Italian nationalists who proclaimed in their art a new era for Italy.”
138 Dexter, 17.
139 Dexter, 17.
140 Dexter, 17.
Having left the *Toronto Star*, Dexter refocused her efforts on graduate work in History at the University of Toronto; it was at the University, in late 1969 or early 1970, that the Canadian Liberation Movement under the Perlys began to take shape.

The Canadian Liberation Movement’s publishing arm, called New Canada Press, was founded in early 1970. As it was later described in *Quill & Quire* by Walter Klepac, “of all the small, independent publishing houses in Canada today, NC Press (‘New Canada’) is one of the few to be directly affiliated with an active political organization . . . CLM attitudes permeate virtually every aspect of the publishing house’s operations.”141 Within three years, New Canada Press would publish a dozen titles, with each selling at least six-thousand copies.142 In their “Fall ’73 Catalogue,” the Press’s third year of publishing is described as their “most ambitious to date.”143 In addition to publishing their own titles, the Press undertook a considerable amount of distribution including “progressive literature from Québec” from Éditions Québécoises, Parti Pris, and Re-edition Québec, books from the People’s Republic of China, and more recently as the “Canadian distributors for the national publishing house of Tanzania.”144 “Unlike other publishing houses in Canada,” the catalogue states, “we accept no government grants. This is

142 Klepac.
because we have no intention of being co-opted by a government, which is a caretaker of US interests in Canada.”¹⁴⁵

Around the same time as New Canada Press was launched, in February 1970, the Canadian Liberation Movement published its first issue of New Canada (February 1970–April 1976), a monthly newspaper—though occasionally published every other month—that served as a public-facing periodical. Internally, the Movement published newsletters, which were only shared among club chairs in various Canadian cities.¹⁴⁶ In New Canada’s first issue, the group’s mandate, later to be elaborated, is given succinctly: “the CLM sees as its task the struggle for an independent socialist Canada: to unite all those classes, strata, national groups and patriotic personalities who can be united to fight U.S. imperialism.”¹⁴⁷ Each issue generally contained a mix of trade labour and organizing news, reporting on legal challenges and business news relating to American corporations’ dealings in Canada, information about student and university activities, and, from the first issue, reporting on culture.¹⁴⁸ The content, however, remained highly selective, and generally corresponded closely with whatever activities the Canadian Liberation Movement was engaged in at the time the issue went to press. Consistently anti-racist,

¹⁴⁵ “NC Press Fall ‘73 Catalogue,” 3.
¹⁴⁶ The newsletters seem to have been closely guarded, as Dexter advised club chairs in her General Secretary’s Report for May 1974, “the security rules which apply to the newsletter apply to this report. Please attach this report to your copy of the May newsletter and file it with your newsletters in a safe place.” “General Secretary’s Report,” May 1974, File 22, Box 5 Administrative Files D - Ma, Canadian Liberation Movement fonds, The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University. A near-complete collection of the newsletters is in the Canadian Liberation Movement fonds at McMaster: “CLM Newsletters,” 1976 1970, Files 74-105, Box 2 Leaflets, O-Y and Newsletters, Canadian Liberation Movement fonds, The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University.
¹⁴⁸ Take, for instance, the article “Americrap” from this first issue: “As if dismantling our cultural institutions (firings at the National Film Board, cut-backs for Canada Council, closing the Canadian Design Centres etc.) isn’t bad enough, the Federal Government has gone into making American films! The first product of the CFDC (the Canadian Film Development Corporation which gives money to our filmmakers so long as they get matching amounts from commercial sources i.e. from American distributors) is a movie called Explosion.” “Americrap,” New Canada 1, no. 1 (February 1970): 4.
allied with Indigenous self-governance and Quebec sovereignty, and closely associated with Canadian Artists Representation, some representative article titles included “Black carpenters fight racist bosses” (June 1971); “Canadian artists endorse 85% Canadian quota” (November–December 1971); “U.S. Unions Crush Waffle” (July 1972); “Liberation brings great progress in the Tibet Region of China” (July–August 1973); and “Ojibway Warriors Take Up” (October 1974). Regular columns included “People’s Recipes” (tourtière and bread pudding, for instance), “People’s Art” and “Young People’s Corner”—the former often serialized excerpts from Lord’s The History of Painting in Canada and the later reproductions of line drawings from a booklet for children called Dr. Bethune, published by China’s Foreign Languages Press which was distributed in Canada by New Canada Press.

Except for letters to the editor and the occasional special report, none of the articles in New Canada were signed, and material related to the paper (as with the Press) is not included in the archives at McMaster University. That said, much of the culture and art writing shows such a nuanced and highly specialized knowledge of the Canadian scene, it seems likely that Dexter penned a number of articles. Among the so-called national officers of the Movement, Dexter had the most knowledge and ability in writing about art. Slightly later, there are suggestions that Lord was also a contributor for New Canada, he was occasionally quoted in the paper, and sections of Painting in Canada were serialized in its pages, following the book’s release. In one instance, Lord published a signed article in Canadian Forum in September 1974 in review of an exhibition at the Royal Ontario Museum of Chinese art called “Let the Past Serve the Present.”

title “Make the Past Serve the Present . . . ,” a slight variation in the translation of Mao Zedong’s aphorism. The two texts are very different in tone: the *New Canada* review is far more critical of the Museum’s “bourgeois view,” for instance, and credits the People’s Liberation Army with the work of excavating and preserving the archaeological finds. Even so, it seems unlikely given Lord’s close involvement with the Movement at the time that anyone else would have written such an extensive treatment of the exhibition.

In February 1970, just as New Canada Press and *New Canada* newspaper were being launched by the Canadian Liberation Movement, Dexter published “Art and Empire” in *Canadian Dimension*, a text that would subsequently appear with minor variations as “Yes, cultural imperialism, too!” in Ian Lumsden’s anthology *Close the 49th Parallel, Etc.: The Americanization of Canada* (1970). At the time, Dexter was still working toward her MA in History at the University of Toronto. In 1974, referring to this later essay, Lord credits Dexter as “the first critic to take an anti-imperialist position on recent painting in Canada.” Indeed, the essay stands at the outset of a roughly four-year-long engagement with these ideas in print, especially in *New Canada*. Beginning with Charles Comfort’s essay and other contributions in the Massey Report from 1951, Dexter criticizes the Commission’s concept of culture as being fundamentally “defensive.” That is, the anti-American position taken up by Charles Comfort, in his essay “Painting,”

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151 Lord, *The History of Painting in Canada: Towards a People’s Art*, 245.
152 Gail Dexter Lord still points to this essay as a summative account of her politics and thinking at the time. Dexter Lord, interview.
and the Report’s other writers on Canadian culture, is derived in fact from “their valuation of American culture as commercialized and vulgar,” and not a political position in its own right. For Dexter, the experience of subjugation she sees in Canadian culture is a direct result of the economic domination of the United States in Canada: “as long as our artists must compete in an art market and art world dominated by US interests,” Dexter wrote, “they can do no more than compete according to the standards established by the Americans.”

She sets her sights clearly on critics such as Terry Fenton (b. 1940), particularly his article “Looking at Canadian Art,” which appeared in *Artforum* in September 1968, and artists such as Robert Murray, Jack Bush, and Joyce Wieland.

The last target is perhaps surprising, especially given Wieland’s association with New Left politics around this time, however there is a sense by members of the Canadian Liberation Movement that Wieland engaged instrumentally with New Left struggles, remaining, as Dexter wrote, “an avid Trudeau supporter.”

Later, in review of Wieland’s exhibition *True Patriot Love* (1971) at the National Gallery of Canada, an anonymous “Canadian art-worker” in *New Canada*—perhaps Dexter or Lord—viciously took down the exhibition and artist.

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155 Dexter, 162.
156 “Meanwhile at the National Gallery, a more sophisticated version of cultural imperialism could be seen as artist-filmmaker Joyce Wieland’s exhibition *True Patriot Love* opened its July-August showing on the ground floor. It was launched in the late afternoon with a razz-matazz fanfare from a Yankee style cadet band in a hair-raising rendition of *The Maple Leaf Forever*. As the battle hymn to the worst kind of Anglo jingoism, the tune is guaranteed to enrage any French-speaking person within earshot and the boys were lucky someone didn’t throw a bomb at them . . . But whatever her stated alliance, at heart Wieland is loyal only to the Americanized *avant-garde*, her fellow ‘far-out’ artist friends who are actually the sharp end of imperialist propaganda in this country.” “Official ‘National Art’ Sees Canadian Culture as Folklore,” *New Canada* 2, no. 5 (September 1971): 11, 8. Roughly a decade earlier, in 1963, when Lord was an assistant curator at the Vancouver Art Gallery, he had described Wieland’s *Disaster in the Air, or Plane Crash* (1963) as a “whimsical and delightful use of popular images.” A reporter for the *Vancouver Sun* wrote of the recent purchase, “Lord said he felt the painting had a lasting value, and was not simply part of a trend.” “Delights City Curator: Air Disaster Whimsical In World of Pop Artist,” *Vancouver Sun*, 1963, Joyce Wieland, Documentation files, Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.
The next year, in 1971, Lord wrote what may be considered a pendant to Dexter’s “Yes, Cultural Imperialism, too!” in the form of an essay for *Saturday Night* called “Living Inside the American Empire of Taste: Canadian Artists are Struggling to Find a Way Out.”\(^\text{157}\) In a sense, Lord’s text takes up the challenge Dexter included at the close of her 1970 essay, where she wrote: “space does not permit me to describe the activities of artists, both in the United States and without, to change the art system.”\(^\text{158}\) Lord begins by covering very much the same ground as Dexter had explored in her essay, including the central observation that “the imperial centre sets the only criterion of quality, while the art of the colonial appendages can only occasionally hope to rise to the imperial standard.”\(^\text{159}\) Like Dexter, Lord derides Jack Bush for having “stayed at home” and “waited for a visit from the chief agent of the U.S. Empire of Taste in Canada,” Clement Greenberg;\(^\text{160}\) likewise, “Regina has become a branch plant of U.S. Art,” largely owing to

\(^{157}\) Lord, “Living Inside the American Empire of Taste: Canadian Artists Are Struggling to Find a Way Out.”

\(^{158}\) Dexter, “Yes, Cultural Imperialism, Too!,” 166. Dexter continues, “Some are forming Art Workers Unions, others are attacking public museums, and still others have given up the traditional artists role in order to use their creative abilities in radical political work.”

\(^{159}\) Lord, “Living Inside the American Empire of Taste: Canadian Artists Are Struggling to Find a Way Out,” 30.

Greenberg’s influence.161 “Happily,” Lord wrote in the last section of his essay, “Canadian artists are fighting back.” Lord’s great hope lies in artists working in London, Ontario and he encourages others to look to Southwestern Ontario as a model: the work of Greg Cunroe, Jack Chambers and John Boyle, chiefly. To these artists, he adds Ivan Eyre in Winnipeg and Claude Breeze in Vancouver, whom he feels are too often overlooked by Canadian curators, given the incommensurability of their work with an imperialist vocabulary.162

By the time Lord wrote “Living Inside the American Empire of Taste,” he was already a member of the Canadian Liberation Movement. In his criticism and self-criticism, completed on July 26, 1974—the same exercise that Dexter would complete in May 1975, as discussed above—he begins by stating that he has been present at annual congresses for four years; the second congress took place October 8–11, 1971. By this time he had also started a relationship with Dexter, and the two would later marry.163 Much of their time and energy went into the Movement, and the period from 1971 through their break with the group and sudden move from Toronto to Ottawa around July 27, 1975, their commitment only intensified. Lord left his position as director of education at the National Gallery of Canada in 1972 ostensibly to take up a teaching

162 Tellingly, he sets up these artists are showing “a more hopeful sign than the mere flag-waving symbolism of the exhibition called ‘True Patriot Love’ that Joyce Wieland presented at the National Gallery last Summer. For the very elected officials who salute our symbols and who smiled on that show (Trudeau himself owns a Wieland quilt) are among those who have presided over the sale of our resources and industry so securely into U.S. control.” Lord, 33.
163 In an unusual aside in a profile of William Ronald, William Cameron wrote that “in his own way [Lord] is a courageous man. He has been involved in demonstrations against the imperial politics of the United States, and he has said in a magazine that he lives with a woman who is not his wife; not heroism, perhaps, but small public acts that allow a man in the middle of the night to think of himself as brave.” William Cameron, “Portrait of the Artist As A Violently Honest Man,” Maclean’s, February 1971, 33.
position at Ryerson University (where Dexter also taught), however it seems that the move to Toronto was largely motivated by his increasing involvement with the Movement.

On February 21, 1971, Dexter gave a talk at the Graduate Students Union at the University of Toronto entitled “Canadian Art and the Revolutionary Struggle.”\(^{164}\) Around this same time, Dexter was heavily involved in a confrontation with Esso to allow the publication of C.W. Jefferys drawings, which the company owned and had refused to give permission for the New Canada Press to use reproductions to illustrate their translation of Léandre Bergeron’s *The History of Québec: A Patriote’s Handbook*. As was reported in June 1971, Dexter successfully negotiated with Esso to give permission to reproduce the works: “the Imperialist Esso Oil Company, a multi-billion dollar cornerstone of the notorious Rockefeller empire, was forced to back down from its refusal to permit the publication of drawings.”\(^{165}\) Dexter later described the negotiations in her criticism and self-criticism and what she perceived to be a personal failing in not forcing Esso to publically announce their decision.\(^{166}\)

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\(^{164}\) “Canadian Art and the Revolutionary Struggle,” 1971, Box 1a Canadian Liberation Movement Leaflets, A-N, Canadian Liberation Movement fonds, The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University.

\(^{165}\) “May 27 saw an important victory for the Canadian and Quebecois peoples in their common struggle against U.S. Imperialism. The Imperialist Esso Oil Company, a multi-billion dollar cornerstone of the notorious Rockefeller empire, was forced to back down from its refusal to permit the publication of drawings by Canada’s famous historical artist C.W. Jefferys in the English edition of Leandre Bergeron’s *Petit manuel d’histoire du Quebec*, soon to appear as *The History of Quebec: A Patriote’s Handbook*.” “Popular Pressure to Force Imperialist Esso Retreat,” *New Canada* 2, no. 3 (June 1971): 1–2.

\(^{166}\) “After the Movement had organised demonstrations in 13 cities to demand the release of the Jefferys drawings, Esso agree to meet and negotiate. I represented CLM in the group that went in to negotiate. Entirely unequal to the task, I felt right at home once in the executive offices. During the course of the discussion the company said they agreed in principle with our using the drawings. I used this statement to go back to the picket line outside the building and announce that we’d won, disbanding the picket line. This was a fraud. What it showed (and this was pointed out at the time by the National Chairman) was that I placed greater faith in the imperialists than in the people. There is no doubt that if we had fought a little longer, Esso would have been forced to come out openly and admit defeat. This would have been a tremendous victory which our many supporters would have been able to participate in. Instead, I created a mess. We announced that Esso had capitulated. Esso denied it. This caused considerable confusion among
The Second Annual Conference of the Canadian Liberation Movement, meetings which were later called congresses, took place on October 8–11, 1971. By summer 1972, Lord was travelling extensively on behalf of the organization: to Victoria, Vancouver Island, Vancouver, Edmonton, Regina, Saskatoon and Thunder Bay. He was also the Ottawa club chair of the Canadian Liberation Movement at the time, but likely resigned from that role at the same time as leaving his position as director of education at the National Gallery of Canada, moving to Toronto in fall 1972. While on this summer tour, Lord gave various talks, including to local Movement clubs, but also on August 15, 1972 at the Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon (later Remai Modern).

Although Lord had left the National Gallery of Canada, it seems he was keen to find work at the Art Gallery of Ontario as their curator of contemporary art. As was reported in the July 1972 issue of New Canada, Lord was told in an interview, presumably with William Withrow (1926–2018), that he would not be considered for the our ranks.” “Gail Lord Self-Criticism.” In the next issue of New Canada, the author, presumably Dexter, reported on research conducted in the Ontario Archives and wrote that Esso had purchased the drawings in 1951 for $15. “It is important to point out that in the ‘art market,’ even prices like those above are peanuts for an original work by an artist as well known as Jefferys is in Canada,” the author writes, “daily, Canadian collectors lay out comparable amounts for mass produced prints by fashionable American artists—the big names of so-called ‘avant-garde’ art, which is usually in fact, imperialist art.” “Imperialist Essobee Paid next to Nothing for Jefferys Drawings,” New Canada 2, no. 4 (July 1971): 2.


169 The talk was reported in the Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, and Lord seems to have spoken extensively about Robert Murray’s work. Writing in 1967, Lord had praised Murray’s contribution to an exhibition at Hart House as well as works of his on view at the Jewish Museum: “this is undoubtedly the first time that a Canadian sculptor has been accorded a one-man show in a major New York museum. The fact that only two works were shown is simply due to the exigencies of contemporary statement in large scale, and does not lessen the importance of the exhibition.” In his talk at Mendel, Lord is quoted as saying, “‘He used to have evidence of struggle in his work,’ said Mr. Lord in an interview Tuesday. ‘But he has become the producer of sleek, luxury commodities like Detroit automobiles. He is doing very well for himself down there,’ he added.” Barry Lord, “Sculpture in the Summer: Toronto: Hart House, University of Toronto to October 1,” Artscanada, no. 113 (October 1967): 6; Barry Lord, “Robert Murray: New York: Jewish Museum,” Artscanada, no. 113 (October 1967): 6–7; Jaffe, “Art Critic Blasts American Influence.”
job because of his politics. A few months later, the September 1972 issue of New Canada ran a series of articles on the formation of American Friends of Canada, one reprinted from the Globe and Mail by George Russell describing in detail Bluma Appel’s role in the formation of the group. An accompanying article, presumably written by Lord or Dexter, titled “How a Big Donor Controls Ont. Art Gallery,” describes in detail Ayala Zacks’ role at the Art Gallery of Ontario: “Mrs. Zacks is the most powerful single donor on the AGO Board of continentalist Canadians who have made their money serving U.S. imperialism. Her fortune comes from her late husband’s exploitation of northern Ontario gold mines.” Given the inordinate criticism leveled at the Art Gallery of Ontario by New Canada in the months following the Gallery’s refusal to consider Lord for position of curator of contemporary, it is difficult not to see something of personal resentment. On November 29, 1972, the Canadian Liberation Movement and New Canada Press staged a protest against the appointment of Richard J. Wattenmaker (1941–2017) as chief curator at the Art Gallery of Ontario.

170 “Barry Lord, Ottawa chairman of CLM and a nationally-known Canadian art critic revealed to an outraged audience that the Director of the Gallery told him in a recent interview that despite his qualifications for the position of Curator of Contemporary Art, he would not be acceptable because of his politics. ‘Wattenmaker is acceptable,’ Barry Lord said, ‘because he is an American—that is his main qualification.’ “Fight to Oust New U.S. Gallery Head at AGO,” 1.
174 As described in a release, “like the appointment of Mario Amaya before, this appointment represents a further step in the US takeover of our culture. Further, the vital position of curator of contemporary art has remained unfilled for the past ten months because the most qualified Canadian candidate for this post is Barry Lord, a member of the Canadian Liberation Movement which stands for an independent, socialist Canada—a stand which both Wattenmaker and the AGO Board of Trustees strongly oppose.” “Statement of The Canadian Liberation Movement and NC Press, November 29, 1972,” November 29, 1972, File 2, Box 9 New Canada A-K, Canadian Liberation Movement fonds, The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University.
By 1973, both Dexter and Lord were heavily involved in the Canadian Liberation Movement. Owing to the anonymity maintained in most of the group’s documents, it is difficult to determine when Gail Dexter assumed the role of general secretary of the group, effectively the second highest ranking “national officer” after Gary Perly himself. Although Dexter uncharacteristically signed her name and title together in a letter from May 30, 1973, it is possible that she had held the position since her earliest involvement with the group.\(^{175}\) Moreover, on April 13, 1973, Dexter wrote to Rob Yurchuk at the Atikokan Canadian Liberation Movement club that “I have a new address and phone number, 16 Simpson Ave.”\(^{176}\) The house seems to have been purchased by the Movement and served as a headquarters until it was sold in September 1975.\(^{177}\) Dexter, and presumably Lord, as well, lived there from early 1973 through their departure from the group in July 1975.\(^{178}\) Other members of the national office lived there, as well.

In 1974, Lord described his “patchwork economic base” during the previous year, that is 1973, holding down multiple jobs and responsibilities—a departure from his steady income between 1970 and 1972 as the director of education at the National


\(^{176}\) Gail Lord to Rob Yurchuk, April 13, 1973, File 21, Box 4 Administrative Files, Canron–Court, Canadian Liberation Movement fonds, The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University.

\(^{177}\) “16 Simpson. JH [Judy Haiven] moved and CP [Caroline Perly] sec[onded] that as of the closing date for the house which is the 15th of Sept. all monies from the sale of the house will go into the CLM savings account.” “Minutes of National Officers’ Meeting 9 Sept. 1975,” September 9, 1975, File 21, Box 6 Administrative Files, Mc–O, Canadian Liberation Movement fonds, The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University.

\(^{178}\) “All the files on Canadian film which you loaned me are in the bottom drawer of the file cabinet in my living room. Please pick them up ASAP—immediately after receiving this letter. If you show this note to Don Hayward who lives there (16 Simpson) he should help you get them.” Gail Lord and Bruce Elder, July 27, 1975, File 57, Box 5 Administrative Files D - Ma, Canadian Liberation Movement fonds, The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University.
Gallery of Canada. He continued to write freelance for various publications, including “Comprador Canadian Painting” for Canadian Forum in November 1973. The end of the year seemed to have been especially busy for Dexter. In an unusual document, she wrote out a breakdown of work the Movement needed to accomplish in December 1973: Dexter determined that in “15 days there are 360 hrs / 196 hrs of work / 120 hrs of sleep / 44 hrs of other like eating etc. / 360 hrs total in 15 days.” If this proposal is an indication, she seems to have regularly worked thirteen-hour days throughout the month.

By the following spring, Lord was acting chair of the Hamilton club, and seems to have been living or at the very least spending considerably time in Hamilton, as he regularly attended club meetings. This corresponds closely with the establishment of the Canadian Workers Union, which held its founding congress June 8–9, 1974 in Toronto. From July 20–28, 1974 the Canadian Liberation Movement held their annual congress, at which Lord volunteered to be New Canada Press’ Sales Manager. It is also at this congress that Lord wrote his self-criticism, as does another member, Betty Bower. The congress was followed by what seems to have been the inaugural “organizing school.” By summer 1974, however, there is some suggestion that Dexter

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179 As he wrote on July 26, 1974, “being separated from Gail, having multiple responsibilities both political and in family life, and having to depend on patchwork economic base in the year ahead, as in the year just ended. These factors led me to clutch at the NC Press Sales job as a way out.” “Barry Lord Self-Criticism,” 2.
182 “Barry will now be able to spend more time in Hamilton, and this should help.” Gail Lord to Frank Chadwick, June 18, 1974, File 36, Box 4 Administrative Files, Canron–Court, Canadian Liberation Movement fonds, The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University.
had a falling out with the group, possibly, as she later wrote, because she “refused to give my assistance . . . to the National Chairman [Gary Perly] and the Director of Propaganda and Education [Caroline Perly] at the time of the birth of their child. I made the decision that it was their problem.”\textsuperscript{185} By October 1974 she was “allowed to become active in the Movement again,” however it was short-lived.\textsuperscript{186}

Over October 26–27, 1974, just a week and a half following the launch of \textit{Painting in Canada}, at the quarterly meeting of the National Office of the Canadian Liberation Movement a motion was passed to change the name of the general secretary, Dexter’s long-time role, to “the Poobah.”\textsuperscript{187} Unusually, the minutes are redacted in sections, however it was noted that throughout the meeting there was consistent criticism of the general secretary [Gail Dexter] and of her bourgeois selfish political line. She had been earlier criticised for not carrying out various decisions of the Congress regarding reports and statements that had not gone out to membership.\textsuperscript{188}

The motion to change her title preceded, as recorded in a bizarre set of minutes, various accusations against her, including failing to collect fundraising money and post-dated cheques from clubs. Caroline Perly motioned for her to be removed from the position, which was passed.\textsuperscript{189} Immediately following her removal, Dexter’s younger sister, Judy Haiven, took on the role of general secretary.\textsuperscript{190}

\textsuperscript{185} “Gail Lord Self-Criticism,” 13.
\textsuperscript{186} “Gail Lord Self-Criticism,” 13.
\textsuperscript{187} “Minutes of the Quarterly Meeting October 26-27/74,” April 12, 1974, File 10, Box 7 Administrative Files, P-Y, Canadian Liberation Movement fonds, The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University.
\textsuperscript{188} “Minutes of the Quarterly Meeting October 26-27/74.”
\textsuperscript{189} “Minutes of the Quarterly Meeting October 26-27/74.”
\textsuperscript{190} “Minutes of the Quarterly Meeting October 26-27/74.”
In spite of Dexter’s treatment by the group in October 1974, both Dexter and Lord continued to participate in the Canadian Liberation Movement, with Lord heavily involved with the Canadian Workers’ Union and labour organizing in Hamilton, as recounted in another self-criticism entitled “Self-Criticism of my collaboration with the Nazi Osowsky by Barry Lord.”

Throughout the document, Lord refers to Dexter, bizarrely, as “Poobah.” Lord also continued to work as the New Canada Press sales manager through early 1975. Sometime during spring 1975, the group seems to have begun what it called its “Campaign Against Bourgeois Selfishness,” events which precipitated Dexter and Lord’s departure from the Canadian Liberation Movement.

The Campaign coincided with internal struggles and disorganization, as New Canada failed to publish its now bi-monthly issue for either April or June 1975, publishing an apology and explanation in their August 1975 issue. During the Campaign, in May 1975, Dexter completed a lengthy, sixteen-page criticism and self-criticism, describing her activism and early involvement with the Canadian Liberation Movement, with the upshot of the document being the confession that she was a “bourgeois sympathizer parading as revolutionary.”

She described that as she had “one of the few highly paying jobs in the Movement” she “used every possible opportunity to

193 “This is due largely to fast moving events which required the attention of our writers and staff. It is our policy not just to write about the struggles for national liberation but to take part in them as well.” “New Canada Apologises,” New Canada 6, no. 6 (August 1975): 12.
194 “Gail Lord Self-Criticism,” 1.
keep the Movement small and to entrench my position as a big shot.” She ends the text with a list of “recommendations for correction,” using Mao’s “On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People” (1957) as a guide. Among these proposals, she suggests that she continue teaching at Ryerson “until I have proven myself ready to organise in a factory and that at that time I quit my petty-bourgeois job,” but that for the summer she find “a part time job working in a hotel as I was before as this was a great help in teaching me humility and in showing me the oppression that the Canadian people experience at the hands of the imperialists and the bourgeoisie.” In addition to finding a job in a hotel, she would also continue doing housekeeping for the national office. Her salary from her teaching position at Ryerson was given over entirely to the Movement (as was Lord’s) from which she would receive a two-hundred dollar a month allowance. In her self-criticism, however, she proposed meeting with the general secretary (her sister, Judy Haiven) to discuss increasing the amount. Dexter concluded her self-criticism by recommending that she submit a plan for outside work and finances by August 15, 1975.

Given the exceptionally fraught circumstances Dexter described in this document, it perhaps comes as little surprise that by July 27, 1975, she and Lord would leave Toronto suddenly, breaking with the Canadian Liberation Movement. As Dexter wrote to Bruce Elder, her colleague at Ryerson, on July 27, 1975, “I am leaving Ryerson and not

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195 “Gail Lord Self-Criticism,” 5.
196 “Gail Lord Self-Criticism,” 15.
197 “Gail Lord Self-Criticism,” 15.
198 “Gail Lord Self-Criticism,” 16.
199 “I myself proposed that I receive $200 per month from my salary as living expenses. This was based on an absolute minimum required to cover rent, food and transportation . . . On the other hand I cannot live on $200 per month. My original budget for that amount allowed for some small savings that I proposed I use to pay the cost of the window I broke in the National Office . . . I also recommend that the budget be a combined one for Barry and myself since as a married couple we should share finances. “ “Gail Lord Self-Criticism,” 16.
200 “Gail Lord Self-Criticism,” 16.
planning to return for some time. I realise this will be a shock and an inconvenience but it is something I feel I must do.”

She gives Elder instructions for getting back his files on Canadian film, which she had borrowed, and also offers him and Marta Braun “any books from my library at school that will be of help to you in your work. Please take what you want. The rest I am donating to the Ryerson library.”

On August 8, 1975, when he received Dexter’s letter, Elder called the Canadian Liberation Movement office repeatedly. The conversation he had with Judy Haiven, Dexter’s sister, was recorded by her in an extremely detailed four-page typescript. Elder was justifiably worried about Dexter and asked Haiven how he could contact her, though he knew from the postmark on her letter that she was in Ottawa; it is unclear from the typescript, however, whether Haiven herself knew where Dexter and Lord had gone.

Dexter and Lord’s departure signaled the beginning of the end of the Canadian Liberation Movement. “Let us Unite and Go Forward,” an unsigned document written in September or October 1975, begins by describing how “in the last year, it has become clear that we have many serious weaknesses. We have driven many of our best and most respected leaders away.” The text cites the “call to action against bourgeois selfishness,” which seems to have begun in early 1975, as one determining factor in the breakdown of the group:

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202 Lord and Elder.
203 Judy Haiven, “Phone Call with Bruce Elder—Teacher at Ryerson on 8 Aug. 1975 at about 2.30 Pm,” August 8, 1975, File 57, Box 5 Administrative Files, Deahl - May Day, Canadian Liberation Movement fonds, The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University.
204 “Bruce knows the letter is in Gail’s writing—after all, he said, he taught with her and was friends for years . . . he is very concerned about the letter. It is peculiar style, he says, and it shows she is very upset.”
205 “Bruce asked me twice to keep this information in the strictest confidence. The only reason he was telling me was because I was her sister, and I should know . . . Bruce then began to cry softly and say that for personal reasons, he had asked to speak with her—had to get a hold of her.” Haiven.
206 “Let Us Unite + Go Forward, Draft #4, September or October 1975.”
Instead of building unity and a feeling of trust among the members, the campaign pit one member against the other, lead to fear, distrust and self-preservation at all costs. It also set Gary Perly up as the sole arbit[er] or judge of who was guilty or not.206

“In the name of ‘combatting bourgeois selfishness’ many atrocities were committed,” the document continues, “including beatings, threats and humiliation. People’s personal problems and personal lives were made primary and people’s actual domestic and financial conditions were made unbearable.”207 Among the members who left the Movement during this period, Dexter and Lord are among the few mentioned by name. Lord was “the ultimate sacrifice offered up on the altar of bourgeois selfishness . . . The only way Barry could preserve any self-respect after months of this degradation was to cut off all ties with the movement.”208 The document continues, “even Gail Lord, who committed serious errors, and who had a bourgeois line, was dealt with incorrectly . . . Gary Perly led a fascistic reign of terror against her which included locking her in closets, beating her, pouring scalding water on her and forcing Barry Lord to do the same . . . A number of National Executive and other meetings were dominated by this brutal torture of Gail and others.”209

On September 15, 1975, the house at 16 Simpson Avenue, where some of the group’s members had lived, including Dexter between 1973 and 1975, was sold and its proceeds placed in the Movement’s savings account.210 It was not until the following congress, held February 28–29, 1976, however, that the group expelled Gary Perly.211 In April 1976 the final issue of *New Canada* appeared, and that same month, Caroline Perly

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206 “Let Us Unite + Go Forward, Draft #4, September or October 1975.”
207 “Let Us Unite + Go Forward, Draft #4, September or October 1975.”
208 “Let Us Unite + Go Forward, Draft #4, September or October 1975.”
209 “Let Us Unite + Go Forward, Draft #4, September or October 1975.”
210 “Minutes of National Officers’ Meeting 9 Sept. 1975.”
211 “CLM Expells Gary Perly.”
received a legal opinion from Norman Endicott as to how to maintain her shares of New Canada Press. She later married Endicott, in 1981, and the two operated the publishing house into the 1980s. While the Movement had no formal dissolution, it had effectively ceased to exist by summer 1976.

While today best known for their museum consultancy firm Lord Cultural Resources (1981–), fifty years ago Gail Dexter and Barry Lord were among the most vocal opponents of American cultural imperialism in Canada. The culmination of the couple’s political, theoretical, and art critical work of the late 1960s and early 1970s, *Painting in Canada* is equally a product of the Canadian Liberation Movement. While much remains unaccounted for—the papers related to New Canada Press and all of its publications, including *Painting in Canada*, seem to have passed to Caroline Perly after the dissolution of the Movement—there is evidence that Dexter’s contribution to the book was far more significant than previously thought. Her role, too, if not in the formation but rather the shape and growth of the Canadian Liberation Movement has rarely been discussed, in part perhaps owing to the troubling, and by some accounts abusive, treatment of her and others by the Movement’s national officers. If reticent to revisit this period, particularly following Barry Lord’s death in 2017, Dexter’s remarkable trajectory from art critic to activist—and eventually museum consultant by

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212 Norman A. Endicott and Caroline Perly, April 7, 1976, File 24, Box 9 New Canada A-K, Canadian Liberation Movement fonds, The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University.
214 As Peter Flosznik wrote to *Alive*, “it hasn’t been formally dissolved but it has broken up and its assets have been disposed of: some sold to pay off debts, others given to members, etc. *New Canada* has ceased publication. A new Congress (scheduled for the middle of May) which was supposed to deal with ideological and political contradictions in CLM failed to take place as no preparation for it was made. For all practical purposes, CLM is dead.” Chris Faiers and Peter Flosznik, “CLM’s National Chauvinist Body Dead, Let’s Bury the Opportunist Spirit!,” *Alive Magazine*, no. 54 (October 9, 1976).
the early 1980s—stands as a fascinating and complex episode in the history of art and politics in postwar Canada. Dexter and Lord’s involvement with the Canadian Liberation Movement, especially during their harrowing final year which coincided with the publication of *The History of Painting in Canada: Toward a People’s Art*, surely stands as among the most extreme cases of cultural nationalism of the period.
Chapter Seven

Surrogates, Copies, and Doubles

Aesthetics of Distance at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design

In early 1972, Alice Aycock (b. 1946) prepared a list of potential projects to be realized in connection with her forthcoming exhibition at the Mezzanine Gallery at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) in Halifax. The proposal now survives only as a fragment, at least in the College’s archives, however Aycock described under the heading “Additional projects not yet begun” the following:

Using a high-speed still camera, photograph an individual crossing the border between Canada and the U.S. Still photographs could also be made of an individual walking/standing on the border and if possible, walking/standing between the two countries. The project would also include maps and data, e.g., the width of the border at the point of crossing.¹

Though never realized, Aycock’s inclination to create a work on the border between the United States and Canada for exhibition in Halifax signals a preoccupation of many Canadian artists, faculty, and critics in thinking about the College’s relationship to art and artists from the United States. While the border is often conceived as an imaginary, infra-thin line, judging from this brief proposal, Aycock was more interested in the border as a physical manifestation: questioning the actual width of the border at various points.²

NSCAD’s distance from major art centres—not only New York, London, and Paris, but

even in the Canadian context, it was far from Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver—meant that the school’s relative geographical isolation was a determining factor in its pedagogy, programming, and exhibition making. In reality, this isolation was more psychic than physical: as David Askevold (1940–2008) later recalled, “Halifax is close to New York and not far from England and Europe, so it was really not that far away although it seemed like a remote place.” For artists visiting the College or proposing works to be realized there, such as Aycock, this distance, psychic or otherwise, was often instantiated in their work.

During the period 1967–1972, from the arrival of Garry Neill Kennedy (b. 1935) as President in 1967 through fall 1972 when Askevold left for an eight-month sabbatical in London, England, a considerable number of projects were realized at NSCAD where the College’s physical remove was registered. Between 1970 and 1972 alone, there were some 84 visitors to the College. Three larger programs at the school stand out in this regard, the most celebrated, perhaps, being Askevold’s Projects Class, but equally determining during these five years were the Lithography Workshop, and exhibitions mounted by Charlotte Townsend (later Townsend-Gault) for the Mezzanine Gallery.

Recounting to Jack Burnham in 1973 the Board of Governors’ decision to hire him as the College’s first President, Kennedy said—in false modesty, perhaps—that he was chosen after “they ran out of candidates.” Halifax had a certain draw for Kennedy, “I was a thirty-two-year-old Canadian with fond memories of Nova Scotia, where I had

3 “Artists were traveling a lot then and were getting away from a lot of material baggage . . . I also think Nova Scotia had some sort of exotic appeal at the time since it was not at all well known to Americans and Europeans.” David Askevold and Mario Garcia Torres, “The Language and the Object (2006-2007),” in David Askevold: Once upon a Time in the East (Fredericton, N.B.; Halifax: Goose Lane Editions; Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 2011), 89.
spent my childhood . . . I thought that if interesting and exciting artwork could happen in the backwoods of Wisconsin, it could certainly happen in Halifax.”6 When Kennedy arrived in 1967, the College had nine teaching staff, fewer than 125 students and an annual budget of $75,000.7 Kennedy’s appointment was followed by an unprecedented hiring of American or American-educated faculty, which though excessive, was by no means uncommon.8 In 1968 alone the faculty increased from 17 to 26.9

In spite of his early education at the Ontario College of Art, it was to the United States that Kennedy looked to revitalize the faculty—hiring artists and teachers including Pat Kelly and James Davies (as Dean) from Northland College, Wisconsin; David Askevold, Gerald Ferguson, Jack Lemon, and Bill Nolan from the Kansas City Art Institute; and ceramicist Walter Ostrom from Ohio University.10 Commenting on this tendency more broadly, in 1976 Greg Curnoe (1936–1992) argued in Canadian Forum that

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10 Barber, “Conceptual Art: The NSCAD Connection 1967-1973,” 11. As Jayne Wark has noted, “many of the Americans recruited by Kennedy saw NSCAD as a means to leave behind the turmoil then afflicting American society.” Among these, she includes May ‘68, the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy, the election of Richard Nixon and the war in Vietnam. “The resulting reductions to draft deferments for students enrolled in universities led to a surge of middle-class draft resisters moving to Canada. Although few of the teachers and students who came to NSCAD during these years were actual draft dodgers, the allure of Canada as a liberal state led by the newly elected Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau was compelling.” Wark, “Conceptual Lithography at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design,” 62.
many Americans have been hired, creating a self-perpetuating situation in which US faculty members recommended US institutions for graduate studies, and, as a result, a US outlook is guaranteed a prominent place in the future programmes of our art galleries and art schools.  

In his defense, Kennedy made the analogy in 1973 to Burnham that the College “has to function as a professional work center—medical schools don’t separate themselves from their profession and neither should we.” He continued, “unfortunately teachers too often feel threatened by outside expertise. Any indication to their students that there are bigger and better names challenges their authority.” In addition to hiring new, largely American, staff shortly after his arrival in 1967, Kennedy also supported a culture that made tenure difficult and encouraged contract appointments and short-term visiting artists. As he recounted to Burnham,

contracts are offered on a sequential basis of three one-year contracts, a two-year contract, a three-year contract, and then five-year contracts. Such a hiring system only works if the faculty has sufficient respect for administrative policy and judgement.

In this way, Kennedy’s administration of the College in his first years—whether through hiring new contract faculty, eliminating tenured positions, or bringing in visiting artists—corresponds remarkably to the type of artwork being realized at the College, whether through teaching or exhibitions, in programs such as the Projects class, the Lithography Workshop or at the Mezzanine Gallery. In her essay “Under the Sign of Labor” (2006), Sabeth Buchmann argues for a reconsideration of Lucy Lippard and John Chandler’s notion of dematerialization in light of “modes of representing labor in the neo-conceptual

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12 This policy lent, Kennedy suggested, to the “relative youth of the faculty.” Burnham, “Nova Scotia: Answers for Academia,” 55.
13 Burnham, 55.
movements of the 1980s and 1990s.”

Drawing on Maurizio Lazzarato’s idea of “immaterial labour,” which Buchmann defines as “service-oriented activities in the realm of education, research, information, communication, and management,” she draws links between conceptual (late 1960s and 1970s) and post-conceptual (1980s and 1990s) developments through reference to discourses of post-Fordism, service culture, and neoliberalism that draw heavily of capitalist concepts such as “flexibilization, deregulation, and mobilization.”

That Kennedy’s hiring policies and administrative decisions correspond with conceptual art’s service-orientation is no mere coincidence: many of the activities at NSCAD between 1967 and 1972 employed surrogates, stand-ins or other forms of delegated labour. This accounts, I argue, for the remarkable attention paid to the College during this period, and in large part for its critical acclaim. Aligned closely with what could be argued as conceptual art’s most distinctive strategy—namely portability by virtue of the work’s nimble and oftentimes scant material manifestation—programmes at the College hypostatized distance. It was only beginning in the 1980s, however, as John Roberts has suggested, that these questions of “appropriation, copying, replication, [and] simulation” become “the necessary terrain” of post-conceptual art practices. The College’s activities during this period anticipated these developments in a remarkable way. These aesthetics of distance—the faculty and staff’s dependence on surrogates and

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15 Buchmann, 181.

copies—if first brought about through NSCAD’s geographical distance from established centres, would, in retrospect, be clearly coincident with one of the principal characteristics of conceptual art: namely, its predisposition to easy circulation. In short, that these projects took place in Halifax is determining to a degree that has gone unaccounted in recent scholarship on the College.

In a 1974 article for *Studio International*, Eric Cameron (b.1935) wrote about NSCAD’s Lithography Workshop, frequently invoking Nelson Goodman’s distinction between autographic and allographic modes of art making, as Goodman articulated in his influential *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (1968). Though Goodman made this distinction primarily between painting and music, he raises printmaking as an exception to the easy correspondence between what he calls “one-stage” and “two-stage” art. Goodman begins his discussion with the simple assertion that in music, unlike painting, “there is no such thing as a forgery of a known work”: Hadyn’s holograph is no more genuine than a score printed this morning, and “last night’s performance is no less genuine than the premiere.” In music, so long as a performance is “correct” it is a genuine instance of the work. Goodman continues by defining the autographic work as one where “the distinction between original and forgery of it is significant,” so “painting is autographic, music nonautographic, or allographic.”

Complicating this notion, however, and of particular interest in Cameron’s reading of the Lithography Workshop, is the print. As Goodman posits, but does little to elaborate,

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19 Goodman, 112.
20 Goodman, 113.
“printmaking is two-stage and yet autographic,” and so refutes “the unwary assumption that in every autographic art a particular work exists only as a unique object.”

This allographic mode, however, takes on significance well beyond the language of prints and the hand of the artist on the press. NSCAD’s distance from traditional art centres was hypostatized in a number of artist projects during the early 1970s, including while making lithographs, with “non-visiting” artists using surrogates to realize their work, sending instructions or otherwise corresponding with staff and students in Halifax.

At first, although the so-called allographic mode was a necessary condition of Halifax’s distance, the autographic touch of the artist was still sought out. Only later, as will be seen, did this instantiated distance become an aesthetic position.

Nowhere is this ambivalence between autographic and allographic modes better illustrated than in one of the Lithography Workshop’s best-known projects: John Baldessari’s *I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art* (1971). Baldessari’s writing sample, provided to Charlotte Townsend in one of two letters he wrote to her on February 1, 1971 as an exemplar for students executing the work in the gallery, was in fact used as the source image for both the exhibition announcement and the lithograph (Fig. 8.1). The facsimile more closely approximated the autographic, whereas the student-copists who realized the exhibition at the Mezzanine Gallery wrote in various hands, and occasionally strayed from the script, as recounted in a letter from two of the students who realized the

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21 Goodman, 115. Goodman continues, “The line between an autographic and an allographic art does not coincide with that between a singular and a multiple art.”

work for Baldessari. This tension between presence and absence, between autographic and allographic, instruction and realization by the artist him- or herself runs throughout the major programmes at the College.

If the immediate precursors to conceptual art were minimal sculpture, as first argued by Benjamin Buchloh in his essay “Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions” (1990), the instructional mode on which Baldessari’s work depends appears slightly further back in conceptual art’s prehistories. For her May 1962 exhibition at the Sogetsu Art Center in Tokyo, Yoko Ono (b. 1933) chose to show only a set of instructions on paper, rather than resulting objects. In common with minimal sculptors, however, such as Donald Judd, Robert Morris, and Dan Flavin, was certain conceptual artists’ use of delegated fabrication—that is, sculptures constructed or assembled from drawings or instructions. This working practice meant the occupation of the artist had decisively—if not irreversibly—passed from that of maker to conceiver. Although Buchloh asserted that one of conceptual art’s main proposals was to “replace the object of spatial and perceptual experience by linguistic definition alone,” subsequently Liz Kotz and Alexander Alberro, among others, have suggested the sheer heterogeneity and variety of conceptual practices resists

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23 Gary Marcuse and Dennis Gill to John Baldessari, April 7, 1971, Artists’ Files, Mezzanine Gallery Collection, NSCAD Collection, CAUL-CBUA Atlantic Islandora Repository Network, Nova Scotia College of Art & Design.
24 Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions.” Some of these “different readings of minimal sculpture” that Buchloh cites include Dan Graham’s fascination with Sol LeWitt, Mel Bochner’s debt to Dan Flavin, and Joseph Kosuth’s interest in Donald Judd. Buchloh, 107.
26 Altshuler, 32.
such easy definition. Nevertheless, as more emphasis was placed on conception rather than making through the early 1970s, the work’s “linguistic expression was admitted as artistic form.” In this way, as Bruce Altshuler has suggested, “artworks could be embodied in statements, and a collection of statements could constitute an exhibition.”

Or even, as was the case with Askevold’s Projects Class, a syllabus.

In an undated, seven-page typescript, likely from around 1970, David Askevold described the Projects Class as endeavouring to create a space that “should allow for an attention time which is conducive to a type of concentration that you can’t find as easily outside a school.” Although both Askevold and Gerald Ferguson (1937–2009) seemed to agree that one way of bypassing critical discourse, which according to them “filtered” work or subjected it to fashion, was to invite artists themselves to College, the Projects Class first came about through a highly selective—and somewhat arbitrary—network of personal connections which were formed while Askevold was at the Kansas City Art Institute, along with Ferguson, just prior to arriving in Halifax in 1968.

Born in Montana in 1940, Askevold had studied art and anthropology at the University of Montana (1958–1963), and in 1963 won a Max Beckmann Scholarship to study painting with Ruben Tam at the Brooklyn Museum School of Art (1963–1964).

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29 Altshuler, “Art by Instruction and the Pre-History of Do It,” 32.

While in New York, he worked at the Museum of Modern Art bookstore. In 1966, Askevold went to the Kansas City Art Institute in order to finish his BFA, and it was there he first met Ferguson and Garry Neill Kennedy. While still in Kansas City, according to an account Ferguson gave in 1994, Askevold and Ferguson assisted with an exhibition at the Nelson Gallery of Art (later the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art) called *The Magic Theater* (May 25–June 24, 1968). They helped the New York-based artist Charles Ross (b. 1937) with his prism works, and worked closely alongside Ross’s studio assistant, Rex Lau (b. 1947), a friend of James Lee Byars (1932–1997). In this way, it was through working with Lau that Ferguson and Askevold were first introduced to a group of New York-based artists. (This, in spite of the fact that Askevold had lived in New York for two or three years already.) As Ferguson recounted in 1994, Lau provided additional perspective on Sol LeWitt and Carl Andre, as well as introducing me to the work of Joseph Kosuth and Lawrence Weiner. It was all very intriguing stuff, especially since the work I was doing at the time could only be described as some kind of funky minimalism.

It was at Kennedy’s invitation, and with Ferguson’s encouragement, that Askevold took up a teaching position under his former colleague from Kansas City. Moving to Halifax in 1968, during his first year of teaching the College’s foundation course, Askevold set on developing a class for the following year that would question “the assumptions, conditions and parameters of art practices.” During a trip to New York in fall 1968,

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35 Cliff Eyland and David Askevold, “Biographical Sketch & Video Notes,” in *David Askevold: Cultural Geographies and Selected Works*, ed. Terry Graff and Petra Rigby Watson (Charlottetown: Confederation Centre Art Gallery & Museum, 1998), 70. “Askevold’s original plan—to co-teach a sculpture course with
shortly after moving to Halifax, Askevold and Ferguson met with Lau, who at that time made the introduction to James Lee Byars.36

Following this introduction to Byars, Askevold relied on names and suggestions solicited from other artists. During this same trip with Ferguson to New York in fall 1968, Askevold asked Lawrence Weiner for recommendations of artists who might submit projects.37 As Askevold recounted to Richard Hertz in 2009,

I connected with both Kosuth and Weiner. Lawrence gave me the names of a number of people to include for the class. Because of cost restraints, I couldn’t bring everyone I wanted to Nova Scotia and came up with a compromise. I composed a letter asking artists to propose projects for the students to complete. The artists would send in instructions and the students would make the work. The responses were enthusiastic and we went forward with the projects.38

Askevold saw his role in the course as that of a “moderator,” “orchestrator” or “director.”39 Working between the students and individual artists, he conceived of himself as a kind of “transitional teacher/instructor,”40 feeling at the time that students

Pat Kelley—could not be carried out due to enrollment restrictions in sculpture, so he taught the Foundation Course with three other instructors.” Bronson, From Sea to Shining Sea: Artist-Initiated Activity in Canada, 1939-1987, 44.
needed to see as many examples of practicing artists as possible, and “more than one teacher to direct them.” In another, perhaps less conventional description of his role, however, Askevold described “the artist [as] the author, students could be considered apprentices, and my role was to monitor the process.” As Jack Burnham wrote in “Alice’s Head: Reflections on Conceptual Art” (1970), “perhaps the future of Conceptual art is tied more to its power for influencing artistic behavior than to any success as commodity art.” In this way, the model of apprenticeship—and so, too, perhaps, the emulative mode that such a model implies—was certainly connected more broadly with practices of conceptual art.

This model of student apprenticeship would also find expression in the Lithography Workshop, although more controversially. “Theoretically the students are supposed to learn like medieval apprentices, by assisting visiting ‘big names’ turn out prints for the market,” an anonymous critic in New Canada wrote of the Workshop in December 1971. “Most of the proceeds, naturally, go to the artists although a percentage goes to the College to help finance this bonanza.” Apprenticeship necessarily depends on a certain power imbalance between the conceiver and maker, which is alluded to in the criticism of the printmaking programme, above. Initially, the Projects Class was inexpensive to run—it “cost only the price of some stamps and minimal equipment,” Askevold recalled in interview in 2006–2007. His calculation, of course, failed to take into consideration the students’ labour in realizing these artists’ works.

In its first iteration, which began in fall 1969, the Projects Class consisted of twelve works submitted by Robert Barry, Mel Bochner, James Lee Byars, Jan Dibbets, Dan Graham, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, Lucy Lippard, N.E. Thing Co., Ltd., Robert Smithson, and Lawrence Weiner. Askevold solicited the projects by mail, with some of the original correspondence now included in the Art Metropole Collection, Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada. Using this correspondence, Askevold then transcribed—though in certain instances redacted or otherwise edited—each submitted project and published it as a card in September 1969. These cards, assembled together in a plain manila envelope and stamped with the return address of the College, remain among the best-known physical manifestations of the course. Perhaps this is because in their modest form they assert what Liz Kotz calls the principally “instrumental” value of a number of the projects, which have a chiefly “inscriptional function in relation to the performance, action, or object that is seen as the actual work.”

Robert Barry and Douglas Huebler’s projects shared a common quality: both involved the fabrication of an idea or myth by a group of students. In Barry’s case, the students were to gather together and “decide on a single common idea. The idea can be of any nature, simple or complex. This idea will be known only to the members of the group.” So long as the idea remains “in the confines of the group,” the piece continues to

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47 Lucy Lippard et al., “Projects Class, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (Original Submissions),” 1969, Askevold Artist Box, Art Metropole Collection, Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.
48 Lippard et al., “Projects Class, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.” For instance, Huebler’s original description of Variable Piece #5 runs considerably longer than the brief description on the published card. Douglas Huebler to David Askevold, October 15, 1969, Projects Class, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (Original Submissions), Askevold Artist Box, Art Metropole Collection, Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.
49 Kotz, Words To Be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art, 4.
exist: “we may never know when or if the piece comes to an end.”50 By contrast, although Huebler’s project begins by “fabricating a myth” soon is launched “into an original and true existence through ordinary information systems.” By April 1, 1970, “all documents relating to its existence during the period described and this statement would constitute the form of the piece.”51

Unlike Barry’s work, whose content remains unknown, Huebler’s took on a very public face. Aware of the interest NSCAD was generating internationally, the students set on establishing a fictitious, neighbouring, art school, in East Dover, Nova Scotia, roughly thirty kilometres South of Halifax.52 The principal means of “launching” the myth was in a single advertisement for the imagined school placed in Artforum (Fig. 8.2).

Kosuth’s project similarly made use of mass media, asking for a set text to be reproduced on a billboard, in a newspaper advertisement, a handbill, and as an advertisement in buses, during the period October 15–November 9, 1969.53 Unlike Kosuth’s provided text, however, both Barry and Huebler’s projects are notably generous with the participating students—leaving the form open and, in Barry’s case, unknown even to the artist himself. They constitute an example of delegation from artist to student

50 Lippard et al., “Projects Class, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.”
51 Lippard et al.
52 Bronson, From Sea to Shining Sea: Artist-Initiated Activity in Canada, 1939-1987, 71. As Askevold later recounted in interview, “we bought an ad in Artforum and we advertised a school in it. It was called the Haliburton. Anyway, it was in East Dover, this fictitious school, so we listed all the names of these people like Dan Graham, and then we had Frank Stella and different artists, big name New York artists. Dan actually thought this school was a real school. We said for further information—we gave Doug Huebler’s address so he had to answer all these letters, you know, students applying for this school.” Kennedy, The Last Art College: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1968-1978, 35.
that is so exceptionally undeveloped that the conceptualization of the artist almost ceases to matter—that is, if it were not for the artist’s assertion of authorship.

This absence of ego is conveyed further in Huebler’s correspondence with Askevold about the project, in October 1969. Although he asks for documentation of the students’ work, including “a tape recording of your first discussion of this project, whatever you write to organize and begin it, whatever is printed in media about it,” he has no desire to be associated with the project.54 “If the myth has expanded and has ‘power,’” Huebler wrote, “perhaps it should be left ungoing [sic] by maintaining secrecy concerning its genesis.” He even, in his postscript, suggests he be disassociated from the class, “it might seem wise to maintain secrecy by scratching my name from any list of artists who are working out these projects with you. I withdrew or something like that.”55

Beyond these three projects, another group of works constituted statements, difficult—or even perhaps unnecessary—to realize. Byars’ contribution, for instance, consisted solely of the text, reproduced in the smallest legible text on the published Projects Class card, “Mr. Byars is the Artist in the Pentagon.”56 Without instruction, it appears Byars simply wanted to share a fictitious secret with the participating students—one that played on an ironic correspondence between an American artist and a vast military power. Yet another set of projects corresponds more closely to land art, with one highly difficult, if not impossible, to realize. Smithson’s work Mud Flow (1969) was “1000 tons of mud dumped from a dump truck over a rocky or stony cliff.”57 Never achieved by the artist himself, it seems he set the students a near-impossible task, though

54 Huebler to Askevold, October 15, 1969.
55 Huebler to Askevold.
56 Lippard et al., “Projects Class, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.”
57 Lippard et al.
he himself had frequently imagined the work through preparatory drawings.\textsuperscript{58} Weiner’s project was less difficult to realize than Smithson’s, though perhaps more mysterious: “Removals Halfway Between the Equator and the North Pole. The extent of and documentation (if any) of the removals is completely in the domain of students.”\textsuperscript{59} In a letter Weiner sent to Askevold on July 7, 1969, he wrote “the above mentioned point is a few hundred miles above you. John or Audry Pearson can tell you where it is.”\textsuperscript{60} This information was not reproduced on the published Projects Class card, however; perhaps Askevold decided to withhold this piece of information in order to complicate the project somewhat for his students.

Interestingly, among the original submissions Weiner sent to Askevold for this inaugural Projects Class is a document titled “Works by Lawrence Weiner.”\textsuperscript{61} The first four of the five works are identical to those included in Weiner’s earlier exhibition at the Anna Leonowens Gallery (April 7–27, 1969), as discussed below, however the last is given as \textit{A boulder blasted by high explosives} (1969). In the spring 1969 exhibition in Halifax, this work was replaced with \textit{One quart heavy grade motor oil poured into the Gulf Stream} (1969). Whether the high explosives were simply too dangerous, costly or unfeasible, the quart of motor oil into the Gulf Stream was a far easier work to realize. In

\textsuperscript{58} See, for instance, \textit{Mud Flow (1000 Tons of Yellow Mud)} (1969), crayon and felt-tip pen over graphite on wove paper, 45 x 60.6 cm (17 11/16 x 23 7/8 in.), National Gallery of Art, 1992.38.1; \textit{Mud Flow} (1969), fiber-tipped pen and wax crayon on paper, 45.2 x 60.8 cm (17 13/16 x 23 15/16 in.), Whitney Museum of American Art, 77.99.

\textsuperscript{59} Lippard et al., “Projects Class, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.”

\textsuperscript{60} Lawrence Weiner to David Askevold, July 7, 1969, Projects Class, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (Original Submissions), Askevold Artist Box, Art Metropole Collection, Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.

\textsuperscript{61} Lawrence Weiner, “Works by Lawrence Weiner,” c 1969, Projects Class, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (Original Submissions), Askevold Artist Box, Art Metropole Collection, Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.
this way, like Smithson, Weiner wanted to see works that were, for him, difficult or even impossible to realize attempted by students in Halifax.

If Smithson and Weiner were both overly ambitious in their assignments to students, LeWitt was far more open, in keeping with the spirit of Barry and Huebler’s projects and leaving much to students’ interpretation. His instructions were to, “in any form chosen by the student,” and selecting no “more than two” realize “1. A work that uses the idea of error. 2. A work that uses the idea of incompleteness. 3. A work that uses the idea of infinity. 4. A work that uses the idea of completeness. 5. A work that uses the idea of stupidness. 6. A work that is subversive. 7. A work that is not original.” More conventional, and purely instructional, projects centred on photographic documentation, as with Lippard, Dibbets, and Graham’s submissions. Lippard’s consisted of daily group photograph sessions for a two-week period, with each resulting image accompanied by a written description. These are then presented together in a variety of possible configurations, as provided by Lippard. Dibbets’ project is similarly durational, though asked students to photograph the shadows cast by a tree in ten-minute intervals. Graham’s work *From Sunset to Sunrise* (1969), shares something with Dibbets interest in documenting natural phenomena, though is far more convoluted: specifying 160 photographed views, over a set two-day period in September, resulting in “a complete map of the sky.” More than documentary, though, Graham is interested in how we perceive space, suggesting that we would fail to notice the sky “if it were never disturbed by clouds and the darkness of night.”

62 Lippard et al., “Projects Class, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.”
63 Lippard et al.
Graham was, significantly, the first visitor Askevold brought to Halifax in connection with the Projects Class, around October 11, 1969. The proposal to submit a project for the course, which Graham received in a letter from Askevold, initially appealed to him in that “instead of being a student I was like the sort-of teacher, the sort-of artist, not even artist.” The ambiguity of Graham’s role, though quite clearly felt by him, was not shared by all of the artists who provided projects in the first year of the course. Mel Bochner’s project for the class, *Phenomenology of a Room* (1966), asked students to measure/consider (subjectively also) the classroom in every possible way they can think of, e.g., height, length, volume (walls, doors, floor, windows, etc.), temperature, humidity, thickness of walls, amount of illumination, number of objects, how it feels to be there, etc. It doesn’t matter to me what the specific details are or how they are presented.

In an unpublished letter from December 23, 1969, now in the Art Metropole Collection, Bochner thanks Askevold for sending a “batch of material” produced by students for the project, and writes, though “it is interesting, but somewhat disappointing in terms of what I was hoping for.” Bochner continues,

phenomenology is different in intent from phenomenalism. The type of data which your students gathered produces an incomprehensible bulk, but does not really convey the density of their experience with the various rooms.

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64 Hertz, “David Askevold,” 63.
66 Lippard et al., “Projects Class, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.”
67 Mel Bochner to David Askevold, December 23, 1969, Projects Class, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (Original Submissions), Askevold Artist Box, Art Metropole Collection, Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.
Since the project did not turn out as he had hoped, Bochner asked Askevold to pose a series of questions to the students related to the space, including “what specialized functions are performed here?” “I cannot consider my idea realized until this is done, but, of course, that is up to you. I would be happy to come up and conduct a short seminar (3-4 days) on the ideas involved if you think there would be any value in that. Please let me know what you are thinking,” Bochner wrote to Askevold. 68 It seems as though Bochner never travelled to the College to complete the project, and his desire for its closer realization never fulfilled.

Of the dozen projects realized in the inaugural Projects Class, the distance between the artist conceiving the project and students realizing it was perhaps best expressed through the simple installation by N.E. Thing Co., Ltd. of Teletype and Telecopier units in the Anna Leonowens Gallery from September 15-October 5, 1969, where “students carried out projects as they were received.” 69 Printouts of the projects were posted on the surrounding walls, and subsequently compiled in a book. 70

Though better known is the format of the Projects Class for its first year, for the academic year 1971–1972, Askevold spent a mini-sabbatical in London. 71 Covering for him, Askevold invited visiting artists to conduct a series of five-to-six week sessions: Vito Acconci, who was the general coordinator for the course taught two sessions, Dan Graham, Dennis Oppenheim and James Lee Byars, each taught a single session. 72

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68 Bochner to Askevold.
69 Lippard et al., “Projects Class, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.”
72 “I invited Dan Graham, Dennis Oppenheim, Vito Acconci, and James Lee Byars to take over my course, each being in residence for a period of approximately six weeks. This program was approved and I returned in the spring, overlapping with James Lee Byars.” Askevold, 13.
shift from purely instructional, distance-based projects, to relatively long-term residencies for artists, suggests a change in the course that is not often discussed in conventional histories of the program. Pedagogically, the use of visiting instructors is not nearly as radical as having instructions alone as stand-ins. Even so, the course was largely self-directed: the course description included the caveat that Projects Class was, as Ian Murray described it, “designed only for those students who are capable of a high degree of independent motivation and who can work on their own during those periods when no instructor is available.”73 The class officially ended in 1976, when the course was dropped from the College’s curriculum: Askevold had left to Los Angeles to take up a five-year contract teaching at the University of California.74

With its facilities ready by fall 1968, and fully operational by January 1969, the Lithography Workshop was established at NSCAD in clear emulation of an American model, even if it eventually departed from that model in significant ways.75 Eric Cameron, in his history of the workshop from 1982, went so far as to say that NSCAD at times “seemed to travesty the ideals of Tamarind.”76 June Wayne (1918–2011) had

73 I.M. [Ian Murray], “Projects Class: September, 1971-May, 1972,” August 1971, 4, Projects Class, Mezzanine Gallery Collection, NSCAD Collection, CAUL-CBUA Atlantic Islandora Repository Network, Nova Scotia College of Art & Design. Murray, then a student at NSCAD, prepared a pamphlet of sorts entitled Projects Class: September 1971–May 1972 (1971), which he compiled from various sources in August 1971. As a guide for students for the upcoming academic year, it was not intended to serve as a course description but rather, according to his preface, “a booklet of information of interest to the students in the course and to the faculty of the school.” I.M. [Ian Murray], 2. In the excerpt Murray included from the “Programs of Study,” the course is described as follows, “for students who do not want to specialize in a specific studio discipline. This course deals with traditional and current art concerns and also uses information from other sources. Means of problem-solving are employed which seek to avoid some of the presumptions of traditional media. The medium is considered as a vehicle which carries the content under consideration and naturally poses its own problems.” I.M. [Ian Murray], 3.

74 Stacey and Wylie, Eighty/twenty: 100 Years of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 84.

75 Wark, “Conceptual Lithography at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design,” 63.

established the Tamarind Workshop in Los Angeles in 1959 with the express goal to revivify lithography as a medium, making it available to artists throughout North America.\footnote{Gerald Ferguson, “A Professional Lithography Workshop,” \textit{Artscanada}, no. 27 (April 1970): 61. As Virginia Allen wrote in her introduction to the catalogue accompanying an exhibition of Tamarind prints organized by the Museum of Modern Art, New York (April 29–June 30, 1969), “the test of the value of the Tamarind program to artists and to lithography is that while few artists made lithographs in the 1950s, there are few in the 1960s who have not done so, either at Tamarind or at the workshops established as a consequence of the Tamarind program.” Virginia Allen and William S. Liberman, \textit{Tamarind Homage to Lithography} (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1969); in Ferguson, “A Professional Lithography Workshop,” 61.} While workshops modeled after Tamarind sprouted across the United States over the course of the 1960s, NSCAD’s iteration was exceptional in that it was the only such programme operating in a educational institution, and more than that, it was also the only such workshop in Canada.\footnote{Ferguson, “A Professional Lithography Workshop,” 61.} By the end of 1970, Tamarind was set to close its training facility, and NSCAD understood its role as carrying on not only Tamarind’s early pedagogical mission, but in “keeping lithography vital in the 70s.”\footnote{Ferguson, 61.} Both Jack Lemon, NSCAD workshop’s first director, and Robert Rogers, its first master printer, had first-hand experience at Tamarind.\footnote{Cameron, “The Lithography Workshop (1982),” 43. “Mr. Lemon predicted that within three years, Halifax will be the best place to study it on the North American continent. There are only two colleges teachings it in the United States now, he said.” “Says Lithography In Period of Renaissance,” \textit{Halifax Chronicle Herald}, January 6, 1969.}

While closely modeled after the Tamarind Workshop, as Cameron pointed out, NSCAD departed in significant ways from its exemplar. For one, the use of photographs and photographic transfer techniques “would have been frowned on at Tamarind”; at NSCAD, such work constituted as much as a third of the total output.\footnote{Cameron, “The Lithography Workshop (1982),” 49.} What is more, and as discussed above in connection with Cameron’s reading of Nelson Goodman’s distinction between autographic and allographic modes of art making, Cameron

suggested that in muddling the distinction between autographic and allographic, by relying on instructions rather than the presence of the artist themselves in the workshop, NSCAD had somehow corrupted the founding intention of Tamarind to improve the medium’s reputation. Over previous decades, particularly with the proliferation of offset lithography, the medium had been strongly associated with commercial, and not fine art, printing. Without the artist’s presence during printing, it was thought, quality suffered and the mechanical reproducibility of the medium together with potentially vast print-runs devalued fine art printmaking as a whole.

Between the Workshop’s founding in January 1969 and the end of 1972, some fifty-three prints or sets of prints were published at NSCAD. In addition, the Workshop produced three bookworks, preceding the foundation of the College’s Press in 1972. In an article introducing the Workshop to Artscanda readers from April 1970, Gerald Ferguson emphasized the significance of the shop to Canadian practicing artists. In fact, on the first page of the article, he only listed Canadian artists who had participated in the Workshop, omitting the considerable number of Americans who had made prints within the first year of its operation. “Because it is the only workshop in operation in Canada, its educational opportunities extend considerably beyond the bounds of the College,” Ferguson wrote. “Mindful of this responsibility, the first year’s activities have been

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devoted almost exclusively to Canadian artists. Already this year the shop has printed for Robert Murray, Iain Baxter, Gordon Rayner, David Bolduc, Greg Curnoe and Hugh Mackenzie.84 From May 1969 to May 1970, of the fifteen artists who made prints or books at the College five were American and ten were Canadian. However later in the Workshop’s operation, during 1971, for instance, eight of the participating artists were Canadian and while ten were American.85 Indeed, American artists were involved from the outset. In fact, the very first artist to produce a print in May 1969 at the Workshop was Dan Christensen (1942–2007), an American abstract painter, who had graduated from the Kansas City Art Institute in 1964, shortly before Ferguson, Askevold, and Kennedy had attended the school.86

Most of the Canadian artists seem to have travelled to Halifax—as may be expected—and engaged autographically in making their prints. By contrast, some of the College’s better known lithographs instantiated the allographic mode that was at odds with Tamarind’s founding ideals, relying on artists working from a distance rather than being present on the press. The most obvious example of this is LeWitt’s instructions for ten lithographs, which were drawn by students and subsequently exhibited alongside two of his wall drawings.87 However Dan Graham, Douglas Huebler, and Robert Ryman also worked allographically on their prints at NSCAD. Baldessari’s I Will Not Making Any More Boring Art (1971), presents something of a hybrid of autographic and allographic modes: while printed without his supervision, the source image was taken from a

84 Ferguson, 61.
85 See the chronology provided in Kennedy, The Last Art College: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1968-1978.
86 The second was Canadian Art McKay (May 1969), followed by American John Griefen (September 1969). Kennedy, 10, 18.
handwritten sample of text provided to Charlotte Townsend in the instructions for his accompanying exhibition. In contrast, prints by Joyce Wieland and Vito Acconci radically assert the presence of the artist’s body on the lithography stone itself—a testament to the proximity and autography that was far closer to June Wayne’s ideals.

Part of the tension, surely, that arose between certain of the participating artists’ allographic working methods and the founding tenets of the Tamarind Workshop have to do with basic strategies of conceptual art. Against the desire to increase the fine art reputation of prints as rarefied impressions, closely realized by the artist under their supervision, as was Wayne’s goal for Tamarind, artists such as Dan Graham, Robert Ryman, Sol LeWitt, and Douglas Huebler often delegated part or all of their printmaking to students, printers, or even in Huebler’s case, the collector. Yet in spite of these attempts to achieve distance from such a conventional mode of printmaking, as with the Tamarind Workshop’s example, as Blake Stimson has argued,

> the various ways in which conceptualism distanced itself from the material quality and commodity status of art—it’s rejection of art’s conventional object status, for example, and its attempt to eliminate or appropriate many of the institutions of art, such as the critic and the gallery—were based . . . on naive assumptions about the potential for avant-garde autonomy.

Alexander Alberro, in a similar vein, has argued convincingly that while conventional accounts suggest conceptual art “strove to negate the commodity status of art but failed . . . the idea that the political economy of conceptual art sought to eliminate the commodity status of the art object, while highly provocative, is mythical.” Artists and dealers struggled with how the works could be collected, Alberro continues, “but there was never

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88 Baldessari to Townsend, February 1, 1971.
a moment when they did not seek to market the art.”91 Even if, as Lippard wrote in her landmark *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (1973), certain of these prints made at the Lithography Workshop share a “deemphasis on material aspects (uniqueness, permanence, decorative attractiveness)” they remain rarified and desirable commodities.92 In the specific case of the Workshop, the art market’s then-keen interest in editioned prints was part of the cost-recovery model supporting its operation. There was considerable demand for fine art lithographs, as Ferguson suggests in his article introducing the workshop in *Artscanada*, both Pollock Gallery and Jerrold Morris International Gallery in Toronto had been bringing “lithographs of international merit” to the Canadian market for a number of years, supplying a ready market.93

A regular visitor to College, Dan Graham was the first artist to visit Halifax as part of Askevold’s Projects Class in fall 1969, and would return nearly ten more times throughout the 1970s and 1980s.94 Graham produced two prints for the Lithography Workshop: *Time Extended/Distance Extended* (October 1970), and *Homes for America* (May 1971), and he had been in Halifax around the production of both of these projects, first in October 8–15, 1970 and again between March 10–22, 1971.95 Of these works, the latter addresses more directly the question of distance, continuing an ongoing interest in use of art magazines as technical support for his work that began with his work *Schema* (1966).96 *Homes for America* appears as a magazine spread, including text and

91 Alberro, 4.
94 Stacey and Wylie, *Eighty/twenty: 100 Years of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design*, 79.
accompanying images of tract housing schemes. Arts Magazine had previously published Graham’s text, however in layout had removed all but one of the images. It was a desire to see a potential arrangement for the magazine piece that Graham had the College’s Design department design the full text on facing pages and all of the accompanying images. In an act of defamiliarization, however, placed centre on the verso page of the spread is a grey rectangle captioned “Moonstone Grey,” as Cameron has suggested, “the name of one of the colours in which the trade offered houses to its clients.” Reflecting on his magazine pieces more generally, Graham wrote in 1985, “through the actual experience of running a gallery, I learned that if a work of art wasn’t written about and reproduced in a magazine it would have difficulty attaining the status of ‘art.’”

Graham’s interest in magazines’ ability to confer value on works of art seems particularly well suited to the work taking place at NSCAD in the early 1970s. As most of the information students at the College encountered came “from books and magazines,” Askevold wrote in an undated typescript likely from around 1970, “I favored a policy where students were learning from working artists.” In an email exchange with Mario Garcia Torres, which took place between 2006 and 2007, Askevold elaborated this idea further: “what better way to gain information than to have artists present their own ideas, thoughts and works directly to students, instead of always reading art magazines . . . which are always based on fashion?” This dependence on

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98 Cameron, 53.
100 Askevold, “Projects Class,” 1–2.
magazines—with the information they published already sieved through a critical filter—was also of concern to Askevold’s colleague Gerald Ferguson, who wrote in the document that accompanied the Seth Siegelaub’s Halifax Conference (October 5–6, 1970) that,

when one is located away from major centres of contemporary art there is a tendency to become dependent on the art magazine as a primary information resource about Art Now [contemporary art]. The magazine format creates a false impression of what the art is about. Further, that information is usually filtered through the “eyes” of a critic. The result is a third-hand view of the art. While it is often impossible and very expensive to move the art, it is not difficult to move the artist. Today anyone can be anywhere in the world in a matter of hours.

In addition to delegating the layout of the print to the College’s Design department—in itself a gesture to undermine the artist’s hand and control of the precise visuality of his work—Graham’s decision to revisit a magazine work addressed well the College’s particular situation, and resulting dependencies, away from centres of the art world as conventionally understood.

While less attuned to the mechanisms by which the College was operating, and more clearly interested in process and form, Robert Ryman made two prints in relatively close succession in March and June 1971: Two Stones and Circle Lithograph (both 1971). Both works are instructional in nature. The first consists solely of the impressions of two inked

102 “List of Participants of The Halifax Conference,” October 5, 1970, The Halifax Conference, Mezzanine Gallery Collection, NSCAD Collection, CAUL-CBUA Atlantic Islandora Repository Network, Nova Scotia College of Art & Design. Still, Askevold encouraged wide reading, in 2011 saying “when I was teaching at NSCAD I tried to encourage reading and not necessarily to busy oneself with making things all of the time. To me it was more important for students to figure out what they wanted to do, and that was not necessarily about developing an art career.” Askevold and Torres, “The Language and the Object (2006-2007),” 85. Kennedy also encouraged the building of the library and archives at College: “Beyond classroom work his [Kennedy’s] program is oriented towards building archives, mainly art work and recent interviews. Included are extensive magazine and catalogue collections in the library, and video- and sound-tape documentaries of visiting artists.” Burnham, “Nova Scotia: Answers for Academia,” 56.
lithograph stones, the seam between them visible. The result is a spare, minimal impression of the means of production. Cameron describes the work as a “self-referential enquiry into its own nature as a print,” but it also is a work that curiously foregrounds an act of deskilling. Though requiring the master printer’s involvement on press, there is no technical requirement on Ryman’s part—simply the act of instruction. By instructing the printer to place two small stones adjacent and to print the results, Ryman points to the printmaking apparatus while at the same time obscuring his role, delegating the responsibility for the work to the printer. In this instance, as Jayne Wark has pointed out, the artist’s autographic marks are “completely absent.”

By contrast, autographic marks are fully apparent in LeWitt’s *Five Lithograph Projects with Variations*, a suite of seven two-colour and three five-colour lithographs in an edition of twenty-five, however they are the hands of NSCAD students Richards Jarden, Bill Power, Ellison Robertson, Susanne Paquette, Jon Young, Albert McNamara, and Tim Zuck, and not those of LeWitt himself. Printed between March 16–June 5, 1971, the suite of ten prints relies on an act of delegation closely aligned with the realization of LeWitt’s related site-responsive wall drawings. While it is unclear how closely other students followed the spirit of LeWitt’s instructions, rather than acting dutifully as surrogates for the artist, Jarden and Zuck took up their brief somewhat perversely: the two students interpreted the instructions, which LeWitt had mailed to

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103 “Two fairly small lithographic stones were clamped side by side in vertical position to form a larger horizontal rectangle divided by a narrow vertical gap in the middle; they were then inked and printed on square sheets of paper.” [Cameron 2012, 47]
106 Kennedy, “Introduction,” xviii. “Written instructions were sent by mail and handed over to seven students who made one drawing each directly onto the plate, from which the master printer then pulled an edition of twenty-five prints, adding the instructions, type-set, underneath.” Cameron, “The Lithography Workshop (1982),” 46. “The completed edition was sent to the artist for his approval and signature. In the event, LeWitt accepted and signed every edition.” Cameron, 47.
Halifax, so that the resulting drawings, according to Kennedy “did not at all carry the
LeWitt ‘look.’” Kennedy continues,

In fact, Jarden’s drawing resembled a Stella concentric square piece, while the Zuck work
looked like a Wall Street up-and-down, boom-and-bust graph. When LeWitt was presented
with the artist’s proofs for his signature, he at first balked at signing these two works. But
recognizing the trap he faced—for he also had written, “Conceptual art is only good if the
idea is good”—LeWitt approved the edition. In addition to being beautiful works, the
resulting lithographs capture an important and inadvertently ironic moment in the
development of conceptual art. Not only had LeWitt been led to an unexpected form of
expression, but students had pushed the ambiguities surround the creative act to a new
level.

LeWitt’s own extensive writing and thinking about conceptual art, most notably in his
“Sentences on Conceptual Art” (1969), give some indication of what Kennedy calls the
“trap” he faced on seeing the resulting works. Among the declarations LeWitt made was
that “the artist may not necessarily understand his own art. His perception is neither
better nor worse than that of others.” And that “once the idea of the piece is established
in the artist’s mind and the final form is decided, the process is carried out blindly. There
are many side effects that the artist cannot imagine.” Cameron, for one, understood the
use of assistants as a “means of distancing himself from its production so that he cannot
compromise the integrity of the idea.”

LeWitt’s “Sentences” also share sentiments with Bochner’s earlier essay “Serial
Art, Systems, Solipsism” (1967), wherein he stresses the importance of “rigorous

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108 Kennedy, xviii.
110 LeWitt, 107.
governing logics rather than on personal decision making.”\textsuperscript{112} In spite of the students’ attempts to make the prints look as un-LeWittian as possible, given the artist’s own maxim to never adjust, once established, the “governing set of decisions,” to quote Bochner again, to “any predetermined ideas of how a work of art should look.”\textsuperscript{113}

In a publication accompanying an exhibition held in Halifax in June 1972, where the ten lithographs were documented along with two of LeWitt’s wall drawings, the written instructions for the prints are reproduced but not the resulting images. The publication also dutifully reproduces LeWitt’s annotated diagrams for his wall drawings, along with an image of the complete work on facing pages. Each of the two photographs of the wall drawing itself are captioned “Draftman: Hazel Boudreau.”\textsuperscript{114} The direct correspondence between diagram and completed work suggests a certain equivalency. The diagrams, however, are uncaptioned and otherwise unattributed, the assumption being, of course, they are the hand of the author given in the title of the publication.

For Huebler’s first lithograph made at NSCAD, \textit{Location Piece #150 (May 1973)} (Fig. 8.3), he asked an unnamed collaborator in Montreal “to participate with the artist in the fabrication of this work.” After he set the parameters, the project involved the participation of said collaborator, but also the resulting owner of the print. In a convoluted series of instructions, both his collaborator and the owner determined the content of the work, the latter customizing it, and so making it “a print that is an ‘original,’” as Huebler wrote. In March 1969, Huebler asked the collaborator to carry out three actions: first, to “photograph an object or place that is: Beautiful, Boring, Not

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Bochner, 101.
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Beautiful, Silent, Bland, Noisy, Erotic, Funny, Picturesque, ‘Your Choice,’” and to send him the negatives, along with the dates and times each photograph was taken. Second, to “tell an important secret . . . record time and place, do not sign. Seal.” And finally, to “define a neutral shape in Montreal on map . . . visit the location, make 2 [in.] square rubbing . . . photograph surface.”¹¹⁵ After Huebler received the results of these three actions from his collaborator in Montreal, in April 1969 he photographed the three sections, along with the typewritten instructions. The first section corresponds to the first question, though with the negatives undeveloped and illegible in his resulting image; the second consisting of the secret, which he burned, “the ashes have been mixed with ink of the same colour as the original patterned paper within which it was sealed: in that manner its essence is forever embodied in this work.” The secret is signified only by this material transubstantiation only, the image is dumb and is known only to Huebler. Finally, the third section reproduces the map of Montreal, the rubbing, and another illegible negative.

These complex actions realized, the print remains to be completed by the purchaser: “it is the responsibility of its owner to complete this print,” as Huebler writes. The owner chooses a negative from the first section, indicated only by a random letter, and informs Huebler, who sends an 11 x 14 inch enlargement of the negative. The owner then attaches the photograph to the print, and writes in the caption themselves: deciding whether the photograph appears to them “Beautiful, Boring, Not Beautiful,” etc. “Whatever the process produces will join with the reproduced images and this statement as the final form of this piece.”

Huebler’s work depends not only on participation from two other individuals, it is also carried out at a distance, depending on the owner to realize the work. Even more

¹¹⁵ These instructions, quoted here and below, are reproduced on the work itself.
than works realized by students at the Workshop and approved by the artist (as with LeWitt’s project, for instance), Huebler will never know the final appearance of his work, in spite of pre-emptively appending his signature and marking the edition on the print’s primary support. This process pushes the allographic mode even further than previously conceived by artists in the Lithography Workshop.

For a subsequent work, which Huebler realized a couple of months after the print described above, *Location Piece #25* (June 1973), he simplified the process but still depended on the work’s owner to complete the print. While in Rome on March 23, 1973, Huebler found the location from which a photograph on a postcard of the Trevi Fountain was taken. As his camera was unable to shoot the entirety of the image, he took six images and made a composite photograph, which he then reproduced in his print. As he writes in the accompanying statement, “as reproduction of the postcard itself is forbidden by [copyright] law its inclusion as another aspect of this work will be in the form of an ‘original’ attached to this print in the box on the right.”

Once the owner purchased Huebler’s lithograph, they send him their address and a version of the postcard is sent to them from Rome, which they then must attach to complete the work. In this way, distance is embedded in the very material of the work—the postcard is sent from Rome, the subject of the image it bears. Just as the paper upon which the collaborator’s secret was written is burned by Huebler and its ashes mixed with the ink in *Location Piece #150*, there is an alchemical quality to the aura of the postcard itself travelling from its place of origin to the owner by mail, accumulating whatever

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postmarks, folds, and damage it incurs in transit. One can hardly imagine a better metaphor than the mailed postcard for referencing geographical distance in a work.

Baldessari’s *I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art* was made at the Workshop in May 1971, and stands as something of an exceptional case as regards allographic and autographic modes at the College, departing from the purely instructional or collaborative works described above. While produced without Baldessari’s supervision, or indeed, even his direct involvement, it nevertheless turns quite precisely on the autographic quality of an image he had provided as a template for the student-copyists in his eponymous exhibition at the Mezzanine Gallery, which ran April 1–10, 1971. As described in the catalogue raisonné for his prints, Baldessari recounted the origins of the print—which was his very first—on a notecard found in his studio:

This piece was for an exhibit I was asked to make at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. Since there was no money for me to go there to do the show, I asked that the walls remain bare, and any one [sic] that wanted to write this sentence on the walls for as many times as they wished, could do so. The idea was a Christian one of atonement, of punishment of oneself for one’s sins and of public confession. At the end of the show, the walls were fairly well covered. The genesis was my dissatisfaction with the fallout of Minimalism.

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118 On Kawara’s series, *I Am Still Alive*, which he began in 1969, is likely the best-known use of this device, and one that Huebler was surely aware when he realized his work in 1973.

119 This description departs from the instructions provided to Townsend in correspondence, which are quoted below. Sharon Coplan Hurowitz, John Baldessari, and Wendy Weitman, *John Baldessari: A Catalogue Raisonné of Prints and Multiples, 1971-2007* (Manchester, Vt: Hudson Hills Press, 2009), 62. “In the same year, Baldessari made a black-and-white videotape of the same name (Electronic Arts Intermix [EAI], New York) where the artist (shown only by his hands) performs the act of writing the sentence repeatedly with pen and paper. While the lithograph was made without direct supervision of the artist, Baldessari provided the imagery, which is the repeated sentence in his handwriting.” Hurowitz, Baldessari, and Weitman, 62.
As discussed below, in connection with the exhibition, Baldessari’s “dissatisfaction” was registered by parodying not only the bland content of minimal sculpture, but also the very act of delegated fabrication. As if testing the limits of the unsupervised execution of a work, the exhibition was visually varied, with different hands and degrees of interest and attention inscribed on the walls. Against minimalism’s carefully rendered objects, the Mezzanine Gallery’s walls were irregularly and almost haphazardly marked: not only with his words, but errant text, as well. In a somewhat inconsistent, even perverse, play on Baldessari’s critique of minimalism’s aestheticized object, in deciding to use Baldessari’s holographic writing sample, the Lithography workshop asserted the hand of the artist—and an artful hand at that. This contradiction, seen especially in comparing the processes of organizing the exhibition with those of making the lithograph, point to an ambivalence between allographic and autographic prints realized at the Workshop during this period.

Against these examples of allographic works produced at the Workshop—those prints realized at a distance, by instruction, or using student- or printer-delegates—there are two sets of works from this period that are resolutely autographic: the works made by Joyce Wieland and Vito Acconci radically assert the presence of the artist’s body on press. Although readings of Wieland’s O Canada (December 1970)—where she kisses the lithography stone with lips pursed while singing the national anthem—have often centred on her Canadian nationalism and attendant love for the land, taken in the context

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120 Marcuse and Gill to Baldessari, April 7, 1971.
of prints being produced just before her arrival as a visiting artist in Halifax, Wieland’s work is also a declaration of her physical presence.\textsuperscript{121}

Acconci realized his prints during a visit to take part in Askevold’s Projects Class, between February 10–21, 1971.\textsuperscript{122} Conceiving three works, which were printed over the following four months, Gerald Ferguson also commissioned Acconci to bite him, and have the indexical marks tattooed permanently on his body, with the work \textit{Trademark Utilization (Trademarket)} (1971).\textsuperscript{123} Acconci’s prints, \textit{Trademarks} (February 1971) and \textit{Kiss-Off} (June 1971), for Wark at least, seem clearly to have been made in response to Wieland’s work from two months earlier.\textsuperscript{124} Later still, for \textit{Touch Stone (For VL)} (June 1972), Acconci imagined himself massaging the woman he dedicated the work to, as he rubbed ink into the stone.\textsuperscript{125} If Wieland’s \textit{O Canada} subtly registers the erotics of nationalism, this last print by Acconci demonstrates a far more bodily engagement with the lithography stone as a fetish object or surrogate lover.\textsuperscript{126}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{121} For instance, the fact that lithography uses a stone is significant for Cameron: “It is important that the print was made on stone since the stone represents metonymically the earth from which it came (though it actually came from Bavaria rather than Canada), and the kissing of the stone becomes an act of ritual homage in which sexual connotations are barely sublimated beneath the passions of true patriot love,” Cameron, “The Lithography Workshop (1982),” 51. Though hers was the twenty-fourth print made in the Workshop, Wieland was the first woman. Wark, “Conceptual Lithography at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design,” 78.
\item \textsuperscript{122} Kennedy, \textit{The Last Art College: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1968-1978}, 84.
\item \textsuperscript{123} Kennedy, 84–85.
\item \textsuperscript{124} Wark, “Conceptual Lithography at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design,” 79. “While Wieland had applied her ‘speaking lips’ to the stone in a way that indexed her insistently feminine authorship, Acconci first applied lipstick to feminize his male body and then wiped it off on the litho stone in a process he describes in the text on his print as ‘rubbing off my female characteristics, ‘cleaning myself up.’” Wark, 80–81.
\item \textsuperscript{125} Cameron, “The Lithography Workshop (1982),” 51.
\item \textsuperscript{126} Askevold, “The Projects Class: History,” 13. Just as Askevold had described the relationship of artists to students in his Projects Class as that of authors to apprentices, as discussed above, this model of student apprenticeship also found expression in the Lithography Workshop. This power imbalance between the conceiver and maker of the print drew on the history of the “artistically backward Tamarind Workshop,” according to a critic writing in \textit{New Canada}, “where artists distain manual work and turn the actual labour of printing over to workers and students.” “CAR Demands Quota in Art Schools,” 6. The critic continues, “Sounds like a racket? In fact, however, Ferguson has more on his mind than money. As head of the department he can make the facilities available to his buddies, degenerates like Vito Acconci, a Greenwich
\end{itemize}
The Workshop continued to stage encounters between artists and students into mid-1970s, when, as Kennedy later recalled, “I felt for a number of reasons it might better be put to rest. The workshop was expensive and it was taking funds away from the NSCAD Press, with which it operated concurrently for three years.” Kennedy continues, “the press was becoming a more important activity, more in tune with current developments in the art world.” The Workshop had initially published “several small books,” for the most part “modest productions with white covers,” as Ferguson described them. As forerunners to the NSCAD Press, these books embedded within the Lithography Workshop, practically since its outset, the germ of a larger publishing house.

If the Lithography Workshop realized projects both allographically and autographically, to continue to borrow Cameron’s useful distinction from Nelson Goodman, the latter was a far more conventional approach to printmaking, closer to the founding ideals of the Tamarind Workshop. In a similar way, the activities of the Mezzanine Gallery also

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Village poet who makes lithos by wiping his lipstick off on his hands (from his lips, of course!) and then smears his hand on the plate. By contrast, the Workshop’s organizers saw the apprenticeship model as a way of “bringing students in contact with the reality of contemporary art production in the most direct and meaningful way,” as Cameron wrote in 1982. Cameron, “The Lithography Workshop (1982),” 43. Or as Kennedy put it, “students would have direct contact with professional artists.” Kennedy, “Introduction,” xvii.

127 Kennedy, “Introduction,” xix. “In the end, 191 prints by 76 artists, many of whom were relatively unknown at the time of their invitation to the College, were produced in the Lithography Workshop.” Kennedy, xviii.


129 Ferguson credits Dan Graham as providing the impetus for the Press, saying “burn the paintings and keep the books.” Graham’s interest in book-works well predates his involvement with the College: in 1967, he wrote an appreciation of Robert Morris’s Card File (1962), with the work of Marcel Duchamp and Stephane Mallarmé as important precursors. Dan Graham, “The Artist as Bookmaker (II): The Book as Object,” Arts Magazine 41, no. 8 (Summer 1967): 23. “It was Dan Graham, an artist who had been affiliated with the College since 1970, when he had his first solo show in the Anna Leonowens Gallery, who suggested that the publication of books would be a viable, timely, and suitable enterprise for the College to embark upon. He also suggested Kasper Koenig as the person best suited to head such a venture.” Kennedy, “Introduction,” xix–xx.
operated on two very different registers. The Mezzanine Gallery, a twenty by twenty-nine foot space adjacent to, and overlooking, the Anna Leonowens Gallery, opened its doors in October 1970.\(^\text{130}\) As Charlotte Townsend, director from 1970 to 1973, wrote in 1970, it was a “facility for the showing/demonstration/performance of art information/works/projects etc.”\(^\text{131}\) Townsend was, at least by her own account, not a meddlesome director, intent to leave the exhibition format and selection of work to artists themselves. More than that, she was also open to a variety of artists—students, faculty, and visitors—maintaining that the space was “open to all submissions and suggestions.”\(^\text{132}\) She conceived it in 1970, at least, as a space which could assist both students and more established artists in elaborating their own practices within an “open and volatile situation within an education institution.”\(^\text{133}\) The reference to the space as a facility in Townsend’s description is intentional; later she wrote “we preferred to call the Mezzanine a ‘facility’ rather than ‘gallery,’ with all of the attendant connotations, since it is not only in but also through it that work has been made and seen.”\(^\text{134}\) In this vein, facilitator might be a more apt title for Townsend than director, at least in certain cases: signaling, as it does, her varied roles as exhibitions were either conceived by students or


\(^{132}\) Townsend, “Mandate of the Mezzanine Gallery,” 1.

\(^{133}\) Townsend, “Information about the Mezzanine Gallery.”

faculty at the College or working as a collaborator with artists at a distance. Whatever her title, Townsend was astonishingly productive: between 1970 and 1972 alone, she facilitated some seventy-six exhibitions.

The means by which work was realized for the gallery were varied. In the first six months of operation, the gallery displayed “art by telex, by mail, by telephone, on film, video tape and audio tape, in print and in person.” It is telling, but perhaps only suggestively so, that the artist’s presence “in person” comes last on Townsend’s list. Although this alone does not suggest that Townsend privileged mediated encounters, it is remarkably consistent, as will be seen, with her early programming of the space. This modest space also benefitted from close links with departments and resources across the College, which meant extensions of actual exhibition space, but also technologies such as film, slides, audio and video equipment, telex machines, telephones and postal services, access to publications and not least, willing and often enthusiastic participation from the student body. This porosity between the gallery and the school more broadly was signaled by, as Townsend recounted much later, “book racks for publications, a pin-board for the steady stream of printed matter, and easy access to equipment from the school’s Audio-Visual Department.”

Over the course of the Mezzanine Gallery’s operation, a number of exhibitions embodied a certain model of delegation, designating in many instances Townsend herself as more than a facilitator, but as part-collaborator in realizing artists’ works and projects.

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135 In some respects, the gallery prefigured characteristics of artist-run space in Canada, which as Robert Stacey and Liz Wylie suggest, “in the early 1970s were only in nascent form.” Stacey and Wylie, *Eighty/twenty: 100 Years of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design*, 82.
137 Townsend, “Mandate of the Mezzanine Gallery,” 1.
Though prefiguring the founding of the Mezzanine Gallery itself, Lawrence Weiner’s 1969 exhibition sets an important precedent in this regard. Townsend’s involvement in a series of exhibitions, beginning with Vito Acconci in 1970, through John Baldessari in 1971, Eleanor Antin in 1972 and Bas Jan Ader in 1973, all demonstrate something of the importance of working from a distance in terms of the facility’s programming.

Among the earliest New York-based artists to realize an exhibition in Halifax was Lawrence Weiner. Though preceded earlier in the month by a performance by James Lee Byars, *Two in a Hat* (April 1–3, 1969) simultaneous with his friend Rex Lau’s exhibition of “performance residue,” Weiner’s *5 Works* (April 7–27, 1969) may justifiably be placed at the outset of a sequence of exhibition programming of conceptual art at the College. Although it has often been cited that Weiner’s “first one-artist exhibition was held at the Mezzanine Gallery in 1969,” it was in fact held in the adjacent Anna Leonowens Gallery, and preceded Townsend’s tenure as director. The exhibition came about through Gerald Ferguson. As he recalled in 1994, “for some time, I had been anxious to meet Weiner and show him my work to see if, in any way, it coincided with his interests.” Ferguson met Weiner in January 1969 at the exhibition organized by Seth Siegelaub known variously as *January 5-31, 1969* or *The January Show*, often considered among the earliest conceptual art exhibitions. “I contracted him to do an exhibition at the College in April 1969,” Ferguson later recalled, “I believe this was Lawrence’s first

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139 Stacey and Wylie, *Eighty/twenty: 100 Years of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design*, 79.
140 Ferguson, “The 1968-1969 Works,” 13. “Weiner’s response to my work was cool. I took his nod, however, as a pass. Positive feedback was difficult to come by.” Ferguson, 15.
public gallery one man show.”¹⁴² For Siegelaub’s exhibition in New York, as with the Halifax show a few months later, “the exhibition consists of (the ideas communicated in) the catalogue; the physical presence (or the work) is supplementary to the catalogue,” as described by Bruce Altshuler.¹⁴³ The exhibition consisted of work by four artists, all of whom would eventually be connected with the College: Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, and Lawrence Weiner.¹⁴⁴

When Weiner was in Halifax in April 1969, he realized for a second time one of the eight works shown in January 1969: One standard Air Force dye marker thrown into the sea (1968). Immediately after Weiner threw the dye marker, a student from the College, Paul Jeddrie, jumped into the water to retrieve it. When asked by Harris Sullivan, a reporter from CJICH television in Halifax, who was interviewing Weiner and had watched the work being made, why he had retrieved the marker, Jeddrie replied “I wanted to get this and I think I’ll make a presentation or a donation on my behalf, as Mr. Weiner suggested, to the college’s permanent collection.”¹⁴⁵ Jeddrie seemed to have missed the point, somewhat, as Weiner went on to explain to Sullivan, “because when asked what you have after it’s done, what does the college have, all it will have is a souvenir of a

¹⁴³ Altshuler, “Art by Instruction and the Pre-History of Do It,” 35.
¹⁴⁴ Siegelaub also organized an exhibition for the Centre for Communication and the Arts at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver (May 19–June 19, 1969). The exhibition included work by Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin, Robert Barry, Jan Dibbets, Douglas Huebler, Stephen Kaltenbach, Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, N.E. Thing Co. Ltd., and Lawrence Weiner, and was realized using various communication technologies throughout the University. As part of the show, a symposium was held on June 17, 1969 in the University’s theatre by “telephone hook-up” between artists in New York, Ottawa, and Burnaby. Seth Siegelaub, ed., Catalogue for the Exhibition Burnaby, British Columbia: Centre for Communication and the Arts, Simon Fraser University, 19 May - 19 June 1969, 1969.
¹⁴⁵ Lawrence Weiner, Lawrence Weiner Interview, interview by Harris Sullivan, April 1969, 1, Artists’ Files, Mezzanine Gallery Collection, NSCAD Collection, CAUL-CBUA Atlantic Islandora Repository Network, Nova Scotia College of Art & Design.
process, it will be like having an artist’s brush . . . it’s a souvenir. It’s nothing. It’s not art. It has no relevance.”

The exhibition at Anna Leonowens consisted of five works, not including *Dye marker*, prefaced in the accompanying publication by Weiner’s “Declaration of Intent” (1968), which had been published the previous year. With his declaration Weiner effectively set about, in Alexander Alberro’s words, “abolishing the traditional notion of artist-centered production.” In this way, the statement is particularly germane to a discussion of works realized in Halifax, at a distance and without the hand of the artist. Although Weiner realized his exhibition himself, the instructional nature of his practice established a precedent that was permissive, even perhaps inclined toward, works fabricated by those other than the artist. As it appeared in *5 Works*, Weiner’s statement read:

> The artist may construct the piece.
> The piece may be fabricated.
> The piece need not be built.
> Each being equal and consistent with the intent of the artist the decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership.

The first of the three statements conveys a more conventional understanding of the role of the artist, although Weiner alludes to the potential to either construct, or not construct, the work. However the second and third more directly address the use of delegated

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146 Weiner, 1. “There is an intellectual skill, if you want to call it a skill. I’d much rather not call it skill, but there’s something that’s thought about, something that’s worked on. There’s just no technical skill involved. But there’s no unique object. The whole point is that I’m dealing in art which does not make a unique object.”
fabrication and the potential for instructions alone to stand as a fully realized work. As Alberro has argued, with this declaration Weiner effectively destabilized the “myth of authority and authorship”—a gesture encountered repeatedly through projects at the Mezzanine Gallery in the period that followed Weiner’s exhibition.150 Though all three of Weiner’s statements allude to the artist’s possible absence—the ambiguity of the first statement leaves the making of the work, and the maker, open to interpretation—the last addresses most directly the absentee artist. It is related, too, to the notion of deskilling, without the hand of the artist, technique can no longer be relied upon to realize a work.

The works Weiner chose for his Halifax exhibition were closely related to those shown in Siegelaub’s exhibition, held a few months earlier, and included *A shallow trench dug from high water mark to low tide mark upon a North Atlantic beach*, 1969; *A wall pitted by a single air rifle shot*, 1969; *Five gallons water base tempa [sic] paint poured directly upon the floor and allowed to remain for the duration of the exhibition*, 1969; *Two common steel nails driven into the floor one directly in line with the other at points determined at the time of installation*, 1969; and *One quart heavy grade motor oil poured into the Gulf Stream*, 1969.151 Certain of these works respond to Halifax’s location on the Atlantic, notably the first and last, as well as the *Dye marker*, though again, not listed as part of the exhibition proper.152 Weiner’s early exhibition at the Anna Leonowens, and indeed his method of working, clearly underlies the Askevold’s development of the Projects Class, but it also sets the course for an exhibition programme.

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151 Weiner, “5 Works.” The collections are given as, respectively, freehold; Seth Siegelaub, New York; NSCAD; the last two have no collection information given.
premised on instruction and the absent artist: when Townsend began programming the following year, there were a number of exhibitions premised on this absence.

When, in October 1970, the Mezzanine Gallery opened with an exhibition of Bruce McLean’s work *King for a Day + 999 other pieces-works-stuff, etc.* (October 1970), it was in part, at least according to Townsend, Weiner’s example of the previous year that allowed for a selection of found objects to be exhibited as art. As Townsend later recalled, the idea that “anything you say is art is art . . . [was] a widely held view and axiomatic at the College since Lawrence Weiner’s visit in 1969.”153

Following Weiner’s exhibition, among the next events of “real consequence to the school’s artistic development,” again according to Townsend, was the exhibition of Vito Acconci’s work held at the Mezzanine Gallery titled *Accessibilities* (December 1–15, 1970).154 According to an unpublished statement written by Acconci on the exhibition, it was organized into four parts.155 The first three, under the heading “Accessibilities,” included some seven films, four videos, and the work *Roll*, a thirty-foot wide by three-foot high sheet of paper, which Acconci attached to the gallery wall and used throughout the course of the exhibition to record ideas while he was in Halifax.156

The second part of the exhibition, called *Doubles*, was a more complex project involving the use of NSCAD students to replicate his work through instructions and diagrams. For *Doubles*, Acconci sought out surrogates to carry out performances in Halifax roughly simultaneous to his enacting them in New York. As he wrote in an

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156 Acconci. The films were *Opening Piece, Blindfolded Catching Piece, Hand and Mouth Piece, Soap and Eyes Piece, Flour and Breath, Jumps, and Circle*. The videos were *Melody, Breathing Space, Running Tape*, and *Hand and Mouth*. 343
undated project description, likely from late 1970, “during the exhibition, I will be carrying out whatever pieces I would have ordinarily carried out. The pieces will be work in which I am the visible performer—pieces that can be considered ‘private.’” He continues,

The Nova Scotia show will be used as a copying device: Schemas of work—verbal descriptions, diagrams—will be sent to Nova Scotia; each piece is intended to be duplicated—I would like someone to perform the piece, using my description and whatever medium I have used. When the Nova Scotia version of the work is completed, it should be sent to me. The piece will exist, then, both in original form and in duplicated.

Acconci appends three notes to the bottom of the description: first, certain works may be assigned to certain students, “if more convenient”; second, if the College finds it too difficult to process the film, they can send it to him unprocessed; and finally, if both original and copy, that is his version and the NSCAD version, are produced before the exhibition closes, he will send both to Nova Scotia to be exhibited. It is unclear, based on the exhibition archives, if this last intended outcome was ever realized, however it is possible that when he returned to Halifax in February 1971, he brought the films and tapes with him.

158 Acconci.
159 Acconci.
160 Anticipating the trip from New York to Halifax to take part in Projects Class (February 10–21, 1971), Acconci produced a short text entitled “Statement regarding trip to Halifax” (1971). Vito Acconci, “Statement Regarding Trip to Halifax,” 1971, Artists’ Files, Mezzanine Gallery Collection, NSCAD Collection, CAUL-CBUA Atlantic Islandora Repository Network, Nova Scotia College of Art & Design. For an account of the trip, see Kennedy, The Last Art College: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1968-1978, 84–85. If a work, it is anticipatory and was never realized, as it was premised on his death by plane in February 1971 between New York and Halifax. Acconci writes, “flying scares me . . . I am afraid that I will die on the trip to or from Halifax.” Accordingly, before leaving New York he gave an envelope to the Registrar at the School of Visual Arts, where he was teaching at the time, with the instructions that in the event of his death, “the envelope can be picked up by the first person who calls for it; he will be free to use my apartment, and its contents, any way he wishes.” Acconci, “Statement Regarding Trip to Halifax.”
While the first three parts of the exhibition stage proximity—films, videos, and a sheet of paper that he himself inscribes, resolutely an autographic gesture—the last part is premised on his separation from Halifax. Acconci devised an approach to his practice which for the most part is premised on embodiment: his performances and the films and videos that document them, all insist, quite emphatically, on his body and its limits. Often durational, they both stage and require his presence in a space. While film and video is one way around his actual proximity, so, too, is the delegation of works to surrogates. By assigning tasks to copyists, much like LeWitt’s instructions for the Lithography Workshop or, indeed, Askevold’s submissions from artists for the first year of the Projects Class, Acconci conceived a work that depended on distance.

Baldessari’s exhibition for the Mezzanine, which took place April 1–10, 1971, also depended on student-copyists, albeit in a far more dramatic staging of delegated labour. Though on view for a little more than a week, by the close of the exhibition, the phrase “I will not make any more boring art” had been written some 4,000 times, in columns, from floor to ceiling throughout the space. As a cliché pedagogical exercise, to inscribe punitively the same words over and over parodied the serial repetition and delegation of minimal art, as discuss above in connection with the related lithograph realized at the Workshop. By turning students into mere copyists, Baldessari was also alluded to a long tradition of academic training in the arts.

“I have no idea what your gallery looks like and I know you do not have much money for shows so that conditions my ideas,” John Baldessari wrote to Charlotte Townsend on February 1, 1971. “It was tough making a decision about what I wanted to

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do because I suppose there is never enough opportunity to do all those pieces one wants
do. Some good ideas are always waiting impatiently in the wings.”

Baldessari’s project for Mezzanine Gallery, now better known through the associated print realized at
the Lithography Workshop, discussed above, was conditioned at its outset by these two
unknowns: what the gallery looked like and how much money was available to him. As a
result, his “punishment piece” is barely contingent on the gallery space and exacts almost
no material cost. Whereas artists such as Flavin and Andre “exhibit acute awareness of
the phenomenology of rooms,” according to Mel Bochner in his essay “Serial Art,
Systems, Solipsism” (1968), Baldessari’s instructions treat the room as nonspecific
support. The text need be arranged in columns, but otherwise the spatial qualities of the
gallery space are inconsequential.

If the space and materials required for the work were minimal, Baldessari’s project
did depend on considerable, and ideally voluntary, labour. The work, Baldessari wrote,

will require a surrogate(s) since I can’t be there to take my self-imposed punishment but
that’s o.k. since the theory is that punishment should be instructive to others. And there’s
precedent for it—Christ being punished for our sins, and think of all the others. So some
students as scapegoats are necessary. If you can’t induce anyone to be sacrificial and take
my sins upon there [sic] shoulders, then use whatever funds there are ($50?) to pay
someone as a mercenary.

The text, “I will not make any more boring art,” was to be written floor to ceiling by “one
or more people, one sentence under another” in at least one column before the exhibition
opened on April 1, 1971 (Fig. 8.4). The work would then continue each day for the run

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163 Baldessari to Townsend, February 1, 1971.
165 Baldessari to Townsend, February 1, 1971.
of the show. As if to anticipate short-cuts, Baldessari stipulated that, “the sentences should be hand-written, clearly written with correct spelling.” He continued,

This self-flagellation of mine should not be meted out by you as punishment to students that have done there [sic] art badly but only to holy innocents who will willingly take on my sins and suffer the punishment or who will do it for pay but it should be money that would normally go to me. I prefer the former—that you will find students that will freely take on my punishment.166

Two such students wrote to Baldessari, Gary Marcuse and Dennis Gill, on April 7, 1971. Working as surrogates, Marcuse and Gill had “some questions” they wanted to put to their instructor. One response to the task set to them was “the visual problem of filling up the designated space. Write large. Another solution was writing in circles or circling words or writing ‘I will if I like’ etc.”167 While the two students switched to working overnight in the gallery, others “got bored and left.” It was the boredom, however, that appealed to Marcuse and Gill: they paraphrase John Cage, “do something boring and ideas will fly into your head like birds,” and conclude that the show is “sheer repetition of the concept of boring activity.”168 The students deduce that they share with Baldessari “a wee touch of masochism.”

Much of Townsend’s programming depended on recommendations solicited from artists and colleagues, and in many cases, Townsend never met the artists for whom she organized exhibitions. This approach, depending on a kind of networked word-of-mouth, is consistent with how Askevold invited the first group of artists for the Projects Class, as

166 Baldessari to Townsend.
167 Marcuse and Gill to Baldessari, April 7, 1971.
168 Marcuse and Gill to Baldessari. The reference is to the closing lines of “Experimental Music,” which was published in *Silence* (1961): “I was explaining at the New School that the way to get ideas is to do something boring. For instance, composing in such a way that the process of composing is boring induces ideas. They fly into one’s head like birds,” John Cage, “Experimental Music (1957),” in *Silence: Lectures and Writings by John Cage* (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 12.
discussed above. In a letter to Townsend from a correspondent known simply as Judy, from August 27, 1971, she suggests a number of women artists for exhibitions at the Mezzanine, including Adrian Piper and Alice Aycock, writing they would “be able to use Mezzanine to advantage.”169 “What about,” Judy continues, “Elaine Baxter as a person on her own?” She provides addresses for various artists, and recommends Cecile Abish, Brenda Miller, and Jackie Winsor.170 “Do you know Eleanor Antin’s work? Her 100 boots series? And a library card piece that’s terrific sounding,” Judy continued. Townsend would end up inviting Piper, Aycock, Winsor and Antin to realize exhibitions at the Mezzanine, indicating just how closely recommendations could be followed.

Townsend’s decision to programme a number of women artists, particularly following summer 1971, was likely an attempt to redress the near-systematic exclusion of women from College activities during the period. During the Halifax Conference (October 5–6, 1970), for instance, Kennedy received a telegram “from New York signed by a number of women. Although I only recognized the name of Lucy Lippard, the message was short, stinging, and to the point. It condemned the conference organizers for not including women as participants.”171 Whether this was Townsend’s signal to begin inviting more women artists to participate in the Mezzanine Gallery, she would extend invitations to a number of women artists beginning in summer 1971.

170 “God knows what Jackie [inserted by hand: W.] will do there but she’s definitely good.” to Townsend.
171 Kennedy continues, “This telegram was important because it served as a wake-up call for the College and for me. From this point forward, the representation of women would play an increasingly important role in the recruitment of faculty and visitors as well as in the development of academic programs and employment policies within the College.” Garry Neill Kennedy, “The Halifax Conference,” in The Last Art College: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1968-1978 (Halifax; Cambridge, MA: Art Gallery of Nova Scotia; MIT Press, 2012), 59.
Eleanor Antin’s exhibition *Library Science Z695.1 A27* (February 1–9, 1972), was first proposed to Townsend in a letter sent October 16, 1971, a few months after Judy’s initial recommendation to Townsend. *Library System* (1971), as the work would subsequently be titled, used the Library of Congress subject classifications to organize a “sub-set of the world of people,” namely, women.172 “Initially I asked 26 women artists to characterize themselves by some ‘exhibit’ (some metonymic entity that would stand for them), then chose to regard each ‘exhibit’ specimen as a ‘book’ which I classified by the Library of Congress Classification System,” Antin wrote to Townsend. “The piece consists of a description of my system,” Antin continued, “one photograph of each ‘exhibit,’ its library subject card, and a skeletal outline guide to the meaning of the classification system published by the Library of Congress.”173

Significantly, the whole of the twenty-six “exhibits” are represented as a single “exhibit” and that, Antin decided, could itself be classified as a single book, called *Library Science*. “Thus,” Antin writes, “the entire ‘exhibit’ is designated by my author card.” This interest in parts and wholes—that is, individual exhibits anthologized as a single exhibit, the exhibit instantiated as a publication—extended beyond the walls of the Mezzanine Gallery itself. In a letter accompanying the works, likely sent January or February 1972, Antín provides mounting instructions and draws a diagram showing the

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172 The work had been shown previously by Jorge Glusberg in *Art as Systems (Arte de Sistemas)*, an exhibition that was conceived for the São Paulo Biennial, though subsequently withdrawn in protest in 1969 at the start of the boycott of Emílio Garrastazu Médici’s military government; it was shown instead at the Buenos Aires. Isobel Whitelegg, “The Bienal de São Paulo: Unseen/Undone (1969–1981),” *Afterall* 22 (Autumn/Winter 2009).

173 Eleanor Antin to Charlotte Townsend, October 16, 1971, Artists’ Files, Mezzanine Gallery Collection, NSCAD Collection, CAUL-CBUA Atlantic Islandora Repository Network, Nova Scotia College of Art & Design. “I am currently in a show in Canada,” Antin tells Townsend “the Image Bank Postcard show at the Fine Arts Gallery at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. Do the east and west talk to each other in your part of the world?”
arrangement she prefers for the “exhibits.”

She leaves the order open, writing to Townsend that either alphabetically arranged by author’s name or by subject (meaning call number), is fine, though she prefers the latter, as it “would be easier to follow for those people wishing to follow the reading with the ‘outline.’” Antin had lost the negative for one of the images, so suggests leaving the space empty, and placing adjacent the card, stamped with “storage.”

In general, Antin was happy to delegate the exhibition to Townsend, much as Lee Lozano or Bas Jan Ader were for their Mezzanine Gallery exhibitions. For her exhibition, held January 27–February 13, 1971, Lozano provided Townsend with a hanging plan for the ten drawings that comprised her show, she also described how to mount them, but in general allowing for a considerable degree of flexibility in the installation. Ader’s exhibition with William Leavitt (March 29–April 5, 1973) was made up of two parts: the first, his video Niagara Falls (1973), while the second was conveyed as a set of instructions to Townsend, Thoughts Unsaid, Then Forgotten (1973). Purely instructional, the latter addressed the mutability of the exhibition space itself. The title’s text was to be written in two lines in “light grey-blue” paint, then a light placed to cast a spot over the text. Ader then asked Townsend to place a simple vase of a “few mixed flowers (no roses) below and a little to the right of the two sentences.” After a few days the text was to be painted over, however the light remained unchanged.

175 Antin to Townsend.
177 “Instructions for work to be performed at Nova Scotia College of Art & Design (sketch enclosed). 1. On a large, white sparsely lit wall paint (by hand) in light grey-blue letters the following THOUGHTS
In a postscript to a subsequent letter to Townsend, perhaps from November 1971, Antin writes, “I would like a mailer. What are your format regulations, etc. I remember Vito Acconci’s as looking very handsome and intriguing. Is that your standard size?” It is clear from the correspondence that followed that Antin was particularly interested in the exhibition announcement, conceiving it practically as a work in and of itself. Though not unusual that an artist would be concerned with the appearance of an announcement card, Antin’s correspondence with Townsend does underscore an important fact: many of those individuals receiving the card would never see the exhibition in person, the artist included. The mailer would, in all likelihood, be the extent of the work for most people outside Halifax. Without documentation of the exhibition in the form of installation views, wall text or critical reviews, the mailer would have to stand, metonymically, for the whole project. This metonymy is nicely consistent with the use of the catalogue cards and Library of Congress classification system in the work itself. Announcing the exhibition, for most of the artists based outside of Halifax, the mailer was subject to a

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UNSAID. THEN FORGOTTEN. The letters are approx. 5” high in themselves. The top line is approx. 4’6” from the floor, the space between the two lines is approx. 1’6” 2. Place a simple vase of a few mixed flowers (no roses) below and little to the right of the 2 sentences in front of the wall. 3. Place a reflected light such a distance away from wall, that a circle of light is thrown on wall, just covering the writing in upper left corner and top of flowers in lower right. 4. After a few days repaint wall in original former color, covering and obliterating printed words, but without disturbing light or flowers.” Bas Jan Ader to Charlotte Townsend, March 1, 1973, 2–3, General Correspondence, Administrative Records of the Mezzanine Gallery, Mezzanine Gallery Collection, NSCAD Collection, CAUL-CBUA Atlantic Islandora Repository Network, Nova Scotia College of Art & Design.

178 Eleanor Antin to Charlotte Townsend, November 1971, Artists’ Files, Mezzanine Gallery Collection, NSCAD Collection, CAUL-CBUA Atlantic Islandora Repository Network, Nova Scotia College of Art & Design. “A number of my friends have shown with you (Vito Acconci, Dan Graham, come immediately to mind) I still have Vito’s mailer on my wall. It’s fabulous. I was a little disappointed to learn the picture was a still from a film. I had envisioned a marvelous art work for him in which he sat naked in the gallery for the entire duration of the show. Not unlike Kafka’s hunger artist, I guess.” Eleanor Antin to Charlotte Townsend, November 17, 1971, Artists’ Files, Mezzanine Gallery Collection, NSCAD Collection, CAUL-CBUA Atlantic Islandora Repository Network, Nova Scotia College of Art & Design.

179 As Antin describes to Townsend in a letter from January 10, 1972, she had stolen a library card from a university library near her, asking Townsend to make the announcement “the closest approximation of the real thing that is possible.” Eleanor Antin to Charlotte Townsend, January 10, 1972, Artists’ Files, Mezzanine Gallery Collection, NSCAD Collection, CAUL-CBUA Atlantic Islandora Repository Network, Nova Scotia College of Art & Design.
considerable amount of time and care. Townsend herself reflected on this in 2012, saying that, “many times they were designed as stand-alone ‘pieces,’ low-key and oblique, disdaining the status of mere announcement.”\textsuperscript{180} The mailers were important to Dan Graham, as well, who many years later asked Townsend to send him one of Lee Lozano’s announcements from her 1971 exhibition.\textsuperscript{181}

This interest in mailers may have had something to do not only with distance, but also temporality. As Ursula Meyer wrote at the time, “books have become an increasingly important medium for Conceptual Art, often taking place of exhibitions,” Meyer wrote, “they have more permanence than transient shows in galleries.”\textsuperscript{182} The same may be said of mailers, which additionally could circulate easily by mail in a gift economy. Sent to mailing lists which do not discriminate between collectors or students, friends or curators, the easy circulation of announcements transcends geographical distance, and shares conceptual art’s own emphasis on the “disdain for the notion of commodities,” as Meyer suggests, however mythic that emphasis would later prove.\textsuperscript{183}

When Kennedy first took up his position at the College in 1967, he saw the school’s “peripheral geographic location” as a potential advantage.\textsuperscript{184} Kennedy was encouraged in

\begin{itemize}
  \item Townsend, “The Mezzanine,” 58.
  \item Dan Graham to Charlotte Townsend, July 1974, Artists’ Files, Mezzanine Gallery Collection, NSCAD Collection, CAUL-CBUA Atlantic Islandora Repository Network, Nova Scotia College of Art & Design. Graham had received “your Doug Waterman . . . I really like the simple form you’ve adopted for announcements (whose idea was it?).”
  \item Meyer, \textit{Conceptual Art}, xiii. As Seth Siegelaub told Meyer, in interview on September 27, 1968, “when art does not any longer depend upon its physical presence when it becomes an abstraction, it is not distorted and altered by its reproduction in books. It becomes ‘PRIMARY’ information, while the reproduction of conventional art in books and catalogues is necessarily (distorted) ‘SECONDARY’ information. When information is PRIMARY, the catalogue can become the exhibition.” Meyer, xiv.
  \item Meyer, \textit{Conceptual Art}, xx. See the discussion of Stimson and Alberro’s argument regarding the anti-commodity status of works of conceptual art, above.
  \item Kennedy, “Introduction,” xiii.
\end{itemize}
this respect—or perhaps he first developed the idea—with a talk at the College given by Lucy Lippard on November 29, 1969,

the impermanent art that is being done now demand that artists travel as well as the art. As artists travel to different cities and countries, they talk to other people and to other artists who are in turn directed to ideas of their own rather than waiting for the objects to be dragged up to wherever they are, which often takes a long time. Europe is wide open for this kind of decentralization now, and Canada probably still more so . . . Because New York has a very, very strong gallery, museum, critic, collector, magazine oriented power structure and it is going to take an awful lot of energy to get rid of it. In Canada, maybe you can start from scratch and don’t even have to mess with breaking down any barriers. 185

In 1994, Kennedy reflected on Lippard’s talk, saying it “seemed to fit my observations about the possibilities for Nova Scotia.” He goes on,

there were few barriers to break down, few art traditions to uphold. There was no city or provincial art gallery, and there were no curators and few critics. There were no university art history departments. The art of the province was scattered, and much of it was in storage—there was no place to see it. 186

While this apparent absence of an established “power structure” was for Kennedy an advantage, the College’s location could also prove an impediment that required certain workaround solutions. In one of the best-known examples, Askevold initially intended the Projects class to be a series of visits from artists, though it was “considered to be too expensive to carry out in this manner, so my compromise was to operate through the mail and telephone.” 187 (As it turned out, during the class’s first year, in 1969, of the twelve

187 Askevold, “The Projects Class: History,” 13. [Askevold 2012, 13; “When I conceived of the Projects Class, my idea was to have a different artist take part in my class for six weeks at a time throughout the
artists who submitted propositions, a majority were able to visit Halifax.188) Bringing in visiting artists to solve the problem of the College’s relative remoteness was evident to Gerald Ferguson, as well: “the most immediately obvious fact about NSCAD was its isolation, both from mainstream Canada and the art world in general,” Ferguson recalled in 1994, “the remedy was equally obvious—bring in visitors.”189

While Bruce Barber has argued that it was as a result of the “truly international” nature of conceptual art, its works’ attendant mobility, and the support of visiting artists described above that allowed “for an institution away from the centre, like NSCAD, to become paradoxically, a centre,” it could equally be argued that what the College achieved during the first five years of Kennedy’s tenure was to effectively replicate the attendant “power structure” Kennedy saw as absent on his arrival to Halifax.190 AA Bronson—discussing in interview the College’s failure to extend an invitation to General Idea—described NSCAD effectively as a branch of “New York conceptual-minimalist culture.”191 In this sense, NSCAD may be considered akin to the Emma Lake Artist’s Workshop and the resulting Regina school of painting through the sixties and seventies, which, as Roald Nasgaard and others have suggested, “often seemed more an outpost of New York than a part of the Canadian art scene.”192 If Kenneth Lochhead and other organizers’ decision to bring Barnett Newman to Saskatchewan in 1959 owed itself to a lucky draw out of a hat, as John O’Brien recounted, then the subsequent invitations of...
Clement Greenberg, Jules Olitski, Kenneth Noland, John Cage and others would seem far less happenstance. In this respect, Emma Lake as a pedagogical exercise is remarkably similar to the ways in which NSCAD organized itself in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

During the period, NSCAD, much like Emma Lake, came under frequent attack for its dependence on American artists. This was especially true when it came to Kennedy’s hiring of College faculty. Greg Curnoe, in one of his lettered paintings, quoted a speech Kennedy gave justifying the nearly fifty-percent American faculty at the College by saying “there’s no need to be afraid of undue American influences, because, after all, art transcends boundaries.” One of the very specific ways that art managed to transcend geographical limits, at least in Halifax in the late 1960 and early 1970s, was through acts of surrogacy, instruction, and delegated fabrication. Cataloguing and describing these varied strategies across three of the College’s best-known programmes—the Projects Class, Lithography Workshop, and the Mezzanine Gallery—it is evident that artists developed ways of working at a distance, and that these strategies came to shape not only their individual practices, but the set of practices that came to be known collectively as conceptual art.

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194 As Peggy Gale argued, “that Halifax, Nova Scotia, was hardly a centre itself became the reason for bringing in the artists whose work seemed the most interesting, the most challenging.” One could equally apply this observation to Emma Lake. Gale, *Artists Talk: 1969-1977*, vii.
195 Unfortunately, Lord does not give the title of the work. Lord, *The History of Painting in Canada: Towards a People’s Art*, 232.
In 1973, in Aachen, Germany, Robert Filliou (1926–1987) celebrated the 1,000,010th anniversary of art. Marked with a simple cake-lighting ceremony (Fig. 9.1), for the next anniversary, a group of artists drawn mostly from Toronto and Vancouver, but also Los Angeles and New York, looked to render homage to Filliou but also to outdo his modest celebration from the year before. Art’s one-millionth birthday was first conceived by Filliou—the Fluxus artist, filmmaker, and poet—in 1963 with his performance *Whispered Art History*, however in Los Angeles the celebrations for 1974 were organized, to varying degrees, by Lowell Darling (b. 1942), Michael Morris (b. 1942), and Willoughby Sharp (1936–2008), along with Glenn Lewis (b. 1935), General Idea (1969–1994; AA Bronson, b. 1946; Felix Partz, 1945–1994; Jorge Zontal, 1944–1994), Dana Atchley (1941–2000), Eric Metcalfe (b. 1940), Kate Craig (1947–2002), Vincent Trasov (b. 1947), John Jack Baylin (b. 1948), among many others.¹ Held on February 2, 1974 at the Elks Building at 607 South Park View Street, Los Angeles, and modeled on the Academy Awards, the event was a rare physical manifestation of the so-called Eternal Network: the loose association of artists working within an international gift economy to exchange images.

¹ In fact, Filliou was not in attendance: “in conjunction with the Eternal Network and without Robert Filliou’s attendance we will also celebrate the Birthday of Art. We’ll toast Robert from Los Angeles while he does something in Berlin.” Lowell Darling and Willoughby Sharp, “Invitation to Decca Dance,” 1974, Box C5, accession number 18.4 2 of 2, Morris/Trasov Archives, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia.
and works of art by mail.\(^2\) Such postal projects often parodied more conventional forms of mail, including personal ads, chain letters, and fan club circulars. At its core, the Eternal Network was premised on the belief that artists could and should be in communication without dependence on conventional art world structures.\(^3\) Coined by Filliou, the Eternal Network was also known as *La Fête permanente.*\(^4\) Falling, as it did, a decade before the Orwellian year of 1984, which held extraordinary significance for a number of the event’s organizers, it was called the *Decca Dance.* The idea of 1984 was widely shared on the so-called “subliminal network,” and nowhere more than between Image Bank and General Idea.\(^5\) Though ostensibly celebrating an occasion over one million years in the past, in fact the *Decca Dance* was anticipating the arrival of an event ten years in the future.

In referencing the Academy Awards the *Decca Dance* drew both on a certain global kitsch recognition and also a specific local association with Hollywood, where the event took place. It was also, significantly, a highly ritualized model. As AA Bronson wrote in “Pablum for the Pablum Eaters” (1976):

> The Miss General Idea Pageant, Corres-Sponge Dance Meetings, the Coach House annual Waizygoose, Bumbank’s John Dowd Fanny Club meetings are all prime examples of ritual. Each is derived from formats available in existing North American culture . . . this is the subliminal in motion, society mirrored and mirrored captured in reverse frozen in flux by the time lapse thinking of the subliminal kids.\(^6\)

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\(^2\) Designed by Claude Beelman in 1923–1924 for the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, a fraternal order established in New York in 1868, the Los Angeles Elks Club 99 was sold by the organization on November 27, 1966, and a small portion subsequently leased back for their activities. The Park Plaza Hotel ran the majority of the space as a special events centre. Scott Harrison, “Know Your City: No. 57 - Los Angeles Elks Lodge,” *Los Angeles Times,* September 29, 2016.


As an existing format lifted from popular culture, the awards show, much like the beauty pageant, was readymade but also ripe for the organizers’ playful *détournement.* Often mentioned only in passing in accounts of General Idea, Image Bank, Ant Farm, or indeed more general surveys of artist-centred culture in the 1970s in Canada, *Decca Dance* should properly be considered alongside the shared preoccupations and interests of a whole host of artists, and further situated within each artist or group’s practice. In the case of General Idea, for instance, *Decca Dance* is quite clearly related to the structure of the *Pageant,* the first such event realized in 1970 and the ultimate, yet never realized incarnation, planned for 1984. Instead, perhaps owing to the shared and somewhat ambiguous authorship of the *Decca Dance,* it has not been fully discussed in light of the *Pageants* or rehearsals that took place from 1970 through 1977. Philip Monk, for one, does not include the *Decca Dance* among the “ongoing performances” or “rehearsals” for the ultimate *Pageant* in 1984, among which he includes *Blocking* (1974), *Going Thru the Motions* (1975), *Hot Property* (1977), and *Towards an Audience Vocabulary* (1978). This is, he argues, because the *Dance* was a one-off event, rather than a repeated rehearsal, however the complexity and uncertainty of the event’s authorship must also

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7 “The ritual re-enacts the potency of the imagery in repeated manifestation of its venerated importance. Secondly, the ritual re-enacts an activity repeated in the past and known to repeat in the future, the ritual enacts the past as present, enacts the future as present, establishes the time continuum as a complex network of ongoing presents. The present ritual generates both past and future experience. In this way the ritual acts as a means of stepping outside of the historical process and placing oneself in the context of a dense mythical network in order that one may view simultaneity.” General Idea, 28.


figure in his careful excision from the genealogy cited above.\textsuperscript{10} Significantly for General Idea, 1973 was the year the group transitioned from the \textit{Pageant} structure to the \textit{Pavillion} as a container for their work;\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Decca Dance} is an anomaly in this respect, far closer to \textit{The 1971 Miss General Idea Pageant} (October 1, 1971) held at the Art Gallery of Ontario than to those works Monk discusses. Messier in its conception and organization than these discreet performances, the \textit{Decca Dance} merits closer attention in order to determine the roles of its various actors, both Canadian and American.\textsuperscript{12}

Though resituating and describing this event within one artist group’s practice is part of what follows, the event has broader implications in light of transnational artist collaboration during the early 1970s. \textit{Decca Dance} was, at least superficially, an occasion for General Idea from Toronto and Image Bank from Vancouver, along with artists associated with both groups, to travel together to Los Angeles, and while there to bring together Canadian and American artists and instantiate the eternal, “subliminal,” network. This network had existed transnationally since at least the founding of \textit{FILE Megazine} (1972), if not earlier, with the activities of Image Bank (1968–1973). However the performance provides compelling evidence that hundreds of artists working on the “subliminal” shared references and a kind of codified language—demonstrating just how porous the border was between Canada and the United States, particularly with respect to mail art.

\textsuperscript{10} “The Hollywood Deccadance was a one-off event, but The 1984 Miss General Idea Pageant, of course, was a repeated ritual. The Pageant was a ritual in which the audience participated, following the prompts of a Master of Ceremonies that were in actuality the commands of the format.” Monk, 106.
\textsuperscript{11} Monk, 63.
\textsuperscript{12} Indeed, before General Idea reified into three members, AA Bronson, Felix Partz, and Jorge Zontal, it was a far more expansive and much messier amalgam of figures. This is captured in the early issues of \textit{FILE Megazine}, as Philip Monk has suggested: “their work cannot be separated from the collective enterprise of the period that FILE represented.” Monk, 32.
More than this tangled creation and shared network, the Decca Dance also marked the end of a surge in mail art activity in Canada. In a number of ways, the performance itself announces the mail network’s replacement with the emergence not only of zine culture, but also artists travelling internationally to stage events and collaborate on projects. “The period between 1971 and 1974 was . . . the correspondence network’s high point,” Vincent Bonin has argued, “as of 1973, this network began to deteriorate from within.”13 Ultimately, the Decca Dance also signals a split between Image Bank and General Idea. The porosity between the artists involved in both groups later reified, and at least from Morris’s perspective, with the event in 1974 heralding distance between the two groups—though correspondence between the artists through the later part of the 1970s suggests a more gradual separation.14

If Decca Dance’s two principal organizers were Michael Morris and Lowell Darling, as recounted below, the two artist groups most involved in its realization were Image Bank (1968–1973; Michael Morris and Vincent Trasov) and General Idea (1969–1994; AA Bronson, Felix Partz, and Jorge Zontal). Especially from 1971 through 1974, these two groups were remarkably porous, far from the discreet identities now often described in scholarship. For a brief time, in spite of their geographical distance they were almost undistinguishable in their projects, concerns, and strategies, in keeping with their abandonment, as Barbara Fischer has argued, of “the model of a singular or solitary

13 Bonin, “Documentary Protocols: 1967-1975,” 49. Bonin continues, “Since the number of participants had increased, most of the artists who had initiated it no longer systematically responded to correspondence from their peers.”
artist” slipping instead “into the anonymity of a corporate identity whose variously
tangled working relationships would become its politics.”15

Even from the outset, General Idea’s name—and so, one could argue, formation—
was something of an error: the title of a work taken inadvertently for that of the artist
during the organization of the exhibition Concept 70 (June 1970).16 Years after they
devised the name in 1970, however, General Idea’s constituents were often more than the
three principals, that is Bronson, Partz, and Zontal, whom we now associate with the
group. To give just two examples, first, in an interview for Avalanche conducted by
Willoughby Sharp in 1973, General Idea is expansively identified as “Ron Gabe, Jorge
Saia, AA Bronson, Granada Gazelle, P.J., Noah Dakota, Marcel Idea, Ms. Paige, Myth
Honey, Ms. Generality,” in spite of the fact only Gabe, Saia, Bronson and P.J. seem to
have been present for the conversation.17 The following year, on their corporate
letterhead, The 1984 Miss General Idea Pavillion Foundation (1974), Granada Gazelle is
listed among the four directors.18 There are numerous other instances of this expanded
membership of the group.

As Luis Jacob mapped in his exhibition and accompanying publication Golden
Streams: Artists’ Collaboration and Exchange in the 1970s (2003), there were close-knit
relationships and correspondences between Image Bank, General Idea, Banal Beauty Inc.

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16 “Louise Dompierre Interviews General Idea,” 1991, General Idea fonds, Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada. “To start with, General Idea were not always, well, General Idea. In the beginning they operated without a name—or with individual projects under their own names. It was only in 1970 for the Toronto exhibition Concept 70 that they assumed the name General Idea.” Monk, Glamour Is Theft: A User’s Guide to General Idea, 158.
(Eric Metcalfe as Dr. Brute and Kate Craig as Lady Brute) and the New York Corres Sponge Dance School of Vancouver (Glenn Lewis as Flakey Rose Hips). These relationships, between Image Bank and General Idea, the earliest of these four groups to be established, seem to have begun around 1970. In an undated letter from that year from Ron Gabe (later Felix Partz) to Image Bank, Gabe asks “please add us to the list of info wanted. We would like material on border line cases and also on sweeping generalities . . . Could you please let Peter Daglish in Victoria know that we would like pics of pine trees. Don’t let anyone else [know] especially Vincent as he thinks we like palm trees.” On December 10, 1970, Michael Tims (later AA Bronson) wrote to Morris, in a somewhat businesslike letter, sending him “a few samples of my body documentation pieces.” “Our Miss General Idea Pageant 1971 is coming up,” Tims wrote, “and of course we will keep you informed regarding this. This competition will be conducted by mail.”

While in Vancouver in March 1971, AA Bronson collaborated with Image Bank on the performance-cum-video project *Fire/Mirror/Landscape* (1971). Also referred to as *Fire Mirror Video* or *Burning Mirrors*, the black-and-white six-minute video was a joint project involving “igniting a circle of gunpowder with mirrors placed intermittently around its arcs” near Grey Point in Vancouver. Morris next visited Toronto in

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21 “Please continue to send me material of interest, I was talking to [A]nn [B]rodzky the other day, and she told me you were wanting a postcard. I sent her one to send you, I do hope she remembered to do so.” Michael Tims to Michael Morris, December 10, 1970, Box C7, accession number 22.1, General Idea 1971-1972, Morris/Trasov Archives, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia.
September 1971.24 Arriving well in advance of The 1971 Miss General Idea Pageant (October 1, 1971), where he would be crowned Miss General Idea 1971; sometime before, or even perhaps during, the Decca Dance, Morris’s title would be expanded to “Miss General Idea 1971 to 1983 inclusive.”25

Following Morris’ visit in fall 1971, there is correspondence between Jorge Saia (later Jorge Zontal) and Image Bank about a potential project involving Pilkington Glass Co., “sponsoring a show of recent Canadian mirror and/or glass works.” “Are you interested?” Saia asks, “it could develop into an Image Bank-G.I. Affair?”26 In the end, General Idea pursued the project alone, realizing Luxon V.B. (1973) for their exhibition at Carmen Lamanna Gallery, Toronto (December 15, 1973–January 3, 1974). The work was conceived as a “prototype for the first in a series of proposals being devised towards an architectural program aimed at generating mirror situations for the 1984 Miss General Idea Pavillion.”27

After the 1971 Pageant, Tims wrote to Morris about an upcoming trip to Vancouver, ideally paid in part by the Vancouver Art Gallery, though Tims was also

24 “So looking forward to your visit here in September, I count the days, each day only one more day has passed, Vito Acconci gave a performance at A Space two nights ago, he lay naked on speakers and altered volume of treble and bass in dubious patterns. He wrestled with someone. He repeated what one was reading while another read something else, then, stopping, he told them what they had read . . . if this is unclear, still it was quite interesting, but we didn’t say hello but left quickly sliding out the door.” Michael Tims to Michael Morris, June 1971, Box C7, accession number 22.1, General Idea 1971-1972, Morris/Trasov Archives, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia.
26 George Saia to Image Bank, Fall 1971, Box C7, accession number 22.1, General Idea 1971-1972, Morris/Trasov Archives, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia.
looking elsewhere for funding.28 While in Vancouver, Tims planned to organize an autograph party for the new Miss General Idea—that is, Morris himself:

also we will be carrying out a great number of borderline publicity stunts based on Life magazines of the forties, including the burying of a time capsule of General Idea mementoes under a specially constructed earthwork or monument in some auspicious location. At the Vancouver Art Gallery, we hope to donate a slab of concrete with the handprints and signatures of the Miss General Ideas.29

Judging from Bayer’s extensive early history of the group, it seems as though the trip and related projects never materialized.30

If the planned trip to Vancouver in early 1972 never took place, perhaps it was because by spring 1972 General Idea was occupied with the first issue of FILE Megazine (1972–1989). The periodical’s very first editorial made clear the close links between General Idea in Toronto and Image Bank Vancouver,

In order to grasp the FILE phenomenon it is necessary to realize the extent of concerns involving the invisible network that bind[s] the world of Dr. Brute and Alex the Holy, Marcel Idea and Miss Generality, Clara the Bag Lady and Lady Brute, the Swedish Lady and Mr. Cones, Dadaland and Dada Long Legs, AA Bronson and Dr. Fluxus, Ray Johnson and Susan Bunny, Anna Banana, and Honey Banannas, Bum Bank and Art Rat, Brutiful Brutopia and Canadada. We are concerned with the web of fact and fiction that binds and

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28 “Plans for the Vancouver show have suddenly begun to kick their heels. Although the budget has been cut to $500 and although Margarite Pinney [Marguerite Pinney] wants to reduce the evenings to one night (instead of three) we are continuing as before and attempting to raise the money elsewhere. That is why I asked Mr. Peanut for that special delivery letter predated inside telling us in official tones that image bank would provide accommodation for 9 people and that Image Bank was looking forward to our exchange visit (Image Bank having already come to Toronto). And that Image Bank would like us to do a special Image Bank evening presentation or something of the sort to make it all sound a big deal. We have applied to the Ontario Cultural Exchange for travelling money and also to the Secretary of State.” Michael Tims to Michael Morris, October 21, 1971, Box C7, accession number 22.1, General Idea 1971-1972, Morris/Trasov Archives, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia.

29 “Who will invite us (or some of us) for an evening at the Cave? Pascal at the Cave would be a sensation and a half. We would like to christen a boat with champagne, go wading in English Bay, and trade a bottle of ocean water for polluted Lake Ontario sludge. Naturally we will be visiting the courts, city hall, and the stock exchange.” Tims to Morris.

30 Bayer, “Project Series, General Idea Fonds.”
releases mythologies that are the sum experience of artists and non-artists in co-operative existence today.31

Skipping over London, Ontario, which had remained “introspective,” it was clear that General Idea found closer kindred spirits in artists working in Vancouver, who had “left the banquet years for the banquet.” Just prior to the appearance of the first issue of *FILE*, Trasov stayed with General Idea in Toronto in spring 1972. Partz wrote to Morris to say that they “had a lovely time at the ‘Mr. Peanut visits the island’ day,” it was presumably this same trip when they shot the cover image of the inaugural issue of *FILE*.33

Living at 87 Yonge Street—“an old office building above a restaurant and hairdresser”—General Idea and their friends would gather daily “around the big round kitchen table and talk as we opened the mail—there was usually a gigantic pile of it.” In a retrospective account from 2006, Bronson continues, “we saved everything in those days; there was a sense of the importance of everything . . . It was out of that activity of sitting around that table opening the mail that FILE began.”34 It continued for its twenty-six issue run, in many ways, as a means of reproducing and circulating those daily piles of mail.35 While work on *FILE* began in December 1971, the first issue appeared on April 15, 1972, made possible through a $17,000 Local Initiatives Project grant from the

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31 General Idea, “Editorial: Some Juicy and Malicious Gossip: Myth-Taken,” *FILE Megazine* 1, no. 1 (April 1972): 3. Monk discusses the significance of including “practicing non-artists,” such as Clara the Bag Lady, “Was called street people ‘artists’ a patronizing appellation? Or, was it, following Warhol and his Puerto Rican drag queens, a camp principle to glamourize society’s refuse” Monk, Glamour, 104.
32 General Idea, 3.
33 “Took the mag into the printers this morning and should have it early next week.” Felix Partz to Michael Morris, Spring 1972, Box C7, accession number 22.1, General Idea 1971-1972, Morris/Trasov Archives, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia.
federal government. Jorge Saia (later Jorge Zontal), wrote in an undated letter to Image
Bank, likely from 1971, that “Paul [Oberst?] went to get an application form for the new
Manpower program, we are applying to put out a publication in the Art Tabloid format,
you’ll be hearing more about it from Paul, especially regarding the Trans-Canada
columns.”36

Incorporating mail art projects, such as Top Ten Lists and their Borderline Research
Project, FILE also featured interviews, society pages, and reviews. Yet in spite of its
deeply parodic vein—it was a “transcanada art organ” in imitation and appreciative
homage to LIFE magazine, after all—the Megazine served an important social function,
responding to, as Barbara Fischer suggests, the “need for a mirror and the giddy
discovery of the self-appointed power to reflect.”37 Just following the appearance of the
first issue, Bronson wrote to Morris and Trasov that “File has crept into my blood stream
and planted eggs . . . I can’t think of anything else, or is it thinking of me?”38

In many ways, Image Bank and General Idea were formed in parallel. Both had an
interest in organizing and circulating images and information. “The Image Bank,” Morris
told Sharp in interview on July 13, 1973, “is a network of people exchanging images.”
“We make up lists and directories. They are an important part of our activities; they’re
access to the Bank. The Bank is like a decentralized file, its access is quite open-ended on
the subliminal. There are numerous banks, Bum bank, Chicken bank . . .”39 Morris

36 Saia to Image Bank, Fall 1971. General Idea joked in their second issue, “the Local Initiatives Program
Grant with which we launched FILE has provided employment for six people; their requirements have been
37 Fischer, “Introduction,” 22. LIFE was not an object of ridicule or derision to the creators of FILE, but
rather “the Coca-Cola of the picture magazines, image bank primer extraordinaire.” General Idea,
39 “The NY Corres-Sponge Dance School of Vancouver looks after the mail, and all of us are members.
The school holds informal meetings with guest stars every Thursday at the Crystal Pool.” “Business as
described the group’s origins when he came across a reference to an Image Bank in William Burroughs’ *Nova Express* (1964), which seemed to express well his interest in networks. As is well documented, Morris had been in touch with Ray Johnson (1927–1995) as early as 1967. By 1970, many fellow artists were interested in “media imagery,” Morris recalls, “we got to identify a person by the images he was interested in and whenever we came across them we’d cut them out, stick them in an envelope or rubber stamp them, and put them in the mail without any explanations.” Image Bank was an attempt to “formalize the concern a little, just to see where it would put our heads.” From this attempt to organize, came the image request lists, which Image Bank would circulate “as often as we could afford to have them printed.” Much like Image Bank, General Idea was “a node on the correspondence network,” with “FILE is evidence of correspondence that passes through General Idea Headquarters; friends, visitors, mail, gossip.” Zontal, in interview in 1973, told Sharp, “I think FILE came out mainly

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40 General Idea was also deeply indebted to Burroughs. Much later, for instance, Gregg Bordowitz would argue for the writer’s “surgical method” as a technique employed by General Idea in their *Imagevirus* works. Gregg Bordowitz, *General Idea: Imagevirus*, One Work (London: Afterall, 2010), 13–17.

41 “The artist who has had the greatest influence on behaviour and aesthetics in the network context is Ray Johnson, master philosopher, collagist and founder of the New York Correspondence School. Michael Morris, “The Artist as Curator of the Imagination,” *ArtsCanada* 220/221 (May 1978): 42. This relationship has also been discussed in various monographs and theses; see for instance, Ray Johnson, *Ray Johnson: How Sad I Am Today* (Vancouver: Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, 1999); Emily Robertson, “Pushing the Envelope: The Evolution of Mail Art in Canada” (Concordia University, 2007); *Letters: Michael Morris and Concrete Poetry* (London and Vancouver: Black Dog Publishing and the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, 2015).

42 “Business as Usual at the Western Front: An Interview with Marcel Idea, Dr. Brute, Lady Brute, Mr. Peanut by Willoughby Sharp,” *Avalanche*, no. 8 (Summer/Fall 1973): 34.

43 Later, retrospectively, Morris described the purpose of Image Bank “was not to hoard or collect, rather it was and is research, carried out by practicing artists, using individual methods of communication and expression.” Morris, “The Artist as Curator of the Imagination,” 41.

44 “Dense and varied, this little network includes some 500 artists around the world (mostly Canadian), a representative, interesting cross-section of work-in-progress.” General Idea, “Artists’ Catalogue,” 57.
because we were getting so much information coming in through the mails, from the network, that it was a way of putting it in a context, getting it out again.”

*FILE* began to publish the “Image Request Lists” with its fourth issue, coinciding with the publication by Image Bank of the *International Image Exchange Directory* in December 1972. However with *FILE’s* first issue, General Idea printed the “Artists’ Directory,” which may be considered as a forerunner to the request lists in spite of the fact it included only the artist’s name and address, without any specific interests in types of images provided. The directory was an attempt to “list the names of all Canadian artists involved in mailing exchange or related concerns,” and was “compiled by Fluxus West, Image Bank and Fluxus Ltd. (editor Ken Friedman).” When it was expanded, alongside this simple address book appeared requests for images, headed with the epigraph, “words beget image and image is virus,” unattributed in *FILE* but recognizable to savvy readers as William Burroughs.

In an unusually straight, for lack of a better term, section appearing in *FILE’s* second issue (May–June 1972) called “Artists’ Catalogue,” General Idea provides the reader with a survey of “available sources of Canadian art imagery and documentation” including lists of publications and art publishers in Canada, postcards, slides, films and video. “We began as a mirror of sorts, a transcanada organ of communication within the art scene,” they wrote, “a way of looking at the scene and oneself within it.” Bronson had written to Morris and Trasov describing this section, in an undated letter sometime

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51 General Idea, 57.
before May 15, 1972; he explained the rationale for providing a survey, which he referred to as a “small Eaton’s catalogue section at the back” of the magazine,

sort of a handbook for libraries and art schools to convince them, demonstrate how much research there is around. Hoping the little hot stove league will be able to provide a lot of data (or actual ads) concerning available videotapes, movies, slide sets, performances, print sets (alphabet series), books, etc.52

These early issues of FILE were conceived closely with Image Bank, which Bronson referred to as the “hot stove league,” above. In the same letter, Bronson asks “let me know how many pages to reserve for image bank/art city/whatever” in the second issue.53

This proximity between the two groups was made even more evident in the May 1973 issue of FILE, with an article called “Pablum for the Pablum Eaters,” subsequently signed by AA Bronson when republished a few years later in Video by Artists (1976).54

Expansive and highly perceptive, the article begins by signalling the recent turn to self-referentiality, particularly given that with “de-materialization of art” came the realization “that what made art was public veneration of the art object as art.”55 The bulk of the article is an appreciation and analysis of Image Bank—“a group of artists in Vancouver Canada working on this problem . . . as many others are working and living this problem.”56 The article also offers General Idea’s definition of history—one arguably shared by Image Bank, too. “History is very simple,” Bronson writes, “it is very clear that history is just another reality, fact tied with fiction, distorted by the viewing and seen

53 Bronson to Morris and Trasov.
56 General Idea, 22.
through the seeing of others.”57 This notion of history as twinned fact and fiction would underlie the multiple references, annihilaries and events later instantiated by the *Decca Dance*. Myth, in this same text, is for the two groups is nothing more than the “past brought into the present, ritualized and enacted.”58 “Image Bank is primarily a structure for setting up, extending, stabilizing, and reinforcing correspondences,” Bronson wrote, “a collaborative vision arrived through the mails by rewrite.”59

More than Image Bank and General Idea’s frequent collaborations through the mail, as evidenced above through correspondence and various early projects from 1970 through 1972, it was *The 1971 Miss General Idea Pageant*, held at the Art Gallery of Ontario on October 1, 1971, that stands a direct precursor to the *Decca Dance* in 1974. As Felix Partz told Willoughby Sharp in 1973, the *Pageant* “was the biggest thing the town had ever seen.”60 When asked how the selection of the sixteen finalists was made, Bronson replied, “a means of chain-linking a network of artists across Canada, which started out in terms of correspondence leading towards, and resulting in, the Miss General Idea Pageant. That was all done through the mails.”61 Significantly, in light of the relationships between Toronto and Vancouver, in that same interview, Sharp goes on to ask “was that when the first contact with Vancouver was established?” to which Bronson replies, “that was the first strong link. There had been consciousness before but that was the first time that the link really cemented. Since then collaboration between Vancouver

57 General Idea, 24.
59 General Idea, 27.
and Toronto has been . . . ,” P.J. interrupts, “hot and heavy.” Partz adding, “wet kisses, on the lips.”

Perhaps part of the reason the 1971 Pageant ushered in the “wet kisses” phase of relations between General Idea and Image Bank was because of the choice of Miss General Idea herself. To name Morris as Miss General Idea was the group’s ultimate endorsement and confirmation of Image Bank’s work. During the Pageant, slide shows of the finalists, the three previous queens, and the “Miss Honey Movie” preceded the crowning of the new queens, two, in fact: Miss Generality 1971 The Public’s Choice went to Margaret Coleman, Victor Coleman’s mother, while Miss General Idea 1971 was given to Michael Morris. Later, in interview, General Idea implied that the competition—unsurprisingly—was fixed.

While ostensibly based on a historical event, the Pageant’s formative moment was in fact imagined, just as the celebration of Art’s Birthday (and that of Gertrude Stein, as seen below) would form the basis for the 1974 Decca Dance. In the case of the Pageant, it was initially modeled after a found programme for the Folies-Bergère, Paris (ca. 1931–32), the added text recounting enigmatic events in Paris and Deauville, France in summer 1932 and Reading and Bournemouth, England, as inciting incidents for the so-called “General.” While the five-part structure of the Pageant was lifted directly from the found pamphlet, the contents of each part departed significantly from the original “five acts, stylized in the Egyptian manner.” Suggesting enigmatically that the programme was reconstituted from notes, a short text reads: “the General, in his usual manner,

63 General Idea and Sharp, 16.
64 The 1971 Miss General Idea Pageant Programme (Toronto: General Idea, 1971).
65 The 1971 Miss General Idea Pageant Programme.
incorporated the programme into his notebooks with only slight alteration.”66 Like Filliou’s birthday for art, an imagined history set the foundation for the Pageant, and provided archival evidence to match.

While various artists and groups have been cited as organizing the Decca Dance, judging from extensive correspondence in the Morris/Trasov Archive, now held by the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery at the University of British Columbia, it was Michael Morris and Lowell Darling who were most involved: the former devising the ceremony itself and the later organizing everything in advance of the performance. Willoughby Sharp’s role, though often mentioned, seems relatively minor by comparison.67 Darling lived in Los Angeles and worked under the moniker Dudley Finds of the Fat City School of Finds Art. Though less visible than the emcees and other presenters during the event itself, for the Decca Dance Darling was “Mr. Organizer.”68 Nearly all of the performers in Decca Dance were from Canada, though the audience was mostly—as would be expected—from the United States. Although he did not participate in planning the event

66 The 1971 Miss General Idea Pageant Programme. Later, the programme includes a parenthetical passage about the General’s interest in tattoos and his shopping habits. For a discussion of the Pageant, see Bayer, “Uncovering the Roots of General Idea: A Documentation and Description of Early Projects,” 65–75.
67 Although Sharp signed the letter inviting attendees to the event, he only arrived in Los Angeles on January 30, 1974, some three days before the event. Michael Morris, “Michael Morris Sketchbook,” 1978 1974, Box 16, accession number 97.11, Morris/Trasov Archives, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia. There is little in the way of correspondence between Morris and Sharp, however it is possible that Darling and Sharp’s correspondence was more crucial to the event’s planning. Darling and Sharp, “Invitation to Decca Dance.” Sharp also appears toward the end of Ant Farm’s video, along with Darling and Morris, in a kind of debriefing of the event. Art’s Stars in Hollywood: The Deccadance, Video transferred to DVD, 1974.
68 Glenn Lewis: “If you don’t know it already, Lowell is Mr. Organizer of this Deccadance. How does it feel to organize a Deccadance, not to mention Art’s Birthday, Dudley? Have you ever organized a deccadance before?”Coleman and designed by AA Bronson, “Mondo Artie Episode No. 1681 The Hollywood Deccadance Arts Birthday February 2, 1974,” n.p.
in 1974, it was Dana Atchley of Ace Space Co. who initially “had suggested the theme of the Decca-Dance, which tied in neatly with everyone’s long range plans.”69

It was Darling, crucially, who first took Vincent Trasov to Elk’s Building for lunch while he was visiting Los Angeles in mid-April 1973. As Darling later wrote in the letter inviting participants to the Decca Dance, “Mr. Peanut of Vancouver, B.C. and I were eating at the Elks Building and decided that it was the perfect place to do it (the building is one of those great L.A. Twenties structures designed for Superman to land on).”70 Two years earlier, in 1972, Darling and Dana Atchley, had had the idea “to hold an Art Red Cross Convention at the Mars Hotel in San Francisco,” though it was never realized. Darling and Atchley tried again, this time in Madison, Wisconsin, however the arts council there dissolved and with it the event’s main source of funding.71 The main motivation in organizing Decca Dance, as it was with these two previous, unrealized, events, seems to have been to manifest the subliminal—that Eternal Network of correspondents that only knew each other through the “mails.” Speaking about summer travel plans among networkers more generally, in a feature in FILE called “Surfacing: Travel,” from May 1973, General Idea wrote: “it is a welcome extension of the network when a real live person pen pal knock on the mail box.”72 Better yet, why not organize a party where all the pen pals get together?

The Decca Dance was initially planned for October 1973, as discussed in a letter that Darling wrote to Trasov in late April 1973, just a couple weeks after Trasov’s visit.

69 Art’s Birthday (Decca-Dance Salutes Network) (Vancouver: The Western Front, 1974), n.p.
71 Darling and Sharp, 1974. In a postcard from February 1973, Ant Farm writes to Morris that Trasov has been touring the Bay area; it was later on this same visit that Trasov first ate at Elk’s Lodge. Ant Farm and Michael Morris, February 1973, Box C7, accession number 20.11, Ant Farm Binder 1971-1972, Morris/Trasov Archives, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia.
and lunch at the Elk’s Building. The fact that the event as first conceived would not have coincided with Filliou’s February 2 date of Art’s Birthday indicates something of the arbitrariness of the connection between the Decca Dance and Filliou’s idea. More significant are the precedents of Darling and Atchley’s unrealized ceremonies. Reinforcing this tenuous connection with Filliou’s anniversary, at least in the early stages of planning the event, when Liza Bear asked in interview on July 13, 1973, if there was a script for the ceremony, Morris replied:

Yeah. Uh, E.E. Clair [Glenn Lewis] is writing the script based on an episode from the television series, Peyton Place. On one of my visits to L.A. I met a t.v. producer. We were running around in the studio one Sunday opening up filing cabinets and he said, just take anything you like. I picked half a dozen episodes of Peyton Place, it was the first drawer I opened. They are marvellous, they’ve got all the commercial breaks and camera movements and lines. I gave a script to E.E. Clair and he’s used it as a basis for our shooting script.73

Peyton Place (1964–1966) was a soap opera that aired on ABC, based on the eponymous novel by Grace Metalious from 1956, earlier adapted as a film in 1957. As it was staged in February 1974, however, the ceremony bore no resemblance to the television series. This early and abandoned model does attest, however, to their interest in using readymade formats lifted from popular culture.

Also in Darling’s letter from late April 1973, he provided a preliminary budget for the event and gave Trasov a break-down of costs, including the hall rental, dinner and hotel costs (all of the participants from outside Los Angeles stayed in rooms at Elk’s Building), and concludes “the money we take in is [$] 4668 . . . That would mean a ‘profit’ of [$] 2168. If we only do half-as-well on what I hazard a guess at, ticket-wise,

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73 “Business as Usual at the Western Front: An Interview with Marcel Idea, Dr. Brute, Lady Brute, Mr. Peanut by Willoughby Sharp,” 38.
we will still break even . . . God! I hardly ever write such hard-core business letters.”

By July 1973, the date had changed to February 1974, and Darling had met with Mike Mazurki, who agreed “to host din-din.” Mazurki (1907–1990) was a character actor who, along with his spouse Sylvia Mazurki (1916–1997), managed the Elk’s Building.

“Off-hand I would hazard a guess that the February thing may be the Big Hollywood extravaganza of the year,” Darling wrote to Image Bank on July 16, 1973. “I’ve mostly avoided inviting or uninviting her [Anna Banana] to participate in the Feb. Canadians in Hollywood thing, because I’m leaving the Canadian act up to you.” By August 1973, Lowell had “paid for the space with my new checks (skis, golf, surfing, and dune buggies printed on them), and Mike and Sylvia [Mazurski] are really getting up on it. We took some PR picks with Mike in the space.”

That same summer, both Lowell Darling and Willoughby Sharp visited The Western Front, which had been formed only a few months earlier, in March 1973, by

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74 Darling had spoken with Sylvia Mazurki about the “Elk Club gig in October,” and she had quoted $150 for the hall rental, and hotel rates of $5 per day for single rooms and $7 for doubles. They initially budgeted flying ten people from Vancouver to Los Angeles round-trip, for a total of $1680. Darling asks Trasov to speak to his “folks” and “decide what you want to do.” Darling also suggests setting up “gigs at local schools,” such as Cal Arts and Otis for “a few hundred additional bucks.” Lowell Darling to Vincent Trasov, April 1973, Box C5, accession number 18.4 2 of 2, Morris/Trasov Archives, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia.

75 Darling continues, “and let us use his wonderful face on posters and in magazine for P.R. What a guy! Sylvia wants to sell postcards at her boutique.” Lowell Darling to Bankers, Dancers, Brutes, etc., July 16, 1973, Box C5, accession number 18.4 2 of 2, Morris/Trasov Archives, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia.

76 “Sylvia sends her love to Mr. Peanut and loves Marcel from his lovely Miss GI pic. She thought the dress divine!” Darling to Bankers, Dancers, Brutes, etc. In their invitation to the event, Darling and Sharp write, “the dining area is a lovely space run by Sylvia and Mike Mazurki. Mike is a Hollywood Movie Heavy whose face has permeated the culture via unforgettable films. He will be our host at the dinner in honor (honour for our Canadian guests) of our Canada guests.” Darling and Sharp, “Invitation to Decca Dance.”

77 Darling to Bankers, Dancers, Brutes, etc., July 16, 1973.

78 Darling to Bankers, Dancers, Brutes, etc.

79 Lowell Darling to Image Bank, August 1973, Box C58, accession number 89.24, Lowell Darling Fat City School of Finds Art, 1972-74, Morris/Trasov Archives, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia.
eight shareholders including Morris, Trasov, and Lewis. Spending time in Vancouver, Darling and Sharp also visited Babyland on the Sunshine Coast, the Fronters’ country property, where presumably discussions continued regarding the organization of the event. Once Darling had returned to Los Angeles, he began work to produce a screen-printed commemorative plate as an edition for the dinner, and much of the correspondence leading up to the event includes discussions of the logistics for this edition, which seems never to have been produced. By that fall, Darling had suggested to The Front, “why don’t we sell tickets for dinner at a low[er] price, and sell the prints separately?” Darling had heard “a little badmouth about the dinner prices,” and suggested that the ticket to the dinner be priced at $25 and the plate, separately, at $100. In the end, the prices for the dinner were $25, though to see the performance only was $5, $4 for in advance, and just $2 for students. In Avalanche’s summer/fall 1973 issue, Sharp interviewed Morris, along with Trasov, Eric Metcalfe and Kate Craig. Morris told Sharp, “the February gig in Los Angeles will be the first real coming together of people

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80 The other shareholders were Martin Bartlett, Mo Van Nostrand, Kate Craig, Henry Greenhow, and Eric Metcalfe. Wallace, Whispered Art History: Twenty Years at the Western Front, 2.
81 For a brief account of their visit, see General Idea, “Nude Egos at the Western Front,” FILE Megazine 2, no. 4 (December 1973): 38. Once back in Los Angeles, Darling wrote to thank those at The Front: “mainly I write to send my love, and thank you all for perhaps the nicest trip I’ve ever had. Certainly the best time I’ve ever had in Fancouver, and can’t wait until we do it again. And the sooner the better. End of November. Great.” Lowell Darling to Western Front, October 1973, Box C5, accession number 18.4 2 of 2, Morris/Trasov Archives, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia. Babyland was a piece of property on the Sunshine Coast, just a couple hours from Vancouver, bought by Morris and Trasov with Carole Itter and Michael (Mic) Henry, see Jacob, Golden Streams: Artists’ Collaboration and Exchange in the 1970s, 4.
82 “The plate glaze place is on a little holiday, and will be back on July 26th. So plate info soon.” Darling to Bankers, Dancers, Brutes, etc., July 16, 1973.
83 Lowell Darling to Western Front, October 14, 1973, Box C5, accession number 18.4 2 of 2, Morris/Trasov Archives, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia.
84 Darling to Western Front, October 1973.
85 Darling and Sharp, “Invitation to Decca Dance.”
on the subliminal. It’s going to be an extravaganza. I think we’ll write it into our Mondo Arte scenario.”

Morris announced the event in *FILE Megazine* in December 1973: “you’ve probably heard rumours of our activities but have been at a loss to understand how you can find out more about them and participate in the network consciousness on the tips of so many peoples’ tongues.” While apparently open, with names, addresses, and gossip regularly published in *FILE*, in reality the Eternal Network was “a ritual community, an esoteric society, a secret cult,” as Monk has suggested. It was possible to be a bystander, to know the names and gossip, and even to correspond with the subliminal’s principals, but to be written about, or to write in *FILE*, remained illusive for most readers.

“Keeping this in mind,” Morris continues, “we have planned an event to throw some light on the story so far.” Significantly, Morris billed the event as “the first to bring together an international group of artists who have been working closely together on the subliminal.” Exaggerating slightly, he suggests that the organizers had been travelling “across the globe,” when in actuality it seems most of the work was being coordinated by Darling in Los Angeles, with the occasional visit with Sharp from New York, or Morris or Trasov from Vancouver. He talks up Ant Farm’s “video coverage” of the performance, as well as advance publicity in *Avalanche* and a supplement to be included in *FILE* following the event.

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86 “Business as Usual at the Western Front: An Interview with Marcel Idea, Dr. Brute, Lady Brute, Mr. Peanut by Willoughby Sharp,” 38.
90 Morris, 34.
Decca Dance depended on certain readymade forms, not only the Academy Awards, but also the architecture of the Elk’s Building, Filliou’s ritual celebration of Art’s Birthday, and, though rarely mentioned, the centenary of Gertrude Stein’s birth. Elk’s Building was determining in many respects, not least for General Idea, evoking something of the imagined architecture that the group had been investigating around 1973 in connection with the Pavillion to house the 1984 Pageant. While the Pavillion structure was never based on a single, actual, building, it did draw widely on the real built environment. While Bronson and Zontal were in Caracas, Venezuela, for instance, they posed in front of Miss World’s space-age house, suitably captioned, “they were on a Miss General Idea Pavillion scouting mission and the beuys snapped the picture to the left of a former Miss Venezuela, Miss World’s humble abode.”

The 1984 Miss General Idea Pageant Pavillion itself served as a model for thinking about a potentially decentralized arts practice. As General Idea described in a 1976 interview in Unmuzzled Ox, speaking about the work installed at Carmen Lamanna Gallery which appeared to be construction scaffolding, “this section of Hoarding that we’ve erected is about all we’ll ever need as it’s portable and can be mobilized to encompass the far-flung site of the Pavilion.” When asked whether this means the Pavillion will be “de-centralized,” they responded:

Traditionally you would call it de-centralized but we see it more as “widely centralized.” We never refer to the sites of the Pavillion. Only the site. It’s a singular site with multiple points of view. The fact that there are several locales where activity takes place on expands

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the center. Our center is defined by the circumference and the Hoarding is a sort of tool that allows us to expand the center to any of its installations.93

“If this interview, for instance, was ever published, we would see it as just another extension of the site-lines. The Pavilion is a very parasitic structure,” General Idea advised.94 Although the Decca Dance exists on the cusp of General Idea developing this “widely centralized” approach to the Pavillion, perhaps Elk’s Building in Hollywood could have been considered as an extension of the “site-lines” of the imagined structure. In keeping with General Idea’s thinking closer to 1974, however, perhaps it was simply being scouted as a possible location, as with Miss World’s house in Caracas.

The connection between General Idea’s Pageants and Elk’s Building as one of the “site-lines” for the Pavillion is made surer by the presence of the Escalier d’Honneur, which “made its first art-official non-operatic debut at the Ms. General Idea Pageant at the Art Gallery of Ontario in 1971.”95 According to a two-page, annotated typescript included in the Morris/Trasov Archive, signed only “R. Gang,” the author gives an account of the “First Annual Sphinx d’or Academy Awards.”96 Imagined as a “prototype” in Toronto in 1971, in Los Angeles “the staircase to the stars is a reality.” “At its summit are three sets of massive wrought iron gates,” presumably the existing entrance to the Elk’s Building, “past this, the ante room to the main auditorium area is punctuated dramatically by the six silhouettes of the Hand of the Spirit.”97

93 General Idea, 24.
94 General Idea, 26, 28.
95 R. Gang, “Sphinx D’Or 73 An Account of the First Annual Sphinx D’or Academy Awards Los Angeles, California, February 2, 1974,” 1974, 1, Box C5, accession number 18.4 1 of 2, Morris/Trasov Archives, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia.
96 Gang, 1.
97 Gang, 1. The staircase’s “prototype” was found when Michael Morris posed as Miss General Idea 1971-1983 on the staircase of the Pilkington Glass Company Showroom in Toronto; the showroom was a 1930s Art Deco building. Fern Bayer, “Project Series, General Idea Fonds,” 2002, Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.
As determining as the existing architecture of the building was for the identity of the event, it ostensibly was to celebrate Art’s Birthday, and so, too, its originator Robert Filliou. Filliou’s *fête permanente* began on January 17, 1963, “when he thought about the fact that one million years ago modern human beings first appeared on the face of the earth,” according to Image Bank,

in those days art was life and that it would be an excellent idea to have an artless day of festivities to celebrate the happy beginning and bring about a happy ending to the whole affair, so that art will become life again and return to the people; children, men and women everywhere, to whom it belongs.98

Darling wrote to Image Bank in August 1973, “is that fucking Filliou there? I am very happy with his ideas, except I personally never walk in public parks with placards, but the birthday party is great. Do you think he will be here in February [?]”99 Filliou did not end up attending, “we’ll toast Robert from Los Angeles,” Darling and Sharp wrote in their invitation, “while he does something in Berlin.”100

Perhaps more significant than Filliou’s idea, for Bronson at least, was the fact that when midnight struck the *Decca Dance* coincided with Gertrude Stein’s birthday (February 3, 1874)—her centenary, in fact. Stein figured repeatedly in General Idea’s practice in the early 1970s. *The 1970 Miss General Idea Pageant*, which was the inaugural *Pageant*, was the culmination of a staging of *What Happened* (1922), Stein’s first play. Jorge Zontal, along with Mary Gardner, Bernice Hune, Jeff Levy, AA Bronson and Felix Partz had realized Stein’s play in connection with Festival of Underground Theatre, held at the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts and the Global Village Theatre,

98 *Art’s Birthday (Decca-Dance Salutes Network).*
99 “Tell him, if he’s there that he is one of the people Kath and I don’t personally know (physically, of course) who we definitely have a kiss waiting in ready reserve for. So, Robert, if you’re there, look out.” Darling to Image Bank, August 1973.
100 Darling and Sharp, “Invitation to Decca Dance.”
Toronto (August 19–September 6, 1970). The various acts of the play—including the “Geodesic Kite and Folding Event,” “The Laundry Bag Event,” and a “Trousers Demonstration Event”—concluded with The 1970 Miss General Idea Pageant. Though written in the early 1920s, What Happened enjoyed something of a revived interest in the 1960s—performed, for instance, by the Judson Dance Theater (including by Yvonne Rainer and Lucinda Childs, among others) in 1963. Though it is unclear whether Zontal, who led the project in Toronto in 1970, knew of this precedent, it seems likely.

In this way, Stein has been connected with the Pageant since its inception. The fact that Bronson invokes Stein in the Decca Dance, in this sense, almost seems more significant than the more conspicuous celebration of Fillou’s idea of Art’s Birthday. Although Monk has argued that “the first pageant was framed by the wrong context, reflective of General Idea’s experimental theatre interests,” the debt to both Stein and experimental theatre is deeply imbedded in the structure of the Pageant and, indeed, in the Decca Dance, as well.

Morris arrived in Los Angeles on January 9, 1974, where he was met by Lowell Darling at the airport; Willoughby Sharp would not arrive from New York until a few days before the Decca Dance, on January 30, 1974. As Morris recounted in a letter sent to Trasov the day he arrived: “I am in Hollywood—about 3 hrs late between the delay in Fancouver [sic] and getting through customs here in L.A. but when I stepped out into a total grey smog Lowell and Cathy were there, still waiting to greet me.” He records his arrival in slightly different form in his notebook from the trip, and then goes onto describe that evening spent with Lowell, Cathy, and Dundee—the three finishing a bottle of Cutty Sark. “Later Lowell and I take a short walk before going to bed,” Morris wrote, “lots of studio lots around his home, 20s & 30s ones that will thrill A.A. and the troops. Staggered home Gilbert and George style and went to bed.” That next morning, Morris recalled in his notebook his first visit to Los Angeles, in 1967, when he stayed with Kurt von Meier (1934–2011) and through him first met Arman (1928–2005).

Remarkably, Morris does not seem to have visited the Elk’s Building until nearly two weeks after he arrived in Los Angeles, having lunch there on Monday, January 21, 1974, and writing in his notebook afterwards “the Elk’s is definitely ‘fantasmagoric.’ I am sure everyone is going to be quite blown-out by it. It’s really ‘the’ set.” Over the next week-and-a-half, Morris got to work organizing the event. The program was also

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105 Morris, “Michael Morris Sketchbook.”
106 Michael Morris to Vincent Trasov, January 9, 1974, Box C5, accession number 18.4 2 of 2, Morris/Trasov Archives, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia. The letter continues, “driving in took no time at all and it was great to see all those palms in silhouette (still can’t spell that word). Back at 849 1/2 N. Seward we met Dundee who is great the true spirit of Hollywood I felt and full of enthusiasm and suggestions. Realise what an oversight it was to forget the sharks fin bathing cap or send some photos anyway, also forgot George’s musician friends address which is on banknote stationery and might be on the surface. Everything seems fine here, can’t wait till you arrive, much love, Marcel.”
107 Morris, “Michael Morris Sketchbook.”
108 Morris.
109 Morris.
originally going to included a performance by Eleanor Antin, as Morris recorded in a notebook after speaking with her on Tuesday, January 22, 1974: “enthusiastic phone call with Eleanor Antin who unfortunately has to leave for Europe of Feb 2nd. She was keen to do one of her impersonation works which would have been a good addition to the program.” While Antin couldn’t attend, she gave Morris a list of names of other artists to invite. A couple days later, on Wednesday, January 23, 1974, Morris wrote in his notebook, “Susan Subtle bought a ticket!!! Bill Farley wants a machine gun prop!!! Anna Banana & Bill Gaglioni want to help with the dinner!!! Who will really get to blow Hollywood . . . The keys to the decca dance have been hidden in Hollywoodoops.”

Morris spent all day of Saturday, January 26, 1974 “at Lowell’s—long visit with Chris Burden, Tony Remos, Bons Bons, Dundii [sic] etc. Waiting for Peanut & Ms Rhonda who didn’t arrive. The Count, Dr. Dirt and Mince all arrived in the evening and spent first night at the Elk’s Lodge.”

On Monday, January 28, 1974, Morris got a haircut at Elk’s Building, in preparation, and planned the tuxedo rentals. Early this same week, he also made the *Hand of the Spirit* props used in the performance, working at Darling’s house with Robert Cumming (Fig. 9.2). “Elk’s seems to have past [sic] the test everyone looking fine except for the Dr. [Brute] who has a cold and looks a bit like Al Balkavind [Alvin Balkind]. Arrived at E.C. later than intended but everything together and a fine

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110 Morris.
111 “List of suggested names from Eleanor [Antin]: Claire Loeb (Starck); Newton and Helen Harrison (University of California at San Diego, Visual Arts Department); Belinda Trebell (Art News/Artweek); Orlando Gallery; Hal Glicksman (Glucksman?).” Morris.
113 Morris, “Michael Morris Sketchbook.”
114 Morris.
115 Morris.
introductory evening to the Decca Dance—everyone late there because of Mohammad Ali, Fraser fight on close circuit [sic] t.v.” At the end of the day, Morris “arrived back at Elk’s quite tired, premiered Shuck and Jive, seemed well received. Ant Farmers Chip & Megan had checked in and gone to bed, quickly followed.”

On Tuesday, January 29, 1974, the same day General Idea arrived from Toronto, Ant Farm shot some two-and-a-half hours of video—presumably the interviews that are cut in with the footage of the event itself in *Art’s Stars in Hollywood: The Deccadance.* These interviews with Irene Dogmatic, Michael Morris, Mike Mazurki, Hudson Ant Farm, AA Bronson, Pascal, Dr and Lady Brute, and others, are for the most part anecdotal. Morris, for instance, describes his tuxedo fitting with “Dundee of Hollywood,” which took place the day before: “the fitting is something else; go prepared, wear a jockstrap.” Pascal discusses her musical inspirations (Desy Smith and Billie Holliday), and then describes how she got her name: I was “hitch-hiking from Halifax to Toronto [and] “I was trying to look like a girl, because it was easier to get rides that way.” Picked up by a truck driver, “I couldn’t very well tell him my name was Stuart Murray, so I made it up on the spot . . . not like choosing Diane, or Linda, Pascal has creases, you know, don’t touch” (Fig. 9.3).

The last entry for Morris’ notebook appears to be from Wednesday, January 30, 1974—Morris was either too occupied with organizing the event or seeing friends who

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116 Morris.
117 Morris.
118 *Art’s Stars in Hollywood: The Deccadance.*
119 *Art’s Stars in Hollywood: The Deccadance.*
120 *Art’s Stars in Hollywood: The Deccadance.*
had arrived in town, or both. The dress rehearsals were planned for the mornings of Friday, February 1, and Saturday, February 2, 1974 (Fig. 9.4).121

The most comprehensive documentation for the Decca Dance ceremony itself exists in three forms: first, a short tabloid entitled Art’s Birthday: Decca-Dance Salutes Network that was distributed with the February 1974 issue of FILE Megazine;122 second, a videotape made by Ant Farm, Art’s Stars in Hollywood: The Deccadance (1974);123 and lastly, the “shooting script” of the event, published as a special issue of Is journal from Coach House Press, Mondo Artie Episode No. 1681 The Hollywood Deccadance Arts Birthday February 2, 1974 (1975), edited by Victor Coleman (Vic d’Or) and designed by AA Bronson.124 This last document supersedes an earlier spiral-bound version, though containing the identical text, which was published the previous year by The Western Front with a near-identical title.125 In addition to these sources, James Minton wrote a three-part review of the event for West Coast Artweek called “Decca Dancing in the City of Angeles,” which was serialized in the paper between February 23, 1974 and March 9, 1974.126

According to Minton’s account, the night before Decca Dance, on Friday, February 1, 1974, Lowell Darling married his spouse Kathleen. Both were in drag, though it is

121 Morris, “Michael Morris Sketchbook.”
122 Art’s Birthday (Decca-Dance Salutes Network). FILE Megazine 2, no. 5 (February 1974).
123 Art’s Stars in Hollywood: The Deccadance. Shot and edited in 1974, the copy in the collection of Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada was transferred to DVD in 1997.
124 Coleman and designed by AA Bronson, “Mondo Artie Episode No. 1681 The Hollywood Deccadance Arts Birthday February 2, 1974.”
125 The Western Front, Mondo Artie: Episode No. 1681; Art’s Birthday, the Hollywood Decadance (Vancouver: The Western Front, 1974).
unclear from Minton’s account whether the performance was just that, or a legal marriage

ceremony, even though he describes the Darlings “signing legal forms, s[c]izzoring
wedding garments from each other.”

The morning of Saturday, February 2, 1974, by contrast, “passes without intelligible developments.”

“All afternoon the Grand Auditorium (scene of the outrage) is amok with preparation,” Minton wrote, “the internal
structure of the Decca Dance, the nature and sequence of events has been left in the hands
of Canadians. Dr. Brute, Mr. Peanut, New York Corres Sponge Dance School of
Vancouver . . . these people; and naturally they’re rehearsing, wiring the joint for image machines, getting ready.”

This division of labour that Minton articulates is interesting, aligning with correspondence and documentation in the Morris/Trasov Archive that suggests Darling handled the logistics of the rentals, accommodation, and food, for instance, with Morris largely conceiving the performance; as Minton says “the internal structure,” itself. By four o’clock, everyone who had been rehearsing goes off to nap, and “by five-thirty they’re already filtering back.”

At six o’clock, the food service starts to pick up, and a “lot of bar business being transacted between flash women and their men and a lone bartender so classically harassed.”

At seven o’clock, Darling arrives as maître d’—“stunningly decked-out in top hat, swallow-tail coat, blue pullover shirt with dollar sign scribed in sequins on the chest, white floppy pants and sneakers.”

At half past eight, the doors opened and Darling started taking tickets.

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127 Minton, “Decca Dancing in the City of Angeles [Part Two of Three].”
128 Minton.
129 Minton.
130 Minton.
131 Minton.
132 Minton.
The number in attendance varies according to the account: the tabloid for the event, included along with the February 1974 issue of *FILE*, cites 800 attendees.133 Lowell Darling interviewing Willoughby Sharp in advance of the event also refers to 800 people.134 Luis Jacob in *Golden Streams*, suggests “more than 1,000 mail-art network artists and their friends,” though without giving a source.135 Earlier plans for the event, as Darling wrote to Trasov in late April 1973, suggested 500 for the Saturday evening performance, and another 250 for the Sunday matinee—the second show, of course, never realized.136 Those in attendance included (in addition to the performers): “Chris Burden, Van Schley, Hudson Ant Farm, Richard Dixon, Sandy Stagg, Dave Robinson, Rookie of the Year David Young, John Mayonnaise, Bon Tons, Bons Mots, Bon Bon Vivants, Gene Youngblood, Opal L. Nations, Futzie Nutzle, Irene Dogmatic, Alex Hay, Doug Christmas, Pascal, [and] Robert Cumming.”137

*Decca Dance* began at nine o’clock with a screening of *Schuckin’ An’ Jivin’* (1973), a film shot during Darling’s visit to Vancouver in late June and early July 1973, recounted above.138 Following the screening, the ceremony proper began with Don Davis,
“the Total Media One Man Band” somewhat confusingly accompanied by his spouse, Rae Davis, making them more of a duet than a solo act: “welcome to the Deccadance! To begin a tribute to Canada,” Don Davis announced. After playing *O Canada*, with “a request for equal time” Davis starts in on the *Star-Spangled Banner*. During the performance, “his banjo lights up, horns blow, spring-loaded cloth snakes jump out from secret compartments,” according to Minton. The banjo, in fact, glows with an illuminated map of America, which Davis holds aloft during the anthem. In and among the various props and instruments, just visible behind Davis is a sign reading “Andy Warhol is a conservative!” Morris seems to have first met with Davis to discuss the event a few days earlier, on Tuesday, January 24, 1974, though the decision to open the event with renditions of both national anthems was made before the invitation from Darling and Sharp went out, earlier that month. In any event, the choice to open *Decca Dance* with both anthems signals something of the transnational flavour of the evening.

Following the Total Media One Man Band, Bronson and Lewis came onto the stage, keeping their backs to the audience, each holding a *Hand of the Spirit* as they begin to recite in hushed voices Filliou’s text *Whispered Art History* (1963). After the reading, Morris comes on stage, seeming at first slightly nervous: “friends, we are from monuments to prevent them from being thrown off the surface of the earth by the centrifugal force of its rotation.” Wallace, *Whispered Art History: Twenty Years at the Western Front*, 13.

139 Coleman and designed by AA Bronson, “Mondo Artie Episode No. 1681 The Hollywood Deccadance Arts Birthday February 2, 1974.”
140 *Art’s Stars in Hollywood: The Deccadance.*
141 Minton, “Decca Dancing in the City of Angeles [Part Two of Three].”
142 *Art’s Stars in Hollywood: The Deccadance.*
143 *Art’s Stars in Hollywood: The Deccadance.*
144 Morris, “Michael Morris Sketchbook.” “At the organ, a surprise. Someone who played for Douglas Fairbanks Sr. back in the Silent Film Era, perhaps? Will he be able to play both the U.S. and Canadian National Anthems simultaneously so that standing can remain optional? We hope so.” Darling and Sharp, “Invitation to Decca Dance.”
145 *Art’s Stars in Hollywood: The Deccadance;* Minton, “Decca Dancing in the City of Angeles [Part Two of Three].”
Canadada to celebrate the one million and eleventh anniversary of the birth of art."

He introduces himself as “Miss General Idea 1971 to 1983 inclusive,” and then the emcees,
“your Masters of Ceremony for the evening are: AA Bronson, editor of General Idea’s
FILE Megazine, the zine of the correspondence network, and E.E. Claire [Glenn Lewis],
founder of the N.Y. Corres Sponge Dance School of Vancouver” (Fig. 9.5). Morris’s
introduction is telling: he devised the programme, judging by notes on the order and
content of slides in his notes for the month leading up to the event.

At the podium, duly customized with *Hand of the Spirit* insignias, Bronson and
Lewis with highly stylized delivery, blinking often and speaking very slowly, each hold a
*Hand of the Spirit*, mounted on long dowels. Bantering, they discuss plans for “a
limited edition of hand-crafted leather gloves”—these, Bronson explains, “are just mock-
ups,” as the real thing will be expensive to make. Ad libbing, Bronson explains how,
on
the whole we’re not too good at marketing, because we don’t have too many products to
market most of our art lies in what we do and in how we recycle what’s around us and the
events of our everyday lives, banal as that is, it’s all banal, of course.

Bronson and Lewis provide a survey of the past year—“the year of ‘Collage or Perish,’
‘Pablum for the Pablum-Eaters,’ ‘The Borderline Case.’”—“who knows what the next ten
years will bring? Well, we do!” The past year was not with “casualties,” however, and
in a section lifted from the Academy Awards’ “in memoriam” segment they list the artists

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146 Coleman and designed by AA Bronson, “Mondo Artie Episode No. 1681 The Hollywood Deccadance
Arts Birthday February 2, 1974.”
147 Coleman and designed by AA Bronson.
148 Morris, “Michael Morris Sketchbook.”
149 *Art’s Stars in Hollywood: The Deccadance.*
150 *Art’s Stars in Hollywood: The Deccadance.*
151 *Art’s Stars in Hollywood: The Deccadance.*
152 Coleman and designed by AA Bronson, “Mondo Artie Episode No. 1681 The Hollywood Deccadance
Arts Birthday February 2, 1974.”
no longer involved in the Eternal Network, including the death of Ray Johnson’s New York Correspondence School, which had been announced in the *New York Times* on April 5, 1973, concomitant with—or perhaps owing partly to—the rise in “junk mail.”

In an interview earlier in the week, likely recorded on Tuesday, January 29, 1974, Morris described how “the basic thing is the awards, that’s where the people are,” the dance numbers and other performances, for Morris, “is just like the fill, this is just definite fill, the whole thing’s mysterious because nobody’s going to know what the fuck the awards are . . . it’s just a format.” “Most of the performance,” Morris continues, “is going to be ‘may I have the envelope please?’” Some eighteen awards were given, though only ten were included in the replica envelope and announcement cards published as the edition *Sphinx d’Or Awards* (1974). While many of the awards were jokey, rather insiderish nods to friends, they do nonetheless document the changes happening to the Eternal Network and its reorientation—at least from the perspectives of *Decca Dance*’s principal organizers—away from mail art toward publications, such as *FILE Megazine* and *Fanzini*. In this way, the event stands as a bookend to a period of correspondence art, signalling a turn toward artists’ publications instead.

153 Coleman and designed by AA Bronson.
154 *Art’s Stars in Hollywood: The Deccadance.*
Bronson and Lewis introduce John Jack (John Jack Baylin a.k.a. Count Fanzini) and Granada Gazelle to begin the awards.157 “I do want to congratulate you on ‘Fanzini Goes to The Movies,’” Gazelle says, “it was the featured periodical on the Air Canadada [sic] flight out here.”158 She continues,

for those of us who have licked a thousand stamps, have waited patiently in Xerox lines, have collated pages of offset, have stood for hours over light tables trying to line up the Letraset, and most of all, have fought for precedence in the world of ideas and gossip . . . This is our night of nights! . . . Here in Hollywood the Dadacademy salutes you the network!159

Gazelle and Baylin begin awarding the various prizes, with the first category being “Best Animal Impersonation” [1].160 With 28 contenders—ranging from Tree Frog (Edmonton), Honey Bear (Toronto), and Buffalo Barton (Quebec) to the rather jokey Moos Gallery (Toronto) and Granada Gazelle herself—the award went to Irene Dogmatic, with Ant Farm’s camera expectantly trained on her, awaiting her feigned surprise. The second category alluded to the changes taking place in mail art, as Baylin says, “the mail scene has been rapidly expanding into the zine scene. As the network grows the demand for the news off the subliminal is always there.”161 The award is called “Art’s dead by gossip’s still alive,” [2*] and went to Noah Dakota. Followed by “best contribution in 1973 in a Rapid Off-set Zine” [3] (John Dowd and Bum Bank for Fanzini Fanzine) and “best

157 Art’s Stars in Hollywood: The Deccadance. Gazelle, in interview, describes how she was given her name: “I was given gazelle by an Arab millionaire, it’s like saying chick or something.”
158 Coleman and designed by AA Bronson, “Mondo Artie Episode No. 1681 The Hollywood Deccadance Arts Birthday February 2, 1974.” Baylin asks, “Did the stewardesses get off on the fetishes?” To which Gazelle replies, “No, but perhaps the mechanics did.”
159 Coleman and designed by AA Bronson.
160 Indicates the sequence of the eighteen awards; an asterisk indicates the award is not included in the multiple Sphinx d’Or. “Sphinx d’Or Awards.”
161 Coleman and designed by AA Bronson, “Mondo Artie Episode No. 1681 The Hollywood Deccadance Arts Birthday February 2, 1974.”
glossy Zine” [4] (‘IFEL’—the special Paris issue of *FILE Megazine*). As an interlude between prizes, Morris begins a slideshow, nearly repeating Baylin’s earlier comment, and saying “the correspondence scene has been replaced by the zine scene but the mail is still the main vehicle [sic] for the latest off the subliminal.” Next, John Dowd led five sponge dancers in a routine called “Gold Diggers of ‘84,” apparently choreographed by Felix Partz with Vic d’Or (Coleman). The routine featured “Sponge Dancers in black tuxedos and shark-fin bathing caps designed by Glenn Lewis and Kate Craig, waving General Idea’s black *Hand of the Spirit* (1973–74),” as Bayer described it. Dowd, on the other hand, was dressed in black leather with a “FETISH” t-shirt; Hank Bull accompanied on piano and Pascal sang.

Following the performance, Dowd returned to the stage and gave the “Spirit of Ray” [5] award to Marcia Herscovitz. Miss Rhonda, who made silver jewellery, including a palm tree pendant for Bronson, presented the next award, “Rookie of the Year” [6] to David Young. “Best alias” [7] was presented jointly to Dudley Finds (Lowell Darling) and the Mighty Mogul (Willoughby Sharp). Lady Brute (Kate Craig) and Dr. Brute (Eric Metcalfe) presented the next award, “Best New Talent for 1973,” [8] which went to Gilbert and George; apparently meant to be accepted on their behalf by Mince Edwards, from Vancouver, who does not appear.

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162 Coleman and designed by AA Bronson.
163 Coleman and designed by AA Bronson.
165 Bayer, 102. Although Bayer credits General Idea with the motif of Hand of the Spirit, it was Morris and Robert Cumming who made these particular props at Lowell Darling’s house for the *Decca Dance* the week before the event, as discussed above and recorded in Morris’ notebook. Morris, “Michael Morris Sketchbook.”
166 Coleman and designed by AA Bronson, “Mondo Artie Episode No. 1681 The Hollywood Deccadance Arts Birthday February 2, 1974.”
167 Coleman and designed by AA Bronson. For a profile and examples of Ms. Rhonda’s work, see “Made to Order,” *FILE Megazine* 1, no. 2&3 (June 1972): 27.
Lady Brute goes on to list the nominees for “Best Major Work,” [9] which went to Flakey Rose Hips (Glenn Lewis) for *The Great Wall of 1984* (1973).168 Lewis’ collaborative work consolidated the Eternal Network by assembling together contributions from various correspondents, and in doing so, much like the *Decca Dance*’s awards, in a way signalled the network’s gradual decline. Conceived by Lewis, it drew on “the assistance of the Corres-Sponge Dance School” and “involved everyone by asking for contributions to be housed in the Great Wall of 1984 for the National Research Library in Ottawa.”169 Premised on the structure of a safety deposit box, with 365 containers for days of the year, correspondents, or “spongers,” could “put their valuables away for future reference.”170 While the container for the work was installed in the lobby of the National Research Library in Ottawa in January 1974, Morris guessed it would “take as much as ten years to finalize, which is funny because that makes the work complete in 1984.”171

Next in the ceremony, Lowell Darling is brought on stage and introduced as “Mr. Organizer of this Deccadance.”172 Mr. Peanut announces the next award, “Miss Congeniality,” [10*] and gives it to Anna Banana, who roundly refused the title: “you

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168 Other nominees are shown in a slideshow, including Ant Farm’s *20/20 Vision* at the Houston Museum of Contemporary Art, the Image Bank (later Morris/Trasov) Archives at The Western Front, *The 1971 Miss General Idea Pageant*, and more recently, General Idea’s *Luxon V.B.* installed at Carmen Lamanna Gallery, Toronto. Coleman and designed by AA Bronson, “Mondo Artie Episode No. 1681 The Hollywood Deccadance Arts Birthday February 2, 1974.”

169 *Art’s Birthday (Decca-Dance Salutes Network).*


172 Coleman and designed by AA Bronson, “Mondo Artie Episode No. 1681 The Hollywood Deccadance Arts Birthday February 2, 1974.”
don’t know me very well if you think I deserve this, this is what I think of it!” The “I Never Promised You A Rose Garden-Mostly Flowers Award” nominees were listed by Darling, however “the judges were unable to reach a decision. There is no winner for this award.” The “Tom of Finland Bulge Event Meeting Buddha University” award was given to Picasso, and Dr. V.D. Dirt accepted it on his behalf while an image was projected at the back of the stage of Picasso standing outdoors in a pair of white briefs, his bathrobe in one hand and the collar of his dog in the other. The final five awards before the “Sphinx d’Or” are “Best Contribution to Art Deco in 1984,” for which Ms. Rhonda was acclaimed; “Hole of the Year Award . . . Most Fab Boutique in Hollywood,” which went to Clifton Martin; “Best Xerox Art,” to Les Petits Bons Bons for Meet Andy and David; “Best Camouflage of 1973,” and “Best Business Woman of 1973,” which went to, respectively, “Dr. Brute/Banal Beauty for Spots in Front of Your Eyes” and “Sandy Stagg for Amelia Earhart.”

Before awarding the “Sphinx d’Or”—which is almost always emphatically pronounced during the event as “sphincter”—Bronson asked the audience to light the candles given to them on entering the event: “please note: midnight marks the birthday, too, of the one and only Gertrude Stein. I invite you to join Pascal and myself, then, in this rendition of Happy Birthday to Art. Remember! Your letters conquer time and space!” Vic d’Or arrives on stage, dressed in a turban, to announce the winner of the “Sphinx d’Or.”

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173 The stage direction reads: “Anna throws the trophy on the floor, breaking it, everyone is a bit taken aback, Lowell tips his hat, E.E. rolls his eyes, Anna stalks off the stage.” Coleman and designed by AA Bronson.
174 Coleman and designed by AA Bronson.
175 Coleman and designed by AA Bronson.
176 Art’s Stars in Hollywood: The Decadance.
177 Coleman and designed by AA Bronson, “Mondo Artie Episode No. 1681 The Hollywood Deccadance Arts Birthday February 2, 1974.”
and in a nod to the past fictional crownings of Miss General Idea that took place in the 1970 Pageant—which had caused some confusion around the founding year of General Idea—d’Or lists the previous winners of the “Sphinx d’Or” as Anna Banana, Miss Canadada, and the Marquis d’Arachide (Vincent Trasov). Though not described during the performance itself, in the accompanying tabloid, an extensive fictional history for the award is given:

The award had its origins in ancient Egypt where the bill of the ibis inspired the Egyptians to invent the enema; the long beaks of these birds were inserted into the anus to introduce water to cleanse the intestines. Today the award resembles a bust of Edmund Purdom in the role of the Egyptian and came to the Academy as a gift from the collections of Dr. V.D. Dirt. The award nearly created an international incident when its base was penetrated by Custom’s officials at Vancouver’s International Airport. However, the award must not be mythtaken for a borderline case, for it represents the most deep-seated approval and appreciation of all the Dadacademy members.178

The more mundane, and goofy, origins of the award are given by Eric Metcalfe (Dr. Brute) in Ant Farm’s video documentation: the award “grew out of a joke, we’re watching a film, at Western Front, and there [were] these two mad scientists [and] they were after this award; we sort of changed it to sphincter; we were sitting around getting drunk, then sphinx d’or came about, this is all in line with [John Jack Baylin’s] Bum Bank.”179

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178 Art’s Birthday (Decca-Dance Salutes Network).
179 Art’s Stars in Hollywood: The Deccadance. Count Fanzini, during an accompanying interview, recounts his own origins in Ant Farm’s video: “It all started one summer when we decided to give that person an alias so we could talk about him without using his name, and we called him the count, and then everyone started calling me the count.” Fanzini comes from fan zine—“which is a type of magazine for fan clubs, which John [Dowd] has been involved in, doing covers.” “And Fanzini came as a sort of play, that would be the Italian pronunciation, some kind of deposed aristocracy. I really feel quite comfortable, you know, feeling like the Count, or Count-like.”
“I am pleased and honoured to present,” d’Or says, “by acclamation, this exquisite bust of Edmond Purdom to . . . Count Fanzini [John Jack Baylin]!”180 John Jack accepted the award, saying “I feel empty and full, thrilled and full of despair. The banquet has yet to begin,” and ending by wishing Gertrude Stein a happy birthday.181 Bronson and Lewis returned to the stage to introduce Dr. Brute, though in fact their announcement was barely audible, with “great slabs of inexplicable noise . . . pouring into the auditorium from just outside the entrance.”182 Dr. Brute leads his band on stage in tuxedos, again accompanied by Hank Bull at the piano. The band plays a few numbers on the kazoo-cum-saxophones, followed by Pascal singing, Mr. Peanut wandering about the stage, and a slide show of “Leopard Reality” as a backdrop.183 Dr. Brute was followed by the Oinga Boingas, weaving their way from the stage through the audience and eventually “the band leaves the way they came still playing, the guests talk and drink and slowly leave,” the stage directions read, “Fade Out.”184

There were ostensibly two videos and one film made documenting the event: *Art’s Stars in Hollywood: The Decca Dance* (1974), a sixty-minute video “made by Chip Lord and

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180 Coleman and designed by AA Bronson, “Mondo Artie Episode No. 1681 The Hollywood Deccadance Arts Birthday February 2, 1974.”
181 Coleman and designed by AA Bronson.
182 Minton, “Decca Dancing in the City of Angeles [Part Two of Three].” “AA Bronson is up there now, saying something . . . an announcement of some sort . . . difficult to hear.”
183 Coleman and designed by AA Bronson, “Mondo Artie Episode No. 1681 The Hollywood Deccadance Arts Birthday February 2, 1974.” “Dr. Brute and The Brute Band come crashing onstage for a set that peaks out reminiscent of the old Colgate-Palmolive Comedy Hour finales—Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis out there in front of the studio orchestra, ties undone, cufflinks gone, Vegas socko evening clothes nicely rumpled: ‘We’re wasted, folks, from giving our all . . . ’ But nothing wasted about Dr. Brute. Not yet, anyway. He’s in tails, ruffled yellow shirt: Young Guy Lombardo Crazy In Los Angeles—except—his axe. You know, the thing he plays. It looks like a saxophone but it isn’t—it’s just case fiberglass or something in that saxophone shape, with a hole in the mouth end into which a kazoo has been inserted. A kazoo! Jesus Christ!” Minton, “Decca Dancing in the City of Angeles [Part Two of Three].”
184 Coleman and designed by AA Bronson, “Mondo Artie Episode No. 1681 The Hollywood Deccadance Arts Birthday February 2, 1974.”
Megan Williams with the assistance of Willoughby Sharp, Environmental Communications, Ace Space Co., and Willy Walker."\textsuperscript{185} 

\textit{Art’s Stars Interviews} (1974), another video featuring sixty minutes of interviews conducted by Sharp with “Marcel Idea and Mr. Peanut of Image Bank; AA Bronson and Flakey of General Idea and the Western Front; Dr. Brute and Lady Brute of Banal Beauty Inc.; John Jack and John Dowd of the John Dowd Fan Club; Pascal (Androgyne Bomb of the Mondo Artie Scene) and Granada Gazelle, Miss General Idea 1969."\textsuperscript{186} And lastly, a twenty-minute 16mm black-and-white film with sound, shot and edited by Kerry Calonna from the Film Department of University of California, Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{187}

Of these three recordings, it seems only the first and last are extant, though the first videotape also features a number of interviews intercut with footage of the ceremony itself, suggesting perhaps that Sharp’s interviews, ostensibly the content of the second tape, were also incorporated in the first. There is a possibility that the second tape was never completed, or that it was destroyed in the late 1970s. Chip Lord wrote to Glenn Lewis in an undated letter, most likely from late 1978/early 1979, that “our studio was destroyed by fire a month ago . . . we were able to salvage all our slides, some tapes, files, scrapbooks, and other image archives . . . the Deccadance tape, however, was lost, and it was the master.”\textsuperscript{188} Lewis responded, offering to send him a copy from at the tape at The Front, in a letter from January 24, 1979.\textsuperscript{189} The fact that Lord only refers to a single tape

\textsuperscript{185} \textit{Art’s Birthday} (Decca-Dance Salutes Network).
\textsuperscript{186} \textit{Art’s Birthday} (Decca-Dance Salutes Network).
\textsuperscript{187} \textit{Art’s Birthday} (Decca-Dance Salutes Network). A copy of the film exists in the Audio, Film and Video Works Series, General Idea fonds, Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada, though it is unclear whether still in viewable condition.
\textsuperscript{188} Chip Lord to Glenn Lewis, Late /early 1979 1978, Box 47, File 14, Artist in Residence 79, Western Front Society Fonds, Rare Books and Special Collections, University of British Columbia.
\textsuperscript{189} Glenn Lewis to Chip Lord, January 24, 1979, Box 47, File 14, Artist in Residence 79, Western Front Society Fonds, Rare Books and Special Collections, University of British Columbia.
in the letter quoted above gives some evidence, however ambiguous, that the second tape of interviews was never completed.

That three film and video recordings were made of the event attest to the fact that for Bronson, and many others, aside from artist publications such as FILE Megazine, the second major means of “connective tissue” was video. Both the 1970 and 1971 Miss General Idea Pageants were, as Bronson later wrote, “performance[s] for video.” Elaborating Bronson’s idea, Monk has argued that “the Pageants already inhabited a double format: they were always performed as if in television studios—playing to the camera as well as to scripts—with videotapes as their outcome.” That the model for the Decca Dance was the Academy Awards, which the vast majority of people encounter televised, rather than live, is also significant.

Chip Lord and Megan Williams of Ant Farm may have begun plans for their video documentation of the Decca Dance as early as August 1973 when they travelled to Vancouver from San Francisco. As Lord wrote to Morris on July 31, 1973, he was planning to arrive on August 13, 1973, and wanted to “spend a few days visiting all the video outlets, including the local cable station, then spend a few days with you, Peanut, and friends. Are you will you be in Roberts Creek [Babyland]? Can I stay at the Western Front?” Whether they had discussed plans for the videos during that visit or not, it is clear that recording the Decca Dance was not an afterthought—as Chip Lord wrote to Morris, in an undated letter, likely from late 1973, “I’ve applied to the National Endowment for a grant to videotape the Deca Dance. It’s in the media division under the

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190 Bronson, “The Humiliation of the Bureaucrat: Artist-Run Centres as Museums by Artists,” 34.
191 Bronson, 34.
193 Chip Lord to Michael Morris, Late 1973, Box C7, accession number 20.11, Ant Farm Binder 1971-1972, Morris/Trasov Archives, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia.
category ‘film or video about artists.’” Earlier still, on October 14, 1973, Darling wrote to The Western Front that Ant Farm “wants to do color T.V. with an actual possibility of seeing it edited for television. E.C. [Environmental Communications] will (would like to) handle any distribution of the thing, too.” The resulting videos ended up being in black-and-white, however, and it does not seem they were televised. Ant Farm’s tapes were expensive to produce, with Darling suggesting it cost Chip Lord “over $1500 and probably 500 hours of his time, so I hope some sell or rent.” Lord himself was hesitant to invest more time in the project; in an undated letter to Trasov, likely from summer or fall 1974, “I’m not too interested in re-editing the Deccadance tape unless we have a firm financial commitment that it will be aired. So far I am holding a [$]600-700 . . . debt on the production with only one possible sale that I know of (Sacramento State College art school).”

Though there exists a copy in the General Idea fonds and it has yet to be transferred digitally, the content of the 16mm film by Kerry Calonna is especially intriguing, as Darling wrote to The Front on August 27, 1974, “Kerry showed me the film, and I have endorsed it as the complete Decca Dance Documentary (film). Chip Lord said it was better than the tape because Kerry didn’t stick to a typical show-what-happened style.”

Aside from the video and film documentation, publications and editions were also produced in connection with the Decca Dance. More generally, Bronson had stressed the
need for documentation, saying in interview with Sharp in 1973, “I think that every time we operate, every time we put something in FILE it’s with the sense of taking that sense of something that has happened, and raising it to a consciousness of having happened.”  

Art’s Birthday (1974), the tabloid that circulated as an insert in FILE Megazine, not only documented the event in brief—evidence of it “having happened”—it also served as an advertisement for the exhibition that resulted from the event, which could be bought in its entirety or borrowed by institutions. In this way, the performance anticipated a rich afterlife through documentation, editions and ephemera, and allowed an otherwise intangible and fleeting experience to be received by a collector or institution.

The artist-organizers were ambitious in this respect: the “entire exhibition package is limited to an edition of 300 and can be purchased at $1500,” or can be borrowed for one month for $1000, “postage not included . . . please allow one month for delivery.”  The four-week delivery may have something to do with the fact that not all of the components of the exhibition package—and definitely not in the ambitious edition size of 300—had been realized at the time the tabloid went to press and circulated with FILE Megazine. It seems the package had only been planned, however, a few days before the event took place. In a notebook entry written the week of the Dance, Morris itemized the various components of the exhibition package, along with prices. Among the items he mentions are the two videotapes and one film, eighty slides, copies of the FILE Directory, Fanzini Goes to the Movies, and the Image Bank Directory, along with Hand of the Spirit multiple, menu, plate, an “autograph page,” among other items.  Perhaps

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200 Art’s Birthday (Decca-Dance Salutes Network).
201 The total for all of the roughly twenty components was $1172.50. Morris, “Michael Morris Sketchbook.”
overly ambitious, some of the editions listed in Morris’ notebook or advertised in *Art’s Birthday* never seem to have been realized, or at least, not as planned. None of the packages seem to have been acquired by museums or galleries, at least in Canada, however both The Western Front and Art Metropole mounted exhibitions of the package.202

Five publications that ostensibly documented the event were listed as part of the “exhibition package” including the February 1974 “special issue” of *FILE Megazine*. In fact, the only acknowledgement of the *Decca Dance* in the issue, aside from the dedication and inserted tabloid, was the presence of a 1974–1984 appointment book in what was otherwise simply *FILE*’s “Annual Artists’ Directory Issue.”203 In a similar vein, *Fanzini Goes to the Movies* is also listed in the package, though it only reproduces a few images from *Decca Dance* and no text.204 Another, Ant Farm’s *20/20 VISION* (1973), was published before the event in Los Angeles took place.205 The forth document listed was *Mondo Artie Episode No. 1681* (1974), the earlier, spiral-bound version of the “shooting script” published by The Western Front and later adapted by Vic d’Or and AA Bronson as the special issue of *Is*.206 And lastly, in a curious kind of meta-bibliography, *Art’s Birthday* itself is cited, the document wherein the list is advertised.207

202 *Surfacing on the Subliminal* took place April 21–May 1, 1974 at The Western Front, Vancouver. Bronson wrote to Morris on May 12, 1975, regarding the exhibition held at Art Metropole: “Yes, the Deccadance was a definite success, hope to have installation photos to send you . . . made a very handsome show and the films were well attended, a definite success.”AA Bronson to Michael Morris, May 12, 1975, Box C6, accession number 20.8, General Idea/Art Metropole 1975-76, Morris/Trasov Archives, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia.


205 Ant Farm, *20/20 VISION* (San Francisco: Ant Farm, 1973).

206 Coleman and designed by AA Bronson, “Mondo Artie Episode No. 1681 The Hollywood Deccadance Arts Birthday February 2, 1974.”

207 *Art’s Birthday* (*Decca-Dance Salutes Network*).
A number of multiples were also described in *Art’s Birthday*, though not all seem to have been realized. “The Hand of the Spirit in Plexiglas” is the most conspicuous, as they seem to have been used as props in the *Decca Dance* itself. Bayer describes the work in the catalogue raisonné of General Idea multiples by writing that “an unknown number of these multiples were constructed for the Decca Dance, they were also used by General Idea for their performance/film/video ‘Blocking’ produced at the Western Front.”208 These appear to be the same multiples made by Morris and Robert Cumming at Darling’s house the week of the event.209 It seems highly unlikely that 300 of these existed. These Plexiglas works were to be sold “with facsimiles of the winning envelopes designed by General Idea and Count Fanzini.”210 A “Commemorative ceramic plate designed by Mr. Peanut” never seems to have been made, but is likely related to Darling’s extensive correspondence with Image Bank, and the original idea to provide diners with an editioned plate to eat on, have washed, and then take home at the end of the evening.211 As well as a selection of photographs (twenty 8 x 10 black-and-white photographs and twelve 8 x 10 in colour), there was a 16 x 30 inch silkscreen print of the Elk’s Building, Hollywood.212 This last item does not seem to have been produced as planned, made instead as a 14 x 14 inch silkscreen image of the Elk’s Building, Hollywood, produced in an edition of 100. With the recto bordered in black and gold, and a pastel-hued image of the building, as seen from a distance over water and framed by palm fronds, it evokes a deco aesthetic in keeping with the building’s architectural style. Interestingly, this poster

209 Morris, “Michael Morris Sketchbook.”
210 *Art’s Birthday (Decca-Dance Salutes Network)*; “Sphinx d’Or Awards.”
211 Darling to Bankers, Dancers, Brutes, etc., July 16, 1973; Darling to Image Bank, August 1973.
212 *Art’s Birthday (Decca-Dance Salutes Network).*
was later included in *Morris/Trasov Archive Sampler: 1973-2005* (2004). This “sampler,” assembled and distributed with the help of the collector and dealer Steven Leiber (1957–2012), included sixteen items spanning the artists’ collaborative work, however five are related to the *Decca Dance*. Lastly, the “exhibition package” was to include various ephemera, possibly items that went unsold in Sylvia Mazurki’s shop at Elk’s Building. These include t-shirts (Mr. Peanut, Jack Dowd, etc.), a button for the John Dowd fan club, “Art’s Birthday Menu from Mike Mazurki’s Restaurant,” a black-and-white poster for *Decca Dance*, and “16 composite Z cards of the Stars designed by Dr. Brute.”

Writing in the Summer after the event, Darling asks Morris and Trasov, “what does Fat City get from the Decca Dance package? If anything. Mostly I’m only curious about the film, since all I have from it is a copy with a sound track that sounds like a recording of Amtrack wheels at ground level.” It is unclear whether Morris or Darling ever realized a sale or even rental of the package, given that the two instances of its exhibition were with Art Metropole and The Western Front. When Bronson designed *Mondo Artie Episode No. 1681 The Hollywood Deccadance Arts Birthday February 2, 1974* (1975) the following year, he wrote to Morris, “really enjoyed designing DECCA DANCE for

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214 They are the tabloid *Art’s Birthday* (1974); *Fanzini Goes to the Movies* (1974); the sprial-bound shooting script *Mondo Artie Episode no. 1681* (1974), later adapted by Vic d’Or and AA Bronson as the special issue of *Is*; ten cards announcing winners, in envelopes stamped Sphinx D’Or Awards (1974); and the above-mentioned silkscreen.
215 “Sylvia wants to sell postcards at her boutique.” Darling to Bankers, Dancers, Brutes, etc., July 16, 1973.
216 This is likely Ray Johnson, “Decca Dance Place Mat,” 1973, Accession number 11201, Art Metropole Collection, Library and Archives, National Gallery of Canada.
218 *Art’s Birthday (Decca-Dance Salutes Network).*
219 “Between the Decca Dance and the Artists Lawyers’ Ball, last year got pretty absorbed in non-profit, so I’m going back on the road in October.” Darling to The Western Front, August 27, 1974.
Vic d’Or—I think it will be really great—there’s a lot of interest in that event around—but this will be the first documentation available to skinny pocketbooks.”220 Perhaps that was the obstacle to circulating the exhibition package more widely: given the specialized audience for the material, the price for both sale and even rental was hefty, to say the least.

The excitement of the Decca Dance carried over into the second year of The Western Front, which had formed in March 1973 with eight shareholders looking for stable “living/working spaces.”221 Though mounted roughly a year after its founding, Surfacing on the Subliminal (April 21–May 1, 1974) was the Front’s first exhibition, documenting the Dance through the exhibition package detailed above.222 The event was a major expense for the artists involved, especially felt without sales or rentals of the resulting exhibition package to offset the costs. Robert Cumming wrote to Image Bank on May 13, 1974, shortly after Surfacing on the Subliminal came down: “did the Decadance do it . . . as a responsible party to finish all parties [?] I know you’re all low on funds since the extravaganza.”223 A few days later, Cumming reflected more on the event:

the Decadance proved eventually to the folks in the LA area, if not the world that Canada is the future, if not eventual center of world high society. Avant-garde monumentality guised as performance hi-jinx. No one could have envisioned it. And no one could have encompassed it so quite successfully. That’s what I think for the magazines, upon which I

220 AA Bronson to Michael Morris, August 19, 1975, Box C6, accession number 20.8, General Idea/Art Metropole 1975-76, Morris/Trasov Archives, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia.
221 Wallace, Whispered Art History: Twenty Years at the Western Front, 2.
223 Robert Cumming to Image Bank, May 13, 1974, Box C56, accession number 82.1, Robert Cumming Correspondence 1968-75, Morris/Trasov Archives, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia.
While Cumming was keen to debrief the event, strangely, there is little correspondence between Image Bank and General Idea immediately following the Decca Dance. On May 12, 1975—over a year after the event—Bronson wrote to Morris, “so delighted to hear from you, it feels like years.” Later that year, Morris and Trasov were planning on attending General Idea’s Going Thru the Motions (September 18, 1975), held at the Art Gallery of Ontario. Bronson wrote to Morris on August 19, 1975, however, “distraught to hear you and P-Nut won’t be coming out in September.” Especially as Bronson writes, “it’s another Decca Dance, but the rent is free. Don’t know how you and P-Nut ever did it.” In October 1976, Bronson wrote again to Morris and Trasov, saying that the Winnipeg Art Gallery wants “another Decca Dance,” “basically lots of people, craziness, and a big party.” That performance would be Hot Property (October 22, 1977), the first of two occasions when the Pavillion would meet its destruction. In effect, it was planned as “a variation on our last performance at the Art Gallery of Ontario,” that is, a variation on Going Thru the Motions.

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224 Cumming continues, “When we’re alone and freed from prying ears, I’ll tell you what others who attended the event thought, since I’m now in dreaded fear of mentioning anything in candid conversation that might be reprinted in FILE. Art may be dead some years ago, gossip alive at the present, but my own future I’ll entrust to Word of Mouth or some better suited form for privacy.” Robert Cumming to Michael Morris and Vincent Trasov, May 16, 1974, Box C56, accession number 82.1, Robert Cumming Correspondence 1968-75, Morris/Trasov Archives, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia.

225 Bronson to Morris, May 12, 1975.

226 Bronson continues, “We are anticipating our visit to NYC with excited tremors. It will be so good to get OUT of Toronto. Toronto’s getting better, but not good enough—so we are upping our mobility as you did in pre-Front days.” Bronson to Morris, August 19, 1975.

227 AA Bronson to Michael Morris and Vincent Trasov, October 1976, Box C6, accession number 20.8, General Idea/Art Metropole 1975-76, Morris/Trasov Archives, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia.


229 Bronson to Morris and Trasov, October 1976.
As early as summer 1972, Bronson had written to Morris: “personally I am getting a bit tired of all these lists. Actually I suppose I have made my choices as far as exchange goes, and have enough to find the ones I want.”\textsuperscript{230} If Decca Dance coincided with the peak of the mail art movement, as Keith Wallace, Vincent Bonin, and others have argued, it also signaled its decline.\textsuperscript{231} Although Bronson began to tire of “all these lists” as early as summer 1972, the decline in mail art reached the wider community a year or so later, particularly following Ray Johnson’s declaration of the death of his New York Correspondence School on April 5, 1973.\textsuperscript{232} This event, announced in The New York Times, received further notice in FILE in September 1973, when General Idea printed a selection of Johnson’s letters.\textsuperscript{233} Along with Robert Cummings’ “resignation of mail art,” as General Idea wrote in “Nudes of the World” in FILE’s December 1973 issue, both events “signalled a decline in the volume of junk mailings (distinctly passé) and a return to information and escapade.”\textsuperscript{234}

Philip Monk has argued that this broader disengagement from correspondence art is concomitant with General Idea’s move in late 1973 away from the Pavillion as a “a participatory project of collective tender solicited through the mail” toward a far more discrete project conceived by the artists alone. “The death of correspondence,” Monk

\textsuperscript{230} “Rain Rien sent me seven white camels on strings,” Bronson continued, “And a palm tree.” AA Bronson to Michael Morris, August 1972, Box C7, accession number 22.1, General Idea 1971-1972, Morris/Trasov Archives, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia.

\textsuperscript{231} Decca Dance “could be said to mark the peak of the mail art movement, and for many signalled the end of it. Copiously documented on film, video and in print.” Wallace, \textit{Whispered Art History: Twenty Years at the Western Front}, 15. “The period between 1971 and 1974 was also the correspondence network’s high point. As of 1973, this network began to deteriorate from within. Since the number of participants had increased, most of the artists who had initiated it no longer systematically responded to correspondence from their peers.” Bonin, “Documentary Protocols: 1967-1975,” 49.

\textsuperscript{232} Morris, “The Artist as Curator of the Imagination,” 42.

\textsuperscript{233} “With some luck it shouldn’t become another readymade date for Lucy Lippard’s next book.” Ray Johnson, “Letters from Ray Johnson,” FILE Megazine 2, no. 3 (September 1973): 42.

suggests, “consolidated General Idea’s program.” The most definitive disengagement from mail art for *FILE*, and perhaps, then, for General Idea, as well, comes with the announcement of the end of Image Request Directory, in its spring 1976 issue. “The Image Bank Request Lists are being discontinued as of this issue,” General Idea writes, “as the letters below demonstrate, the request lists and artist’s directory have spawned more varied and specialized offspring.” By way of consolation, they suggest a host of other directories then in circulation. In this sense, the directory ceases not only owing to a lack of interest on General Idea’s part, but also because of its obsolescence. Not only were there other directories, other means of networking among artists, the mid-1970s, as evidenced by the *Decca Dance* itself, increasingly saw artists travelling, meeting, and working face-to-face.

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Conclusion

I began this dissertation by invoking General Idea’s “Borderline Research” project, and taking, however loosely, its composite cartography as my guide. General Idea’s collaborative map relied on contributions from dozens of disparate correspondents across Canada and the United States, and two years later, *Deccadance* gathered many of these very same correspondents at the Elk’s Building in Los Angeles. I take this manifestation—the actual embodiment of formerly disembodied network participants—as an important, if provisional, sign.¹

Proposing an obscure performance art event as a bellwether for changing transnational artistic relations warrants a caution: as the scenes I have discussed attest, there are a rich variety of interactions between artists, curators, and other cultural workers in Canada and the United States from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s. There is no simple trajectory to be discerned among the varied cases. It nevertheless seemed fruitful for me to follow a set of histories, however diverse, and to gather them together in a way to suggest their interactions. For the sake of closure, I would like to draw a few more connections between these scenes.

The first part, in which I arranged histories of Jack Bush, Brydon Smith, and the Vancouver Art Gallery exhibition *New York 13*, all described individuals in Canada who valued or admired, to varying degrees, contemporary American art. The earliest of these

chapters developed out of a series of long-form interviews with Brydon Smith, conducted during summer 2009, while I was living in Ottawa following a term position as a curatorial assistant in the department of European and American art at the National Gallery of Canada. Having worked closely over the previous year with a collection largely assembled by Smith, and having researched the acquisition records and installed works by Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, Carl Andre, James Rosenquist, Andy Warhol, and others, it became increasingly clear to me that many of Smith’s acquisitions and exhibitions, now much celebrated, first came about through happenstance, and often developed over years through conversation with friends. As an art historian more accustomed to thinking about the theoretical, political or aesthetic determinants of exhibition making, these chance, and oftentimes mundane, origins surprised me.

In a similar way, Bush’s meeting with Greenberg in June 1957, and their subsequent friendship, was determining for the artist in many respects. Just as Smith’s acquisitions and exhibitions often arose through personal connections with artists and fellow curators, after looking closely at Bush’s papers and extensive diaries, it was clear that a similar personal association with Clement Greenberg lay beneath much of the painter’s practice of the sixties and seventies. Likewise, New York 13—one in a larger series of exhibitions I researched while doing fieldwork in Vancouver—seemed to me to share similar originating causes. Though the cast was more expansive than either of these other two cases, implicating dealers, curators, critics, scholars, and artists, I wanted to unpick the relationships which underwrote the making of one particular, and often overlooked, exhibition. In some ways, the exhibition is exemplary, but in others, it demonstrated for me the complex networks of relationships that allows for any art
exhibition to be realized. That all of these relationships in some way instantiate power relations between the United States and Canada—showing an enthusiasm for American art and deference to American artists, curators, and critics by Canadians—is, for me at least, evidence of cultural imperialism at work.

Against these scenes of admiration for American art, in the second part I wanted to contend with some of the better-known articulations of nationalism and anti-Americanism in Canadian art, namely the work of Greg Curnoe and Joyce Wieland. Though much has been written on both artists, and my contributions here lie less in original research, they are both unavoidable figures in histories of postwar Canadian art. Had I wanted to continue to show artists appreciative of American art’s example—that is, to show the continued currency of ideas coming from the United States—I could have equally taken up the work of Michael Snow, Robert Murray, Les Levine, William Ronald, or David Rabinowitch. It seemed to me, however, that this spirited response on the part of Wieland and Curnoe generated some of the most interesting and provocative art of the 1960s and early 1970s in Canada. That such a political position could be generative for artists, and result in work in both cases that brokered heavily in strategies of assemblage from the early-twentieth-century avant-garde, was to me a far more instructive set of histories than to show the persisting deference for American models, though this undoubtedly existed and was even, perhaps, the dominant paradigm both in the market and on museum walls.

In my account of the Canadian Liberation Movement, and specifically the roles of Barry Lord and Gail Dexter as the Movement’s principal cultural workers, instead of

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showing the responses of artists to American art, I wanted to elicit those perspectives of
two of the period’s more persuasive, if divisive, activist-writers. With their subsequent
turn to museum consulting in the mid-1980s, much of the Lords’ fervent anti-
Americanism and Canadian nationalism has been forgotten, however *The History of
Painting in Canada: Towards a People’s Art* (1974) still appears intermittently in the
footnotes of scholarship on Canadian art. While for a time derided, recently a more
appreciative tone has been taken by scholars toward the book’s approach, particularly as
regards its earnest, if at times slightly dated and muddled, discussion of Indigenous art
histories and its prescient analysis of Black subjects in Canadian art.  

During the third and final part, I turned to two scenes that suggest a way toward
our present globalized art world: in opposing gestures, I staged the strategies of distance
between traditional art centres and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD)
followed by the consolidation of the so-called Eternal Network of mail correspondents in
*Deccadance*. The College, as Gerald Ferguson later argued, had to “bear the cross of
conceptual art for many years,” this in spite of the fact that relatively few students and
faculty, over a rather short period of time, were involved.  

Despite this, as I argued, NSCAD drew not only visiting artists, but a significant number of artists who worked
from a distance, employing surrogates or delegating their work in order to realize their
projects. This method of working—now commonplace among artists employing post-
studio practices—was then new, and attended key strategies of conceptual art.

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3 Lord and Lauder, “Energy Trade: Where the Museums Are”; Charmaine Nelson, “Slavery, Portraiture and
4 Ferguson, “The 1968-1969 Works,” 32. David Askevold, too, recalled that “not that many students and
faculty really knew what was going on in the Projects Class.” Askevold and Torres, “The Language and the
If NSCAD continued to depend on mail, telex machines, and the telephone to operate, artists around Image Bank and General Idea had worked from a distance for long enough. Though they would continue to use the postal system to make work following *Deccadance*, the event signaled the beginning of the end for the correspondence network. Travel had become the order of the day, and artists now gathered together to realize performances, make videos, and mount projects.

In his monograph *Glamour is Theft: A User’s Guide to General Idea* (2012), Philip Monk wrote of the group’s frequent invocation of the border that “a borderline is a place to stage difference—not just differences. It is not just a place where opposites confront each other face to face as if in equal reflection.”5 As a site for staging difference, the borderline implies a certain physical proximity and, as Monk implies, inequality. Monk continues, “this differential of power opens sites for transgression. Canadian artists are adept here.”6

In his special mention of Canadian artists ability to negotiate the borderline, Monk draws on Marshall McLuhan’s two-part talk entitled “Canada, the Borderline Case” (1967). “What all of us do,” McLuhan proposed in his Marfleet Lecture, “only the artist makes visible.” “The ordinary procedures and environmental patterns of a society don’t become visible until the artist creates this counter-environment of art objects.”7 On first read, McLuhan’s invocation of the artist seems oddly out of place in an account of Canadian-American relations. In this first of the two-part lecture, however, McLuhan

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6 Monk, 75.
proposes this striking correspondence, positing Canada itself as an artist-figure; the
country, in other words, as a maker of global anti-environments. Reflecting on what it
meant to share a border with the United States, over the course of the lecture McLuhan
argues that as America becomes the “world environment” through its global reach of
“resources, technology and enterprises,” Canada’s principal role is to lay bare such
newfound configurations. Speaking at a time of intense geopolitical transformation,
McLuhan, tellingly and rather curiously, points to the indispensability of artists. That he
would marry transnational politics and the function of the artist in 1967 is significant: it
was a moment when centennial celebrations in Canada fostered new transnational, and
indeed international, configurations, as well as unprecedented levels of state sponsorship
in the arts.  

By marked contrast, much of this dissertation was written during the months
surrounding the so-called “trade war” that has dogged the renegotiation of the North
American Free Trade Agreement through late 2017 and early 2018, and my education
leave from the National Gallery of Canada came to an end the week after the group of
seven summit of leaders of highly industrialized countries held June 8–9, 2018, in

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8 This lecture would later reappear in various guises, including in David Staines’ The Canadian
Imagination: Dimensions of a Literary Culture (1977), and reworked with Bruce Powers as “The United
States and Canada: The Border as a Resonating Interval” (1989). David Staines, “Canada: The Borderline
University Press, 1977), 226–48; Marshall McLuhan and Bruce R. Powers, “The United States and Canada:
The Border as a Resonating Interval,” in The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and Media in
9 McLuhan’s understanding of Canada as an artist-figure grew out of his earlier and extensive thinking
about environments and counter-environments; in particular, his central argument in the Marfleet Lecture
arose out of a conjunction of two seemingly disparate ideas. These two ideas are Canada as a counter-
environment, and artists as makers of counter-environments. The former first appears with McLuhan’s
hasty response to the Massey Commission Report, in an essay entitled “Defrosting Canadian Culture” from
March 1952. The second idea, that of artists as makers of counter-environments, would come over a decade
later, with the text “Art as Anti-Environment,” published in the 1966 issue of Art News Annual. Marshall
McLuhan, “Defrosting Canadian Culture,” American Mercury, March 1952, 91–97; Marshall McLuhan,
Charlevoix, Quebec. Though we have seen for many years now a growing hostility toward migration, this recent turn toward impeding the transnational circulation of goods and services, which has been a cornerstone of the economic development of Western liberal democracies for decades, suggests an even greater aversion to the ideal of open borders. Perhaps, then, the global expansion of the art world witnessed since the 1970s is, too, only provisional. Although the last chapter of this dissertation anticipates the increasingly globalized art world to come, is there now not the possibility of a creeping protectionism in the visual arts, as we have seen in other sectors?

I have written clearly from a Canadian vantage, with little concern for reciprocity in describing American cases. In this way, American art has been something of a foil for my purposes: this dissertation has been unapologetically drawn to Canadian histories. This approach itself suggests something of hangover of nationalist art histories of the postwar period which I write, and a practice of art history that still very much persists in parsing national school from national school.10 As Kitty Zijlmans, writing for Stedelijk Studies’ special issue on “Collecting Geographies,” summarily argues, though “geography is often seen as overlapping with the nation-state . . . such nations do not exist; most, if not all nation-states are polyethnic, and state borders often cut right across ethnic geographies.”11 The impossibility of return to a monocultural nationalism, or even a protectionist regionalism, seems assured. Contemporary practices depend profoundly on a globalized spatial model—whether through fairs, residencies, biennials, museum

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10 As Mark Cheetham argued in One Hour Empire, “the nation as a category for art history offers a practical conveyance for the discussion of contemporary art produced in Canada. Without the nation as an organizing receptacle, like the tree falling in the forest, much of this work risks remaining unheard and unseen in this country.” Mark Cheetham, “‘For Internal Use Only?’ Canadian Accents and Affirmative Action in Art History,” One Hour Empire, no. 1 (Fall 2008): 78–82.

touring programs, or other art world structures—all premised on local practices’ imbrication and simultaneity with global discourses. However as Benjamin Buchloh argued in 1981, while still editor at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design Press, particularly in moments of growing economic crisis, when the budgets have to be restricted, the claim for the culture’s national identity turns into outright chauvinism. Then, the artistic producers themselves develop an appropriate ideology of regionalism, of the necessity to preserve national cultural identity, to protect the privileged purses of cultural civil servants.¹²

Given that the exercises of nationalism and the instrumental use of Indigenous art seen last year with the sesquicentennial of Canadian confederation took place at a time of relative economic stability, one wonders whether Buchloh’s identification of pressure on cultural producers would have been even more deeply felt under reduced economic circumstances. At cultural institutions such as the National Gallery of Canada, but also broadly across the culture and heritage sector in Canada, celebrations of indigeneity have assumed cultural currency in a way not dissimilar to the uses of nationalist art in the 1960s and early 1970s. If a return to national cultural identity is now impracticable in the arts, perhaps the strategic promotion of Indigenous art and culture, especially and worryingly by non-Indigenous cultural institutions, has assumed a similar function.

Fig. 1.1 “Borderline Research Project,” *FILE Megazine* 1, no. 2 & 3 (May–June 1972)
Fig. 2.1 Mabel Bush, Jack Bush, Jenny (Janice) Van Horne Greenberg and Clement Greenberg at the Rendez-Vous Room, The Plaza, New York, 1960
Fig. 2.2 Jack Bush, *Summer No. 3*, 1956

National Gallery of Canada, 16539
Fig. 2.3 Jack Bush, *Man + Woman #1*, 1955
Fig. 2.4 Richard Serra, *Shift*, 1972
Fig. 3.1 Andy Warhol, *Brillo Soap Pads Boxes*, 1964

National Gallery of Canada, 15298.1-8
Fig. 3.2 Polychrome Construction: Judd, Weinrib, Burton, Rayner, Snow, Wieland,
March 12–31, 1965, The Isaacs Gallery, Toronto
Fig. 3.3 Donald Judd, *Untitled*, 1964 (DSS 57)

National Gallery of Canada, 17189
Fig. 3.4 Walter P. Chrysler, Jr, Charles Comfort and two unidentified men at the opening of The Controversial Century 1850–1950: Paintings from the Collection of Walter P. Chrysler, Jr at the National Gallery of Canada, 1962
Fig. 3.5 James Rosenquist, John Turner, Brydon Smith and Jean Sutherland Boggs at the opening of James Rosenquist at the National Gallery of Canada, 1967
Fig. 3.6 Dan Flavin, *untitled (to S.M. with all the admiration and love which I can sense and summon)*, 1969, National Gallery of Canada, 1969
Fig. 3.7 Donald Judd, May 2–July 6, 1975, National Gallery of Canada
Fig. 4.1 Michael de Courcy, *The Vancouver Art Gallery*, 1969
Fig. 4.2 Michael de Courcy, *Tony Emery at the Vancouver Art Gallery* [standing on Dennis Vance, *Fat Emma*, 1969], August 31, 1969
Fig. 4.3 Michael de Courcy, *Doris Shadbolt at the Vancouver Art Gallery* [sitting in Dennis Vance, *Fat Emma*, 1969], August 31, 1969
Fig. 4.4 Roy Lichtenstein, *Drowning Girl*, 1963

Museum of Modern Art, New York, Philip Johnson Fund (by exchange)

and gift of Mr. and Mrs. Bagley Wright, 685.1971
Fig. 4.5 Lucy Lippard in Vancouver, *Vancouver Province*, April 25, 1968
Fig. 4.6 Claes Oldenburg, *Giant Saw–Hard Version*, 1969

installation view, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1969

Vancouver Art Gallery, 69.9
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Fig. 4.8 Andy Warhol, *Thirty-Five Jackies (Multiplied Jackies)*, 1964

MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt am Main, 1981/58
Fig. 5.1 Greg Curnoe, *Homage to the R 34* (detail), 1967–1968

National Gallery of Canada, 39705.1-2
Fig. 5.2 Greg Curnoe, *Homage to the R 34* (detail), 1967–1968

National Gallery of Canada, 39705.1-2
Fig. 5.3 Greg Curnoe, *Homage to the R 34* (detail), 1967–1968

National Gallery of Canada, 39705.1-2
Fig. 5.4 Greg Curnoe, *List of Names of Boys I Grew Up With*, 1962

McIntosh Gallery, University of Western Ontario, Gift of Owen Curnoe, 2002
Fig. 6.1 Joyce Wieland, *The Clothes of Love*, 1961

Private collection
Fig. 6.2 Joyce Wieland, *Cooling Room II*, 1964

National Gallery of Canada, 16706
Fig. 6.3 Joyce Wieland, *The New Power*, 1963

Private collection
Fig. 6.4 Joyce Wieland, *The First Integrated Film With a Short on Sailing*, 1963

Private collection
Fig. 6.5 Joyce Wieland, *Nature Mixes*, 1963

Catherine Hindson, Hamilton
Fig. 6.6 Joyce Wieland, *N.U.C.*, 1966

Private collection
Three Hundred Years a Nation

PETER FLOSZNIK

Three hundred years a nation
And a colony we are still,
But listen, can’t you hear the stream
Among the distant hills?
Rushing from the hills it comes,
The fulfilment of a dream,
Well, soon this tiny stream will grow
And sweep away the chains.

Refrain:
It’s the stream of liberation,
See, the river running strong,
The sky is red there in the east,
It’s revolution’s dawn.

Three hundred years of history
Distorted and suppressed,
Imperial powers have decreed
We shall not know our past,
But when we look, each century
More bitter than the last,
Canadians have fought and died
For the freedom of our land.

Refrain
Allied with the Quebecois
We fight for liberty,
Together, three hundred years
Of struggle to be free.
In the fields and factories
And in the mines and mills,
The river’s rising, flowing stronger
From the distant hills.

Refrain
Well, now we see the working class
Arise to take the lead,
We’ll fight imperialism
Til our nation has been freed,
Build a new Canada,
Socialist and free,
And help to build a new world,
Can you hear the stream?

Refrain
Repeat Verse 1
Refrain

Fig. 7.1 Peter Flosznik, “Three Hundred Years a Nation”

reproduced in The History of Painting in Canada: Toward a People’s Art, 1974
Fig. 8.1 Exhibition announcement for John Baldessari (April 1–10, 1971)

Artists’ Files, Mezzanine Gallery Collection, NSCAD Collection, CAUL-CBUA Atlantic Islandora Repository Network, Nova Scotia College of Art & Design
Fig. 8.2 Advertisement placed in *Artforum* in connection with

Douglas Huebler’s work for the Projects Class, 1969
Fig. 8.3 Douglas Huebler, *Location Piece #150*, 1973

NSCAD University Permanent Collection
Fig. 8.4 Photograph of student writing “I will not make any more boring art” on the Mezzanine Gallery walls, March 1971

Artists’ Files, Mezzanine Gallery Collection, NSCAD Collection, CAUL-CBUA Atlantic Islandora Repository Network, Nova Scotia College of Art & Design
Fig. 9.1 Robert Filliou lighting a cake for Art’s 1,000,010th Birthday, Aachen, 1973

*Mondo Artie: Episode no. 1681; Art’s birthday, the Hollywood Deccadance*

(Vancouver: The Western Front, 1974)
Fig. 9.2 Hand of the Sprit props used in Decca Dance, 1974

Art’s Birthday (Decca-Dance Salutes Network) inserted in

FILE Megazine 2, no. 5 (February 1974)
Fig. 9.3 Mr. Peanut and Pascal at *Decca Dance*, 1974

*Art’s Birthday (Decca-Dance Salutes Network)* inserted in

*FILE Megazine* 2, no. 5 (February 1974)
Fig. 9.4 John Dowd during dress rehearsal for *Decca Dance*, 1974

*Art’s Birthday (Decca-Dance Salutes Network)* inserted in

*FILE Megazine* 2, no. 5 (February 1974)
Fig. 9.5 AA Bronson and E.E. Claire (Glenn Lewis) as emcees for Decca Dance, 1974

Mondo Artie: Episode no. 1681; Art’s birthday, the Hollywood Deccadance

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