

Professor James Elkins, E.C. Chadbourne Chair in the Department of Art History and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, came to Canada last fall to give the keynote address at the University Art Association of Canada conference, hosted in 2010 by the University of Guelph. His lecture was smart, polished, 'on message' as media pundits like to say, but it left me very puzzled. Elkins drew a grim portrait of Art History in the academy, as a discipline drowning in a wave of Visual Culture. He argued that Art History's narrowness, inflexibility, orthodoxies, and inability to fight for or even recognise the threat to its survival, virtually guaranteed its early demise. The difficulty for me was that Elkins's description matched no Department of Art History that I could think of – most damningly, given where Elkins was lecturing, it spoke not at all to the way we think, teach, and produce Canadian Art History. Since its inception, some thirty-five years ago, the *Journal of Canadian Art History* has represented our field's ways and means. Yes, the two-screen compare and contrast pedagogical method continues to be employed in some classrooms, but Canadian art historians and theorists have also had both eyes open to new approaches that pertain to our field and the role of these developments in the broader culture. Add to that the diversity of topics broached in our community of scholarship, and the tide grimly forecast by Elkins seems already to have turned.

Consider the wealth of knowledge and interests represented by the Editorial Board of this journal. Their specializations and topics include, but are not limited to: Aboriginal art (Racette); historical Quebec art (Lacroix); Canadian Modernism (Foss); caricature and print culture (Hardy); the Automatiste movement (Gagnon); institutional theory (Whitelaw); modernist architecture (Simmins); landscape art and aesthetics (Sloan); conceptual art (Wark); expatriate art practices (Prioul); photographic experience (Langford). Vastly expanding this repertoire is the interdisciplinary range of their activities. No tourists here, but a photographic historian with a solid background in geography (Schwartz); an architectural historian focusing on conceptions of gender in modernist architectural photography (Simmins); a close reader of the imbrications of artwriting and artmaking (Cheetham); a craft historian looking at industrial design (Alfoldy); a feminist art historian working through the optics of poststructuralism, psychoanalysis, and social history (Huneault); a film scholar who is also a filmmaker (Asselin). And if some of these art historians are drawn to questions of visual culture, they frame their inquiries in terms of persistent and migrating symbols (Gagnon, Sloan); nationhood and identity (Foss); or transnational expressions of Cold War ideology and anxiety (O'Brian).

This issue includes articles that represent both the adventurousness and solidity of Canadian art historical scholarship. It is not a thematic issue *per se*,

but certain themes tie the articles together. Conceptual art, a very timely pursuit in light of the recent exhibition, *Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada 1965–1980*, is critically examined by Adam Lauder and Eduardo Ralickas.¹ Lauder's article focuses mainly on a milestone exhibition organized in 1970 by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. His investigation deals efficiently with how Canadian artist IAIN BAXTER&, then president of N.E. Thing Co., participated in an American exhibition, to consider the more interesting problem of how the philosophy and protocols of BAXTER&'s practice might have inflected MoMA's exhibitionary model. Ralickas looks at a Conceptual work that appropriates an entire collection and, through exhibitionary strategies, seeks to suppress the curatorial voice, a voice that is nevertheless heard, or rather seen, by Ralickas in the gallery apparatus. Lauder and Ralickas are both emerging scholars, and it must be added that Ralickas is not strictly speaking a Canadianist, but a theorist of German Romanticism. Let it be said here and now that the *Journal of Canadian Art History* wants to hear from scholars who detect parallels between ideas developed elsewhere and the Canadian context. Indeed, Rosemarie Tovell's account of Homer Watson's attempt to translate a British marketing model to his Canadian homeland speaks to this question as a study of importation. As Tovell explains, what was sauce for the British goose was not sauce for the Canadian gander. All three of these articles have something to tell us about cultural mentalities and institutional structures and their bearing on the circulation and understanding of images and objects, as does Laura Brandon's essay on four World War I photographs, in which she discusses their verbal contextualizations for British and Canadian viewers. This issue also includes two book reviews: the *Journal* welcomes back a faithful contributor and astute analyst of the institutional frame, Monique Nadeau-Saumier, as well as a newcomer to the circle, historian Graham Broad, whose long-term interest in Painters Eleven is complemented by his knowledge of Canadian consumer culture.

These thumbnail sketches of collaborators and contents are intended to expose some of my hopes for the *Journal*. Canadian art history has its house in good order: time to throw open the windows to emerging scholars, to visitors from adjoining houses with something to tell us about the field. The *Journal* has long functioned as an instrument of consolidation, confirmation, circulation, and debate. This will continue – in fact, it will expand, as from Volume 31 onward, the *Journal* will appear twice a year. One of these issues will be organized thematically, sometimes by guest editors; the other, edited in-house, will be a venue for new scholarship, submitted or commissioned, long or short, the short form allowing conference papers to be revised and published, as Laura Brandon has done for us here. Long-time subscribers to

the *Journal* will also have noticed a new look, thanks to the sensitive design treatment of Gareth Markvoort.

I am honoured to have been entrusted with the *Journal of Canadian Art History*. For that I thank Sandra Paikowsky, a founder of the *Journal*, who stays on as publisher and member of the Editorial Board; she will also be our first guest editor with her two-part *Festschrift* for François-Marc Gagnon. As I have gotten my feet wet, Brenda Dionne Hutchinson along with a devoted team of copy-editors and translators have provided continuity and support. I have been touched by the encouragement of colleagues, most notably by Brian Foss, former Associate Editor of the *Journal*, now the Chair of its *working* (the stress is Brian's) Editorial Board. The Members' and anonymous readers' contributions to this issue have been gratifying and illuminating, both for the authors and myself.

To summarize my objectives as editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Canadian Art History*, I would simply say that I want the *Journal* to reflect the many and diverse ways that we do Art History in Canada. And all I can say to Professor Elkins is "Come again soon," or better yet, treat yourself to a subscription to the *Journal of Canadian Art History*, where we will show you how it's done.

Martha Langford

NOTES

- 1 *Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada 1965–1980*, organized jointly by the Art Gallery of Alberta (Edmonton), the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery (Toronto), and the Vancouver Art Gallery, in collaboration with the Leonard and Bina Ellen Art Gallery (Montreal) and Halifax, INK, premiered at four galleries of the University of Toronto (University of Toronto Art Centre, Blackwood Gallery, Doris McCarthy Gallery, and Justina M. Barnicke Gallery), 11 September – 28 November 2010. On the closing weekend of the exhibition, the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery organized an international conference, *Traffic: Conceptualism in Canada*.