

The Frame in Context: The Seagram *Cities of Canada* Collection at the McCord Museum

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I | Introduction: The *Cities of Canada*

In 1953 a collection of paintings of Canadian cities went on an impressive international tour: first to Latin America, stopping in San Juan, Mexico City, Caracas, Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, and Montevideo; then across the Atlantic to London, Paris, Rome, Geneva, Stockholm, The Hague, and Madrid. The exhibition, *Cities of Canada*, travelled with its own setting, which consisted of four tons of drapery-hung aluminum paneling and an integrated lighting system and was shown in a variety of public spaces for anywhere between six to ten days at each venue.¹ Newspaper reports lead us to believe that attendance was impressive: 30,000 visitors saw the show in Stockholm and 7,000 attended the closing day in Madrid.² The paintings returned to Canada in early 1954 and toured twenty-two cities across the country before being retired in 1955 in Montreal.

This collection belonged to the Seagram Company and was the creation of Samuel Bronfman, its long-term president. Bronfman's project is impressive even today, its genius lying in a seamless melding of an optimistic mid-twentieth-century view of Canada as a modern, urban, and industrial nation with a prestigious international publicity campaign for Seagram itself. A few years earlier he had hired the painter Robert Pilot (1898–1967) to commission artists to portray a selection of Canadian cities on canvas. With the help of A.J. Casson (1898–1992), Pilot chose twenty-two painters – including A.Y. Jackson (1882–1974), W. Goodridge Roberts (1904–1974), Charles Comfort (1900–1994), and Jacques de Tonnancour (1917–2005) – from the ranks of the Royal Canadian Academy to produce both preliminary painted sketches and larger, final works of their assigned city.³ Portraying an urbanizing and industrializing country, many paintings highlight the encroachment of the city on the countryside and the exploitation of natural resources. The McCord Museum acquired the Seagram Collection in 2000: the acquisition consists of one hundred and forty-one works depicting the territory, history, and traditions of Canada, eighty-three of which are part of what became known as the *Cities of Canada* collection.

This article addresses two issues regarding the framing of the collection. It looks at the aesthetic of the frames through a study of their design and materials while also exploring questions regarding their value and their preservation. Examination of the paintings indicates that they were framed as a group, probably when they were assembled in Montreal, as works of artists from disparate locations are framed with similar frames. As the paintings in the *Cities of Canada* collection would all have been framed in the narrow window of time between their arrival in Montreal in 1952 and their departure on tour in early 1953, they represent an important set of precisely dated period frames from a particular place. Their poor state of preservation, however, reflects the collection's history and use and has raised questions which will be answered through an investigation of traditional attitudes concerning the significance of the frame in general. The McCord collection contains many high quality period frames, including those associated with a particular collection or collector (see for example the framing of many works in the Notman Photographic Archives or of a group of paintings by Henry Richard Bunnett, commissioned by David Ross McCord). The Seagram frames were chosen for this study because their value, both historic and aesthetic, is not as immediately evident as it is with the older, more traditional frames and because the modern frame in Canada has not been comprehensively studied. Further understanding of the *Cities of Canada* frames can only increase their significance and their consequent preservation, and expand our knowledge about mid-twentieth century Canadian framing practice.

II | The *Cities of Canada* Frames

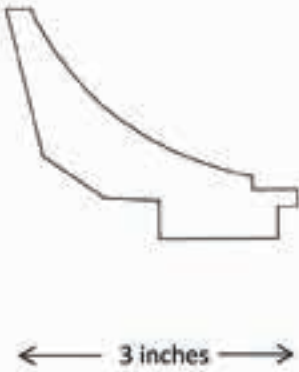
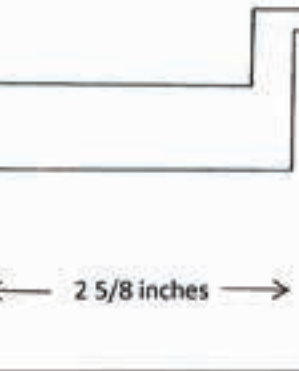
While all the frames in the *Cities of Canada* collection appear to date roughly from the middle of the last century, closer inspection of the labels, inscriptions, and stamps on the backs of the paintings and frames reveals more specific stories relating to the travel, the restoration, and the reframing of individual works. One key mark is a French customs stamp: a circular inked impression with “Douane Centrale” around the perimeter and “AT” (probably for “admission temporaire”) at the centre. This stamp is systematically applied to both the back of the painting and the frame of twenty-four works, indicating that the work as framed would have entered France as part of the 1953–54 international tour.⁴ Twenty frames are very similar – or bear a strong stylistic resemblance – to the core group of stamped frames but are not themselves stamped. This group is also considered to be original, as it is assumed that either the painting was not part of the international tour (only about 50 of the paintings were in the 1953 selection),

or that not all paintings on tour were necessarily stamped. And finally, several paintings bear the “Douane Centrale” stamp, but not the frame. These frames are not considered to be original to the works, but are assumed to be replacement frames. In no case is the frame stamped, but not the painting. In conclusion therefore, two broad categories of frames have been made from the examination of the customs stamps: forty-four original frames chosen in 1952, of which twenty-four bear the “Douane Centrale” stamp, and thirty-nine replacement frames, applied to the painting at a later date.

The Original Frames

The forty-four original frames have fourteen distinct profiles (with some minor variation at the sight edge), the most frequently used including: a scotia moulding with a lowered fillet sight edge and an angled back (nine frames); a rising bevel and scotia moulding, with some variation at the sight edge (eight frames); and a flat moulding with a raised sight edge with two variations (six frames). Sixteen of these frames still have their original finish (Fig. 1). The decoration in all cases is matte to semi-matte, multilayered, and is combed or incised with decorative patterns, thereby revealing differently coloured underlying layers of paint. To enhance these textural effects, paint of yet another colour has been splattered over the surface of some of the frames. Combed linear patterns are usually applied at ninety degrees to the direction of the frame member, emphasizing the curve of the moulding, and incised patterns are often in the form of a single strand or multiple lines of Xs, running along the frame member, either alone or at the centre of the combed areas. Combing and incising are also used to produce cross-hatching, either perpendicular to the frame members, or in a diagonal direction to them. Upper paint layers are neutral in colour, ranging from off-white to beige to brown; overlying splattered paint is usually black, although it can also be beige. Solid paint layers beneath the combed paint are usually a deep shade of red, but can also be gray or a warm, dark beige, and are sometimes overlaid with bronze paint. The preparation layer on the wood is always white. Gold-coloured elements on some frames (usually at the sight or the back edge) consist of a brass leaf applied over a red-pigmented layer. As a final touch, some of the frames are coated with shellac, which imparts a more eggshell finish to the matte paint. The results of the above technique can vary, from a frame with a subtly variegated finish to one with striking surface patterns and colour contrasts.

The patterns of paint at the corners of the frames reveal that the decoration layers were applied after the frames had been assembled. The combed and incised motifs are not cut at the corners but instead either

PROFILE	SAMPLE FRAME	SAMPLE FINISH
A. Scotia molding, with lowered fillet sight edge and angled back		
 ← 3 inches →		
<i>City of Montreal at Night, Albert Cloutier, 1951 (M2000.83.102)</i>		
B. Rising bevel and scotia molding (variations at sight edge)		
 ← 2 7/8 inches →		
<i>Regina in the Wheatfields, R. York Wilson, 1951 (M2000.83.2)</i>		
C. Flat molding with raised fillet sight edge		
 ← 2 5/8 inches →		
<i>Autumn, Sherbrooke P.Q., Robert Pilot, 1951 (M2000.83.137)</i>		

D. Flat molding with raised beveled sight edge

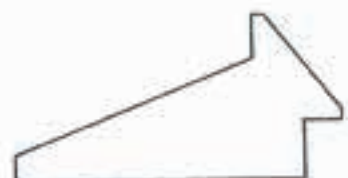


← 3 15/16 inches →



Halifax from the Harbour, Joseph Purcell, 1951 (M2000.83.63)

E. Flat descending molding with raised beveled sight edge



← 2 11/16 inches →



Victoria, Walter Phillips, 1951 (M2000.83.72)

F. Scotia molding with curved back (variations at sight edge)



← 4 inches →



Shawinigan Falls P. Que, Lorne Bouchard, 1951 (M2000.83.28)



2 | Overlap of combed motif at corner, frame, McCord Museum, Montreal, M2000.83.72. (Photo: author)

overlap the bevels, or stop just short of them (Fig. 2). This would indicate that the frames were not made from pre-painted mouldings, but were individually decorated after assembly. This assumption seems to be borne out by the fact that no two frames in this group are exactly alike, and the variations on a theme (the laying down of colours, paint thickness, and the style of combing or sgraffito) give an interesting visual diversity to the group as a whole.

Sampled paint layers of the decoration have a protein medium,⁵ whose solubility in water indicate that a glue binder was used for the preparation and most, if not all, of the paint layers of the early 1950s frames. While the choice of this binder is unexpected, and seems somewhat anachronistic, in fact the kind of re-worked decoration present on the frames requires the qualities that a glue medium provides. Layers may vary widely in thickness, and even though the medium remains water-soluble, after the paint has dried subsequent layers may be applied without disturbing those underneath. As



3 | Modification with white overpaint on partially removed original decoration. Original metallic finish at outer edge, frame, McCord Museum, Montreal, M2000.83.113. (Photo: author)

well, the glue binder provides the rheological properties necessary to achieve the desired decorative effects. The paint in the overlying layers has to remain liquid long enough to be manipulated but also must maintain a viscosity that allows it to be combed or incised without flowing back and obscuring the design.

Alteration of the Original Frames

The decoration of twenty-eight of the forty-four original frames has been substantially altered. This was achieved in a number of ways: a) the original decoration was overpainted without altering the underlying layers, thereby allowing the texture of the original layers to show through; b) the original

decoration was reduced (probably with water and friction) then overpainted, imparting a certain uniformity to the surface both in colour and texture; or c) the original decoration was removed down to the preparation, leaving the sight and/or back edges with a metallic finish, thereby creating a wide white border outlined with gold-coloured filets (Fig. 3). Sometimes the white areas were overpainted sketchily with a non-water soluble white paint. The overpaint on the frames in all cases is uniform in colour and often appears to be an acrylic emulsion – in fact, in one case it has been identified as such through instrumental analysis.⁶ Bronze paint has sometimes been applied to the frames in a poor imitation of a gilded frame, either over the entire moulding or only on the metallic leaf components.

The Later Frames

The *Cities of Canada* collection was exhibited twice after the international and Canadian tours in the early 1950s. In 1964, a selection of works, including some of the *Cities* paintings and other works owned by Seagram, referred to as *The Seagram Collection of Canadian Paintings*, travelled to eight destinations across Canada. In 1967 sixty paintings were shown at the Canadian National Exhibition Art Gallery in Toronto, in an exhibition entitled *The Seagram Centennial Art Exhibition*, as part of the centennial celebrations in that city. Re-framing campaigns likely took place during this time, in the preparation of the works for public display. Labels from two Montreal framing businesses are still present on the backs of some of these paintings. One label identifies Advertising Producers, a company operating in Montreal at two different addresses from 1947 to 1962.⁷ The label is on four works: three studies by Ernst Neumann in non-original frames and a final painting by Robert Pilot, entitled *Kingston*, in an original, albeit altered frame. The label in this last case is, unusually, on the backing of the painting, not on the frame itself. However, both the backing and frame of this work bear the “Douane Centrale” stamp, raising the interesting possibility that Advertising Producers may have been the original framer (or one of the original framers) of the collection.

Another label reads, in part, “Antoine’s Art Gallery/415 Craig Street West.” This company existed as an art gallery and framing business (and at one point an art restoration business) at several different addresses from 1936 to 1969, and was owned for this entire period by Antoine Ulrike.⁸ An advertisement in the *Montreal Gazette* dating from 14 November 1964 proudly announces “Montreal’s most handsome gallery now in their new location 415 Craig Street West,” adding that the framing department is in “full operation.” Given similar hand-written inscriptions on the backs of many of the later frames, it appears that this company was responsible for the bulk of the re-framing

activities, which were surely completed for the 1964 and 1967 exhibitions. Sampling of these frames indicates that while the grounds, where present, continue to be protein-based, the media of the paint and varnish layers is cellulose nitrate.⁹ The paint is thinly applied, very smooth, and quite shiny. The patterns, where existent, are sprayed on in a mottled fashion or brushed in two tones in the direction of the frame member. Several gold-coloured frames with a metallic finish also have a cellulose nitrate medium and lie on a red-pigmented cellulose nitrate paint. The frames are assembled from pre-decorated mouldings, which show no real variation from one work to another.

III | The Preservation of Frames

Only fifteen of the eighty-three paintings in the *Cities of Canada* collection still bear their original and unaltered frames. How is it that a collection, prized and institutionally safeguarded since its inception, can suffer the loss or irreversible alteration of the majority of its frames? What might be the origins of attitudes toward the frame that would create the conditions for this to happen?

Given their quite literally marginal nature, it is unsurprising that frames have not received the serious attention regarding their preservation and conservation that other objects in museum collections have been accorded. Frames have been routinely discarded or modified without documentation and often according to criteria – taste, exhibition design, or poor condition, to name a few – that would never apply to other objects. Critical interest in frames has been sparked in the past by wholesale changes in the framing of important works in large collections (for example, the reframing of early Modernist works at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, during William Rubin’s tenure as the Director of the Department of Painting and Sculpture),¹⁰ but many museums still lack a framing policy, and as a consequence numerous decisions regarding the preservation of frames are contingent on the opinion or taste of those responsible.

Discussion of the frame, both in the literal and metaphorical sense, is often based on the notion of the parergon, as argued by Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Judgment*.¹¹ The Oxford English Dictionary defines the parergon as: “an ornamental accessory. From *para* Greek, meaning beside, adjacent to, beyond or distinct from but analogous to and *ergon* Greek, meaning work.” Kant’s interest in the parergon stems from the necessity in the *Critique* to demarcate the true object of interest in the practice of aesthetic judgment and to identify what lies outside its purview. To this end he defines parerga as “those things which do not belong to the complete representation of

the object internally as elements, but only externally as complements.”¹² Kant refers specifically to the frame as an exemplification of the parergon, whose function is seen as secondary and in its association with setting and architecture, as extrinsic to the work. Frames are unsuccessful if they are too ornamented or call too much attention to themselves, to the detriment of the painting itself.

The frame as parergon is by definition never the primary object of interest, but functions either as the background to the figure of the painting or as a defining element of the architectural environment. Understood as such, it is likely to disappear in representations of the work and, by extension, to recede from our awareness. In almost all of our current images of paintings available in reproduction, be they found in books, in an institution’s database, or on-line, the frame is absent. In most cases, the work itself is distorted by this lack and not just because of the absence of the decorative or rhetorical function of the frame. What we see in these images are not the real edges of the work, but the work neatly cropped at the absent frame’s edge – an act which both reduces its boundaries and creates the appearance of the painting as a free-floating illustration, undermining any understanding of it as object occupying space.

Inhabiting this kind of existential Neverland, the value and significance of the frame is diminished, especially when compared to the work of art it may surround. Frames, in their essence, are seen as being artisanal and linked to craft practices, while paintings have both intellectual and artisanal foundations and are part of well-researched historical, aesthetic, and philosophical traditions. Frames are often produced in large quantities, if not mass-produced, as opposed to paintings, whose aura has traditionally been founded on uniqueness and rarity. Frames can have a (merely) practical function: as part of a preservation strategy, they protect the work from deleterious interactions with environmental and human forces. In their correlation to style in architecture and interior design, frames can easily attain the perilous position of being out of fashion (even if the environment in which they are placed is the supposed neutral one of the museum or art gallery) or of somehow detracting from a work of art.

Cesare Brandi addressed the conservation of frames in his seminal 1963 publication *Theory of Restoration* and came to some interesting conclusions, given his status as one of the great thinkers on conservation practice of the twentieth century.¹³ “For some time now, people have even begun to remove the frames of older paintings. The author confesses to being one of the first to have started this practice.”¹⁴ Citing Kantian notions of the ornamental and the extrinsic nature of the frame (or in Brandi’s terms, their ostentatious and ancillary functions), Brandi defines the frame’s dual role as

a junction between the work and both the wall on which it is situated and the physical space of the spectator, concluding that “the spatial connection that is materialized in a frame is an architectural, not a pictorial issue.”¹⁵ Brandi also identifies the frame as an addition to a work of art. As previously described in his theory, the removal of additions may in some cases be justified, particularly if the addition interferes with the aesthetic reception of a work. Altering the context of a painting is justification enough for Brandi to change its frame. While not in agreement with the decision to remove the frames from Old Master works in the Gallery of the Palazzo Bianco in Genoa, Brandi favourably cites the re-housing of early Renaissance paintings in the Accademia in Venice with modern frames, noting with admiration the solution of “running a ring of emptiness [that is to say, the addition of a wide white border] around the painting.”¹⁶

Jacques Derrida has famously critiqued Kant’s notion of the frame as something not intrinsic to the properties of the work or to the aesthetic experience of it.¹⁷ According to Derrida, it is impossible to fully separate, in any sense, what is intrinsic and what is extrinsic to the work of art, and in fact the frame’s situation vis-à-vis the work is paradoxical: it is both part of the surround and part of the work at the same time. Derrida’s interest lies in these shifting values, in the difficulties of locating the place of the frame. In its decorativeness and detachability, it is contingent and mutable, but simultaneously, in its deeply integrated function as a defining and separating entity, it is de facto necessary to the existence of the work:

But the paragonal frame stands out against two grounds, but with respect to each of those two grounds, it merges into the other. With respect to the work which can serve as a ground for it, it merges in to the wall, and then, gradually into the general text. With respect to the back ground which the general text is, it merges into the work which stands out against the general background.¹⁸

Necessary to the work, but is any individual frame uniquely indispensable? More recent attention to the emergence in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of the artist-made or artist-designed frame has put into question the notion of the frame as a crucial, yet non-specific component of the perception and the aesthetic appreciation of a painting. Nineteenth-century artists from Caspar David Friedrich to Georges Seurat produced or designed frames whose functions were clearly to underline meaning, to complement colour relationships, or to enhance spatial interactions in their paintings. Since then artists have used the frame to extend pictorial effects or to explore the intellectual and physical boundaries of art in a

myriad of ways. In this country, for example, the frames of Clarence Gagnon (1881–1942) and William Kurelek (1927–1977) have been the object of critical interest.¹⁹ Coincident with this increased attention, conservation literature has addressed issues pertaining to the preservation of frames with proposals of certain categories of significance.²⁰ Of prime interest are frames known to have been made, designed, or selected by an artist for a specific work. The selection of a frame by a dealer or a collector is also relevant to its preservation, as this choice often reveals something about both the history of the reception of a painting and the history of style and taste in framing. Livery or gallery frames are also of interest due to their connection with a painting's or a collection's history. Historic frames, when they can be found, are often considered the next best thing to the original frame and can be purchased, often at great expense, for specific paintings. And finally, reproduction frames can be made and applied to paintings in order to replicate a carefully researched historic relationship. Many art museums now have frame conservation departments and some, such as Tate Britain, have added didactic labels to certain paintings on display, with information on an historic frame, or with explanations regarding framing choices.

IV | Preservation of the *Cities of Canada* Frames

Of the eighty-three paintings in the *Cities of Canada* collection, forty-four, or slightly more than one half, still have their original frames. Of these forty-four, only sixteen, or less than twenty percent of the collection, bear their original finish. And only two of the twenty-five larger, final works are still framed as they were in 1953. Change in context and questions of taste and style appear to have been the most important factors in the modifications to, or the loss of, a frame. At the most basic level, a Seagram staffer in whose office a painting was hung might have made decisions about the overpainting of a particular frame. More widespread changes, such as the similar modification to several frames or the wholesale replacement of numerous frames, were most likely done for the exhibitions mounted in the 1960s.

The overpainted frames are intriguing, because the original finish is sometimes still present for examination. While the original paint surfaces would have been somewhat fragile and very difficult to clean, windows through the overpaint where the texture is still visible reveal the underlying layers to be either in relatively good condition, or to have been evenly and intentionally washed down (Fig. 4). Evidently, the overpainting was not necessarily undertaken to mask wear and damage, but in many cases seems to have been done to tone down the complex and textured nature of the surface of the original decoration. This practice accords well with some



4 | Window at corner revealing original patterned decoration underlying monochrome grey overpaint, frame (M2000.83.55), McCord Museum, Montreal. (Photo: author)

mid-twentieth century procedures in the care of polychrome sculpture, when sculptures were routinely stripped of paint layers to reveal the core underlying material, or were overpainted in a uniform, neutral colour.²¹ The aim of such practices was to underscore the importance of three-dimensional form and material in sculpture and to tone down decorative effects.²² The goal here appears to have been much the same, and in line with a certain mid-century aesthetic. All interventions have resulted in an elimination of what would have been considered superfluous decoration: a subduing of colour and texture and the creation of a uniform, more neutrally coloured surface. As well, the removal of the upper paint layers to reveal the white preparation beneath on some of the frames accords well with that “ring of emptiness” admired by Cesare Brandi in his comments on the reframing of early

Renaissance paintings, these frames bearing pronounced similarities – a wide white border with a simple, narrow edge – to historic photographs from the 1960s of installations of the Renaissance works.²³

Even after accession into a museum collection, the perceived value of paintings in this type of collection is ill-defined in ways that both promote and imperil the preservation of their frames. The critical reception of the artists whose paintings form the *Cities of Canada* varies greatly – even during the international tour, controversy arose as to the choice of artists and the quality of the works.²⁴ Generally speaking, paintings in collections such as the *Cities of Canada* tend not to receive a large amount of critical attention, ensuring up to a point the low possibility that an individual work may undergo a change in context (this is borne out by the fact that more of the studies still have their original frames than the final works, which are generally more in demand). But if a particular work, or selection of works, is chosen for exhibition, often a certain level of discomfort with the merit of the paintings themselves, wrenched from the protective numbers and the contextualization of the collection, will precipitate a desire to enhance value by “updating” the frames, with their ensuing loss.²⁵

What is the value of the *Cities of Canada* frames? Should we be at all concerned about the longevity of those remaining that are original to the works? Perhaps a new category of frame worthy of preservation can here be created: the frame (or set of frames) conceived of by a collector for a group of paintings commissioned for a particular purpose. The *Cities of Canada* paintings were acquired as a collection and that collection as such has significance: that a “baron of industry” should commission a group of painters in such a nationalist enterprise, then undertake an ambitious international tour for the works is remarkable and worthy of study. It is the collection itself that points to an historical moment in a particular place – a collection in which the paintings, to quote Ihor Holubizky, the most recent curator of a travelling exhibition of the collection across Canada, “should be read as visual-social documents.”²⁶ The frames are part of that documentation as a whole, metaphorically underscoring the message of the collection and framing it historically. Study of the works has shown that the first impression of a rather ad hoc approach to their framing – due to the replacement and modification of many of the frames ten to fifteen years after the collection was formed – is incorrect. The framing of the collection was a deliberate, considered act. Providing a stylistic unity to the collection, the frames are successful visually and are important in terms of their materials and production, illuminating a point in the history of the frame in Canada which, while not long past, has not been accorded the attention it warrants. The *Cities of Canada* collection contains excellent examples of the modern

Canadian frame and further work to fully elucidate the frames and this period of framing history can only increase their longevity.

NOTES

- 1 McCord Museum information file, M2008.83.1–141.
- 2 “Pope, Swedish King Receive Paintings,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 3 Dec. 1954.
- 3 McCord Museum information file, M2008.83.1–141.
- 4 In several cases, an Italian customs stamp lies beside the French one.
- 5 Dominique DUGUAY, Kate HELWIG, and Jennifer POULIN, *Analysis of Samples from a Collection of Mid-Twentieth-Century Frames*, Report No. CSD 5120, and *Analysis of Samples from a Collection of Mid-Century Frames, Part 2*, Report No. CSD 5120.2 (Ottawa: Canadian Conservation Institute, 2013). These reports detail the media and pigment analysis of samples from ten frames in the *Cities of Canada* collection.
- 6 Ibid. It should be noted that this monochromatic layer cannot be considered original, but is necessarily a later alteration, as acrylic emulsion paints were not available until the mid-1950s. See Marion BARCLAY, “Chronology: Scientific Developments in the Field of Synthetic Paints,” in *The Crisis of Abstraction in Canada: The 1950s*, ed. Denise Leclerc (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1992), 224–25.
- 7 Lovell’s Directory. Accessed 14 May 2014, <http://bibnum2.bnquebec.ca/bna/lovell/cg.html>
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 DUGUAY, HELWIG, and POULIN, *Analysis of Samples from a Collection of Mid-Twentieth-Century Frames*; see BARCLAY, “Chronology.”
- 10 Reesa GREENBERG, “MOMA and Modernism: The Frame Game,” *Parachute* 42 (March, April, May 1986): 21–31.
- 11 See for example: Oleg TARASOV, *Framing Russian Art: From Early Icons to Malevich*, trans. Robin Milner-Gulland and Antony Wood (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), 261–63; and Deepak ANANTH, “Frames within Frames: On Matisse and *The Orient*,” in *The Rhetoric of the Frame: Essays on the Boundaries of the Artwork*, ed. Paul Duro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 153–77.
- 12 Immanuel KANT, *The Critique of Judgment: Part 1 Critique of the Aesthetical Judgment, 14 Elucidation by Means of Examples*. Accessed 14 May 2014, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/kant-the-critique-of-judgement>
- 13 Cesare BRANDI, *Theory of Restoration*, trans. Cynthia Rockwell (Florence: Nardini Editore, 2005), 123–27.
- 14 Ibid., 123.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Ibid., 125.
- 17 Jacques DERRIDA, “Parergon,” in *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian MacLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 37–147.
- 18 Ibid., 61.
- 19 See for example: Susan GUSTAVSON, “The Picture Frames of Clarence Gagnon: A Neglected History,” *Journal of Canadian Art History/Annales d’histoire de l’art*

- canadien* 12:1 (1989). Accessed 23 May 2014, http://jcah-ahac.concordia.ca/en/archive/1989_12-1#article_1989_12-1_185; and Brian DEDORA, “The Necessary Frame: William Kurelek as Picture Framer,” in *William Kurelek: The Messenger*, ed. Tobi Bruce, et al. (Victoria: Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 2012), 179–91.
- 20 Gerry ABALONE, “The Picture Frame: Knowing its Place,” in *Art, Conservation and Authenticities: Material, Concept, Context*, ed. Erma Hermans and Tina Fiske (London: Archetype Publications, 2009), 60–69.
 - 21 Claude BELLEAU, “Historique de la Restauration au Musée du Québec,” in *Restauration en Sculpture Ancienne*, under the direction of Mario Béland (Quebec: Service de l’Édition du Musée du Québec, 1994), 44–49.
 - 22 These ideas can be traced back to John Ruskin’s more nuanced ideas concerning deceit and honesty in architecture. Ruskin was not against decoration with paint or gilding per se, but was categorically opposed to the false representation of material (for example the painted marbling of wooden columns to represent stone) or the use of extraneous ornament. These, he believed, in hiding authentic material and form, robbed a structure of Truth, an essential quality of great architecture. However, of interest in reference to the Seagram frames, he does mention “the sense of human labour and care” as “a source of agreeableness in ornament.” See John RUSKIN, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 37–45. Accessed 3 Sept. 2015, <http://academics.triton.edu/faculty/fheitzman/Ruskin,%20John%20The%20Seven%20Lamps%20of%20Architecture%201849.pdf>
 - 23 BRANDI, *Theory of Restoration*, Plate XL, 170.
 - 24 “L’auteur de deux des peintures donne la réplique à H. Masson,” *Le Droit* (Ottawa), 30 Jan. 1954.
 - 25 See, for example the re-framing at the McCord Museum of 25 paintings by Henry Richard Bunnnett, among over 100 works commissioned and collected by David Ross McCord in the 1880s, upon their selection for two different exhibitions, in 1992 and 1993.
 - 26 Ihor HOLUBIZKY, “Portraits in Time – Canada’s Cities through the Eyes of Artistic Beholders,” in *Policy Options* (February 2004). Accessed 23 May 2014, <http://policyoptions.irpp.org/issues/canadas-cities/portraits-in-time-canadas-cities-through-the-eyes-of-artistic-beholders/>

Le cadre dans son contexte : la collection *Villes du Canada* de Seagram au Musée McCord

ANNE MACKAY

En 1951, Samuel Bronfman, président de la compagnie Seagram ltée, a chargé vingt-deux artistes canadiens de peindre des tableaux de villes du Canada en vue de promouvoir à la fois son entreprise ainsi qu'une vision moderne et plus urbaine du pays. Une sélection des œuvres produites est devenue l'exposition *Villes du Canada*, présentée en Amérique latine et en Europe de 1953 à 1954, puis dans de nombreuses villes canadiennes en 1955, avant d'être installée dans les bureaux de Seagram à Montréal. En 2000, le musée McCord a fait l'acquisition de la collection Seagram, qui comprenait quatre-vingt-trois toiles de la collection *Villes du Canada*.

Le présent article aborde deux aspects de l'encadrement de cette collection. Il s'intéresse à l'esthétique des cadres, dont la fabrication peut être précisément située dans le temps et l'espace par l'étude de leur design et de leurs matériaux, tout en explorant les questions qui entourent leur valeur et leur préservation. L'examen de la collection a mis en lumière le fait que peu d'œuvres demeurent encadrées comme elles l'étaient en 1953, car nombre des cadres d'origine ont été modifiés ou jetés. L'étude de ces cadres portait sur leur style, leur profil, leurs matériaux et leur fabrication ainsi que leurs modifications subséquentes. Si chacun était initialement décoré à l'aide de peinture à la colle stratifiée et peignée ou incisée afin d'obtenir un effet ornemental particulier, les changements ultérieurs, apportés du début au milieu des années 1960, ont transformé l'apparence des cadres, délaissant la texture peignée et incisée pour une surface plus neutre et monochrome.

L'article explore également les attitudes – sur le plan historique et contemporain – à l'égard de la préservation des cadres afin de saisir l'ampleur démesurée de la modification et de la perte des cadres d'origine dans les collections privées comme dans les musées. Pour ce faire, les écrits d'Emmanuel Kant, de Cesare Brandi, de Jacques Derrida ainsi que d'auteurs récents sur la conservation des cadres sont cités.

Les tableaux de la collection *Villes du Canada* constituent un bon exemple de collection discrète appartenant à un musée et dont l'importance historique dépasse souvent l'évaluation de toute œuvre particulière. L'encadrement

de telles collections présente un intérêt qui réside dans la manière dont il met en valeur leur signification, révèle un style et une histoire, et témoigne de l'estime accordée à chaque toile. Si les cadres d'époque ne satisfont pas nécessairement aux goûts contemporains, leur conservation se justifie pour des raisons à la fois esthétiques et historiques.