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Parallels and Intersections

This long-awaited double issue contains important contributions to several fields of art historical interest: photographic studies; museology; communications; archival studies; material culture studies; architectural design; and art activism. Significantly, and fulfilling the promise of current art historical practice, each of these articles takes an interdisciplinary approach that has unearthed instances of interwoven knowledge and complementary pedagogies.

Take for example Kathleen Cummings's "Painting through the Camera's Lens: The Photograph as Source in the Work of William Sawyer." Cummings introduces us to a portrait painter and photographer, active in Montreal, Kingston, and places in-between at a time when using photography as source material was generally kept on the down-low. That Sawyer gave public lectures on this relationship adds his voice to the nineteenth-century photographers who saw the need to educate the public on photographic matters, from dress and decorum before the camera to the utility of the document. These discoveries are important, as they contain the commonplaces of early photographic education, by which I mean efforts to broaden the minds of clients and consumers.

With "No Place like Home: Comparing Displays of Alex Coville, His Life and Work," Leanne Gaudet and Andrea Terry share the results of an art history seminar's critical analysis of themes of place, as expressed in two different museum settings: the art gallery and the historic home. The 2014–15 posthumous retrospective of the work of Alex Colville, organized by the Art Gallery of Ontario in cooperation with the National Gallery of Canada, sought to emplace Colville's practice. Colville House in Sackville, New Brunswick, where the artist lived and worked from 1949 to 1973, has now become an interpretive centre for Colville's oeuvre. At Colville House, which is on the Mount Allison University campus and associated with its Owens Art Gallery, members of an art history seminar reflected on the literature of critical museum and heritage studies, tourism studies, and activist art practices, envisioning a hybrid form of site-specific pedagogical research-creation and enquiring public education.

While the political credentials of Russian-born, Toronto-based painter Paraskeva Clark are well established, Michelle Gewurtz's "Another Possible Community?: Paraskeva Clark's Self-Portraits as Counter-Discourse" enlarges this reading of her work. Inspired by the philosophical writings of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Gewurtz examines Clark's steady production of self-portraits, from 1931 to the early 1950s, as another mode of socio-political

Parallèles et intersections

Ce numéro tant attendu comprend d'importantes contributions dans plusieurs domaines d'intérêt en histoire de l'art : les études photographiques, la muséologie, les communications, l'archivistique, les études en culture matérielle, la conception architecturale et le militantisme artistique. De plus, fidèles aux promesses de la pratique actuelle en histoire de l'art, ces articles suivent une approche interdisciplinaire propice à la découverte d'exemples de savoirs interreliés et de pédagogies complémentaires.

Prenons « La peinture vue à travers l'objectif de l'appareil photo : la photographie comme source de l'œuvre de William Sawyer » de Kathleen Cummings. L'auteure nous présente un peintre et photographe portraitiste qui travaillait à Montréal, à Kingston et dans les environs de ces villes à une époque où le recours à la photographie comme source originale était généralement passé sous silence. Les conférences publiques données par Sawyer sur cette relation justifient son intégration à la cohorte de photographes du dix-neuvième siècle qui souhaitaient éduquer la population sur les sujets de la photographie, des habits et convenances à adopter face à la caméra, en passant par l'utilité de ce document. Ces découvertes sont importantes parce qu'elles renferment les lieux communs des premières tentatives d'éducation à la photographie, soit les efforts pour ouvrir les esprits des clients et des consommateurs.

Dans « On n'est jamais mieux que chez soi : les expositions consacrées à Alex Coville comparées à sa vie et à son œuvre », Leanne Gaudet et Andrea Terry présentent les résultats d'une analyse critique sur les thèmes du lieu réalisée dans un séminaire en histoire de l'art et illustrée par deux cadres muséaux différents : la galerie d'art et la demeure historique. Proposée en 2014-2015 par le Musée des beaux-arts de l'Ontario en collaboration avec le Musée des beaux-arts du Canada, la rétrospective posthume sur l'œuvre d'Alex Colville cherchait à situer sa pratique. La Maison Colville de Sackville au Nouveau-Brunswick, où l'artiste a vécu et travaillé de 1949 à 1973, est aujourd'hui un centre interprétatif consacré à son œuvre. À cette maison, située sur le campus de l'Université Mount Allison et associée à sa galerie d'art Owens, les participants d'un séminaire en histoire de l'art ont réfléchi sur les études critiques des musées et du patrimoine, les études touristiques et les pratiques de l'art militant, ce qui les a menés à imaginer une forme hybride de recherche-crédation pédagogique in situ et à remettre en question l'éducation publique.

Si les références politiques de la peintre d'origine russe établie à Toronto Paraskeva Clark sont bien connues, « “Une autre communauté possible” Les autoportraits de Paraskeva Clark comme contre-discours » de Michelle Gewurtz

expression, one that develops a vernacular of self and other. Understanding the disciplinary context of “major” and “minor” genres in mid-twentieth-century Canadian painting and Clark’s resistance to “death by landscape” turns her self-portraits into vehicles for speaking back to power.

In these mid-century modernizing decades, in Canada and in Quebec, performances of nationhood were taking many forms, “low” and “high,” that are here brought into dialogue. Articles by Samuel Gaudreau-Lalande and Nicola Pezolet were first aired at international academic meetings under the photographic headings of “territorial archives” and “heritage preservation,” respectively. Both interrogating the constructions of “national art history,” they are usefully read in parallel. Gaudreau-Lalande looks at the workaday photographic documentation of a ceremony conducted in 1950 in the Cree community of Mistassini (now Mistissini); Pezolet examines the 1962 unveiling of a modernist fresco of light in the Montreal headquarters of Hydro-Québec. These events are artworlds apart, yet strangely complementary.

In a photo-opportunity staged at Mistassini, three Quebec government officials are releasing beavers into the waterways to revitalize the Indigenous hunting practices that colonial capitalism has done its best to destroy. This moment as officially recorded registers the sorry fact that no members of the Cree community have been invited into the picture. The entire archive tells a more interesting story, not in iconic or even newsworthy images, but in somewhat inexpert photographs whose unpacking is anything but. Samuel Gaudreau-Lalande’s “Indigenous Agency in Government Photography: James Bay Crees and the Mistassini Beaver Preserve in 1950” analyzes this “minor” photographic mission from another angle, and with due respect for the resourcefulness of the Indigenous actors.

Pezolet’s article describes the bringing to life and much-mediated launch of *Lumière et mouvement dans la couleur* (1962), a work by Jean-Paul Mousseau. Well versed in the colours of twentieth-century architectural symbolism, Pezolet deftly describes the ideological rhetoric and photographic attention paid to this monumental light-work, produced by one of the signatories of the *Refus global*. He pays particular attention to the persistence of the sacred in Quebec’s modern society, as a key element in the neon fresco’s meaning and success. From Pezolet’s perspective, contemporary art historians and cultural critics have been too quick to define Quebec as a secular society. His article restores the religious and spiritual dimensions of this climactic moment in Quebec modernism. Restored in 2002, Mousseau’s kinetic work still illuminates this discussion.

Is national cultural identity a sustainable concept? For a *Journal of Canadian Art History/Annales d’histoire de l’art canadien*, this is not an odd

élargissent cette lecture de son œuvre. Inspirée par les écrits des philosophes Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari, Gewurtz analyse la production soutenue d'autoportraits de Clark de 1931 jusqu'au début des années 1950, la considérant comme un autre mode d'expression sociopolitique qui lui permet d'articuler une langue du soi et de l'autre. D'après Gewurtz, le contexte disciplinaire des genres « majeurs » et « mineurs » dans la peinture canadienne au milieu du vingtième siècle et la résistance de Clark à la « mort par paysage » transforment ses autoportraits en l'expression d'une résistance au pouvoir.

Au milieu du vingtième siècle, dans ces décennies de modernisation au Canada et au Québec, les représentations de l'esprit nationaliste ont pris des formes diverses, allant du « petit » au « grand » art, qui dialoguent dans cette analyse. Les articles de Samuel Gaudreau-Lalande et de Nicola Pezolet ont d'abord été présentés lors de rencontres universitaires internationales sous les rubriques photographiques d'« archives territoriales » et de « préservation du patrimoine », respectivement. Interrogeant les constructions de « l'histoire nationale de l'art », elles sont utilement lues en parallèle. Gaudreau-Lalande se penche sur la documentation photographique ordinaire d'une cérémonie réalisée en 1950 dans la communauté crie de Mistassini (aujourd'hui Mistissini), tandis que Pezolet examine le dévoilement en 1962 d'une murale lumineuse de style moderniste au siège social d'Hydro-Québec à Montréal. Ces événements survenus dans des sphères artistiques aux antipodes semblent étrangement complémentaires.

Lors d'une séance de photo mise en scène à Mistassini, trois représentants du gouvernement québécois libèrent des castors dans l'eau, un geste symbolisant la relance des pratiques de chasse autochtones que le capitalisme colonial s'était efforcé de détruire. La documentation officielle de ce moment témoigne d'une triste réalité : aucun membre de la communauté crie n'a été invité à la séance de photo. Prises dans leur ensemble, les archives portent une histoire fascinante, racontée non par des images emblématiques ou d'intérêt médiatique, mais par des photographies au côté amateur, dont l'interprétation est tout le contraire. Dans « L'agentivité autochtone face à la photographie gouvernementale : les Cris de la baie James et la réserve à castors de Mistassini en 1950 », Samuel Gaudreau-Lalande analyse cette mission photographique « mineure » sous un autre angle en reconnaissant l'ingéniosité des acteurs autochtones.

L'article de Pezolet décrit l'illumination et le lancement fort médiatisé de *Lumière et mouvement dans la couleur* (1962), une œuvre de Jean-Paul Mousseau. Grâce à sa maîtrise des couleurs du symbolisme architectural au vingtième siècle, Pezolet dépeint avec finesse la rhétorique idéologique et l'attention photographique dont fait l'objet cette œuvre lumineuse monumentale produite par un des signataires du *Refus global*. Il porte une attention particulière à la persistance du sacré dans le Québec moderne, un élément déterminant pour

question, but a fundamental one. Urban art history has offered an alternative approach, one that Steve Lyons now argues needs its own alternative, one combining localist conditions with imported ideas, practices, and people. His “General Idea’s New York” supplements our histories of Toronto in the late 1970s. This bright moment has been examined by art theorist Philip Monk in *Is Toronto Burning? Three Years in the Making (and Unmaking) of the Toronto Art Scene* (2016). Lyons’s close reading of those three momentous years shatters the city walls erected around this cultural enclave, rebuilding from the rubble with a modest proposal to pay more attention to overlaps and parallel trajectories.

In this way, and in every aspect of this journal, we aim to fuel such burning questions, sparking both private and public conversations.

Martha Langford

interpréter cette murale éclairée au néon et expliquer son succès. D'après Pezolet, les historiens de l'art et les critiques culturels contemporains sont allés trop vite lorsqu'ils ont défini le Québec comme une société laïque. Son article rétablit les dimensions religieuse et spirituelle de ce moment charnière du modernisme au Québec. Restaurée en 2002, l'œuvre cinétique de Mousseau continue d'éclairer ce débat.

L'identité culturelle nationale est-elle un concept durable? Pour les *Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien/Journal of Canadian Art History*, cette question n'a rien d'étrange et se révèle au contraire fondamentale. L'histoire de l'art urbain s'est fondée sur une perspective différente, dont Steve Lyons estime qu'elle doit aujourd'hui être remplacée par une approche qui combine les conditions de l'art local et l'importation d'idées, de pratiques et d'acteurs. Dans « Le New York de General Idea », il enrichit nos connaissances historiques sur la ville de Toronto à la fin des années 1970. Ce moment marquant a été étudié par le théoricien de l'art Philip Monk dans un ouvrage paru en 2016 : *Is Toronto Burning? Three Years in the Making (and Unmaking) of the Toronto Art Scene* (Toronto brûle-t-elle? Trois ans à faire [et à défaire] la scène artistique torontoise). La lecture attentive que fait Lyons de ces trois années mémorables abat les murs érigés autour de la ville comme enclave culturelle, et de ces ruines, il extrait une proposition modeste qui incite à étudier davantage les intersections et les trajectoires parallèles.

Dans ce sens et dans tous les aspects de cette revue, nous cherchons à alimenter les conversations privées et publiques en ravivant l'intérêt pour ces questions brûlantes.

Martha Langford



Painting through the Camera's Lens: The Photograph as Source in the Work of William Sawyer

KATHLEEN CUMMINGS

The work of Canadian portrait painter William Sawyer (1820–1889) has received little attention from scholars. Analysis of his career has been confined to the observations of Michael Bell, whose catalogue *W. Sawyer, Portrait Painter*, produced to accompany an exhibition held at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre in 1978, provides the only published attempt at producing a rigorous study of the artist's work. This oversight does not indicate a lack of technical ability, nor does it speak to the manner in which Sawyer was perceived by his contemporaries in Montreal and Kingston, where he worked from the 1840s to the 1880s and was regarded as an esteemed portrait painter. An astute observer of the world around him and of the social context in which he worked, Sawyer was aware of the increasing value the public placed on photography during the nineteenth century. In response, he adapted his technique to incorporate the formal qualities of the medium, and his work merits further study for the insight it provides into changing views about representation. The following paper considers Sawyer's artistic contributions by situating his work within the larger context of nineteenth-century Canadian art and demonstrates how his technique and professional activity reveal the relationship between photography and portrait painting that defined the art of the period.

The advent of photography had a significant impact on painting, particularly in the realm of portraiture, where the medium's ability to render its subjects truthfully was admired by the public. Exact likeness was a novel quality that provided a counterpart to portraits created by the brush and appealed to the interest in empiricism and objectivity that lay at the centre of nineteenth-century thought.¹ Because Sawyer's career coincided with the introduction of photography to Canada and with the rising interest in the medium, an analysis of his work illustrates how photography transformed portraiture.² For Sawyer, the photograph became a source for his oil portraits

Detail, William Sawyer, *Self Portrait*, 1861, oil on canvas, 75.7 × 51.5 cm, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, Gift of Margaret E. Ettinger, 44-020. (Photo: Bernard Clark)

and was used as an artistic tool to provide a sense of the sitter's features. Although he regarded the photograph as integral to the creative process, he understood it as occupying a subsidiary role and acknowledged that emphasis be placed on maintaining the integrity of the painted image. As he observed in a lecture on photography delivered to the Kingston Young Men's Church of England Association in 1863, photography, while capable of authentic reproduction, cannot be considered equal to painting:

Yet beautiful as its productions are and faithful as they may be, still there is much to be acquired; for compared with Art, it lacks in linear and aerial [sic] perspective in its address to the intellect, in the capability of transcribing colours in its address to the sense ... and in the power over motion and expression, in its appeal to the heart – tho' oftimes a faithful servant of the latter, and sometimes under particular circumstances, of the former.³

The subordinate status Sawyer attributed to photography differs from the view of William Notman (1826–1891), a photographer active in Montreal from the mid- to late-nineteenth century, whose work illustrates an alternate approach to representation. For Notman, the photograph was not simply a tool but a work of art in its own right, and he acknowledged the photograph's artistic potential through his technique and professional practice. His decision to maintain a gallery of photographs in his Montreal studio, where they were displayed on the wall alongside paintings, can be taken as a statement about the status of the photograph as art,⁴ an opinion also expressed in *Photographic Selections*, a compilation of photographs of famous paintings that Notman first published in 1863. As H el ene Samson observes, the work promotes a view of photography as equal to painting and reveals Notman's emphasis on the artistic merits of the medium.⁵

While Sawyer's opinion about the superiority of painting remained constant throughout his career, he used the photograph both indirectly and directly, as an aid in the production of his oil portraits and as an independent work. A comparison of his early and late painted portraits reveals that he reinterpreted his approach to representation by incorporating the formal qualities of photography and altered his style to accommodate characteristics of the "photographic aesthetic." This term, employed by Elizabeth Lindquist-Cock in her analysis of the interplay between photography and painting in the work of Albert Bierstadt (1830–1902), denotes a style of painting defined by the formal characteristics of photography, as evidenced by the blurred rendering of background objects and the pronounced contrast between light and shade.⁶ While Sawyer's work demonstrates the transposition of

photography's formal attributes to painting and provides a quintessential example of the photographic aesthetic, he turned to photography in response to the public interest in the medium rather than to fulfill an artistic vocation. This commercial motivation is further revealed by his self-portraits and cartes-de-visite, which demonstrate an attempt to cultivate a public image as painter. By placing Sawyer's work within the larger artistic context of the period, it becomes possible to ascertain how the tentative status of photography led artists to adopt contrasting views about the extent to which the medium should inform portrait painting, a discordance that is reflected in the various approaches to representation that arose in the years following the invention of the medium.

The nineteenth century was a period of experimentation that saw the development of various photographic methods. The calotype, patented by the Englishman Henry Fox Talbot (1800–1877) in 1841, influenced portraiture because it offered advantages over the daguerreotype, such as shorter exposure times and the ability to produce multiple prints from one negative – a characteristic that had commercial benefits.⁷ The daguerreotype remained popular among photographers until the 1850s, when new methods like the ambrotype were developed.⁸ As Bell observes, Sawyer made ready use of the calotype in his portrait practice.⁹ An evaluation of his extant work demonstrates that he was well-versed in the photographic methods of the period and also created ambrotypes and albumen prints.¹⁰ In his notebook of 1858, he outlines these methods and provides formulas for the albumen process, collodion chloride process, and gallic acid solution.¹¹ This concern for the photograph's chemical basis reveals an emphasis on the scientific aspects of photography over its artistic capabilities. Sawyer articulated this focus further in his 1863 lecture on photography. He defined photography as a “scientific art,” stating that it can provide a pastime and recommending it to the audience as “one of the interesting branches of science” to pursue.¹² The lecture focused on the scientific properties of photography and included a discussion of the chemical reactions involved in the production of a photograph, but no instruction was given about how to produce an aesthetic image. In contrast, Sawyer delivered a lecture on art in 1861, in which he described the formal aspects of painting and discussed elements of composition, such as colour, proportion, and the use of light and shade.¹³ This focus differs from the emphasis on science that defined his photography lecture and illustrates his contrasting views about the two mediums.

The focus on science over art can be connected to larger debates about the status of photography in the nineteenth century. Although the public was captivated by the mimetic capabilities of the photograph, the extent to which photography should inform the painter's practice was a topic of contention.

This debate arose from the photograph's mechanical basis, which led many to associate it with science rather than with the high art of painting.¹⁴ The mechanical nature of the medium was discussed in an editorial published in *Le Journal de Québec* in 1865, which referred to the photograph as “a machine-forced immutability of a moment, with a mechanical stiffness and rigidity.”¹⁵ In 1866, Notman produced a pamphlet, written as a guide to instruct prospective clients about how to prepare for a portrait sitting, that reveals an attempt to counter this assumption. In the text, titled “Photography: Things You Ought to Know,” he refers to the association of photography with mechanical art as a “great mistake” and observes that photographs must be informed by “a thorough practical knowledge of composition, and the various principles which govern art.”¹⁶ The text goes on to describe the materials and costume that will be best captured by the camera:

The best materials, and those which look the richest, are silks, satins, reps and winceys. The most suitable colours are black and the different shades of green, brown, drab grey, or slate, provided they are not too light. Those to be most avoided are white, blue, mauve, and pale pink. Dark checks and plaids take very distinctly, sometimes too much so, as they form too prominent an object in the picture. Lace scarfs, open mantles, shawls, etc., greatly assist in securing graceful and flowing lines.¹⁷

The text centres on how to achieve the most aesthetically pleasing photograph, as demonstrated by Notman's reference to “securing graceful and flowing lines.” Notman returned to this emphasis on aesthetics in his 1870 article “Study of Art Recommended to Photographers.”¹⁸ In the article, which appeared in the publication *Photographic Mosaics: An Annual Record of Photography Processes*, Notman asserts that photography must be informed by art and that the study of chemistry, while not irrelevant, should be a secondary concern:

I refrain from giving any advice as to the mechanical appliances of our art. These have been, I think, so prominently brought before photographers, through the various photographic journals, that I fear it has been to the exclusion of papers on subjects relating to art, and which I deem of more vital importance; at least it would seem to me that photographers have been so engrossed with the *means*, that the *end* has been lost sight of. Having lately visited some of the principal cities in the United States, and their numberless photographic galleries, I am the better able to pronounce an opinion on this subject. Good work mechanically and chemically there was no lack of; ingenious,

ready witted, intelligent, in many cases apparently good businessmen engaged in the profession ... but the idea of art had never entered their heads ... for those whose pictures were in most request, we generally found to be men who were fully conversant with art, and who thought and spoke much more of the effect produced than of “what collodion, what developer, etc., etc., do you use?”

But I must not be misunderstood. I have no intention to ignore studying chemistry in any of its relations to photography, but I place the study of art in all its relations thereto as much more important, and strongly advise this course to those for whom the foregoing remarks are intended.¹⁹

This artistic interest in photography provides a counterpart to Sawyer, whose lecture and 1858 notebook are confined to the technical rather than to the artistic qualities of the medium.²⁰

Those who emphasized the mechanical basis of the photograph held the view that photography led to a loss of the painter’s creativity; photographers were understood as mechanically reproducing the object that appeared before them and were thus seen as possessing a lack of skill. Such a view was expressed in the 1865 article that appeared in *Le Journal de Québec*:

Since the appearance of photography, oil painting has been, so to speak, in its “widowhood,” and if one thinks about it, scarcely exists. Moreover, many of the artists, in order to live, have been obliged to make themselves into photographic machines, that is to say, to lend the weight of their palette to the new process, clothing in colour that which has no life. In this ungrateful work, they lose all inspiration and originality.²¹

As the writer suggests, many artists adopted photography in response to public demand, but individuals without a background in the arts were also attracted to the commercial potential of the medium. Referred to as “transient practitioners” by Ann Thomas,²² they dabbled in photography without possessing considerable skill, and their work led to the assumption that photography, in contrast to painting, required little, if any, artistic training or ability, a view also expressed in an 1863 article that appeared in *The Photographic Journal*, a publication issued by The Photographic Society of London:

In many cases the professional photographer has taken up photography as a profession, and so long as he makes it pay he is content. He does it by machinery; he has no knowledge of art, no

feeling for the beautiful; and in many cases, as any one can see, is entirely ignorant of the optical properties of his lenses. And the amateur, he takes to photography because it is so nice to get pictures of all one's friends! He gets *photographs* of them certainly, but between photographs and pictures there is a wide chasm, bridged by a narrow plank, across which many of our amateur portraitists have yet walked.²³

In his 1863 editorial, "On Photography as Fine Art," W.D. Clark also comments on the lack of artistic ability required by the photographer:

We all know how difficult an art painting is, from the small number of those who succeed in it. But there is no great difficulty in producing a first-rate photograph. A person of average ability, and who can use his hands neatly, if properly taught, could probably become a good photographer in three months. It takes many years' thought and toil before an artist becomes master of his profession. Few men attain this much before middle life. To turn out a first-rate *carte-de-visite* is a comparatively easy matter. To paint a portrait as well as Sir John Watson Gordon is a very difficult thing.²⁴

The popular assumption that the photographer could produce a work with relative ease, and that anyone, regardless of artistic background, could create a photograph, further relegated photography to the realm of science rather than fine art. In *The Artist Inspired* (Fig. 1), a self-portrait produced in 1884, Sawyer underscores the creativity associated with painting. The personification of Inspiration, presented as a young woman who hovers in front of the religious painting displayed on the easel at the right, makes reference to the painter's art as divinely inspired. Sawyer alluded to the divine nature of painting earlier in his lecture on art, observing that art is a "handmaid to the purposes of Religion" and that artists "make use of a means and talent entrusted to [them] by [their] maker."²⁵ The work portrays painting as an inventive art requiring artistic training, a view supported by the inclusion of the sketchbook at the lower left, a detail that also makes reference to the time and planning involved in the generation of a painted work. The portrait promotes a view of painting that can be contrasted with photography, understood by many during the nineteenth century as a mechanical art centred on copying rather than inventing.

Although artists and critics were divided on the photograph's status as fine art, they held the common assumption that photography could serve the painter as a tool. Painters were encouraged to attain a balance between truth



1 | William Sawyer, *The Artist Inspired*, 1884, oil on canvas, 73.6 × 62.2 cm, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston, Queen's University, Gift of Margaret E. Ettinger, 2001, 44-018. (Photo: Bernard Clark)

and beauty, between the mechanical objectivity of the photograph and the aesthetic subjectivity associated with painting.²⁶ Photographers, in turn, were instructed to borrow from painting, to obtain beauty in their photographs, or, as the photographer André-Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri (1819–1889) urged in an article that appeared in *The Photographic News*, “to attempt the beautiful without losing anything of the truth.”²⁷ The accuracy, or “truth” of the photograph was taken as its essential feature, and this characteristic was seen as providing an indispensable aid to the painter. Although Clark was adamant in his view that photography was inferior to the “noble art” of painting, he acknowledged the merits of its accuracy and maintained that photographs could provide the painter with studies.²⁸ A similar view was expressed in the American art journal *The Crayon* in 1855:

As an auxiliary to Art, Photography comes opportunely to the aid of the artist in those preparatory studies always necessary in the production of a work of Art ... These results are attained with the utmost accuracy of form and correctness of effect, such as the most accomplished artist could have attained only at an enormous expenditure of time and labor.²⁹

Although the writers praise the photograph’s capacity for accuracy, like Clark, they emphasize its mechanical basis and draw attention to the lack of creativity required by the photographer:

however ingenious the processes or surprising the results of photography, it must be remembered that this art only aspires to copy, it cannot invent. The camera, it is true, is a most accurate copyist, but it is no substitute for original thought and invention ... so long as invention and feeling constitute essential qualities in a work of Art, Photography can never assume a rank higher than engraving.³⁰

The accuracy of the photograph was also discussed in an article published in the Canadian journal *Colonial Pearl*, in which the daguerreotype is described as “independent of the human touch, so slight, so delicate, so apparently evanescent, and yet so real, so distinct, so clear, so palpably the alter idem of the scene itself as to astonish while it delights.”³¹ The reference to the photograph as “independent of the human touch” can be understood in opposition to painting, where brushstrokes serve as evocations of the artist’s hand, and seems to suggest a favourable interpretation of the medium’s mechanical basis. As noted, such a view was not commonly held, and although the efficacy of the photograph as an aid in the artistic

process was acknowledged, popular opinion maintained that the photograph, because of its mechanical origins, could not rival painting. For the majority of painters, photography was understood as subordinate to painting, an opinion Sawyer expressed in his photography lecture: “As a handmaid to the fine Arts, it [photography] lends its aid in making rapid sketches and studies of individual nature, to assist the painter in his compositions; and to the sitter in portraiture, the necessity of frequent sittings is less required.”³²

For Notman, the photograph had artistic value, and an analysis of his work reveals an attempt to elevate its status, a motivation that informed his 1866 pamphlet and contribution to *Photographic Measures*. Unlike Sawyer, who regarded the photograph foremost as a source to aid in the production of a painting, Notman understood the photograph as an independent work of art. He emphasized the photographic basis of his work by producing hand-coloured photographs, done in either oil paint or watercolour, that reveal a conscious attempt to align photography with painting.³³ Notman also employed a related technique that consisted of projecting the photographic image onto canvas and subsequently painting over the outline with oils.³⁴ Developed in the 1860s and outlined in the article “Photography on Canvas,” which appeared in *The Photographic News* in 1863, the technique was described as particularly useful for portrait painters because it reduced the number of sittings required by the subject and allowed painters to provide an accurate likeness while also permitting them the opportunity to place their creative mark on the image.³⁵ The technique was discussed further in an article published in the French journal *Le Monde illustré* in 1865. The article describes the technique as “simple and ingenious” in its ability to integrate photography and painting, which are referred to as the “two rival arts,” and emphasizes the benefits of the technique, noting that it “allows the artist to paint, after one or two sittings, a portrait, naturally with the resemblance guaranteed, enhanced by all the brilliance of colouring. In an era where more than ever ‘time is money,’ there is a significant economy in using photo-painting.”³⁶ As Bell observes, Sawyer disapproved of the technique and held the opinion that it discredited his practice.³⁷ While Bell does not elaborate on the reasons behind this conviction, some explanation is given in an article that appeared in the *Montreal Gazette* in 1872, which expresses Sawyer’s disregard for the technique:

Mr. Sawyer desires it to be particularly understood that his portraits are veritable oil paintings, produced by the hand directly on the canvas and not a photograph of the person faintly taken on the canvas and then painted over as is so frequently done by inferior artists and palmed off as genuine oil portraits. At the same time, Mr. Sawyer does

not ignore photography as a valuable assistant but will not tolerate the questionable use of it as a foundation for an oil painting.³⁸

The technique of photo-painting ran counter to Sawyer's professional aspirations. He sought to establish a career as painter rather than photographer, and this aim shaped his discourse on photography and informed the technical decisions he made. Photo-painting arose from the photographer's desire to argue for the association of photography with fine art, and by avoiding the technique, Sawyer makes a statement about the superiority of painting, a belief that was central to his portrait career.

Photo-painting provides an example of the photographer borrowing from the painter. The photographer's desire to replicate the formal qualities of painting provides a reversal of the painter's tendency to borrow from photography and demonstrates that the relationship between the two mediums was not one-sided. Painters incorporated photography into their practice, but photographers also sought to integrate the characteristics of painting as a means of asserting the artistic value of their medium. The use of elaborate backdrops and props, which characterize Notman's photographs, provides a further example of the photographer's desire to align photography with painting through the attempt to replicate the elaborate settings often seen in traditional oil portraits.³⁹

In 1860, Notman established an Art Department at his Montreal studio to cope with the demand for hand-coloured photographs, which were admired by the public.⁴⁰ The Department was headed by the Englishman John Fraser (1838–1898), who had trained as a painter in London. Fraser's technique consisted of applying a thin layer of paint over the photograph. This approach, which acknowledges the photograph as the foundation of the work, can be contrasted with the coloured photographs produced by Samuel Hawksett (1827–1903), a painter who may have been employed by Notman in the 1870s. Rather than applying a thin wash of colour, Hawksett covered the photograph in a thick layer of paint. When compared to Fraser's coloured photographs, the photographic basis of Hawksett's work is less evident and his images more closely replicate the appearance of a painting.⁴¹ These varying approaches demonstrate that artists responded to the photograph in diverse ways. The degree to which the photographic source was acknowledged reveals an attempt to come to terms with the artistic merits of the medium and the extent to which it should inform the appearance of a completed work.

In addition to offering hand-coloured photographs, Notman also produced composites. These works, created by means of an elaborate process that involved photographing each sitter individually in the studio and subsequently cutting out the portraits so that they could be pasted onto

painted or photographed backgrounds, were popular with the public and established Notman's reputation as one of the pre-eminent photographers of the period.⁴² Like hand-coloured photographs, the process for producing composites reveals an integration of photography and painting. After the individual portraits were pasted onto the background, the work was re-touched by the painters employed in the Art Department and was then photographed a final time before being presented to the client.⁴³ The manipulation of the photograph, whether through the production of hand-coloured works or composites, reveals an attempt to raise the medium to the realm of fine art.⁴⁴ Through the manipulation of the image, the photographer does more than simply replicate nature and transcends the role of mechanical copyist to become an artistic inventor. By colouring a photograph or arranging cut-out figures in preparation of a composite, photographers place their creative mark on the work and demonstrate that a photograph, like a painting, emerges from a process of invention. Although Sawyer did engage in the manipulation of the photograph by producing hand-coloured works, unlike Notman, these did not emerge from a desire to elevate the status of the medium. Sawyer's use of the technique was commercial and was based on an attempt to cater to public demand rather than to make a claim for the photograph's status as fine art.

Sawyer's commercial motivation for adopting photography must be understood in relation to the decline in commissions for oil portraits that occurred in the mid-nineteenth century. During the period, photographs supplanted oil portraits to become the medium of choice among a middle-class public eager to articulate identity.⁴⁵ Although a few itinerant photographers from the United States and France arrived in Canada in the 1840s and offered daguerreotype portraits, it was not until the 1850s – when the number of practicing photographers rose and when increasingly efficient photographic processes were developed – that the decline in commissions for oil portraits became most apparent.⁴⁶ As a result of this decline, many painters abandoned painting to take up careers as photographers or to find employment as assistants in photographic studios where they worked painting backgrounds and retouching negatives, or, as was the case with the painters employed by the Notman studio, produced hand-coloured photographs and aided the photographer in the production of composites.⁴⁷ In contrast to the traditional approach of painting the sitter from life, those painters who continued to produce painted portraits began to copy from photographs and altered their style to incorporate qualities of the photographic aesthetic.⁴⁸

Like painted portraits, photographic portraits expressed status, but were less expensive than traditional oil portraits, a characteristic that contributed to their popularity among the lower- and upper-middle class. Photography

made portraiture accessible to those who could not afford a painted likeness.⁴⁹ Sawyer commented on this accessibility in his lecture on photography, in which he stated that the photographic portrait “is observed to have benefited all classes of society, rich and poor, and the latter particularly, as it has supplied the place in a great measure of what Art could not afford, namely a cheap portrait.”⁵⁰ A review of the photographs presented at the 1862 International Exhibition, published in *The Photographic News* in 1863, expresses a similar view and refers to portraiture as the genre most affected by photography because of the photograph’s ability to place portraits “within reach of the lowliest, as well as the highest.”⁵¹ The popularity of photographic portraits also reflected the public desire to commemorate loved ones, a concern that had particular significance in the nineteenth century when increasing emphasis was placed on the family. Photographic portraits provided a means of commemorating the deceased, and, in an age when travel was often difficult, served to unite individuals separated by distance.⁵² Sawyer referred to this commemorative function in his lecture and regarded it as one of the greatest social benefits of the photograph:

From the cottage to the mansion, from the peer to the peasant, the hearts of thousands have been gladdened and consoled by the possession of portraits of those who are united to them by the ties of kindred, affection, or esteem. The widow on the lost semblance of the partner of her joys and sorrows – the mother on the reflected countenances of those loved ones who are scattered abroad in distant parts – the lover of the image of the idol of his heart – the man of the world upon that of those who have won his friendship and esteem.⁵³

A major theme to emerge in nineteenth-century discussions of the photographic portrait centred on the photograph’s ability to convey the character of the sitter. Although photography was lauded for its ability to provide an accurate likeness, it was seen as unable to represent the sitter’s character and expression. In his lecture on art, Sawyer defined the ability to convey expression as the mark of a talented painter and noted that it “requires the most refined discrimination and labour to portray its various modifications with correctness.”⁵⁴ Frederick Scott Archer (1813–1856) had expressed this view earlier in an 1854 manual on photography:

It must not be imagined that photography can ever take the place of the painter’s art in its highest branches, as more likely to give faithful portraiture and correct ideas of character and expression. In Portraiture, for instance, the artist will seek for a certain and

well-known expression characteristic of his sitter, without which, he well knows, that his picture, although conveying every other detail with correctness, would be a failure. On the other hand, what photographer has not observed how the various impressions he has taken of the same features, perhaps in succession, vary considerably, without any of them representing fully the characteristic expression of the sitter? In this point of view, it will be seen, that photography is widely separated from art, and cannot easily accomplish all that is required at the hands of the artist.⁵⁵

Sawyer's and Archer's views were common in the photographic literature of the period: the use of the photograph as an aid to provide the portrait painter with details of the sitter's features was encouraged and was regarded as one of the photograph's greatest strengths, but when compared to painting, the medium was seen as lacking in its inability to convey character. Although painters were urged to use photographs as a supplement to the creative process, they were discouraged from copying entirely from photographs.⁵⁶ In contrast to painting from life, which allowed the painter greater opportunity to observe the sitter's personality on account of the lengthy sittings that were required, it was believed that copying from photographs could not provide an authentic indication of character.⁵⁷ In "The Aesthetics of Portraiture," an article published in *The Photographic News* in 1863, Disdéri attempts to contradict this view and maintains that the representation of character should be of utmost concern for the portrait photographer:

In truth, to make a portrait it is not necessary to reproduce that proportion of form of the individual with mathematic exactitude; but it is requisite, above all, to represent them according to the character of the individual, with the modifications and developments which have been given to him by habit, opinion, or social life.⁵⁸

Disdéri's emphasis on conveying character over proportion can be related to an attempt to associate photography with art rather than science, a motivation that is further revealed by the references to the photographer as artist that appear throughout the article, and to his statement that the photographer's work emerges from a laborious process that is comparable to that undertaken by the great painters of the period.⁵⁹

In contrast to photographers, who were bound by reality and could only provide a representation of their sitters as they appeared in life, painters were unconstrained by this limitation and could idealize their subjects. Although the public admired the camera's ability to provide an accurate likeness, they

also appreciated the painter's capacity to present them in a flattering light by effacing, through the manipulation of the painted surface, the imperfections readily captured by the camera.⁶⁰ Despite the desire to be portrayed favourably, the photographer's ability to provide an accurate representation was valued over the idealizing capabilities of the painter, a view expressed in an article on daguerreotypes that appeared in the journal *The Living Age* in 1846:

[The daguerreotype] is slowly accomplishing a great revolution in the morals of portrait painting. The flattery of the countenance delineators is notorious. No artist of eminence ever painted an ugly face ... Everybody who pays must look handsome, intellectual, or interesting at least – on canvas. These abuses of the brush the photographic art is happily designed to correct.⁶¹

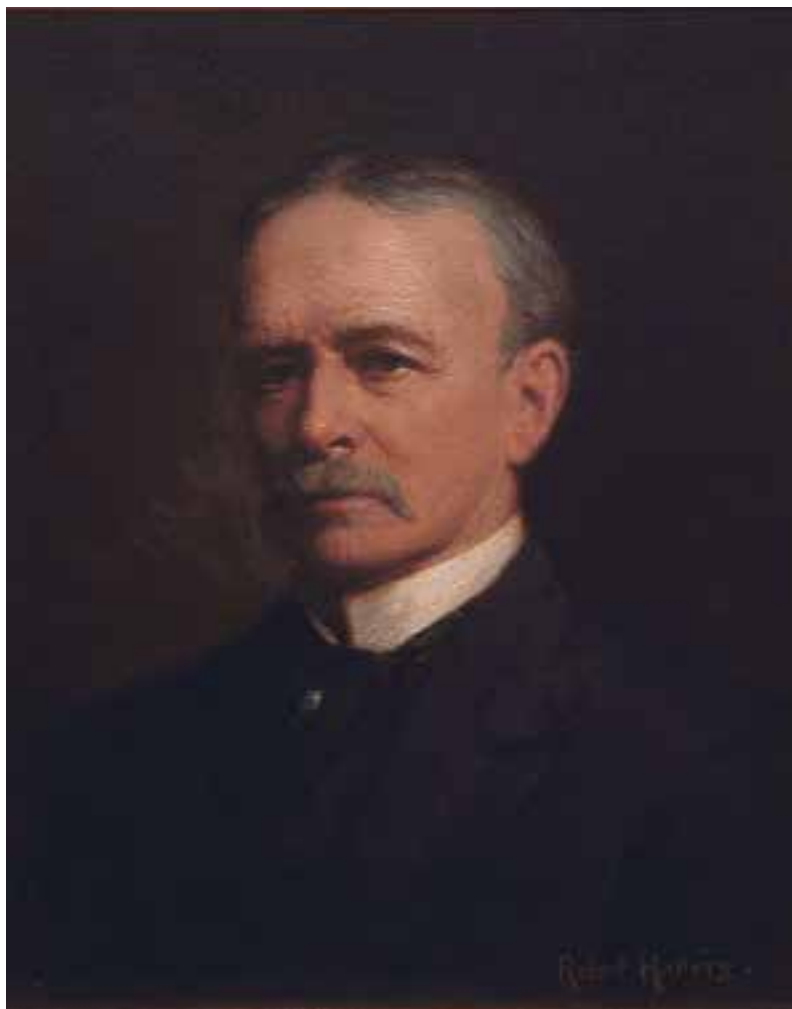
The article draws attention to the extent to which painting, in the nineteenth century, came to be seen in opposition to photography and to be judged in relation to standards of photographic truth. Sawyer seems to have been aware of the distinction between the painter's ability to idealize and the photographer's debt to reality because he kept a copy of a poem by John Gay (1685–1732) titled "The Painter Who Pleased Nobody and Everybody."⁶² Although the poem makes no reference to photography, it does draw a distinction between painters who paint their sitters true to life and painters who idealize their subjects. In Gay's poem, the protagonist, a painter who struggles to find a balance between accurate representation and idealization, achieves fame when he idealizes his subjects, having come to the realization that truthful likeness is a characteristic unadmired by his patrons. The poem's message about the superiority of idealization, a characteristic that the nineteenth-century public associated exclusively with painting, over truth, which they linked to photography, may have resonated with Sawyer as he sought to achieve a balance between the two mediums – between the ideal and the real, the creative and the mechanical.

Although Sawyer acknowledged the assistance that photography could provide the painter, he maintained that it could not rival painting and should not serve as the basis for a painted work. As noted, this opinion explains Sawyer's decision to avoid the technique of photo-painting, and it also shaped his understanding of the other methods employed by painter-photographers of the period, namely the production of hand-coloured photographs. The technique was referred to in *The History and Practice of the Art of Photography*, a photography manual published in New York in 1853, as "ruinous to any daguerreotype."⁶³ A similar view was expressed in an article that appeared in *The Philadelphia Photographer* in 1871 that described hand-coloured

photographs as the work of “pseudo-artists” popular with a tasteless public who “prefer a little mucky daubing to the pure expressing of single forms.”⁶⁴ Sawyer seems to have been aware of these negative associations, and although he did produce coloured photographs, he sought to disassociate himself from these works. He expressly disapproved of the method because of its technical limitations, and he maintained that he produced such works solely to satisfy the public: “Of course with the knowledge of this uncertainty [fading and blotching], should the public insist upon coloured photographs, the responsibility must rest with them and not the painter who does his best to please.”⁶⁵ Sawyer’s attempt to distance himself from the technique might also be seen as a desire to be taken seriously as an artist, given the negative view of the method that was expressed in the photographic literature of the period.

The commercial motivation underlying Sawyer’s production of coloured photographs informed his relationship with photography, and it can be argued that he took up the medium not in fulfillment of an artistic vocation, but in response to the decline in commissions for painted portraits. Sawyer acknowledged his commercial interest in the medium in his photography lecture: “Compared with all that I have seen of my own beloved Art, Photography when weighed in balance is found wanting and altho [sic] it may have injured me some way in my pecuniary interests in common with many others of the same profession, let me speak well of it.”⁶⁶ He goes on to outline the benefits afforded by the photograph, commenting on the accessibility of photographic portraits and making reference to the photograph’s ability to provide the painter with a likeness of the sitter, but is adamant in his assertion that his interest in the medium is pecuniary and that photography, despite its value as an artistic aid, cannot rival painting. As Sawyer makes clear, many nineteenth-century painters were forced, for commercial reasons, to adopt photography in some capacity because they were unable to compete with the photograph’s accessibility, novelty, and accuracy – characteristics that were valued by the public.⁶⁷

Like Sawyer, the painter Robert Harris (1849–1919), who worked in Montreal in the late-nineteenth century, acknowledged the commercial benefits of working from photographs and voiced his frustration at being unable to meet the demand of a public captivated by photographic likeness. According to Harris, he could not “please sitters who want portraits that look like photographs.”⁶⁸ Harris was skeptical about incorporating photography into his practice and noted early on in his career that his success resulted from his refusal to work from photographs: “I put it [success] down to not having worked from photos at all. I told everyone here when I first came that I would not paint from photos as it is mean, inartistic work, though it pays, and I have kept my word.”⁶⁹ Despite his initial reluctance to use photography, the public



2 | Robert Harris,
*Honourable George
Drummond*, 1896, oil on
canvas, 36.8 × 29.5 cm,
McCord Museum, Gift
of the Estate of Mr. Guy
Drummond, M988.98.1.
(Photo: McCord Museum)

demand for photographic portraits led Harris to incorporate the medium into his practice. By the 1880s, he was copying from photographs and often relied on Notman's images as sources for his painted portraits.⁷⁰ The influence of photography is evident in *Honourable George Drummond* (Fig. 2), an oil on canvas portrait that Harris produced in 1896, in terms of the emphasis on light and shade. This emphasis is characteristic of the photographic aesthetic and also defines the painted portraits that Sawyer produced beginning in the late 1850s.

The change in style between Sawyer's early and late painted portraits demonstrates the influence of photography on his painting. In portraits produced after 1856, when he first began to experiment with photography

3 | William Sawyer, *John Bethune*, ca. 1845, oil on canvas, 77.5 × 60.4 cm, McCord Museum, Montreal, M986X.137. (Photo: McCord Museum)



as an aid in the artistic process,⁷¹ the characteristics of the photographic aesthetic become evident, as revealed by the pronounced emphasis on light, the shallow pictorial space, and the lack of defined background, a detail that has been attributed to a desire to replicate the flat backdrops often used by early photographers.⁷² The precise delineation of facial features can also be attributed to the influence of photography since this detail is often taken as an essential quality of nineteenth-century photographs.⁷³ In two early works, *John Bethune*, 1845 (Fig. 3), and *Portrait of a Lady*, 1846 (Fig. 4), no attempt is made to replicate the appearance of a photograph. The sitters appear in defined settings and the works are not marked by the differentiation of light and shade that is a key characteristic of photography. In contrast, his



4 | William Sawyer,
Portrait of a Lady, 1846,
oil on canvas, 77 × 64 cm,
National Gallery of
Canada, 4886. (Photo:
National Gallery of
Canada)

1859 *Portrait of a Lady* (Fig. 5) reveals the influence of the photograph, as demonstrated by the shallow space and defined facial features. The attention given to the play of light, which places an emphasis on form over line, can also be directly related to photography and its ability to capture variations in light.⁷⁴ Sawyer was aware of the relationship between light and photography and referred to photography in his 1863 lecture as the “delineation of light.”⁷⁵

Sawyer’s *Portrait of a Man* (Fig. 6) is defined by a similar emphasis on light. In this painting of 1877, the formal characteristics of the photograph are more apparent than in the 1859 *Portrait of a Lady*, suggesting that, at this late stage in his career, Sawyer was becoming increasingly reliant on the photograph as a source for his painted portraits. In comparison to the earlier portraits, the work reveals a greater attempt to model the figure through light rather than line, as demonstrated by the lack of a defined outline and by the modelling of the head; the contours of the face appear out of focus, a detail that reflects the



5 | William Sawyer, *Portrait of a Lady*, 1859, oil on canvas, 76 × 63,3 cm, Winnipeg Art Gallery, Gift of Mr. Peter Dobush, G-65-141. (Photo: Ernest Mayer)



6 | William Sawyer, *Portrait of a Man*, 1877, oil on canvas, 59 × 49 cm, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, Gift of Dr. Geoffrey Pliny Mason, 2008, 51-011. (Photo: Bernard Clark)

7 (opposite) | William Sawyer, *Photograph of a man*, n.d., Cabinet photograph, Queen's University Archives, William Sawyer Family Fonds, 2054-3-34. (Photo: Queen's University Archives)



inability of the camera to focus on both the head and torso of the sitter.⁷⁶ The blurring of edges and emphasis on light also define Sawyer's undated cabinet photograph of a man (Fig. 7), and illustrate the dialogue between painting and photography that became increasingly evident in the works produced in the later years of his career. The smooth application of paint that defines *Portrait of a Man* also reflects the incorporation of the photographic aesthetic and differs from the earlier portraits. The earlier works are more painterly in



8 | William Sawyer, *Hugh John Macdonald*, 1852, oil on canvas, 62.8 × 73.6 cm, Library and Archives Canada, 1960-123-PIC, 00004, Box number: OP-0476/X1-OP-0476/X2. (Photo: Library and Archives Canada)

9 | William Sawyer, *Isabella Clark*, 1852, oil on canvas, 67.7 × 76.2 cm, Library and Archives Canada, 1960-123-PIC, 00003, Box number: OP-0007. (Photo: Library and Archives Canada)

their emphasis on visible brushstrokes, which can be seen in the folds of the figures' drapery and in the rendering of the background that appears in the 1859 *Portrait of a Lady*. Similarly, Sawyer's portraits of *Hugh John Macdonald* (Fig. 8) and *Isabella Clark* (Fig. 9), painted in 1852, are characterized by the presence of visible strokes, which can be seen in the feathered headpiece that appears in the Clark portrait and in the treatment of the landscape and dress in the Hugh Macdonald work. These portraits provide a counterpart to Sawyer's later works, in which the effacement of the artist's hand can be taken as a conscious attempt to replicate the formal qualities of the photograph, and demonstrate how Sawyer's style evolved to incorporate the formal characteristics of photography in response to the public demand for the new medium.

Although Sawyer used photography as a source, an analysis of his career demonstrates that he wanted to be seen foremost as a painter, and that his decision to produce photographic portraits was commercially motivated. Sawyer adopted photography professionally during the period when commissions for oil portraits were in decline. In the 1860s, he opened an "Art and Photographic Studio" in Montreal and travelled between Montreal and Kingston in search of portrait commissions.⁷⁷ Although Sawyer offered

photographic portraits, he did not abandon painting and continued to produce oil portraits. Correspondence between Sawyer and Sir John A. Macdonald, dated June 1879, demonstrates that he actively sought to obtain commissions for oil portraits well into the 1870s. In the letter, Sawyer expresses his interest in receiving commissions for official portraits of the Governors and Princess Louise, and, although he was unsuccessful in obtaining these commissions, his attempt to secure work as a painter suggests that he wanted to align himself with painting rather than with photography.⁷⁸ Oil paintings were produced in the late-nineteenth century, but were often reserved for official commissions.⁷⁹ As Sawyer's account book illustrates, he continued to receive commissions for painted portraits into the 1880s,⁸⁰ but because there was less demand for these works in comparison to photographic portraits, which found a ready market with the public, he was required to turn to photography to supplement his income.⁸¹

Sawyer's participation in the Provincial Exhibitions also suggests an attempt to cultivate a reputation as painter. The Provincial Exhibitions were organized by the Upper Canada Agricultural Association and provided Canadian artists with a venue for exhibiting their work. In the early years of the Exhibitions, which were first held in 1846, portrait painters could exhibit works in watercolour, oil, or crayon, but by the 1860s, categories were created for photographic portraits. These were developed in response to the rise of photography, and included various classes of photographic portraits such as "coloured portraits," "portraits finished in oil," and "plain portraits."⁸² Sawyer participated actively in the Exhibitions from the 1860s to the 1880s, and won first prize in 1863 for his oil portrait of Sir John A. Macdonald.⁸³ Despite the fact that Sawyer was producing photographic portraits during this period, he often chose to exhibit oil on canvas works,⁸⁴ a decision that can be linked to an attempt to associate himself with painting rather than with photography, and that can be taken, perhaps, as reflecting a view that painting, in contrast to photography, was a medium worthy of exhibition. Unlike Sawyer, Notman exhibited his photographs publicly, participating in exhibitions that included the 1860 Montreal Industrial Exhibition and the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, where he was awarded a gold medal.⁸⁵ While Sawyer sought to cultivate a public identity as painter, Notman embraced his position as photographer and readily associated himself with photography through his presence at exhibitions both in Canada and abroad.

An analysis of Sawyer's cartes-de-visite and self-portraits further demonstrates his desire to align himself with painting. In an undated carte-de-visite attributed to Edwin R. Turner (active 1866–1879) (Fig. 10), a photographer who worked with Sawyer at his Montreal studio, Sawyer is presented not as a photographer, but as a painter. His left arm rests on a



10 | E.R. Turner, *William Sawyer carte-de-visite*, n.d. Albumen print. Kingston, Queen's University Archives, William Sawyer Family Fonds, 2054-3-1. (Photo: Queen's University Archives)

canvas and an open portfolio, containing what appear to be sketches, can be seen at the lower right. In a second *carte-de-visite* (Fig. 11), also by Turner and dated to 1870, Sawyer holds a palette and maulstick and stands in front of an easel. The discernable outline of a figure appears on the canvas, a detail that suggests he is in the process of completing a painted portrait. Sawyer's two self-portraits, produced in 1861 (Fig. 12) and 1884 (Fig. 1), also present him in his studio surrounded by the implements of the painter's trade. In the 1884

11 | E.R. Turner, *William Sawyer carte-de-visite*, ca. 1870, albumen print, Queen's University Archives, William Sawyer Family Fonds, 2054-3-1. (Photo: Queen's University Archive)



work, *The Artist Inspired*, Sawyer sits at the left, holding a palette and gazing contemplatively at the unfinished canvas displayed on the easel in front of him, an open paintbox resting on the table to his right. In the earlier work, which presents similarities to the 1870 carte-de-visite, Sawyer stands, leaning on a maulstick and holding a palette and brushes as he gazes out from the canvas in the direction of the viewer. An anatomical model appears on the table behind him, positioned alongside various books and tools, such as a



12 | William Sawyer, *Self Portrait*, 1861, oil on canvas, 75.7 × 51.5 cm, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, Gift of Margaret E. Ettinger, 44-020. (Photo: Bernard Clark)

palette knife and a barely visible paintbox that is placed behind the model's outstretched leg. A leather-bound sketchbook, a detail also depicted in *The Artist Inspired* and similar to the portfolio represented in the undated carte-de-visite, rests on the ground at the lower left. The two self-portraits can be understood as culminations of Sawyer's views on painting. Like his cartes-de-visite, they reveal his desire to present himself as painter, but can also be taken as broader statements regarding the superiority of painting over photography. As noted, the figure of Inspiration in *The Artist Inspired* underscores the creativity involved in painting, while the sketchbook and model illustrate the thought and time involved in the creation of a painted work. In addition, the books make reference to painting as a learned activity by drawing attention to the intellectual pursuits of the painter.

Sawyer's photographic and painted portraits provide a means of tracing the influence of photography on nineteenth-century portrait painting. A comparison of his portraits with those of other painter-photographers of the period reveals the undeniable link between painting and photography that defined Canadian art of the nineteenth century. Although painters could not avoid the influence of the photograph, they used the medium in contrasting ways, and the degree to which it informed their practice demonstrates the tentative status of photography during the period. As photography was not yet considered a form of high art on account of its mechanical associations, some artists sought to underscore the artistic value of the medium, while others, like Sawyer, regarded the photograph as a source by acknowledging its aid in the production of a painting but emphasizing its subordinate status. Sawyer's interest in photography was commercial, motivated by the public demand for photographic likeness, and he sought to cultivate an identity as painter through his participation in the Provincial Exhibitions and through his self-portraits and cartes-de-visite. His success in this pursuit is confirmed by his obituary, published in *The British Whig* in 1889. As the writer observes, Sawyer's "greatest and highest aims were in representing his thoughts and conceptions on canvas."⁸⁶

NOTES

- 1 Michael BELL, *W. Sawyer, Portrait Painter* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1978), 22.
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- Photographer,” in *Notman: A Visionary Photographer*, eds. Hélène Samson and Suzanne Sauvage (Montreal: McCord Museum, 2016), 25.
- 3 William SAWYER, “Lecture on Photography,” 31 Mar. 1863, William Sawyer family fonds, Locator 2054-4-12, Queen’s University Archives.
 - 4 SAMSON, “Notman: A Visionary Photographer,” 24.
 - 5 SAMSON, “The Art of Photography According to Notman,” in *Notman: A Visionary Photographer*, 71. For a discussion of the production and reception of *Photographic Selections* and how it promoted a view of photography as art, see Joan SCHWARTZ, “With Word and Image: Notman and the Photographically Illustrated Book,” in *Notman: A Visionary Photographer*, 144–47.
 - 6 Elizabeth LINDQUIST-COCK, “Stereoscopic Photography and the Western Paintings of Albert Bierstadt,” *Art Quarterly* 33:4 (1970): 378. See also, Ann THOMAS, “Notes on the Relationship of Photography and Painting in Canada, 1860–1900,” *National Gallery of Canada Bulletin* 20 (1972): 24.
 - 7 Aaron SCHARF, *Art and Photography* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 41; BELL, *W. Sawyer*, 29.
 - 8 Graham G. GARRETT, *A Biographical Index of Daguerreotypists in Canada 1839–1871* (Manotick, ON: Archive CD Books Canada, 2008), 3.
 - 9 BELL, *W. Sawyer*, 5.
 - 10 For examples, see the reproductions in *ibid.*, 30–31.
 - 11 William SAWYER, Photography notebook, 1858, William Sawyer family fonds, Locator 2054-4-23, Queen’s University Archives.
 - 12 SAWYER, “Lecture on Photography.”
 - 13 William SAWYER, “Lecture on Art,” 9 July 1861, William Sawyer family fonds, Locator 2054-4-5, Queen’s University Archives.
 - 14 Dennis REID, *Our Own Country Canada* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1979), 62; Ann THOMAS, *Fact and Fiction: Canadian Painting and Photography, 1860–1900* (Montreal: McCord Museum, 1979), 6–7, 15.
 - 15 *Le Journal de Québec*, 13 June 1865, quoted in J. Russell HARPER, “Ontario Painters 1846–1867: A Study of the Art at the Upper Canada Provincial Exhibitions,” *National Gallery of Canada Bulletin* 1 (1963): 20.
 - 16 William NOTMAN, “Photography: Things You Ought to Know” (Montreal: William Notman, [1866]), quoted in SAMSON, “The Art of Photography According to Notman,” 68.
 - 17 NOTMAN, “Photography: Things You Ought to Know,” quoted in Stanley TRIGGS, *William Notman’s Studio: The Canadian Picture* (Montreal: McCord Museum, 1992), 53.
 - 18 SAMSON, “The Art of Photography According to Notman,” 71.
 - 19 William NOTMAN, “Study of Art Recommended to Photographers,” *Photographic Mosaics: An Annual Record of Photographic Processes*, ed. Edward L. Wilson (Philadelphia: Benerman & Wilson, 1870), 44–46.
 - 20 In his lecture, Sawyer provides a brief discussion of technique in his reference to the results attained by mixing various colours, but he does not provide this information for scientific reasons and goes on to state that the use of colour is linked to artistic effect, and that “[c]olours are important means in the hands of the artist for the representation of nature.” SAWYER, “Lecture on Art.”
 - 21 *Le Journal de Québec*, 13 June 1865, quoted in HARPER, “Ontario Painters,” 20.

- 22 THOMAS, *Fact and Fiction*, 45.
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- 30 Ibid.
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- 39 Jean-Luc DAVAL, *Photography: History of an Art* (New York: Rizzoli, 1982), 22.
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- 41 THOMAS, "Notes on the Relationship of Photography and Painting in Canada," 23–25.
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- 43 GREENHILL, *Early Photography in Canada*, 45.
- 44 Ann THOMAS, "The Role of Photography in Canadian Painting, 1860–1900: Relationships between the Photographic Image and a Style of Realism in Painting," MA thesis, Concordia University, 1976, 15; THOMAS, *Fact and Fiction*, 30–31.
- 45 Peter HAMILTON and Roger HARGREAVES, *The Beautiful and the Damned: The Creation of Identity in Nineteenth-Century Photography* (Hampshire; Burlington: Lund Humphries, 2011), 7–10, 18; THOMAS, "The Role of Photography in Canadian Painting," 55.
- 46 GREENHILL, *Early Photography*, 22–27, 32–33. See also, THOMAS, *Fact and Fiction*, 46.
- 47 THOMAS, *Fact and Fiction*, 29; DAVAL, *Photography*, 22.
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- 49 GREENHILL, *Early Photography*, 24; THOMAS, "The Role of Photography in Canadian Painting," 26.

- 50 SAWYER, "Lecture on Photography."
- 51 "The International Exhibition. Report of the Jury on Photography and Photographic Apparatus. The Applications of Photography," *The Photographic News* 7:230 (30 Jan. 1863): 57.
- 52 HAMILTON and HARGREAVES, *The Beautiful and the Damned*, 10–11.
- 53 SAWYER, "Lecture on Photography."
- 54 SAWYER, "Lecture on Art."
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- 69 WILLIAMSON, *Robert Harris*, 71.
- 70 *Ibid.*, 22; THOMAS, "The Role of Photography in Canadian Painting," 52–53.
- 71 BELL, *W. Sawyer*, 13.
- 72 *Ibid.*, 13, 26.
- 73 *Ibid.*, 25–26.
- 74 SCHARF, *Art and Photography*, 13.
- 75 SAWYER, "Lecture on Photography."
- 76 BELL, *W. Sawyer*, 25.
- 77 Michael BELL, "Sawyer, William," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 11, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003-. Accessed 1 Oct. 2019, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sawyer_william_11E.html.
- 78 Correspondence from William Sawyer to John A. Macdonald, 23 June 1879, William Sawyer family fonds, Locator 2054-1-16, Queen's University Archives.
- 79 HARPER, "Ontario Painters," 21.
- 80 The account book records payments received for photographic and painted portraits. Payments for large-scale oil portraits are recorded between 1882 and 1887. These

consist of eight portraits of mayors and one portrait of “Alderman Allen.” Payment of 155 dollars is recorded for each portrait. William Sawyer, Account book, 1882–1889, William Sawyer family fonds, Locator 2054-4-4, Queen’s University Archives.

- 81 Sawyer’s account book rarely distinguishes between photographic and painted portrait commissions, but references to photographic portraits seem to be most frequent from June 1885–1889, as suggested by the increase in payments received for works under fifty dollars. In contrast, most of the entries from 1882–1885 record payments from fifty to 150 dollars, the higher cost suggesting that these entries refer to painted portraits. Sawyer, Account book.
- 82 HARPER, “Ontario Painters,” 20.
- 83 BELL, *W. Sawyer*, 15. According to Sawyer’s account book, he also received prizes at the 1882 and 1885 Exhibitions. Sawyer, Account Book.
- 84 In addition to the portrait of Sir John A. Macdonald, Sawyer also exhibited painted portraits of Dr. Ruggles and Lady Constance Grosvenor in 1863 and submitted a painted portrait of Sir Charles Tupper in 1881. See BELL, *W. Sawyer*, 14.
- 85 TRIGGS, *William Notman’s Studio*, 27; HALL, DODDS, and TRIGGS, *The World of William Notman*, 42–47.
- 86 “Artist Sawyer is Dead,” *The Daily British Whig*, 10 Dec. 1889. William Sawyer family fonds, Locator 2054-2-1, Queen’s University Archives.

La peinture vue à travers l'objectif de l'appareil photo. La photographie comme source de l'œuvre de William Sawyer

KATHLEEN CUMMINGS

Le développement de la photographie a fourni un autre moyen de représentation et a influencé l'art de la peinture de portraits. Contrairement au pinceau, l'appareil photo permet une reproduction mimétique, et c'est cette capacité d'authenticité qui a captivé le public du XIX^e siècle. La photographie est devenue le médium dominant pour le portrait, et l'analyse de la carrière du portraitiste canadien William Sawyer (1820–1889) illustre la transformation induite par l'appareil photo.

La comparaison de l'œuvre de Sawyer avec celle d'autres peintres-photographes de l'époque révèle que l'adoption de la photographie n'était pas uniforme. En effet, les artistes utilisaient la photographie de différentes manières, soit comme un outil pour participer à la production d'un portrait peint, soit en tant qu'œuvre indépendante. Cette disparité d'approche reflète la position hésitante de la photographie au XIX^e siècle et peut être attribuée à des débats plus larges sur le statut de la photographie en tant qu'art. Il s'agit d'ailleurs d'un thème qui a alimenté de fréquents débats dans les revues de photographie de l'époque. Pour des artistes comme William Notman (1826–1891), la photographie était considérée comme une forme d'art capable de produire un effet esthétique, mais pour Sawyer, la photographie était surtout utilisée comme un outil scientifique pour aider à la production d'un portrait peint. Ainsi, il la considérait avant tout comme subsidiaire à la peinture.

Sawyer a contribué au débat sur le potentiel artistique de la photographie dans ses discussions sur la peinture et la photographie. Cela a pris la forme de conférences qu'il a prononcées alors qu'il vivait à Kingston, la ville où il a travaillé comme peintre et photographe, et ce, des années 1850 jusqu'à sa mort en 1889. Pour cet artiste, l'appareil photo est un complément à la peinture plutôt qu'un véhicule unique à la production d'une œuvre d'art, un processus qu'il concevait comme un acte créatif faisant appel aux capacités inventives du pinceau. L'association entre l'appareil photo et la vérité, et celle du pinceau avec la création, une qualité reconnue comme un marqueur de l'art, ont été largement exprimées par les artistes et le public, et ont marqué la distinction entre la photographie et la peinture. Analysées au même titre que son travail et ses décisions professionnelles, les conférences de Sawyer offrent

un aperçu du discours public sur le statut de la photographie qui était répandu au XIX^e siècle, en plus de révéler la profonde influence de la photographie sur la peinture.

Ce document examine cette influence à travers une évaluation des points de vue contrastés sur les deux médiums qui ont été exprimés dans la littérature photographique de l'époque. En outre, en analysant ces points de vue par rapport à ceux de Sawyer, ce texte offre une appréciation du rôle de ce portraitiste dans ce débat. L'évaluation de ses contributions artistiques, exprimées à travers ses peintures, donne un aperçu de l'œuvre d'un artiste qui a été largement sous-étudié, mais qui a beaucoup contribué, tant sur le plan théorique qu'artistique, au débat sur la photographie. Ce faisant, il a laissé sa marque sur l'art canadien du XIX^e siècle.



1 | Paraskeva Clark, *Self-Portrait*, 1931–32, oil on cardboard, 41 × 31 cm, Collection of Museum London, Purchase 1994. © Clive Clark. (Photo: Museum London)

“Another Possible Community”: Paraskeva Clark’s Self-Portraits as Counter-Discourse

MICHELLE GEWURTZ

Becoming Minor: A “Foot in the door” of Canadian Art

Paraskeva Clark’s (1898–1986) *Self-Portrait* (Fig. 1), was the first painting she ever exhibited, and as she herself acknowledged, the work stands as a marker of her entry into the Canadian art world as a professional visual artist. The canvas was included in the annual exhibition of the Royal Canadian Academy held at the Art Gallery of Toronto (now the AGO). Clark later inscribed the following on the back:

Painted in winter of 1931–32 / Toronto — invited by Many [sic] Hahn to Exhibit in Academy/ was accepted by jury and thus it became a ‘foot / in the door’ into the Temple of Canadian Art.

In the context of early-twentieth-century Canadian art, with its emphasis on nationalist ideology and a nascent visual language that revolved around mythic representations of the land, Clark’s choice of a marginal genre with which to make her presence known and acquire a “foot in the door” in the Canadian art world seems paradoxical. Paraskeva Clark continued to produce self-portraits throughout her most active period in Canada, which spanned from her arrival in the country in 1931 to the early 1950s when the illness of her eldest son Ben Allegri Clark impacted her artistic output. Her practice of self-representation set her apart from her Canadian contemporaries. She has been acknowledged as a member of the Toronto community of painters who contributed to a socially conscious modern Canadian movement in the 1930s, yet her achievements, particularly as a portraitist, have not been fully recognized. Less acknowledgement in art historical writing has been given to her use of techniques that drew upon traditions of European modernism and avant-garde aesthetics. These strategies appear in the landscapes and still-life works she produced in oil and watercolour, and she also mobilized a modernist sensibility in her mimetic work as a portrait artist. While her familiarity with European techniques and histories as an émigré from Russia, who spent the better part of the 1920s living on the outskirts of Paris, earned

her the curiosity of her peers, it also marginalized her in a milieu which was focused on developing a distinctive visual language.¹ That Paraskeva sustained a practice of self-portraiture for twenty-two years – she even included one in her most recognized painting, the political allegory *Petroushka* (1937) – also cast her as something of an outsider. By daring to draw a connection between art and politics, challenging her peers and viewers alike to think differently, Paraskeva Clark distinguished herself from her Canadian contemporaries. She also deliberately cast herself against the dominant discourse in Canadian painting by producing a series of remarkable portraits and self-portraits.

Paraskeva arrived in the country in the summer of 1931, after meeting Canadian accountant Philip Clark in Paris in 1929. She married him in England in June 1931 after a two-year correspondence. After studying art in Petrograd (Saint Petersburg) during the early years of the Soviet avant-garde that followed the Russian Revolution of 1917, as well as living in Paris from 1923 to 1931, Paraskeva Clark was well versed in the ideals and modes of European modernism. Early Soviet modernism is strongly associated with Aleksandr Rodchenko's slogan "Art into life!" as well as Vladimir Tatlin's call for artists to become active builders in society using "real materials and real space." It is hardly surprising that, once settled in Toronto, Paraskeva attempted to integrate into a community of artists who wished to address questions pertaining to the social value of art.² It is likewise understandable that she would come to lament the marginal role such socially conscious artists – not to mention women – played in the nationally recognized arts groups that existed in Canada at the time. Clark's disappointment with Canadian art and in particular her bewilderment at the lack of community and artistic dialogue amongst Anglo-Canadian artists who were based in her newly adopted home of Toronto is well documented.³

It is important to understand that Paraskeva Clark was caught between a deep respect for European modernist painting that sustained her desire to produce modernist work, and a profound disappointment verging on disdain for Canadian art with its nationalist agenda that was centred around landscape painting. That she sustained a practice of self-representation must be viewed in this context, and consideration ought to be given to the fact that she did not simply conform or begin to work in a style that was more attuned to the Canadian painting tradition when she began the process of becoming an artist after settling in Toronto. Paraskeva turned repeatedly to painting her own image demonstrating a reflexivity in relation to self-representation.

Women's self-representation in the early twentieth century has largely been understood as the representation of the personal and an exploration of identity. It has been argued that by concentrating on the reflected self-image, women have engaged in a process where self-knowledge and discovery

is the ultimate aim.⁴ Paraskeva Clark's self-portrait of 1931–32 does engage with issues of self-definition. That she represents herself glancing over her shoulder speaks to a sense of the theatrical. There are numerous difficulties, however, when faced with the task of interpreting self-portraits. Viewers are presented with a proximate image of an artist, albeit one that creates a kind of distancing effect. As E.H. Gombrich observed, self-portraits are in effect representations of a relational model and not one of likeness.⁵ From a feminist perspective, “[s]elf-portraits by women artists draw us into the problematics of deciphering the identity that lies behind the social expectation that women present themselves in public adorned, masked and made-up.”⁶ Paraskeva's touch of red lipstick, her pink clothing and her covered hair gesture towards signs of social life, while the tools and indications of the life of a working artist are notably absent. When this was shown in the RCA exhibition of 1932, it did nevertheless serve to represent Clark as an artist. As Whitney Chadwick has pointed out, it was not uncommon for women to link the question of becoming an artist to an interrogation of their own self-image.⁷ What the small 1931–32 self-portrait also does is position Clark as an artist who painted in a certain way, one that set her apart stylistically from her contemporaries. This reading is underscored when something of her biography is known. The stylistic handling of paint in the self-portrait as well as the subject matter connected Paraskeva Clark to Europe, specifically Petrograd, where she received her artistic education. She continued to paint according to the instruction she received as a student of Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin (1878–1939).

The relatively small oil on cardboard painting that Clark produced after arriving in Toronto serves as a testament to her modernist sensibilities, with its emphasis on structure and modelling of the face. The artist has rendered her features in an almost sculptural fashion, paying careful attention to skin tones and how light and shadow fall on her face. Paraskeva recalled that as students mentored by Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin, she and her colleagues focused on painting the human head using geomorphic forms with an emphasis on the use of colour.⁸ We see in Clark's handling of paint, particularly her emphasis on the angles and position of the body, a link between the conventions of the self-portrait and the artist's adherence to modernist styles.

Paraskeva's *Self-Portrait* of 1931–32 continues a practice of self-reflection that she began in Europe. One of her earliest surviving works is a self-portrait painted in 1925 while she was living in Chatou, a suburb of Paris. *Self-Portrait* (1925) (Fig. 2), signed Paraskeva Allegri, is now part of the Art Gallery of Ontario's permanent collection. In this small oil on canvas, the artist has focused all attention on the facial features as she was taught to do as a student. Paraskeva employed a dark colour scheme, incorporating pinks, browns and reds. The technique bears some resemblance to those found in



2 | Paraskeva Clark, *Self-Portrait*, 1925, oil on canvas, 28.3 × 22.2 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Purchase with assistance from Wintario, 1979. © Clive Clark. (Photo: Art Gallery of Ontario)

Dutch Baroque painting or Vincent van Gogh's (1853–1890) early work. The flesh tones have been carefully rendered and the defining angles and facial features appear to have been worked over with great attention to detail. Pink hues have been used as a motif most apparent on the cheeks and lips, giving the subject a flushed or rosy appearance, and upon close inspection, one can detect that the colour has been used throughout, recurring as a highlight and blended with the flesh tones on the nose and left ear. The lighter tones have been used to offset the sombre background, and the similarly dark colouring of the artist's complexion and hair. A portion of red clothing is visible in the lower right corner of the canvas. Pure white paint has been used to render a beaded necklace, and this application of paint appears to be the only evidence of gestural brushwork employed.

Self-Portrait (1925), which has not been discussed in any detail other than to illustrate Paraskeva Clark's biography, is no doubt indebted to the instruction she received in Russia and can be connected to the practice of self-portraiture produced by artists such as Paul Cézanne (1839–1906) and Vincent van Gogh.⁹ Clark often referred to Cézanne as an important painter whom she admired, and historians of Canadian art have speculated on the extent to which she would have encountered his work while she was a student in Petrograd, given that Petrov-Vodkin was particularly knowledgeable in trends in modern French and German painting.¹⁰ With its focus on the subject's face turned in three-quarter profile, Clark's *Self-Portrait* of 1925 is reminiscent of van Gogh's *Self-Portrait, Saint-Rémy* (1889) or even Cézanne's *Self-Portrait* (1879–1882). A more likely referent would be the work of Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin himself. As Mary MacLachlan has noted in her study of Paraskeva Clark's life and work, it is significant that in the years prior to her study with him, Petrov-Vodkin painted and drew several self-portraits.

Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin may be viewed as a pivotal figure in the development of Russian modernism, as his works offer a marker of a painterly practice that is situated somewhere between a tradition of Russian realist painting and art that was shaped by the influence of developments in European painting.¹¹ He was briefly affiliated with the Symbolist "Blue Rose" group as well as the World of Art collective that came to stand for the avant-garde in Russia in the early 1890s, and which included prominent Russian modernist painters Natalia Goncharova (1881–1962) and Mikhail Larionov (1881–1964), yet Petrov-Vodkin did not affiliate solely with any movement or style.¹² Instead he has been described as a humanist painter who was concerned with the cerebral and imaginary elements of representation rather than depicting objects as they were found in nature. Petrov-Vodkin has been viewed as a painter who valued attempts to transmit complex and

abstract ideas in a way that was recognizable, if not wholly evident or easily understandable.¹³ These characteristics may be applied to the production of portraiture and self-portraiture that aims to express the likeness of a particular individual while also capturing something of their personality or psychological state.

Although portraiture figured in a variety of ways in Russia during the development of modern art, the genre was largely rejected by the Soviet avant-garde for being too intrinsically formal and mimetic for modernist practice. Mimetic painting was considered a less significant mode of expression in the established hierarchies of art, and this view was held by Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) who was an influential advisor in the Department of Fine Art (IZO) set up by the Soviets under the People's Commissariat for Education following the 1917 Revolution. Kandinsky, like other modernist artists working elsewhere in Europe, increasingly adhered to an ethos of total abstraction or “non-objectivity” and dismissed the activity of painting portraits and self-portraits.¹⁴ In contrast to Kandinsky and others who favoured abstraction or “monumental art,” Petrov-Vodkin remained preoccupied with what he termed “the problem of the real,” which placed him at odds with the technical concerns of his contemporaries who formed the Soviet avant-garde. The Rayonism of Mikhail Larionov or Suprematism of Kasimir Malevich serve as examples of work that was antithetical to Petrov-Vodkin's own production.

Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin aspired towards a painterly style that was in essence a synthesis of imagination and observation. His *Self-Portrait* (1918) offers an instructive point of comparison to Paraskeva Clark's own *Self-Portrait* (1925) that she painted while she was living with her then in-laws the Allegris in Chatou. Paraskeva has posed herself in a similar manner to her teacher in his *Self-Portrait* (1918) in which he depicts himself in three-quarter profile. Both painters have paid close attention to the rendering of their own facial attributes. The canvas Paraskeva produced in 1925 employs a darker colour scheme with a uniform background, whereas Petrov-Vodkin has broken up the blue backdrop in a manner that is not dissimilar to cubist or futurist fragmentations of objects or space. It is the focus on the face that takes precedence in both works and this mode of careful analysis of facial features rendered in paint was something that Clark repeated in her work as a portrait artist in Canada.

The 1920s were dominated by the success of the then Toronto-based Group of Seven, who were the embodiment of the nationalist cause. Their influence as purveyors of Canada's self-image as one that is closely tied to the land was still deeply felt in Toronto in the 1930s. What is of interest here is that the rhetoric of cultural nationalism combined with the heavily

design-oriented elements of Canadian painting in the 1920s and early 1930s prompted a trend described as “artistic isolationism,” which was premised on the insistence that artists preserve and develop a set of Canadian social and cultural values that would ensure a distinctive character especially in comparison to the United States.¹⁵ How then was Paraskeva Clark to find her place as a practicing artist in a milieu where artists focused their attention on local developments in insular communities in an effort to minimize non-Canadian influences on their work?

Clark’s decision to include *Self-Portrait* (1931–32) in the RCA exhibition and the specific stylistic rendering of her own image indicates that she was at odds with the dominant discourse in painting then being produced in Toronto. In fact, her work had a stronger affinity with the type of European work that had a more profound impact on the community of painters working in Montréal. Her choice of subject matter did not fit with the rhetoric of artistic isolationism that Toronto-based painters espoused in their quest for a painterly style that expressed the national character of Canada. Clark’s continual production of self-portraits is significant, for it functions not only as a self-reflexive investigation on the part of the artist, but also as a critique of the hegemonic discourse of Canadian nationalism that was so prevalent in contemporary painting. The choice of self-portraiture links Paraskeva Clark’s painterly practices to those legacies of proto-modernism that were concerned with representational form. By consciously aligning herself with such practices Clark deliberately rubbed against the grain of artistic isolationism. Revealed in this representation is the psychology of the outsider who sought a foot in the door of Canadian art.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have argued that writers who have gone against the established canon in this manner can be thought of as “minor.” This is not to say that such artists are minor in the sense of lesser, but rather to highlight their singularity.¹⁶ Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of a “minor literature” is useful in thinking about Paraskeva Clark’s practice as counter-discourse insofar as the concept can also be applied to visual artists. As Deleuze and Guattari explain in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975): “A minor literature doesn’t come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language.”¹⁷ The European modernist author Franz Kafka wrote in German as a Bohemian Jew living in Prague. This hybrid quality led Deleuze and Guattari to characterize his writing as minor. Correspondingly, Paraskeva Clark – working in the major visual language of European modernism transposed into a Canadian context – can be said to have produced minor art.

Minor literature allows for something other than the literature of the masters. As Deleuze and Guattari explain:

[W]hat each author says individually already constitutes a common action, and what he or she says or does is necessarily political, even if others aren't in agreement. The political domain has contaminated every statement (énoncé). But above all else, because collective or national consciousness is "often inactive in external life and always in the process of breakdown," literature finds itself positively charged with the role and function of collective, and even revolutionary, enunciation. It is literature that produces an active solidarity in spite of skepticism; and if the writer is in the margins or completely outside his or her fragile community, this situation allows the writer all the more the possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility.¹⁸

Minor work is necessarily political, and it is made clear that writers do not write or address themselves to an already existing audience or people. The task of minor literature is therefore to imagine "another possible community." In other words, the minor evokes a people who are missing. As Daniel W. Smith has remarked, when artists evoke a people and discover that "the people are missing" this "implies a new conception of the 'revolutionary' potential of literature."¹⁹

Paraskeva Clark's self-portraits can be read as an example of this sort of minor art for it was rendered in opposition to the mythic language centred on *terra nullius* employed by the members of the Canadian Group of Painters who carried forward this nationalist legacy established in the 1920s. Clark was elected a member of this collective that eventually numbered twenty-eight in 1936. She, along with her contemporaries based in Toronto, Montréal, and elsewhere in the country were producing work that has more recently been aligned with pictorial modernism, however, the "vehicular" or commercial aesthetic ideal remained grounded in a vernacular constructed through an ideological prism predicated on "direct contact with nature." This cultural hegemony accounts for the perception that portraiture held an ambivalent place in Canadian art history. These complexities have been teased out in recent scholarship, particularly in academic writing that has transposed a broader outlook onto historical cultural production, as well as curatorial projects that have shed new light on the impact of Canadian artists working during the dynamic decades of the early twentieth Century.²⁰ Clark's work further broke with Canadian tradition by becoming increasingly political in content later in the 1930s, however, it is also possible to read her earlier works – notably her self-portraits – as counter-discourse that was inherently, if not overtly, political.

Canonical Canadian art history, with its emphasis on wilderness painting indelibly associated with the Group of Seven has reinforced the perception that Canadian artists were slower taking up portraiture as an aesthetic exploration than their counterparts working in Europe, the Americas and elsewhere. Group of Seven member and Paraskeva's contemporary Frederick H. Varley (1881–1969) was recognized for his portraits, yet the genre has only been recast recently so that the practice of depicting oneself or others can assume a more prominent place in the language of Canadian modernism. In Montréal, the Beaver Hall Group, who were contemporaries of the Group of Seven, weighed in on the debate between traditionalism and modernism transposed to a Canadian context, yet circumvented the issue of the status of portraiture. These artists were trained in local art schools and followed a French tradition that focused on figure work rather than landscape. Consequently, the preoccupations of the Montreal-based Beaver Hall painters were inherently different from the nationalist aims of their Toronto colleagues, and as Charles Hill has noted, “[W]hile Montréal boasted several excellent landscape artists, observant art reviewers in the early thirties remarked upon the development of an independent school of artists primarily concerned with painting the human form.”²¹ Taking up the concerns of Modern French art, the Montreal painters fostered a milieu replete with salons that would have been amenable to Paraskeva Clark and her European inflected sensibilities, however circumstances dictated that the artists she most associated with were those that formed the Canadian Group of Painters in 1931. It was this group of artists who became “consciously identified as an expansion of the Toronto-based Group of Seven.”²²

While the Canadian Group of Painters was formed as a national body without any explicit ideology in an attempt to include artists from across the country and increase opportunities to circulate work, the legacy of the Group of Seven was strongly felt. According to Arthur Lismer (1885–1969), Tom Thomson's (1877–1917) *West Wind* (1916–17) remained a symbol of the Canadian Group of Painters. The group remained Toronto-dominated, with all meetings and opening exhibitions being held in the city. Only André Biéler (1896–1989) of the Montréal Atelier joined the CGP in 1935. Paraskeva Clark was elected a member the following year alongside Pegi Nicol MacLeod (1904–1949), Bobs Cogill Haworth (1900–1988), Kathleen Daly (1898–1994) and Carl Schaefer (1903–1995).²³ Although Paraskeva became an active member of this prominent national group, Clark remained at odds with the dominant discourse in Toronto, for her work had stronger resonances with the type of practices found in Montreal. The rhetoric of “artistic isolationism” remained, with art critic Fred Housser denouncing European art in his

promotion of “amateurism.” Housser felt that Cézanne’s influence “shackled” contemporary painting, and firmly believed in the importance of developing “a true racial expression” for Canada.²⁴

Paraskeva Clark’s work as a portraitist and her choice to exhibit a selection of self-portraits in prominent group exhibitions linked her practice to the legacies of European modernism in France and Russia, effectively underscoring the influence of Cézanne. That Clark chose not to hide her indebtedness to her European training and her admiration of post-Impressionist artists like Cézanne and van Gogh – not to mention the artists associated with the many groups or schools in Russia such as the Blue Rose Group, Golden Fleece and Jack of Diamonds – positions her in critical opposition to her contemporaries who were working and exhibiting in Toronto.²⁵ The practice of self-interrogation through portraiture thereby serves as a counter-discourse to the nationalism inherent in painting that extended the legacy of the Group of Seven. As a counter-discourse, Paraskeva Clark’s work functions against the dominant landscape tradition, since it breached the doctrine of artistic isolationism in its minor usage of major modernist visual languages.

Situating *Myself* (1933) amongst the Canadian Group of Painters

Paraskeva Clark followed the exhibition of her *Self-portrait* (1931–32) by including two portraits in the inaugural Canadian Group of Painters exhibition in Toronto in 1933. Alongside a portrait of her husband Philip Clark, Paraskeva Clark exhibited *Myself* (Fig. 3). In this large canvas, now part of the National Gallery of Canada’s permanent collection, viewers encounter a woman dressed elegantly in a black dress and hat, with arms folded across her midriff. Clark has carefully rendered the face as in the earlier self-portraits, with her red lips, plucked eyebrows and fashionable coiffure balanced against an image of a strong, confident woman. Stylistically, these elements function as indices of class, all of which are underscored by the artist’s self-confident pose and gaze. The artist is positioned standing in front of a dark wooden doorway, and her figure occupies the majority of the picture plane. There is a monumentality implied in the composition. Paraskeva, a diminutive woman who was just over five feet tall, appears larger as a result of how she has chosen to frame herself in front of the door that is slightly ajar. The opened door creates a trompe-l’oeil effect as a result of the unusual angles deployed by the artist. Paraskeva Clark, who has signed the work in uncharacteristic block capital letters, appears to fill the space of the doorway.



3 | Paraskeva Clark, *Myself (Woman in Black)*, 1933, oil on canvas, 101.6 × 76.7 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. © Clive Clark. (Photo: National Gallery of Canada)

This oil on canvas self-portrait from 1933 appears to function as a visual statement. Clark confronts the viewer directly, and in so doing the artist has refused to cede the act of looking. In other words, Paraskeva Clark's self-portrait of 1933 does not become the object of the voyeuristic gaze of others. Again, as self-portraits are not easily interpreted, the exact nature of the statement remains unclear. Clark has composed the painting so that viewers are presented with an image of an elegant and seemingly self-possessed woman of means. It was not uncommon for women who produced self-portraits in the early twentieth century to avoid making strong psychological demands on the viewers.²⁶ Instead, women often represented themselves through pleasing images that served as testaments to their artistic abilities.

It is telling that Clark chose to exhibit *Myself* with a companion portrait of her husband, Philip Clark, who was then relatively well-known amongst the Canadian cultural elite for his involvement in the Arts and Letters Club. Biographer Jane Lind has speculated whether Paraskeva Clark's decision to exhibit both portraits was strategic, for introducing herself as a competent portraitist and wife of a prominent figure in Toronto could work in her favour, garnering commissions or other opportunities to exhibit work.²⁷ There is no question that the artist's self-portrait, where she is shown as a bourgeois woman, was underscored by exhibiting *Myself* alongside *Philip Clark, Esq.* (Fig. 4). Both Paraskeva and Philip Clark were presented to a viewing public as a respectable pair.

In contrast to her own image represented in *Myself, Philip Clark, Esq.* (1933) features a seated Philip Clark whose gaze does not directly engage the viewer. Clark has composed the image so that one's viewing position is from above and one has to look down at the subject, whose figure fills both the blue chair in which he is seated as well as the majority of the picture plane. Paraskeva has employed a foreshortened perspective so that Philip Clark in fact appears closer to the viewer. This compositional strategy has a flattening effect, and once again stylistically links the painting to a European network of modernist and avant-garde artists. Clark was likely also drawing on her knowledge of Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin's theories of perspective and space when composing both 1933 portraits. Petrov-Vodkin believed that the rendering of space functioned as "one of the main narrators" in his paintings.²⁸ The theories on perspective that Petrov-Vodkin developed were antithetical to those of traditional three-dimensional representation. His ideas on what he termed "spherical perspective" in fact deviated from geometrical laws by dispensing with traditional compositional methods that followed horizontal and vertical lines. The aim of Petrov-Vodkin's system of spatial thinking was to change the vantage point of the viewer such that what was being observed was effectively altered.²⁹



4 | Paraskeva Clark, *Philip Clark, Esq.*, 1933, oil on canvas, 127.7 × 128.3 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Purchase, 1984. © Art Gallery of Ontario. (Photo: Art Gallery of Ontario)

In both *Myself* (1933) and *Philip Clark, Esq.* (1933), Paraskeva Clark has foreshortened the space in order to present her subjects in differing ways. By playing with perspective in her self-portrait, Paraskeva ensured that the viewers encountered a formidable woman who was also an artist. She has represented herself so that she appears almost larger than life by filling the doorway. Her grand stature is emphasized by her elegant clothing as well as her confident stance. In contrast, her husband is almost diminished in size and stature, as he is shown in a contemplative pose not actively engaging the viewer.

The rendering of space in the work is not the only element at work in fashioning the artist's identity. The air of refined taste conveyed by *Myself* was a consequence of the socially determined fashioning of the body. Clark has depicted herself as modern and fashionable. Yet she refused to cede the act of looking solely to the viewer, for her painted likeness returns our gaze, thus presenting herself as something other than object. Her black dress is indeed tailored and low-cut. Her face is well groomed, and she is shown wearing the bright red lipstick her conservative family found so distasteful.³⁰ The image is not, however, provocative in its engagement with questions of feminine subjectivity and sexuality. In spite of the low-cut neckline of her dress, no bosom is suggested here, and Clark has included what appears to be a camisole to prevent any voyeuristic looking. It is the artist's hands that are instead emphasized through careful rendering and placed as they are folded across her waistline.

While no overt signs point to the physically demanding work of oil painting, Clark's profession is hinted at in the rendering of her hands. Paraskeva Clark's hands were in fact quite large, given that she was a small woman. The hands of the artist are not exaggerated, but they are as much the focal point as the artist's carefully rendered face. The flesh tones work as the main bright areas of the canvas, and equal attention is given to the modelling of the face and to the left hand that is depicted cupped around the right elbow. The large hands are those belonging to a working artist. Sandra Paikowsky has also understood Clark's depiction of "masculine hands" as a sign indicative of her profession.³¹ *Myself* may be interpreted as a subtle attempt by Paraskeva Clark to explore the discrepancy between representations of the artist that have been historically produced around masculine attributes of strength and individuality with images of socially acceptable femininity. Clark has indeed portrayed herself as a strong individual, and any conventional indications of passive femininity are subverted in this painting.

That Paraskeva Clark was engaged in a form of subjective production and embodied critique when she produced this self-portrait may also be read through the positioning of her hands. Folded arms across the belly often signify maternity and passivity, and this would seem at odds with Clark's deliberate manipulation of space and perspective that suggest an active presence. Paraskeva Clark was in fact three months pregnant when she painted this self-portrait. Pregnancy was not something to draw attention to publicly at the time this image was painted, as women were expected to conceal their condition. Yet images of pregnancy are not uncommon in women's self-portraiture, particularly in work dating from the early twentieth century. Marsha Meskimmon has discussed self-representations of the maternal body, which she argues are significant given that motherhood has

often meant that women have been limited in their participation in other realms of culture. Although birth has been a fruitful model for creative production, particularly amongst avant-garde artists in the twentieth century, it has been strangely appropriated so that only men could engage in artistic “birth,” as childrearing has often hindered women in their artistic pursuits.³² *Myself*, with its suggestion of maternity, hints at another type of subversion: instead of rendering women’s procreativity and creativity invisible by relegating pregnant women to the margins of culture, Paraskeva Clark has allowed for a resurfacing and a reframing of the maternal body of the artist so that she may fully occupy the spaces of representation.

Myself can be understood as a potentially transgressive representation, although outwardly it retains the appearance of an acceptable modernist self-portrait. As such, it is inherently political. Meskimmon briefly discusses Paraskeva Clark’s *Myself* in the context of a piece on women’s self-representation and politics. She notes that the employment of European modernist techniques in the execution of the self-portrait connects Clark’s work to a type of Russian nationalism with socialist tendencies that was crucial during the early revolutions in Russia. Meskimmon draws a visual comparison between *Myself* and Vladimir Tatlin’s self-portrait *The Sailor* (1911), although I believe the works are markedly different. Clark’s portrait is more formal, whereas Tatlin’s *The Sailor* can be linked stylistically to French and Russian Cubism or Rayonism in its angular and gestural execution. What is interesting for Meskimmon, and what allows her to claim *Myself* as a political painting, is the fact that she views Paraskeva Clark as caught between two poles: that of European modernism and Canadian conservatism. Working in what Meskimmon describes as a “modified modernist style which maintained her position as part of the European avant-garde while integrating her into the more realistic Canadian tradition” Clark was able to present herself as both a “woman modernist” and a fashionable member of the social and cultural elite, courtesy of her husband’s connections.³³ Viewed in this way, *Myself* can be understood as political for it represents a woman who has fashioned herself so that she was able to enter an art world governed by the politics of gender and nationalism. Meskimmon’s observations are helpful in understanding the political and transnational aspects of Paraskeva Clark’s work. However, it is important to remember that the polarities Meskimmon identified tend to be multivalent, especially regarding Paraskeva’s complicated relationship to class, as I discussed earlier in this essay.

Conclusion: Paraskeva Clark as “Russian Red”

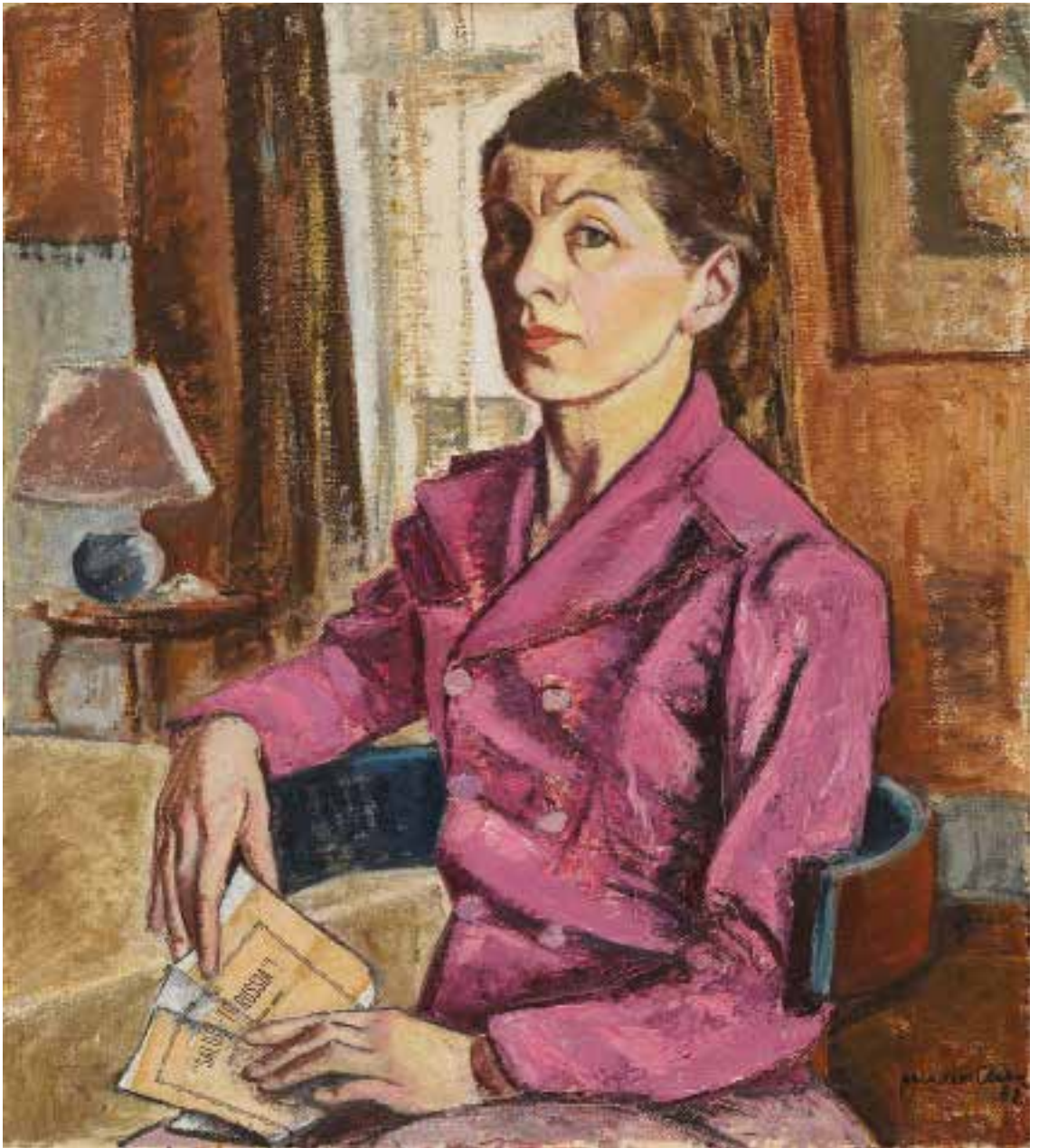
Recognition of Paraskeva Clark’s entry into the Canadian art world as a self-consciously modernist artist who sustained a practice of self-representation

for over twenty years allows for a recuperation of another artistic tradition and of other voices. By using modernist techniques that drew on the theories and teachings of Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin to associate herself with particular cultural politics of the left and of the avant-garde, Paraskeva Clark was able to fashion herself as a modernist artist, one who became increasingly politically conscious and socially active in the later 1930s. Her early self-portraits of 1925, 1931–32, and 1933 must be understood in the context of her training in Russia following the 1917 Revolution, when someone of her class background was permitted to study art in the *Svomas* of Petrograd. Her work is also indebted to Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin, who stressed the use of the imagination above all else to convey abstract ideas and who valorized the role of the artist.

Re-visioning of the role of the artist in Canada is a topic that Paraskeva Clark wrote and spoke passionately about at the height of the Great Depression and in light of the rise of Fascism in Europe. In a world that was more politically turbulent, Clark was dismayed by her colleagues' lack of political engagement and the persistence of nationalist landscape painting. In her polemic article of 1937 entitled "Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield," Paraskeva Clark urged her contemporaries to engage with current social and political issues by producing art that would serve the people by shedding light on those who were struggling. In her call to action, Clark assumed the position of the minor, for she both wrote and painted for a "people to come."³⁴

In her work of the late 1930s, including the celebrated political allegory *Petroushka* (1937), Clark was emboldened to employ avant-garde techniques that distorted perspective and drew on collage and montage and as a result she further distanced herself from Canadian art that was apolitical, not to mention visually and technically conservative. Her use of avant-garde compositional strategies can be found in two watercolours *Presents from Madrid* (1937) and *Portrait of Mao* (1938) that present political imagery and underscore Clark's flair for the experimental given that watercolour is not a medium generally favoured by vanguard artists.³⁵

More experimental elements appeared in her self-portraiture as well. In a small watercolour study dated 12 March 1936, Clark played with collage and incorporated Cyrillic script into the image. Later in her life, Paraskeva Clark liked to claim that she was a "Russian Red" from Leningrad (Saint Petersburg).³⁶ This refashioning as a "Russian Red" found its way into her self-portraiture as well. In keeping with the formalist compositions of her earlier self-portraits painted in oil, Paraskeva Clark produced a final study of herself in 1942, *Self Portrait with Concert Program* (Fig. 5), now in the National Gallery of Canada's permanent collection. Clark has represented herself seated in a domestic setting wearing a pink suit. Paying again careful attention



5 | Paraskeva Clark, *Self Portrait with Concert Program*, 1942, oil with paper (concert program) on canvas, 76.6 × 69.8 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. © Clive Clark. (Photo: National Gallery of Canada)

to her facial features, Clark is shown in three-quarter profile holding an actual concert program, which the artist pasted directly onto the canvas. The title of the program, “Salute to Russia” is legible. When Paraskeva produced this self-portrait, her home city of Leningrad was under siege by the Nazis. In

this instance, Clark not only used collage to align herself with another nation and politics, but to draw attention to a contemporary wartime event. Of this painting she said:

I felt very terrifically about Leningrad being besieged, it's my native town, and just by pose and the expression on my face I wanted to point out the seriousness of that great moment with the whole world at war.³⁷

As a representation of a bourgeois woman that subtly drew attention to contemporary world events, *Self Portrait with Concert Program* is an example of an oppositional work that gestures toward a politics of engagement. Once again Paraskeva Clark positioned herself against the dominant mode of art production in Canada in an attempt to disturb conventional ways of thinking.

NOTES

- 1 As Ann Davis has pointed out in her analysis of the first exhibition of works produced and curated by the Group of Seven that opened in May of 1920 at the Art Gallery of Toronto, these artists took it upon themselves to name and contextualize their form of artmaking, centred around depictions of landscape that emphasized ruggedness, wilderness and a near absence of human presence in order to build their idea of Canadian nationalism. See Ann DAVIS, "Much Ado About Something: A Brief Study of the History of Canadian Art Exhibitions" in *Nation, Ideas, Identities: Essays in Honour of Ramsay Cook*, ed. Michael D. Behiels and Marcel Martel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 99–100.
- 2 This was most evident in Clark's participation and contributions to the collaborative projects of the *New Frontier* artists and writers. In 1937, Clark published a polemic article in *New Frontier* challenging her fellow artists to "Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield" and involve themselves in the social struggles of the time. At the same time, she herself began producing a series of paintings using avant-garde techniques that were overtly political in their imagery and support of leftist politics. See Paraskeva CLARK, "Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield," *New Frontier Magazine* 1:12 (1937).
- 3 See Charles HILL, "Paraskeva Clark in Conversation With Charles Hill, October 18th, 1973." Accessed 27 Apr. 2015, http://cybermuseum.ca/cybermuseum/enthusiast/thirties/interviews_e.jsp?idocumentid=82008; Gail SINGER, and National Film Board of Canada, "Portrait of the Artist – As an Old Lady" (1982), and Mary E. MACLACHLAN, *Paraskeva Clark: Paintings and Drawings* (Halifax, NS: Dalhousie Art Gallery, Dalhousie University, 1982). Clark's complaints that Canadian painting consisted regrettably of nothing other than "landscapes, landscapes, landscapes!" was often quoted in newspaper and magazine articles about the artist that appeared at the same time as MacLachlan's retrospective exhibition and Gail Singer's NFB film.

- See for example, Judy STOFFMAN, "The Rediscovery of Paraskeva Clark," *Chatelaine* (1983): 40, 102–106.
- 4 Liana DE GIROLAMI CHENEY et al., *Self-Portraits by Women Painters* (Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, 2009), 167.
 - 5 Ernst H. GOMBRICH, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (London: Phaidon, 2004), 122.
 - 6 Whitney CHADWICK, "How Do I Look?," in *Mirror Mirror: Self-Portraits By Women Artists*, ed. Liz Riddeal (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2001), 12.
 - 7 *Ibid.*," 9. Chadwick discusses this trend by suggesting that it points to a lack of existing representations uniting the categories of woman and artist. Despite a longstanding tradition of debates around the image and role of male artists dating to the Renaissance, there was little or no precedent for how the artist who was also a woman should be represented.
 - 8 MACLACHLAN, *Paraskeva Clark*, 12. Clark recalled that as students they were instructed to paint using primary colours or to create an image using only one colour. This is no doubt a reflection of Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin's own ideas relating to colour theory and his preference for painting in monochrome or using primary colour schemes. This limited use of colour can be seen in his paintings from 1910 onwards. Petrov-Vodkin developed influential theories on art while working as an instructor in Petrograd. His concept of "spherical perspective" and his thoughts in relation to the handling of "the subject" in painting were later published in his book *Euclidean Space* (exact date of publication unknown.) See Lev MOCHALOV, *Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin*, trans. Anna Jacobson, and Richard Doran (Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers, 1980).
 - 9 Paul Cézanne produced a number of self-portraits relevant to this discussion, as these paintings offer an important reference point in the histories of modern art. His self-portraits have influenced artists interested in constructing their own self-image, particularly given Cézanne's analytic approach to painting that is credited with reshaping the visual plane of painted representation. Steven Platzman's work on Cézanne's practice of self-representation identifies his self-portraits as a neglected area of study. This underscores Shearer West's view that portraiture has fallen outside the realm of modernist art production. See Steven PLATZMAN, *Cézanne: The Self-Portraits* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001) and Shearer WEST, *Portraiture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
 - 10 Both Mary MacLachlan and Charles Hill imply that Petrov-Vodkin was influenced by Cézanne's approach to form in an effort, I believe, to position Paraskeva Clark within a tradition of modernist practice. See MACLACHLAN, *Paraskeva Clark* and Charles C. HILL, *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1975). Russian scholars of art have distinguished Petrov-Vodkin from Cézanne noting that his writings place him in opposition to the famed French painter as well as the development of Cézannism in Russia. See MOCHALOV, *Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin*, 4–16. Petrov-Vodkin's paintings may be historically situated alongside those painters whose works were classed as Post-Impressionist, and in Russia constituted Cézannism. His debt to *The Wanderers*, a society of painters formed in 1870, and his interest in folk iconography and symbolism distinguishes Petrov-Vodkin's work from Post-Impressionism and Cézannism in Russia. Some of his work, notably *Boys Playing* (1911), may be linked to Henri Matisse (1869–1954), specifically *The Dance*

- (1910), painted for Russian patron of the arts Sergei Shchukin (1854–1936). For a useful introduction and primary sources relating to Cézannism in Russia see Ilia DORONTCHENKOV et al., *Russian and Soviet Views of Modern Western Art: 1890s to Mid-1930s, The Documents of Twentieth-Century Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 168, 234–35.
- 11 It is only in recent years that Petrov-Vodkin's influence in the development of Russian modernism and avant-garde art has been reconsidered, recovered and made available to anglophone scholars and the general public alike. See for example the Exhibition organized by the Russian State Museum in 2018. Accessed 8 Mar. 2019, <http://en.rusmuseum.ru/benois-wing/exhibitions/kuzma-petrov-vodkin-on-the-140th-anniversary-of-the-artist-s-birth/> [last]. Petrov-Vodkin's art has been included in a select number of exhibitions outside of Russia and has to date been most prominently featured in a touring exhibition curated by John Milner, Natalia Murray, and Ann Dumas and circulated by the Royal Academy of Arts in London, UK. See the accompanying catalogue, Beatrice GULLSTRÖM, Alison HISSEY et al., *Revolution: Russian Art 1917–1932* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2017). See also Andrew SPIRA, *The Avant-garde Icon: Russian Avant-garde Art and the Icon Painting Tradition* (Lund Humphries, 2008).
 - 12 Camilla GRAY, *The Russian Experiment in Art 1863–1922*, revised and enlarged edition, ed. Marian Burleigh-MOTLEY (London: Thames & Hudson, 1986), 90–91.
 - 13 See MOCHALOV, *Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin*, 12–16.
 - 14 WEST, *Portraiture*, 187–88. West notes that Kandinsky viewed portraiture much in the same way as British critic Clive Bell, who felt that portraiture was alien to his definition of “significant form,” because it was dominated by the likeness of the subject. According to West, portraiture was largely disparaged in much modernist critical theory.
 - 15 Christine BOYANOSKI, *Permeable Border: Art of Canada and the United States 1920–1940* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1989) and Ramsay COOK, *Canada, Quebec, and the Uses of Nationalism* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1986), 120–21.
 - 16 Abigail Solomon-Godeau extends Deleuze and Guattari's literary model of the minor literature to the visual arts in her discussion of the work of Tracey Moffat, Carrie Mae Weems, and Zoe Leonard. See Abigail SOLOMON-GODEAU, “Taunting and Haunting: Critical Tactics in a ‘Minor’ Mode,” in *Women Artists at the Millennium*, ed. Carol Armstrong and Catherine De Zegher (Cambridge, MA: OCTOBER Books, The MIT Press, 2006), 371–402.
 - 17 Gilles DELEUZE and Félix GUATTARI, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 16.
 - 18 *Ibid.*, 18.
 - 19 Daniel W. SMITH, “‘A Life of Pure Immanence’: Deleuze's ‘Critique et clinique’ Project,” in *Essays Critical and Clinical* (London: Verso, 1998), xli. Deleuze discusses the idea of appealing to the people in relation to the minor and theatre by stating that this appeal is made in the name of the majority language, but that the people are missing. See Gilles DELEUZE, “One Less Manifesto,” in *Mimesis, Masochism, and Mime: The Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought*, ed. Timothy Murray (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 254.
 - 20 See for example John O'BRIAN and Peter WHITE, eds., *Beyond Wilderness: The Group of Seven, Canadian Identity, and Contemporary Art*, second edition (Montreal

and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007); Alicia BOUTILIER, Anna HUDSON, Heather HOME, and Linda JANSMA, eds., *A Vital Force: The Canadian Group of Painters*, exh. cat. (Kingston, ON: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, 2013); *A Window on Paraskeva Clark*, Ottawa Art Gallery, 2016, curated by Michelle Gewurtz, and *The Beaver Hall Group: 1920s Modernism in Montreal*, exh. cat. (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 2016).

- 21 HILL, *Canadian Painting in the Thirties*, 38.
- 22 Ibid., 89.
- 23 BOUTILIER, HUDSON, HOME, and JANSMA, eds., *A Vital Force*, 133.
- 24 Fred Housser quoted in Christine BOYANOSKI, *Permeable Border*, 3.
- 25 Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin and Wassily Kandinsky were associated with The Blue Rose Group but were not official members. The Golden Fleece group is credited with being the root of the Russian avant-garde, and was a prime network connecting artists such as Matisse, Malevich, Kandinsky, and members such as Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov. Goncharova was a key member of Jack of Diamonds, Moscow's first radical independent exhibiting collective. See Camille GRAY, *The Russian Experiment in Art*, 69–92.
- 26 CHADWICK, "How Do I Look?," 12.
- 27 Jane LIND, *Perfect Red: The Life of Paraskeva Clark* (Toronto: Cormorant Books, 2009), 88.
- 28 MOCHALOV, *Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin*, 12.
- 29 Ibid. The notebooks containing Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin's theories on perspective and his system of spatial thinking are now held in the Russian Museum in Saint Petersburg. Details with regard to his revolutionary way of composing images according to the laws of "spherical perspective" can be found in DORONTCHENKOV et al., *Russian and Soviet Views of Modern Western Art*.
- 30 LIND, *Perfect Red*, 70.
- 31 Sandra PAIKOWSKY, "Modernist Representational Painting Before 1950," in *The Visual Arts in Canada: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 139.
- 32 Marsha MESKIMMON, *The Art of Reflection: Women Artists' Self-Portraiture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Scarlet Pressa, 1996), 138–40.
- 33 Ibid., 156.
- 34 In her discussion of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of a minor, Claire Colebrook discusses the minor as a subject always in the process of becoming. One who produces work that is minoritarian doesn't write to express what is, but rather writes to produce a people to come. Claire COLEBROOK, *Gilles Deleuze* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 117–18.
- 35 I have argued that these watercolours be understood as experimental works that employ montage as an aesthetic technique to express political narratives. See Michelle GEWURTZ, "Double Margins and Montage: Reading Paraskeva Clark" (Paper presented at the UAAC 2009: CWAHI 2009, Open Session).
- 36 Clark left Russia in 1923 and Petrograd (Saint Petersburg) was renamed in 1924 following the death of Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924). The "Reds" in the context of the Russian revolution refer to the more radical Bolsheviks and the Soviets [workers' party] who overthrew the moderate socialist provisional government that had been instituted after Czar Nicholas II abdicated power in February 1917. Clark often

invoked the position of “red or dead” in interviews as well as in her article published in *New Frontier* in 1937. See CLARK, “Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield,” 16–17; HILL, “Paraskeva Clark in Conversation with Charles Hill”; Gail SINGER and National Film Board of Canada, “Portrait of the Artist – As an Old Lady”; and MACLACHLAN, *Paraskeva Clark*.

- 37 Lawrence SABBATH, “Paraskeva Clark with Lawrence Sabbath,” *Canadian Art* 17:5 (1960): 291–93.

« Une autre communauté possible? » Les autoportraits de Paraskeva Clark comme contre-discours

MICHELLE GEWURTZ

Paraskeva Clark (1898–1986) a entretenu pendant plus de vingt ans une pratique de l'autoportrait qui n'a guère suscité l'attention de la critique. Formée à Petrograd (Saint-Pétersbourg) en Russie après les révolutions de 1917, lorsque l'enseignement artistique était accessible à tous, quelle que soit la classe sociale, Clark a créé un art du portrait qui témoigne de son profond respect pour le modernisme européen. Tous les portraits et autoportraits que Clark a réalisés au Canada sont conformes au style qu'elle a adopté lorsqu'elle étudiait dans les *Svomas*, les studios libres de Russie. Cette allégeance à un mode de peinture qui était ouvertement boudé au Canada dans les années 1930, lorsqu'elle est arrivée à Toronto, fait de Clark une sorte de figure marginale et positionne son travail à l'encontre du programme nationaliste de ses contemporains. Au fur et à mesure que les années 1930 s'écoulaient et que les bouleversements politiques et l'agitation sociale augmentaient dans le pays et à l'étranger, Clark s'est de plus en plus préoccupée des personnes en marge de la société et a demandé aux artistes de renoncer à leur esthétique isolationniste si centrée sur la peinture de paysages. Clark a ainsi exhorté ses collègues-artistes à travailler au service de ceux qui étaient en difficulté. Les penchants politiques de l'artiste deviennent apparents dans ses derniers autoportraits. L'examen de ses autoportraits considère l'œuvre de Clark comme un contre-discours, car elle était une artiste qui s'engageait dans une forme de production subjective qui restait informée par un lien avec le postimpressionnisme tout en faisant appel à une communauté imaginaire d'artistes socialement conscients partageant les mêmes idées qu'elle.

Paraskeva Clark a été reconnue comme un membre de la communauté des peintres de Toronto qui ont contribué à un mouvement canadien moderne et socialement conscient dans les années 1930. Clark a continué à produire des autoportraits tout au long de sa période la plus active au Canada, qui s'étend de son arrivée au pays, en 1931, jusqu'au début des années 1950. Cette pratique soutenue de l'autoportrait – l'artiste en a même intégré un dans son tableau le plus célèbre, l'allégorie politique *Petroushka* (1937) – fait d'elle une artiste « mineure » dans le contexte canadien. Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari ont fait valoir que les écrivains qui sont allés à l'encontre du canon établi peuvent

être considérés comme « mineurs » Il ne s'agit pas de dire que ces artistes sont mineurs dans le sens de moins importants, mais plutôt que le concept est utilisé pour souligner leur singularité.

En s'appuyant sur les écrits de Deleuze et Guattari portant sur la « littérature mineure », cet examen de la pratique de l'autoportrait de Clark considère son travail comme un contre-discours. Clark travaillait dans un langage visuel européen majeur, mais dans un milieu qui prônait une esthétique nationaliste distincte. Le travail de Clark peut ainsi être compris comme un exemple de ce qu'une minorité construit dans une langue majoritaire. Ces choix esthétiques, associés à une sensibilité politique accrue, lui ont permis de se distinguer de ses pairs contemporains canadiens.

En osant établir un lien entre l'art et la politique, Paraskeva Clark a mis ses pairs et le public au défi de penser autrement. L'œuvre des artistes mineurs est nécessairement politique et, comme Deleuze et Guattari l'ont clairement indiqué, les écrivains n'écrivent pas et ne s'adressent pas à un public ou à des personnes qui existent déjà. La tâche de la littérature mineure est d'imaginer « une autre communauté possible ». Les autoportraits de Clark sont compris ici comme un exemple de ce type d'art mineur. Clark est allée à l'encontre du discours dominant de la peinture canadienne en produisant une série de portraits et d'autoportraits résolument modernistes. Son travail s'oppose au langage visuel mythique centré sur la *terra nullius* employé par les membres du groupe des peintres canadiens qui ont perpétué l'héritage nationaliste établi dans les années 1920. Cette hégémonie culturelle explique la perception quant à la place ambivalente du portrait dans l'art canadien durant la période où Clark était la plus active.

L'histoire de l'art canadien canonique met l'accent sur un mouvement de peinture sauvage indissociablement associé au Groupe des sept. Elle a renforcé la perception selon laquelle les artistes canadiens ont été plus lents à s'intéresser au portrait en tant qu'exploration esthétique que leurs homologues travaillant en Europe, en Amérique et ailleurs. Les pairs contemporains de Clark, comme Frederick H. Varley (1881-1969), membre du Groupe des sept, de même que de nombreux artistes de Beaver Hall, étaient reconnus pour leurs portraits, mais ce n'est que tout récemment que le genre a été remanié de telle sorte que la pratique de la représentation de soi ou des autres occupe une place plus importante dans le langage du modernisme canadien.

Dans ses œuvres de la fin des années 1930, dont la célèbre allégorie politique *Petroushka* (1937), Paraskeva Clark s'enhardit à employer des techniques d'avant-garde qui déforment la perspective et s'appuient sur le collage et le montage, ce qui lui permet de prendre davantage de distance par rapport à l'art canadien qui était apolitique, sans compter qu'il était visuellement et techniquement conservateur. Des éléments plus

expérimentaux commencent à apparaître dans son autoportrait également. Dans de petites aquarelles qui servent à la fois d'autoportraits et d'études, Clark joue avec le collage. L'œuvre de Clark rompt davantage avec la tradition canadienne en devenant de plus en plus politique à la fin des années 1930, mais il est également possible de voir ses œuvres antérieures – notamment ses autoportraits – comme un contre-discours qui était intrinsèquement, sinon ouvertement politique.



1 | Le docteur Camille-Eugène Pouliot en compagnie de messieurs Hugh Coun du ministère des Affaires indiennes d'Ottawa et d'Armand Tremblay, directeur du Service des fourrures au provincial, s'apprêtent à libérer des castors dans la réserve de Mistassini après les avoir transportés par hydravion de la réserve Nottaway en production. Cette mesure accélère la production des castors dans la nouvelle réserve, Grand Lac Mistassini. Fonds Ministère de la Culture et des Communications – BANQ Québec, E6,S7,SS1,P79304. (Photo: Gustave Bédard, 1950)

De l'agentivité autochtone dans la photographie gouvernementale. Les Cris de la baie James et la réserve de castors de Mistassini en 1950

SAMUEL GAUDREAU-LALANDE

En 1950, Camille-Eugène Pouliot, le ministre québécois de la chasse et de la pêche, se rend à la réserve crie de Mistassini (aujourd'hui Mistissini, dans le territoire d'Eeyou Istchee) en compagnie de Hugh Conn, fonctionnaire fédéral s'occupant du commerce des fourrures au ministère des Affaires indiennes, et d'Armand Tremblay, chef du Service des fourrures provincial, pour apporter des castors dans la réserve de castors de Mistassini¹. La création de cette réserve en 1948 fait suite à la demande des autochtones de Mistassini, désireux d'obtenir une protection légale pour cette chasse essentielle à leur économie. Gustave Bédard (1909–2001), fonctionnaire provincial, accompagne son ministre et produit une documentation de 188 photographies au cours du voyage.

Parmi celles-ci, une image en particulier retient l'attention (Fig. 1). Sur une petite plage de sable au bord d'un plan d'eau, Pouliot, Conn et Tremblay sont en train de libérer trois animaux de leur boîte de transport. Le photographe capture la scène au moment précis où les castors sortent leur tête de la cage et s'apprêtent à s'élancer dans l'eau pour faire connaissance avec leur nouvel habitat. Le ministre, reconnaissable à son béret, est assis sur la boîte et se contente d'observer; le fonctionnaire fédéral ouvre la cage; le fonctionnaire provincial la surplombe, comme s'il se tenait prêt à intervenir. On voit à la disposition des trois hommes que cette photographie est clairement mise en scène : ils observent les animaux depuis l'arrière, de manière à ne pas obstruer la vue du photographe, et donc du spectateur potentiel. Ce type de composition dégagée représentant le point culminant d'une action vient d'une longue tradition dans l'histoire de l'art occidental et continue d'être largement pratiqué dans les photographies officielles d'événements politiques². De son côté, le titre de la photographie, tel qu'il figure dans l'archive gouvernementale, nomme les individus représentés, souligne l'utilisation de l'avion pour le transport des animaux et inscrit le don des castors dans le cadre d'un plan provincial de conservation.

Le docteur Camille-Eugène Pouliot en compagnie de messieurs Hugh Coun [*sic*] du ministère des Affaires indiennes d'Ottawa et d'Armand

Tremblay, directeur du Service des fourrures au provincial, s'apprêtent à libérer des castors dans la réserve de Mistassini après les avoir transportés par hydravion de la réserve Nottaway en production. Cette mesure accélère la production des castors dans la nouvelle réserve, Grand Lac Mistassini³.

L'absence de tout autochtone dans l'image, considérant que le don des castors est un moment clé dans le voyage du ministre québécois, suggère que cette photographie est un exemple classique de la bienveillance paternaliste du « colonialisme bureaucratique⁴ » canadien, que l'ethno-historienne Toby Morantz caractérise par l'action des représentants officiels des gouvernements du sud venant apporter des solutions aux problèmes des autochtones. Mais si l'on regarde au-delà du cadre de l'image, les rapports entre blancs et autochtones se complexifient et, par-delà un simple rapport de domination, les photographies montrent les Cris comme des agents actifs de leur destin économique, politique, culturel et territorial.

Les autochtones nord-américains sont depuis longtemps les sujets des photographes occidentaux, qui les ont représentés selon divers points de vue : la documentation anthropologique, le documentaire humaniste, ou encore la photographie gouvernementale⁵. Ces photographies, et particulièrement celles à visées anthropologiques, ont fait l'objet de critiques notamment à cause du statut qu'elles confèrent aux autochtones, qui seraient des objets passifs saisis et manipulés par le photographe qui, lui, est un sujet accompli doté d'une vision scientifique, artistique ou politique⁶. Or le sens de ces photographies, comme en témoignent les travaux de Carol Payne sur la collection de l'Office national du film du Canada (ONF) n'est pas figé et univoque : par l'utilisation des méthodes de l'histoire orale, l'historienne de la photographie démontre qu'il est possible que des photographies conçues à l'origine comme des outils faisant la promotion de rapports coloniaux avec les Inuits puissent être *en même temps* des documents historiques importants et empreints d'émotions pour ces communautés⁷.

Pour contrer cette passivité attribuée aux autochtones, il existe divers projets de restitution symbolique des images ou de réappropriation collective⁸. En ajoutant des informations essentielles aux photographies comme les noms des individus, leur histoire personnelle et la signification d'un événement, et surtout en faisant de ces images des objets de conversation pour les communautés dont elles montrent les membres, ces projets permettent aux photographies d'obtenir une seconde vie : ils redonnent aux autochtones, autant les sujets des images que leurs spectateurs actuels, le rôle d'agents actifs dans l'élaboration du sens. De même, les recherches menées sur les photographes autochtones permettent d'établir des récits visuels parallèles à ceux offerts par les photographes occidentaux⁹.

Mais qu'en est-il des images occidentales considérées en elles-mêmes, lorsqu'elles n'ont pas encore fait l'objet de pratiques de restitution visuelle et que les récits oraux ne sont pas disponibles ? La photographe Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie propose l'adoption d'une posture distincte de celle du spectateur, qu'elle nomme la « souveraineté photographique ».

When I first began reading ethnographic images I would become extremely depressed, but then recognition dawned. I was viewing the images as an observer, not as the observed ... Even so flawed, these nineteenth-century images were very significant in filling the empty pages of my family album.

It was a beautiful day when the scales fell of my eyes and I first encountered photographic sovereignty. A beautiful day when I decided that I would take responsibility to reinterpret images of Native peoples. My mind was ready, primed with stories of resistance and resilience, stories of survival¹⁰.

Cette idée de souveraineté photographique proposée par Tsinhnahjinnie ne constitue pas une approche autant qu'une attitude envers les images, qui consiste à se projeter dans les sujets plutôt que dans la figure du photographe. Travail d'imagination autant que de recherche, cette attitude promeut la création de nouveaux récits et de nouvelles interprétations à partir d'images déjà chargées de sens. L'objectif de Tsinhnahjinnie est explicite : il s'agit de casser le moule interprétatif dans lequel l'analyse d'un ensemble photographique uniquement en fonction de son contexte de création originel peut confiner le spectateur. Autrement dit, sans nier l'histoire institutionnelle et intellectuelle des projets photographiques occidentaux représentant des autochtones, la souveraineté photographique permet de dépasser leur mandat initial, généralement lié à une volonté de domination coloniale, et permet ainsi une « ré-imagination » de ces images du passé¹¹. S'il n'est évidemment pas acceptable pour un chercheur occidental de prétendre au « nous » inscrit implicitement dans l'idée de souveraineté, il reste que l'attitude de disponibilité envers les sujets, elle, peut être adoptée avec grand profit pour analyser les photographies au-delà d'un postcolonialisme parfois réducteur qui se concentre sur les stéréotypes sans regarder en profondeur les images individuelles¹².

Ainsi, dans la foulée du réexamen critique des photographies historiques de l'anthropologie¹³, cet article propose une analyse des images de Bédard telles qu'elles se retrouvent dans l'archive. L'étude attentive du contexte historique de leur réalisation, de leurs conditions matérielles de production et du rapport entre le photographe et ses sujets permet de révéler les dynamiques de pouvoir à l'œuvre dans le projet de représentation des Cris

de Mistassini par le gouvernement québécois. Le discours visuel officiel de l'administration, tel qu'il est mis en scène dans les images, ne tient pas uniquement du colonialisme, mais constitue aussi un espace d'expression de l'agentivité autochtone.

Contexte de la commande

Avant d'aborder les images elles-mêmes, il faut discuter de leur statut particulier. Gustave Bédard n'est pas un photographe, mais un fonctionnaire du ministère de la chasse et de la pêche¹⁴. Lorsqu'il prend des photographies dans le cadre de son travail, il doit faire affaire avec le service audio-visuel du gouvernement du Québec : le Service de ciné-photographie (SCP). L'organisme enseigne aux fonctionnaires les rudiments de l'art photographique, leur prête le matériel nécessaire et se charge ensuite du développement, de l'entreposage et du classement des négatifs, effectuant les tirages à la demande des différents services de l'État. Durant ses 21 années d'activité de 1940 à 1961, le SCP a accumulé ainsi une formidable collection photographique d'au moins 130 000 négatifs¹⁵. Ensemble, toutes ces photographies forment la représentation visuelle du Québec tel que le conçoit le gouvernement de la province, et l'on peut donc dire qu'elles en sont l'image administrative officielle¹⁶. Un même souci relie entre elles un grand nombre des photographies de l'organisme : la volonté de montrer un Québec en train de se moderniser. Les 188 photographies prises à Mistassini par Bédard en 1950 n'échappent pas à cette tendance et s'inscrivent au sein de stratégies mises en place par la province pour accélérer la modernisation économique et sociale des régions forestières du Québec, comme la gestion active des ressources naturelles, le financement des services sociaux ou la destruction du tissu social autochtone traditionnel par l'éducation des enfants dans les pensionnats.

Ces photographies, donc, ont un statut particulier parce qu'elles ne sont pas tant l'œuvre d'un créateur animé par une intention esthétique qu'elles ne sont le résultat d'une volonté de documentation interne à l'administration. Loin des photographies de la Farm Security Administration, toutes prises par des professionnels reconnus et dont la diffusion était strictement contrôlée par son directeur Roy Stryker¹⁷, loin des images du Service de la photographie de l'ONF, aussi prises par des professionnels et sujettes à un cahier de charge détaillé, les photographies du SCP sont surtout l'œuvre de fonctionnaires¹⁸ dont toute la formation provient de « leçons sur les éléments de la photographie¹⁹ » prodigués par des photographes qui, de l'aveu de l'un d'entre eux, étaient surtout des techniciens qui ne s'intéressaient pas à l'art photographique²⁰. De plus, parce que ces fonctionnaires sont souvent leurs propres donneurs d'ouvrage, on peut supposer qu'ils prennent des photographies qui correspondent au plus près à l'usage auquel ils les destinent.

La question de l'usage, normalement centrale à toute étude sur la photographie gouvernementale, ne sera pas abordée ici. Cet article n'a pas pour objet l'évaluation de l'impact des photographies de Bédard et la manière dont elles ont informé le public du sud de la province au sujet des Cris de Mistassini. Il cherche plutôt à comprendre la vision que se fait le gouvernement des Cris et de leur territoire, et il est donc essentiel pour cela d'analyser l'entièreté des 188 photographies de Bédard.

Brève histoire économique des Cris de la baie James

Les Cris de la baie James habitent à l'est et au sud-est de cette baie, région où se trouve l'immense lac Mistassini. Ils pratiquent une économie de subsistance fondée sur la cueillette et la chasse, à laquelle le contact avec les Européens au XVII^e siècle vient ajouter la traite des fourrures. Ce commerce s'insère au sein des structures sociales déjà existantes, les groupes de chasse familiaux, sans les modifier de manière fondamentale²¹. La montée en importance des postes de traite de la Hudson Bay Company (HBC) au cours du XIX^e siècle et l'attachement contractuel des groupes de chasse à un seul poste mènent à une sédentarisation estivale qui favorise l'implantation permanente d'évangélistes chrétiens vers 1890. Ces entreprises d'évangélisation deviennent le facteur le plus important de la sédentarisation des Cris, qui apprécient la spiritualité et les rituels chrétiens ainsi que les services sociaux offerts par les religieux²². À la toute fin du siècle, la disparition du caribou, qui entraîne famines et épidémies, fait affluer les familles vers les postes de traite pour y recevoir les services de l'Église. C'est le début des villages actuels autour des postes de traite²³.

Au début du XX^e siècle, les techniques de chasse et de trappe sont renouvelées par l'introduction des pièges de métal et le remplacement des mousquets par des carabines. Au même moment, la grande mode des fourrures et la concurrence entre compagnies pour acheter les peaux fait monter les prix et permet aux Cris d'accéder comme jamais auparavant aux biens occidentaux. L'abondance est cependant de courte durée : l'efficacité de ces nouvelles méthodes et l'arrivée de trappeurs blancs entraînent l'écroulement des stocks de castors à partir de 1920, et en 1930 la crise économique fait s'effondrer les prix du marché des fourrures²⁴. Les revenus de la trappe étant devenus essentiels aux Cris pour se procurer nourriture et outils, leurs conditions de vie dégénèrent jusqu'à une situation de famine et d'épidémies²⁵. Un moratoire temporaire sur le piégeage du castor, mesure utilisée dans le passé par la HBC, ne peut plus suffire pour rétablir la situation²⁶.

C'est à ce moment qu'émerge l'idée de créer des réserves de castors où les autochtones détiendraient en exclusivité les droits de trappe et où ils

seraient en charge de la conservation de l'animal²⁷. Quatre acteurs ou groupes d'acteurs se trouvent à l'origine de la première d'entre elles : James Watt, employé de la HBC et chef du poste de traite de Rupert House (aujourd'hui Waskaganish), est l'initiateur de l'idée et la met en place avec ses fonds personnels, à l'encontre de la volonté de ses patrons; Maud Watt, son épouse, est celle qui plaide l'idée avec succès auprès du gouvernement québécois²⁸; Louis A. Richard, sous-ministre à la chasse et la pêche, a assez de vision pour voir le potentiel des réserves alors même que les dirigeants de la HBC n'y croient pas du tout²⁹; enfin, les Cris de Rupert House acceptent de suivre Watt dans son idée et jouent le rôle le plus important en tant que responsables de la mise en place de la conservation et de sa gestion au quotidien.

Modernisation économique

Revenons à la photographie décrite en introduction, qui montre trois représentants officiels des gouvernements du sud en train de procéder à la libération des castors. Comme il a été dit, cette image semble à première vue une représentation conventionnelle du paternalisme colonial où les dirigeants blancs font acte de bienveillance envers les autochtones en leur donnant les fruits de la planification gouvernementale. Cependant, l'analyse des conditions de production de l'image vient complexifier cette première lecture, qui, sans être erronée, est certainement insuffisante. Il convient alors de poser la question : comment les trois hommes en sont-ils venus à libérer les castors à l'endroit spécifique montré dans la photographie ?

Pour y répondre, il faut mieux comprendre le système des réserves de castors. L'acteur principal de la gestion des réserves est le *tallyman*, qui signifie « personne qui tient les comptes ». Les documents officiels du gouvernement canadien utilisent « maître de trappe » comme équivalent français, mais cette traduction ne rend pas l'aspect symbolique essentiel du comptage, et c'est pourquoi le terme *tallyman* est ici privilégié. De manière significative, l'équivalent cri est *amiskuchimaaw*, qui signifie « gardien des castors³⁰ ». La différence entre le cri et l'anglais est fondamentale, car les deux termes renvoient à deux conceptions distinctes de la conservation faunique dont la négociation est une caractéristique de la culture crie moderne. Le rôle du *tallyman* est de compter les cabanes de castors et leurs habitants sur un territoire donné, de voir si la faune est en santé et de faire des propositions pour l'établissement de quotas de piégeage ou, si les animaux sont trop peu nombreux, de moratoires locaux. En échange de cette surveillance constante du territoire, les *tallymen* reçoivent un salaire modeste. Avec le temps, l'emploi est devenu un titre prisé chez les Cris, car il signifie que son titulaire est un chasseur de grande expérience qui possède un savoir exceptionnel sur l'environnement de la baie James³¹.

L'institution du *tallyman* s'inscrit à l'intérieur d'un schéma de pouvoir autochtone et ne constitue pas une imposition des gouvernements du sud, et c'est précisément ce qui a fait le succès des réserves : dès le départ, les Cris font partie de la discussion et de la solution pour contrer la disparition du castor. Au cœur des techniques de conservation privilégiées se trouvent des principes traditionnels cris comme le respect de l'animal et de son habitat ainsi que la restriction de la chasse aux besoins alimentaires. Mais pour obtenir la protection légale de leurs droits de trappe, les autochtones acceptent d'intégrer certains aspects des pratiques occidentales de conservation, notamment le fait de compter les castors et de rapporter ces nombres aux responsables blancs³². Ce dernier aspect, loin d'être banal, constitue un compromis majeur au plan symbolique et culturel. Plus même qu'une « concession dramatique aux désirs culturels des blancs³³ », le comptage représente l'acceptation du principe essentiel de la modernité occidentale, soit l'arrondissement du monde par la logique du développement technique³⁴. En ce sens, l'institution du *tallyman* marque donc de manière symbolique très forte l'entrée du peuple cri dans la modernité par la cession volontaire d'une part de son pouvoir dans la gestion de la trappe, une pratique culturelle fondamentale, à l'autorité bureaucratique de l'État occidental.

Or, qui dit cession partielle du pouvoir, dit aussi conservation partielle, et c'est ce que montre la photographie de Bédard : si les représentants des gouvernements libèrent les castors à cet endroit, c'est parce qu'il leur a été indiqué comme propice par un *tallyman* qui les y a guidés. La possibilité de l'intervention de l'État dépend donc des connaissances sur le castor et le territoire que possèdent les *tallymen* ainsi que de leur volonté de les partager. L'institution du *tallyman* signifie donc que l'État blanc travaille avec les autochtones, afin de répondre à leur désir de pouvoir continuer à vivre de la chasse. Cela signifie aussi l'appropriation, par les autochtones, des principes modernes de gestion des ressources fauniques, le partenariat n'étant possible que s'il y a compréhension mutuelle et que les Cris acceptent les exigences de la modernité administrative. Plutôt que la bienfaisance paternaliste et le camouflage de la présence autochtone, le thème essentiel de cette photographie est la réciprocité : les blancs prennent l'honneur de la mise en représentation du geste symbolique du don par la photographie, et les autochtones reçoivent les castors qui leur permettront d'améliorer leur niveau de vie. L'image, en quelque sorte, scelle le pacte que font les Cris de Mistassini avec la modernité et l'intervention gouvernementale accrue qui s'ensuit.

Modernisation politique

Une photographie (Fig. 2) montre un don réciproque de cadeaux entre le ministre Pouliot et le chef Shecapio. Une première interprétation fait voir un



2 | L'Honorable Camille-Eugène Pouliot vient de présenter les hommages du Gouvernement du Québec au chef de la tribu Cris « Shecapio » en lui faisant cadeau d'un drapeau du fleurdelysé. Grand Lac Mistassini. Fonds Ministère de la Culture et des Communications – BANQ Québec, E6,S7,SSI,P79309. (Photo: Gustave Bédard, 1950)

échange inégal dans le cadre de relations coloniales : le ministre reçoit un exemplaire très fin d'un savoir-faire traditionnel autochtone alors que le chef cri se voit offrir un symbole de sa propre soumission politique, sans valeur esthétique de surcroît. L'analyse vient toutefois complexifier cette lecture.

Tout d'abord, le titre de l'image, s'il ne mentionne pas le cadeau cri, souligne que l'administration provinciale reconnaît le chef autochtone comme un interlocuteur officiel : « L'Honorable Camille-Eugène Pouliot vient de présenter les hommages du Gouvernement du Québec au chef de la tribu Cris [sic] "Shecapio" en lui faisant cadeau d'un drapeau du fleurdelysé [sic]. Grand Lac Mistassini³⁵ ». L'analyse visuelle abonde dans le même sens, suggérant que les cadeaux signifient ici plus que l'échange de bons procédés

et qu'ils marquent une transformation profonde des relations entre les Cris de Mistassini et l'État provincial. À la gauche de l'image, le ministre exhibe une paire de mitaines ornées de perles, probablement en peau de caribou³⁶. C'est un produit de la chasse des hommes et de la maroquinerie des femmes, qui incarne le savoir et les techniques propres à la culture crie³⁷. Ce que le chef offre au ministre est donc un condensé du mode de vie de son peuple, et la finesse de l'ornement signale qu'un grand soin a été apporté à sa confection. À la droite de l'image se trouve Shecapio, dont le style vestimentaire viril que lui donnent son pantalon de cavalier et ses hautes bottes de cuir tranche avec l'apparence décontractée de Pouliot en veste de laine. De sa main droite tendue, le chef tient un énorme drapeau du Québec; une extrémité repose sur son épaule et l'autre est discrètement soutenue par le ministre. Par son regard assuré et ferme, son allure militaire et sa posture volontaire, Shecapio donne l'impression d'être un vainqueur exhibant un butin de guerre. La signification du drapeau comme cadeau officiel est parfaitement comprise par les deux hommes : il marque l'inclusion des Cris de Mistassini dans le giron politique provincial. Quatre autres photographies du reportage de Bédard montrent d'ailleurs le chef cri en train de hisser le drapeau en haut d'un mât dans le village sous le regard attentif du ministre et de quelques membres de la communauté. De leur côté, les mitaines symbolisent la mise des savoirs traditionnels au service de l'administration provinciale, ce qui se réalise dans le système des *tallymen*. Une question s'impose alors : pourquoi un événement marquant la reconnaissance d'une autorité étrangère, et donc signifiant une perte d'autonomie politique, est-il vécu comme une victoire par le chef cri ?

Le processus de création de la première réserve de castors, dépendant de l'action initiale de la HBC et des gouvernements canadien et québécois, est très différent de celui des réserves subséquentes, qui ont été mises en place à la demande des communautés autochtones elles-mêmes. Deux raisons principales expliquent ce changement d'initiative.

L'élément le plus important est sans contredit le succès de la réserve de castors de Rupert House. Après plusieurs années d'une restriction volontaire de la chasse, allégée par les salaires versés aux *tallymen*, les castors sont redevenus abondants dans la rivière Rupert. Les ingrédients de cette réussite sont connus, et c'est ce qui permet de la répéter ailleurs : ce sont l'utilisation de méthodes de conservation informées par la tradition crie et la science occidentale, la responsabilité managériale locale par le système des *tallymen*, ainsi que la protection légale de l'exclusivité de la trappe pour les chasseurs autochtones, qui acceptent de se soumettre volontairement aux quotas suggérés par les *tallymen* dont ils reconnaissent l'autorité³⁸. Suite au succès de Rupert House, de nombreux groupes autochtones mettent d'ailleurs en place des moratoires temporaires locaux, d'abord sans le support financier et technique du gouvernement provincial.

La création des réserves, dans ce contexte, devient une initiative autochtone relevant de la politique interne au sein des communautés. En 1947, Isaac Shecapio, nouvellement élu à la tête du conseil de bande de Mistassini, fait la demande officielle de la création d'une réserve de castors pour sa région. Cette demande est le résultat d'une négociation entre les structures traditionnelles du pouvoir cri et le système canadien des conseils de bande³⁹, et elle est donc caractéristique d'une modernité proprement crie, à l'instar de la conservation pratiquée par les *tallymen*. D'une part, la direction des conseils de bande est attribuée selon le processus caractéristique des démocraties représentatives occidentales, ce qui implique, pour les candidats au poste de chef, de faire des promesses et de rendre compte de leurs accomplissements au cours de campagnes électorales formelles⁴⁰. C'est en effet suite à sa promesse, en campagne, de faire quelque chose d'important pour l'avenir de sa communauté⁴¹ que Shecapio entreprend les démarches pour la création d'une réserve de castors. D'autre part, en continuité des pratiques plus informelles du pouvoir cri traditionnel, le chef a consulté l'ensemble de la communauté de Mistassini et est parvenu à obtenir un quasi-consensus qui a donné beaucoup de poids à sa démarche autant au sein de la bande qu'auprès des gouvernements⁴². Cette demande montre que l'enjeu de la conservation « était devenu une affaire de politique interne⁴³ » témoignant d'une transformation du rapport à l'environnement des Cris, rapport désormais informé de près par les concepts légaux de la modernité occidentale. Les autochtones de Mistassini, après avoir pratiqué la conservation par eux-mêmes pendant quelques années, veulent protéger leurs acquis en utilisant le cadre légal canadien pour empêcher que les trappeurs blancs ne puissent venir en tirer profit advenant un relèvement de la population de castors.

Pour Isaac Shecapio, la création de la réserve de castors et l'établissement d'une relation formelle avec le gouvernement québécois représentent donc une double victoire : cela confirme sa capacité à mobiliser et protéger sa communauté en plus d'établir son propre statut d'interlocuteur officiel. Pour obtenir la protection légale de la chasse, la gestion environnementale crie doit s'inscrire à l'intérieur du cadre légal provincial. Cela constitue une reconnaissance par les autochtones d'une certaine souveraineté de l'État québécois sur leurs terres et marque donc une perte d'autonomie dans leur contrôle territorial⁴⁴. Mais cela constitue aussi une reconnaissance, par la province, du mode cri d'occupation du territoire et, à ce titre, les réserves de castors ouvrent la voie à une conception moderne du territoire chez les Cris, où celui-ci devient un réservoir de ressources à exploiter. Les photos de groupe montrant une part importante des habitants du village venus assister à la cérémonie du lever du drapeau soulignent l'importance collective de cette nouvelle alliance, qui signifie le retour des castors.

Agentivité des sujets et modernisation culturelle

La photographie montrant des dons de cadeaux (Fig. 2) est marquante parce qu'elle montre le chef autochtone et le ministre provincial sur un pied d'égalité, en train de procéder à un échange dont les termes sont clairement établis pour les deux parties. Son résultat est l'inscription de Mistassini au sein de l'autorité provinciale, comme en témoigne la position centrale du drapeau. La présence d'un troisième homme les mains dans les poches, à la gauche de l'image, renvoie le spectateur à sa propre posture d'observateur passif. Si le titre insiste sur le fait que c'est le ministre qui présente ses hommages au chef autochtone, l'observation de l'image montre au contraire que c'est ce dernier qui joue le rôle principal en portant le drapeau avec détermination.

Cette liberté laissée à l'expression de l'agentivité des sujets est visible dans nombre de photographies prises par Bédard. La plus saisissante d'entre elles est sans contredit celle qui montre une jeune femme tenant une hache dans les airs, prête à l'abattre sur un billot de bois couché à ses pieds (Fig. 3). Le titre, en indiquant un type, est caractéristique de la photographie coloniale⁴⁵ : « Les amérindiennes Cris vaguent [*sic*] au ménage et fendent également le bois, Grand Lac Mistassini ». Il faut aussi noter le fait que l'indication révèle l'étonnement de Bédard devant une pratique étrangère à sa culture canadienne-française, où les femmes ne fendent généralement pas le bois. Plusieurs autres photographies montrent d'ailleurs les femmes crie en train de « vaquer au ménage », c'est-à-dire de s'occuper des enfants, de préparer un repas ou de faire la lessive. Le photographe affirme donc, par le titre, qu'il est courant pour les Cries de fendre du bois, comme l'illustre l'image.

C'est cependant tout autre chose que l'on peut observer dans la photographie. On y voit une jeune femme habillée avec soin, portant des bas de nylon, une robe à pois, une veste de fine laine, une barrette dans ses cheveux et un béret, souriant et tenant une hache en haut de sa tête. Mis à part le tablier qu'elle porte sur sa robe, elle est habillée de manière similaire aux femmes dont le mariage a été célébré lors de la présence de Bédard, et dont l'habillement est visible dans la photo 79302, ou encore comme les convives au banquet qui s'en est suivi (79310). Clairement, il ne s'agit pas là d'une manière de se vêtir appropriée à une tâche aussi éreintante que la coupe du bois, et les autres images où l'on voit des femmes en train de travailler les montrent habillées d'une manière différente : des chaussettes, une jupe de laine carreautee, une veste de grosse laine et un fichu sur la tête (79135, 79139). Ainsi, le sujet de l'image n'est probablement pas en train de fendre du bois, mais en train de poser en tenant une hache en l'air.

Cela n'est pas du tout inusité dans l'histoire de la photographie, où le travail, notamment industriel ou minier, se fait dans des conditions de



3 | Les amérindiennes Cris vaguent [sic] au ménage et fendent également le bois, Grand Lac Mistassini. Fonds Ministère de la Culture et des Communications – BANQ Québec, E6,S7,SS1,P79I30. (Photo: Gustave Bédard, 1950)

luminosité ou de clarté de l'air ne permettant pas toujours la prise d'une bonne photographie⁴⁶. Ce qui est moins courant, c'est que le sujet déborde à ce point du travail qu'il est censé être en train d'effectuer. Si la jeune femme est en train de sourire, c'est probablement de l'incongruité de cette situation où le photographe lui demande de couper du bois alors qu'elle se trouve vêtue de beaux habits, et de l'absurdité de l'image qui s'ensuivra. Dans la mesure où le titre témoigne de l'intention du photographe, soit montrer que les femmes crïs fendent du bois, la photographie de Bédard est un échec et trahit son statut de photographe amateur qui ne parvient pas à diriger ses sujets de manière à obtenir un résultat correspondant à une idée préétablie. Au contraire, le sourire du modèle vient briser le quatrième mur et révèle au spectateur la présence du photographe. Par son sourire, donc, la jeune femme prend effectivement le contrôle de la photographie, qui n'est plus la

représentation d'un type au travail, mais un portrait anonyme; plus qu'un sujet passif soumis à la volonté du photographe, cette femme est un modèle actif qui parvient à s'imposer à l'image.

Cette capacité de s'imposer dans l'image dont font preuve plusieurs des sujets de Bédard n'est pas étonnante parce qu'elle reflète une disposition culturelle particulière aux Cris, une faculté d'adaptation qui se nomme *maamahtaaukaschihtaa*. Ce terme se traduit le plus adéquatement par « ingéniosité⁴⁷ » et il exprime la manière dont les Cris comprennent l'agentivité, « as an embodied capacity to operate autonomous choices in tension between the materials and the social values organizing their technology⁴⁸ ». Cette ingéniosité fait de l'agentivité un caractère culturel particulièrement important et valorisé chez les Cris. Au plan matériel, l'ingéniosité se traduit par l'appropriation des produits et technologies venant du sud, et cela est visible dans de nombreuses images. Par exemple, dans les photographies montrant le village de Mistassini, deux types de constructions sont visibles : les tentes en toile, où habitent les Cris, et les bâtiments en bois, généralement publics, comme l'église ou le poste de la HBC. La présence de bâtiments en planche signale que les Cris possèdent le savoir-faire et les outils nécessaires à l'érection de ces constructions permanentes⁴⁹. Néanmoins, ils choisissent de vivre dans des tentes, qui correspondent davantage à leur désir culturel de pratiquer un mode de vie semi-nomade; ainsi, ils ne choisissent d'adopter que les techniques et pratiques occidentales qui leur conviennent. Cette ingéniosité est aussi manifeste dans la réutilisation d'objets ayant perdu leur utilité originelle, particulièrement les objets métalliques⁵⁰. Ce recyclage est bien visible dans deux photographies de Bédard, P79133 et P79135, où l'on voit une femme faisant chauffer de l'eau dans des barils de pétrole, probablement pour faire la lessive comme l'indique le titre.

Les usages culturels propres aux cris transforment des matériaux occidentaux modernes d'une manière qui n'a pas été nécessairement envisagée par leurs fabricants, et ainsi naissent de nouveaux usages. Cependant, l'adoption croissante des techniques modernes, la sédentarisation définitive au tournant des années 1970 et la séparation des familles par les pensionnats autochtones mènent à une transformation du mode de vie traditionnel. L'augmentation de la population signifie que tous ne peuvent plus vivre de la trappe alors que la monétisation croissante de l'économie inscrit toujours davantage les Cris dans l'espace économique canadien, où ils ne sont plus à même de dicter les termes du marché comme cela avait été le cas du XVII^e au XIX^e siècle⁵¹. Autant qu'une manifestation locale du colonialisme canadien, la transformation de la culture crie est le résultat de son contact accru avec la logique de la modernité, qui tend à réduire les différences culturelles entre peuples s'inscrivant au sein d'un même espace économique et technique⁵².

Peut-être en partie à cause de cette propension culturelle à l'ingéniosité, les Cris de la baie James sont parvenus avec succès à négocier leur entrée dans la modernité malgré les embûches du colonialisme⁵³.

Modernisation du rapport au territoire

La ligne d'horizon se trouve au milieu de la photographie, occupée par des tentes et des constructions utilitaires. Une petite fille au centre de l'image, l'air curieux, porte quelque chose à sa bouche en regardant le photographe alors que le drapeau du Québec flotte un peu plus haut au-dessus de sa tête. P79120 pourrait faire office d'épilogue à la visite du ministre Pouliot : une fois les castors libérés, les cadeaux échangés et les festivités terminées, il ne reste du gouvernement québécois à Mistassini que le cadre légal protégeant la chasse au castor, incarné dans le drapeau surplombant la tente du chef Shecapio.

Si l'agentivité autochtone, le thème de cet article, a été étudiée en détail, il ne faut évidemment pas oublier que la documentation photographique de Bédard a pour premier objectif de servir les fins du gouvernement québécois. Pour l'État provincial, la création des réserves de castors marque le début de l'intervention sur les terres au nord de l'Abitibi, cédées par le fédéral en 1912. C'est ce que souligne le titre d'une autre photographie : « Le fleurdelysé [sic] flotte au-dessus de la tente du chef de la tribu Cris "Shecapio" au Grand Lac Mistassini ». Désormais, cet espace est officiellement entré dans le giron de la province.

Si le gouvernement fédéral est responsable des autochtones au plan légal, le territoire est de juridiction provinciale, et c'est pourquoi la création des réserves et leur maintien est le fruit d'une collaboration entre les deux paliers de gouvernement, comme en témoigne la présence du fonctionnaire fédéral Hugh Conn à la libération des castors. Toutefois, il est intéressant de noter que les décrets adoptés par la législature provinciale concernant les réserves de castors ne font aucune mention de la collaboration avec le gouvernement fédéral ou avec les Cris eux-mêmes. Ces textes soulignent que « d'après le témoignage de tous les missionnaires, les Indiens font une vie plutôt misérable à cause de la rareté des animaux à fourrure, et plus particulièrement du castor dont la chasse a dû être complètement prohibée⁵⁴ ». Ainsi, tout à fait dans la lignée du colonialisme bureaucratique décrit par Morantz, c'est par un souci de développement économique que l'intervention de la province est justifiée.

Cette absence du gouvernement fédéral autant dans les textes de loi qu'à Mistassini même (où il semble, selon les photographies de Bédard, que le drapeau canadien ne flotte pas) suggère que l'un des objectifs de la province est de développer une relation bilatérale avec les Cris. À cet effet, il faut souligner que les peuples autochtones du Québec n'ont pas fait l'objet d'un

projet de représentation systématique par l'administration provinciale. Il est donc très significatif que près du tiers des photographies prises en territoire autochtone (environ 600 dans le fonds du SCP) l'aient été dans ce seul voyage, moment d'un échange diplomatique important pour les deux parties. Par le fait même, cette reconnaissance établit les Cris comme interlocuteurs légaux et il est possible d'y voir l'embryon des succès futurs obtenus par les Cris de la baie James dans leurs négociations avec le gouvernement provincial, lors de la Convention de la Baie-James et du Nord québécois en 1975 et de la Paix des Braves en 2002⁵⁵.

Un autre objectif de la province, s'il n'est pas mentionné dans les textes de loi, est bien visible dans les images : il s'agit de l'intégration du territoire cri dans l'espace politique québécois. Que disent donc les photographies de Bédard sur le territoire qu'elles représentent ? On peut distinguer six catégories d'images faisant état d'autant de manières distinctes d'aborder l'espace.

Le reportage comporte douze vues aériennes, montrant le village, le lac et la forêt, et qui incluent toujours des sections de l'hydravion de transport. Cette vision d'ensemble correspond au regard de gestionnaire et de cartographe de l'État, indique la localisation géographique précise et constate la présence de phénomènes météorologiques. La cartographie est un préalable essentiel aux usages modernes du territoire, sans lequel sa transformation n'est pas possible. Il est significatif que la péninsule du Québec-Labrador ait été cartographiée dans son entièreté pour la première fois pendant la Deuxième Guerre mondiale⁵⁶ : la mobilisation imaginaire du territoire au moyen de la photographie aérienne précède son arrondissement par la technique moderne que représente la construction des barrages hydroélectriques deux décennies plus tard.

Vingt-sept photographies, prises depuis la grève ou le quai, mettent en valeur le moyen de transport utilisé pour parcourir le territoire de Mistassini. L'usage des hydravions est, à ce moment-là, l'apanage du personnel de la HBC et du gouvernement. Neuf des images soulignent d'ailleurs que l'avion est de type Norseman, un hydravion de transport canadien spécialement conçu dans les années 1930 pour rejoindre les endroits difficiles d'accès, largement utilisé pendant la guerre et par la suite reconverti à un usage civil⁵⁷. Ce type de transport rapide témoigne d'une connaissance générale du territoire qui suppose un rapport d'échelle tout à fait différent de l'expérience crie, fondée sur le parcours en canot et en raquettes.

La livraison des castors dans la nouvelle réserve constitue un objectif important du voyage du ministre, et elle est illustrée dans quinze photographies. Ces images montrent un rapport de proximité au territoire qui est celui des Cris qui pratiquent la trappe. Les sujets qui y sont représentés,

outre les castors, sont tous des personnages officiels des gouvernements canadiens et québécois, alors qu'il ne fait aucun doute que ces personnes ont été menées à cet emplacement par des guides autochtones. Cela montre l'importance accordée au geste : dans l'image, ce sont les gouvernements du sud qui font don des castors au territoire cri. Si les animaux sont le prétexte de l'image, ils n'en sont pas le sujet, et ces photographies sont des mises en scènes politiques n'ayant rien à voir avec la photographie animalière de la même époque⁵⁸.

Vingt-deux images sont prises depuis un canot, ce qui est visible par la proximité de l'eau par rapport à la position du photographe. C'est là l'image habituelle que se font de leur territoire les habitants de Mistassini, vision qu'ils partagent avec les visiteurs blancs. Une très belle photo du chef Shecapio, où s'exprime la sensibilité pictorialiste de Bédard pour les effets atmosphériques, le montre en train de conduire un canot à moteur; si le fonctionnaire n'est pas un excellent photographe, il lui arrive toutefois de réaliser de bonnes images, et P80237 constitue le meilleur portrait de tout le reportage.

Les deux tiers des images montrent le village cri et elles mettent toutes l'accent sur les habitations, les tentes en toile blanche reposant sur une base en bois rond, et les habitants du village, particulièrement les femmes et les enfants. Les photographies montrent un rapport semi-nomade au territoire, peu de bâtiments étant construits en bois (ceux-ci sont d'ailleurs les installations de la HBC, l'église et une salle communale). Il n'y a pas d'aménagements sédentaires comme des jardins, des champs ou des clôtures, qui sont typiques des photographies du Service de ciné-photographie montrant les campagnes canadiennes-françaises.

Le drapeau, qui marque la reconnaissance officielle de l'autorité provinciale par les Cris, est présent dans neuf photographies. Plusieurs images montrent Shecapio en train de le hisser et d'autres laissent entendre que c'est le village en entier qui est présent à l'événement. Ces photos de groupe montrant des dizaines de personnes rassemblées sont d'ailleurs particulièrement significatives. D'une part, elles constituent une démonstration de l'acceptation populaire de l'autorité provinciale au moment de la prise de l'image, en 1950⁵⁹. D'autre part, ces photographies symbolisent la mobilisation de la population dans le projet de modernisation économique que sous-tend la logique gestionnaire des réserves de castors.

Photographie, agentivité et modernité

Les images de la documentation photographique réalisée par Gustave Bédard lors de son voyage à Mistassini témoignent d'un rapport au territoire en train de se transformer. Le gouvernement y est clairement présenté comme l'agent exclusif du changement en tant qu'administrateur du territoire et possesseur

du matériel et des compétences techniques nécessaires à sa gestion. Les Cris, cependant, ne sont pas montrés comme les bénéficiaires passifs des bienfaits de l'État. C'est leur rapport à l'espace et leur économie traditionnelle qui se trouvent d'abord renforcés par l'action gouvernementale, et les photographies présentent abondamment cet état de fait.

Malgré tout, et c'est là le prix à payer pour leur entrée officielle dans le cadre légal provincial, les Cris perdent effectivement une partie du contrôle d'un territoire qu'ils pratiquent depuis toujours. Morantz critique cette manière de faire, dont elle dit qu'elle caractérise le colonialisme bureaucratique qui impose des institutions aux autochtones et les transforme en « client[s] du gouvernement⁶⁰ ». Ce jugement semble toutefois devoir être élargi. En effet, la modernisation économique et technique représente une perte de contrôle pour tous les peuples, car elle implique forcément une gestion technocratique fondée sur les données chiffrées qui ne parvient pas à tenir compte des besoins symboliques et spirituels. C'est là le phénomène de l'arraisonement du monde décrit dans de nombreux écrits critiques de la modernité occidentale, comme ceux du philosophe Martin Heidegger ou du penseur Jacques Ellul⁶¹. Et contrôler l'appareil de production technique ne rend pas les peuples occidentaux moins assujettis. Dans le corpus photographique du SCP, on voit la même modernisation à l'œuvre dans les régions rurales du Québec, où le savoir-faire traditionnel est remplacé par l'enseignement agronomique de l'État et le travail manuel, par la machinerie agricole. Cela dit, il faut évidemment affirmer et souligner la violence avec laquelle la modernisation a été imposée aux premiers peuples du Canada, et notamment l'épreuve terrible des pensionnats autochtones⁶². Pour ajouter à ces difficultés, cette transformation spirituelle, économique et sociale s'est faite en une cinquantaine d'années pour les Cris.

Malgré ce contexte culturel et politique difficile, dans le cas particulier des Cris de la baie James, la perte de contrôle sur leur territoire, par le partage de sa gestion avec le gouvernement provincial, constitue donc aussi par le fait même une prise de contrôle, par la maîtrise de certains aspects de sa gestion technocratique via le système des *tallymen*.

Beaver reserves had changed the environment, and this had aided Cree hunters in their attempt to live on the lands; at the same time, however, Cree culture had adapted to the new system of regulation. Because whites had to rely on the Cree for the success of these programs, the Cree were able to influence the character of bureaucratic action for their own cultural ends and to continue the history of negotiated change with the outside world. They had also developed the ability ... to work with white bureaucrats within a Western legal structure.⁶³



4 | Le fleurdelysé [sic] vient d'être hissé au poste des amérindiens Cris du Grand Lac Mistassini, après avoir été présenté au chef Shecapio par l'Honorable Camille-Eugène Pouliot au nom du Gouvernement provincial. Fonds Ministère de la Culture

Cette prise de contrôle, cette capacité d'agir au sein de l'appareil bureaucratique, voilà ce dont cet article a montré la présence dans les photographies de Bédard. Ces images, plutôt que de présenter les autochtones comme des personnes passives face à la transformation de leur destin historique, les montrent au contraire comme des agents actifs de changements qui participent pleinement à la modernisation : de l'économie, où les *tallymen*

jouent un rôle de premier plan; de la politique, où le système imposé des conseils de bande donne une légitimité politique aux chefs autochtones dans leurs négociations avec les gouvernements; de la culture, où l'ingéniosité crie construit sa modernité en s'appropriant les éléments qui lui conviennent de la culture canadienne; et, enfin, du rapport au territoire, dont les cris doivent négocier la gestion avec l'administration provinciale. S'il est possible que « certains Cris aient utilisé les lois des blancs sans être conscients du contexte plus large ou de l'éventuel sens ultérieur d'un tel usage⁶⁴ », il ne fait aucun doute que c'est précisément par des rencontres avec les pratiques administratives des gouvernements du sud que les Cris développent leur capacité à manœuvrer dans l'univers symbolique et légal de la modernité.

La création des réserves de castors est donc une période charnière dans l'histoire des Cris de la baie James. Elle entraîne une intervention gouvernementale accrue, ce qui mène à un plus grand pouvoir politique des élites locales. Par la stabilité économique et les programmes sociaux qui les accompagnent, les réserves de castors sont à l'origine d'un accroissement considérable de la population crie, ce qui fait que le mode de vie traditionnel ne peut plus suffire à faire vivre tout le monde. En ce sens, les réserves accélèrent la modernisation de l'économie Crie, qui commence à ce moment à devenir monétaire et à reposer de plus en plus sur l'emploi salarié. Avec la modernisation de l'économie et la co-gestion des réserves de castors, le rapport à l'espace se transforme et finit par recouper l'idée occidentale de territoire, ce qui contribue à fonder aujourd'hui les revendications territoriales autochtones dans le cadre juridique canadien. Et c'est ce que montre la photographie où l'on peut voir des dizaines de personnes assemblées sous le fleurdelisé, devant les bâtiments de bois au cœur du village (Fig. 4) : les Cris font désormais partis de l'espace politique québécois, et ils entendent bien y jouer un rôle.

NOTES

- 1 La réserve de Mistassini a été créée en 1948 par le ministère de la Chasse et de la Pêche, qui est aussi, à ce moment, responsable des affaires autochtones jusqu'à la création d'un ministère dédié en 2008. Jacques FRENETTE, *Historique des réserves à castor au Québec : Inventaire archivistique du fonds du ministère des affaires indiennes et du nord*, Sainte-Foy, Service des relations avec les Autochtones, ministère du Loisir, de la Chasse et de la Pêche, 1991.
- 2 Vincent LAVOIE, *Images premières : mutations d'une icône nationale*, Montréal, Musée McCord, 2004.
- 3 Fonds Ministère de la Culture (E6 S7 SSI P79304), Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Québec.

- 4 Morantz a proposé cette expression pour désigner les modalités particulières du colonialisme canadien envers les peuples autochtones du nord du pays, où, sans que les blancs viennent s'installer sur les terres autochtones, leurs structures politiques, économiques et sociales sont réglementées depuis le sud sans consultation des principaux intéressés. Toby MORANTZ, *Attention! L'homme blanc va venir te chercher. L'épreuve coloniale des Cris au Québec*, trad. Patricia Raynault-Desagné, Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 2017, p. 7.
- 5 La littérature sur ces sujets est très vaste, en voici une courte sélection. Sur la documentation anthropologique : Christopher MORTON et Elizabeth EDWARDS (dir.), *Photography, Anthropology and History*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2009. Sur le documentaire humaniste : Martha LANGFORD, « Richard Harrington's Guide: Universality and Locality in a Canadian Photographic Document », dans Tanya SHEEHAN (dir.), *Photography, History, Difference*, Hanover, Dartmouth College Press, 2014, p. 33-56. Sur la photographie gouvernementale : Carol PAYNE, « Lessons with Leah: Re-reading the Photographic Archive of Nation in the National Film Board of Canada's Still Photography Division », *Visual Studies*, vol. 21, n° 1, 2006, p. 4-22.
- 6 Pauline WAKEHAM, *Taxidermic Signs: Reconstructing Aboriginality*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2008; Mathilde ARRIVÉ, « Beyond True and False? », *Études photographiques*, n° 29, 2012.
- 7 PAYNE, « Lessons with Leah »; Carol PAYNE, *The Official Picture: The National Film Board of Canada's Still Photography Division and the Image of Canada, 1941-1971*, Montréal et Kingston, Presses universitaires McGill-Queen, 2013.
- 8 Le projet « Un visage, un nom » ou « Project Naming » de Bibliothèque et Archives Canada, en cours depuis 2002, cherche par la collaboration avec le public à identifier les personnes autochtones figurant sur les photographies de ses collections et à ajouter aux images des informations reflétant les valeurs et modes de pensée autochtones. D'autres projets similaires mettant en contact les peuples autochtones avec des photographies de collections occidentales ont cours un peu partout dans le monde. Voir, par exemple, deux projets associés au musée Pitt Rivers : Laura PEERS et Alison K. BROWN, « Just by Bringing These Photographs ... » : On the Other Meanings of Anthropological Images », dans Christopher MORTON et Elizabeth EDWARDS (dir.), *Photography, Anthropology and History*, p. 265-80; Samuel DERBYSHIRE, « Bringing It all Back Home: The Visual Repatriation of Historical Photograph Collections from the Pitt Rivers Museum to the Turkana of Northern Kenya », entrée de blogue, 20 avr. 2018, <https://pittrivers-photo.blogspot.com/2018/04/bringing-it-all-back-home-visual.html>
- 9 Carol PAYNE, « Visibility, Invisibility and Power in Inuit-Settler Encounters in the Eastern Arctic of the 1950s », conférence donnée dans le cadre de la journée d'étude *Visibilité et invisibilité des pratiques du pouvoir*, Université Concordia, 25 mai 2018; Catherine DE LORENZO, « Agency and Authorship in Australian Photo Histories », dans SHEEHAN, *Photography, History, Difference*, p. 172-94.
- 10 Hulleah TSINHNAHJINNIE, « When is a Photograph Worth a Thousand Words? », dans Christopher PINNEY et Nicolas PETERSON, *Photography's Other Histories*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2003, p. 41.
- 11 Tsinhnaahjinnie s'inscrit ainsi tout à fait en faux avec l'approche défendue par le photographe et théoricien Allan Sekula, pour qui toute analyse qui s'écarte du projet initial de l'archive ne peut que venir masquer la volonté de domination qui

- est à son origine, et, par le fait même, la renforcer. Rétrospectivement, il apparaît clair que Sekula attribue trop d'importance au projet de domination originel, comme si la hiérarchie qu'il met en place est indestructible, et que les pratiques de réinterprétation des images permettent justement de proposer de nouveaux récits, ancrés dans une multitude de perspectives. Allan SEKULA, « Photography Between Labour and Capital », *Mining Photographs and Other Pictures 1948-1968*, Halifax, Collège d'art et de design de la Nouvelle-Écosse, 1983, p. 198-268; Allan SEKULA, « The Body and the Archive », *October*, n° 39, 1986, p. 3-64. Pour une discussion similaire sur les limites des travaux de Sekula, voir PAYNE, « Lessons with Leah ».
- 12 Malek ALLOULA, *Le harem colonial, images d'un sous-érotisme*, Paris, Séguier, 2001.
 - 13 Christopher MORTON et Elizabeth EDWARDS (dir.), *Photography, Anthropology and History*; Deborah POOLE, *Vision, Race and Modernity*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997; Christopher PINNEY et Nicolas PETERSON (dir.), *Photography's Other Histories*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2003.
 - 14 Il n'a pas été possible de retracer la biographie de Bédard mis à part ses dates de naissance et de mort (1909-2001) et le fait qu'il est passé du ministère du Tourisme, de la Chasse et de la Pêche à la « Direction générale des communications gouvernementales » en 1973. Source : Fonds Ministère des Communications (E10, S44, S51, D73-478), Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Québec.
 - 15 Rapport annuel du Service de ciné-photographie 1958-1959, p. 1. Fonds Ministère de la Culture (E6 S7 boîte 33 dossier 24), Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Québec.
 - 16 Si cet article n'est pas le lieu d'une étude détaillée du SCP, cet organisme est le sujet d'une thèse de doctorat que l'auteur est en train de rédiger.
 - 17 Nombre de photographies de la FSA ont en effet été poinçonnées par son directeur, en vertu de critères aujourd'hui inconnus. Voir Bill McDOWELL, *Ground: A Reprise of Photographs from the Farm Security Administration*, Hillsborough, Daylight Books, 2016.
 - 18 La documentation disponible permet d'établir avec certitude la répartition du travail visuel au sein du SCP uniquement pour l'année 1952, où un tiers des photographies sont prises par les photographes de l'organisme et les deux tiers, par les fonctionnaires des différents ministères.
 - 19 Joseph MORIN (directeur du SCP), *Rapport mensuel de mai 1941*, 1941. Fonds Ministère de la Culture (E6 S7 S51 boîte 33 dossier 3), Bibliothèques et Archives nationales du Québec, Québec.
 - 20 Propos tenus par le photographe Gabor Szilasi (qui a travaillé pour le SCP et l'organisme lui faisant suite, l'Office du film du Québec) lors d'une conversation avec l'auteur le 12 mars 2018.
 - 21 MORANTZ, *Attention! L'homme blanc va venir te chercher*, p. 23-27.
 - 22 Gérard DUHAIME (dir.), *et al.*, « La sédentarisation des autochtones », *Le Nord : habitants et mutations*, Sainte-Foy, Presses de l'Université Laval, 2001, p. 173-94; MORANTZ, *Attention! L'homme blanc va venir te chercher*, p. 287.
 - 23 Carole LÉVESQUE et Nick BERNARD, « Les Cris de la baie James. Histoire et changement social », dans DUHAIME, *Le Nord*, p. 53-61; Toby MORANTZ, « Deux peuples différents, deux trajectoires différentes : le commerce des fourrures et le gouvernement », dans Jean-Guy PETIT (dir.), *et al.*, *Les Inuits et les Cris du Nord du*

Québec. *Territoire, société, gouvernance et culture*, Montréal, Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2011, p. 40-47.

- 24 LÉVESQUE et BERNARD, « Les Cris de la baie James », p. 61-62. Il est aussi possible, bien que cela n'ait pas été formellement prouvé, que les castors aient été victimes d'une épidémie de tularémie. Hans CARLSON, *Home is the Hunter: The James Bay Cree and Their Land*, Vancouver, UBC Press, 2008, p. 197-98.
- 25 MORANTZ, *Attention! L'homme blanc va venir te chercher*, p. 44. Pour un récit plus personnel et imagé de la misère de cette époque, voir William Ahsley ANDERSON, *Angel of Hudson Bay: The True Story of Maud Watt*, Toronto, Clarke and Irwin, 1964.
- 26 Jacques FRENETTE, *Historique des réserves à castor au Québec : inventaire archivistique du Ministère des affaires indiennes et du nord*, Sainte-Foy, 1991, p. 5.
- 27 Pour un compte-rendu détaillé de la création des réserves, voir CARLSON, « Management and Moral Economy », p. 167-201.
- 28 ANDERSON, *Angel of Hudson Bay*.
- 29 CARLSON, « Management and Moral Economy », p. 177.
- 30 Gail WHITEMAN, « The Impact of Economic Development in James Bay, Canada: The Cree Tallymen Speak Out », *Organization and Environment*, vol. 17, n° 4, 2004, p. 429.
- 31 Carlson, « Management and Moral Economy », p. 192-93.
- 32 Fikret BERKES, « Indigenous Knowledge and Resource Management Systems: A Native Canadian Case Study from James Bay », dans Susan HANNA et Mohan MUNASINGHE (dir.), *Property Rights in a Social and Ecological Context, Case Studies and Design Applications*, Washington, Banque mondiale et Beijer International Institute of Ecological Economics, p. 101-103.
- 33 « a dramatic concession to the cultural desires of the whites », *ibid.*, p. 191 [traduction libre].
- 34 Carlson souligne d'ailleurs que le comptage est vraisemblablement l'une des raisons majeures qui a fait que certains chasseurs, au début de l'établissement des réserves, étaient opposés à celles-ci, par refus de cette logique culturelle étrangère à la tradition crie. *Ibid.*, p. 194.
- 35 Fonds Ministère des Communications (E6 s7 s51 p79309), Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Québec. Dans les titres des images, le nom du chef cri est généralement présenté entre guillemets alors qu'il s'agit pourtant de son nom correct. Le siège du conseil de bande de Mistissini porte d'ailleurs le nom « Isaac Shecapio Sr. Administration Building ».
- 36 Des recherches menées dans quelques institutions culturelles de la province n'ont pas permis de retracer les mitaines.
- 37 Traditionnellement, dans l'artisanat cri, les femmes travaillent les peaux et les hommes travaillent le bois. Anaïs COSSET et Hubert MANSION, « Créer et produire », *Mistissini. Terre des Cris*, Québec, Cornac, 2009, p. 105-118.
- 38 Gail WHITEMAN, « The Impact of Economic Development in James Bay, Canada », p. 425-49. Fait très important, les pratiques de conservation rencontrent moins de succès dans les zones où il y a beaucoup de blancs, qui demeurent autorisés à chasser les animaux autres que les castors. Il semble que la cause en soit que les chasseurs blancs ne comprennent pas, à cette époque, les notions d'équilibre écologique entre les espèces et la nécessité de prendre soin de l'environnement pour que les animaux prospèrent. CARLSON, « Management and Moral Economy », p. 188.

- 39 Le gouvernement fédéral, en imposant le système des conseils de bandes pour gérer les réserves d'un bout à l'autre du pays, a créé une institution de toute pièce ne correspondant pas à la diversité des structures de pouvoir au sein des différents peuples autochtones. C'est par commodité administrative, afin d'avoir un interlocuteur officiel inscrit dans le cadre légal canadien, ainsi que pour accélérer la modernisation des peuples autochtones qu'une structure de pouvoir uniforme est imposée, ce qui constitue un cas exemplaire du colonialisme canadien. Comme ailleurs au pays, les Cris se sont appropriés cette institution, qui donne au chef du conseil de bande un plus grand pouvoir que celui des leaders traditionnels et qui formalise la délégation de l'autorité.
- 40 Pour le détail du processus électoral des conseils de bande, voir la *Loi sur les Indiens*, paragraphes 74 à 78.
- 41 Selon l'agent fédéral du ministère des Affaires indiennes en charge de Mistassini, Isaac Shecapio a été élu en vertu de la « “promise” [to] do something worthwhile for the future ». CARLSON, « Management and Moral Economy », p. 194.
- 42 *Ibid.*
- 43 « Clearly, the matter of preservation at Mistassini, ... had become a matter of internal politics, and this was a change in environmental conceptualization that government action would strengthen », *ibid.*
- 44 Avant l'établissement des réserves de castors, le gouvernement provincial ne s'intéresse pas au territoire de la Baie James, que les Cris pratiquent comme bon leur semble.
- 45 Brian WALLIS, « Black Bodies, White Science: Louis Agassiz's Slave Daguerreotypes », *Smithsonian American Art* vol. 9, n° 2, 1995, p. 38–61.
- 46 Voir à ce sujet l'étude classique d'Allan SEKULA, « Photography Between Labour and Capital », *Mining Photographs and Other Pictures*, Halifax, Presses du Collège d'art et de design de la Nouvelle-Écosse, 1983, p. 193–268.
- 47 « The expression finds its closest equivalent in English with “resourcefulness” ». François GUINDON (en collaboration avec la famille Neeposh), « Technology, Material Culture and the Well-being of Aboriginal Peoples of Canada », *Journal of Material Culture*, vol. 20, n° 1, p. 80.
- 48 *Ibid.*
- 49 À partir des années 1950, plusieurs hommes travaillent d'ailleurs dans les moulins de la Canadian International Paper Company. Ignatius E. LA RUSIC, *From Hunter to Proletarian: The Involvement of Cree Indians in the White Wage Economy of Central Quebec*, Ottawa, Ministère des forêts et du développement rural, 1968, p. 6.
- 50 L'anthropologue François Guindon démontre que les objets et matériaux en provenance du sud sont fréquemment transformés localement et connaissent de cette manière plusieurs vies. Guindon, « Technology, Material Culture and the Well-being of Aboriginal Peoples of Canada », p. 83–88.
- 51 Toby MORANTZ et Daniel FRANCIS, *Partners in Furs: A History of the Fur Trade in Eastern James Bay, 1600–1870*, Montréal et Kingston, Presses universitaires McGill-Queen, 1983.
- 52 Les travaux du sociologue John W. Meyer George démontrent comment les différentes sociétés modernes vivent des changements simultanés qui les font se ressembler de plus en plus aux plans de l'organisation sociale et de la culture. Voir notamment M. THOMAS et John W. MEYER, « The Expansion of the State », *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 10, 1984, p. 461–82.

- 53 Voici deux exemples de cette réussite, aux plans économique et administratif. Les données du recensement de 2016 indiquent que les habitants de Mistissini gagnent un revenu moyen après impôts équivalent à celui des résidents de Chibougamau, ville blanche la plus proche, et à celui de tous les Canadiens. Par ailleurs, en 2017, les Cris sont devenus gestionnaires à part entière d'une réserve faunique, avec à terme le projet d'y créer un grand parc provincial. Karoline BENOIT, « Les Cris de Mistissini deviennent les seuls gestionnaires de la réserve faunique des Lacs-Albanel-Mistassini-et-Waconichi », *Radio-Canada*, 17 avr. 2017. Pour une interprétation de cette réussite dans la transition vers une économie moderne, voir Maurice TREMBLAY, « Un succès historique: les Cris de la Baie-James », *L'Aut'Journal*, 2 fév. 2017.
- 54 *Gazette Officielle du Québec*, vol. 73, n° 45, 1941, p. 3535-536.
- 55 Pour un résumé de l'histoire politique récente des Cris de la baie James, voir Roméo SAGANASH, « La reconnaissance des droits des Cris de la Baie-James : de la CBJNQ à la Déclaration de l'ONU », dans Jean-Guy PETIT *et al.*, *Les Inuits et les Cris du Nord du Québec*, p. 67-86.
- 56 CARLSON, « Management and Moral Economy », p. 197.
- 57 Peter PIGOTT, « Noorduyn Norseman », *Taming the Skies: A Celebration of Canadian Flight*, Toronto, A Hounslow Book, 2003, p. 73-75.
- 58 Karla MCMANUS, « “These Diminished Waters”: Conservation, Camera Hunting, and Settler/Indigenous Conflict in Lorene Squire's Wildfowl Photography of Northern Canada », *Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien/Journal of Canadian Art History*, vol. 36, n° 2, 2015, p. 56-91.
- 59 Acceptation qui ne sera plus présente vingt ans plus tard lorsque le gouvernement québécois décide de harnacher les rivières, engendrant des contestations et une négociation qui mèneront à la Convention de la Baie-James et du Nord québécois.
- 60 MORANTZ, *Attention! L'homme blanc va venir te chercher*, p. 291.
- 61 Martin HEIDEGGER, « La question de la technique », *Essais et conférences*, trad. André Préau, Paris, Gallimard, 1993, p. 9-48; Jacques ELLUL, *Le système technicien*, Paris, Cherche midi, 2012.
- 62 Commission de vérité et réconciliation du Canada, *Honorer la vérité, réconcilier pour l'avenir, sommaire du rapport final de la Commission de vérité et réconciliation du Canada*, Ottawa, Commission de vérité et réconciliation du Canada, 2015.
- 63 CARLSON, « Management and Moral Economy », p. 200-201.
- 64 « some Cree may have used white laws without being aware of the larger context or the potential future meaning of so doing », *ibid.*, p. 193.

Indigenous Agency in Government Photography: James Bay Crees and the Mistassini Beaver Preserve in 1950

SAMUEL GAUDREAU-LALANDE

In 1950, Camille-Eugène Pouliot, the Quebec Minister of Hunting and Fishing, visited the Cree reserve of Mistassini (now known as Mistissini, in the Eeyou Istchee territory) with Hugh Conn, a federal Indian Affairs official in charge of the fur trade, and Armand Tremblay, head of the provincial Fur Trade Department, to bring beavers to the Mistassini beaver preserve. Gustave Bédard (1909–2001), a provincial official, accompanied the Minister and produced 188 photographs of the trip. One of these is particularly eye-catching. On a small sandy beach, Pouliot, Conn and Tremblay are shown releasing three beavers from their travel container. Given that releasing the animals was a key moment of the Quebec Minister's trip and that no Indigenous people are present, the photograph could be seen as a classic example of the paternalistic benevolence of Canadian colonialism, with official government representatives coming from the south to solve problems for the Indigenous people. But when you look beyond the picture frame, the relationships between white and Indigenous people become more complex. Going beyond a simple domination structure, the photographs show the Cree as active agents of their economic, political, cultural and territorial destiny.

In the wake of the critical re-examination of historical anthropology photographs, this paper proposes an analysis of Bédard's photographs as they are found in the archive. A careful study of the historical context in which they were taken, the material conditions in which they were produced, and the relationship between the photographer and his subjects reveals the power dynamics influencing the Quebec government's Mistassini Cree representation project. The administration's official visual discourse, as presented in these images, is not purely colonial in nature – it also constitutes a space to express Indigenous agency. A series of themes addressed on the basis of the images show this agency at work: economic modernization, political modernization, cultural modernization and territorial modernization.

The establishment of beaver preserves was a turning point in the modernization of the Cree economy. They were implemented based on a combination of traditional Cree wildlife management principles and western conservation practices. The key actors in this system were the

tallymen, experienced Cree hunters who observed the state of beavers in the wild and reported their numbers to government officials. They provided guidance regarding the introduction of animals to promote the growth of new preserves. The photograph showing the beavers being released is thus a representation of reciprocity: the white people have the honour of representing the donation through a symbolic gesture with the photograph, while the Indigenous people receive beavers that will help improve their quality of life.

The photograph showing Chief Isaac Shecapio and Minister Pouliot exchanging gifts marks the Mistassini community's entry into the fold of Quebec politics. Far from signifying submission, this entry is rather a formalization of bilateral relations. Creating the Mistassini beaver preserve was the political initiative of Chief Shecapio, who was elected as Band Council Chief after promising to improve the community's future. By recognizing the preserve, the Quebec government made it possible to lawfully protect hunting there, and granted exclusive hunting rights to Indigenous people. The project's success, as demonstrated by the Minister's visit, was thus a great political achievement for the Chief, who had succeeded in mobilizing his community and the provincial government. This success is evidenced by Shecapio's victorious posture and determined gaze in the photograph showing the gifts being exchanged.

The titles of Bédard's pictures fall within the colonial photography tradition: they often provide a category for the Indigenous people rather than their names. However, this does not prevent the subjects from taking some liberties, often in a way that does not seem to have been intended or desired by the photographer. An example of this is the body language of a young woman posing with an axe in her hand but dressed in formal wear. The subjects' penchant for expressing their own identity in the image may relate to a specific Cree cultural disposition called *maamahtaaukaschihtau*, or "resourcefulness," which is the ability to assimilate technology and materials and integrate them into the existing cultural framework. This resourcefulness makes agency a particularly important and prized attitude within the Cree community.

The photographs taken by Gustave Bédard during his trip to Mistassini show a relationship with a territory in the midst of a transformation. The government is clearly presented as the sole agent of change as the territory administrator and owner of the material and technical skills required to manage it. Nevertheless, the Cree are not pictured as passive recipients of the government's benevolence. The government action primarily strengthens their relationship with the space and their traditional economy, as is amply demonstrated in the photographs.

Even so, the Cree effectively lost part of their control over a territory they had controlled for generations – the price they had to pay to gain official entry into the province’s legal framework. Concurrently, the Cree learned about the administrative practices of the southern governments, which allowed them to develop their ability to navigate the legal and symbolic aspects of the modern world. This paper thus shows that this agency, the ability to take action within the bureaucratic system, is indeed present in Bédard’s photographs. Rather than representing Indigenous people as passive witnesses to the historical transformation of their destiny, the pictures show them as active agents of change who are fully involved in modernizing their culture.



1 | Exterior view of the Hydro-Québec headquarters, Dorchester Boulevard (now Édifice Jean-Lesage, Boulevard René-Lévesque), Montreal, 1962. Architect: Gaston Gagnier. (Photo: Courtesy of the Archives d'Hydro-Québec, document HO2_701773_75000-64).

From Automatism to Automation: On Jean-Paul Mousseau's 1962 Lumino-Kinetic Mural for Hydro-Québec

NICOLA PEZOLET

The place was downtown Montreal; the year, 1962. Congregated in the lobby of the modernist skyscraper at 75 Dorchester Boulevard (now Boulevard René-Lévesque Ouest) were journalists, photographers, museum curators, young technocrats, and seasoned politicians. Basking in the glow of colourful electric lights, the well-dressed crowd stood playfully in front of a much-anticipated technological artwork: Jean-Paul Mousseau's (1927–1991) *Lumière et mouvement dans la couleur* (Light and Movement in Colour), a shimmering, polychrome fiberglass mural backlit by a series of neon lights that flickered every few seconds. The gigantic “light fresco” (measuring approximately 23 meters long by 4.5 meters high) was commissioned for the head office of Hydro-Québec, the provincial government-owned public utility company (Fig. 1).

From the day Mousseau won the prize for this prestigious commission, the burly artist from south-central Montreal, better known as the youngest signatory of the incendiary *Refus Global* manifesto (1948), garnered the attention of many people in the media, eager to take snapshots of him and of his mural project, in the company of the individuals spearheading the various economic reforms meant to help modernize the province of Quebec. The national press coverage, which was directly influenced by the terms set by both Mousseau and by Hydro-Québec's public relations office, was quite extensive. His work was praised in mainstream newspapers, such as *La Presse*, *The Gazette*, *La Réforme* and *The Montreal Star*, and was widely celebrated in magazines and art journals such as *Maclean's* and *Canadian Art* for its formal and technological inventiveness. Photographs of the artist and his work, many taken by Quebec-based artist Marcel Cognac, were published in different places. Even a short film by Michel Régnier (b. 1934) titled *Dimension lumineuse* (Luminous Dimension) – which showed a heroic Mousseau toiling away on his mural to the sound of electroacoustic and jazz music – was co-produced by Artek Film in collaboration with Hydro-Québec.¹ At the dawn of the 1960s, Mousseau was the talk of the town.

A pioneering work of lumino-kineticism, Mousseau's project has become, according to the art historian and sociologist Francine Couture, emblematic



2 | Inauguration of Jean-Paul Mousseau's *Lumière et mouvement dans la couleur* in the lobby of the Hydro-Québec headquarters, Montreal, 1962. (Photo: Courtesy of the Archives d'Hydro-Québec, document H02_701773_75130-1)

of Quebec's "global modernity" at the eve of the *Révolution Tranquille*, as well as a formidable "company icon."² In her various articles, Couture offers a celebration of Mousseau's work, in particular how it has contributed to the recognition of modern art by the Quebec political class and has played a role at the dawn of the progressive art-in-architecture programs, known as "le 1%." While this previous scholarship certainly provides very valuable information and context, this essay seeks to provide a different outlook on the changing significance of technology and art in postwar Canada. Indeed, I hope to offer an analysis of Mousseau's search for a form of technological re-enchantment in the specific context of Quebec cultural politics and the rise of secularism.

This essay probes the ways that various media strategies were used to construct the image of the modern French-Canadian artist and to project a self-serving image of the State's role in cultural affairs (which would come to act as a surrogate to the hegemonic Church in different sectors). As befits a work of "light," I also consider the active role that photography (and, to a lesser extent, film), as constitutive elements of political discourse, played at the moment of the mural's successful commission and inauguration (Fig. 2).

Various questions orient my research. What roles did photographic images, both of Mousseau himself and of the unveiling of his lumino-kinetic mural, play in the construction of Hydro-Québec's corporate identity? What were the specific terms used in the Canadian press to accompany these photographs? How significant were photographs in the consolidation of a certain idea of the modern artist in the 1960s? How does the ideological construction of the modern artist tie in with the rise of the Quiet Revolution as a national *grand récit*? Finally, how can we, more than fifty years later, use these same visual and textual documents to rethink certain historiographical constructs, and unveil overlooked stories? By showing how these visual and discursive strands are interwoven in this one artwork, this essay will cast new light on Mousseau's work as a key part of Montreal (and Canadian) history.

Hydro-Québec and Postwar Canada

Hydro-Québec was founded in 1944, when the provincial government expropriated various private hydro-electricity firms: it steadily became the sole electric power provider and a symbol of the Quebec State's role in economic and industrial affairs. In its beginnings, it also sought the economic and political empowerment of French Canadians, previously excluded from major industries. Hydro-Québec's flagship projects were not only its vast dams in northern Quebec (such as Manic-5, the complex on the Manicouagan River), but also its headquarters located in downtown Montreal. The modernist building on Dorchester Boulevard, partially covered by steel and glass curtain walls, was designed by architect Gaston Gagnier (1906–1982) in 1959 (and completed in 1962): it is one of the first Montreal skyscrapers inspired by the clean, efficient and cosmopolitan look of the International Style.³ The building also served as the Montreal office of the Premier of Québec, which shows how crucial the connection of this company is to the political class.⁴

The early 1960s were years of much optimism in Quebec: not only was the province undergoing a period of swift urban growth and rapid modernization across different economic sectors, thanks to further nationalizations, but the election of a Liberal government, led by Jean Lesage

(1912–1980), offered hope of new beginnings, following several years under the reign of the staunchly conservative Premier Maurice Duplessis (who died in 1959).⁵ Although the mobilization of hydro-electricity in Quebec, which powers to this day an impressive range of civilian and manufacturing activities at an affordable price, is typically associated with the 1960s *Révolution tranquille* – in large part thanks to the well-publicized didactic presentations by the charismatic energy minister René Lévesque (1922–1987) on French Canadian state television, during which he defended the government’s technocratic reforms – it actually started many years before.⁶ More specifically, it began in the context of international warfare. As noted by the environmental historian Matthew Evenden, during World War II, the Canadian state, “ordered the damming of rivers, interconnection of systems, and rationalization of industrial and consumer demands” in order to support the Allies’ war efforts.⁷ Furthermore, “the exercise of wartime power control modelled the advantages of state intervention in the power field and helped to produce a postwar model of provincial state building.”⁸ A number of these nation-building projects were developed under Liberal Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King (1874–1950) and, in Quebec, under Premier Duplessis and his party, the Union Nationale. It is probably in response to Hydro’s authoritarian high modernist projects that Paul-Émile Borduas (1905–1960), in *Refus Global*, critically stated that the “exploitation of reason” was spreading “to all society’s activities, in response to demands for maximum production”; he singled out “the straight-jacketing of our tumultuous rivers” as “inviting the destruction of the planet.”⁹

In the 1960s, Hydro-Québec would gradually go through a kind of image makeover campaign. Its association with the Union Nationale, which had gradually fallen into disfavour due to autocratic rule and rampant corruption, was gradually downplayed.¹⁰ The embrace of modernism, architecturally and artistically, helped the company’s cause.¹¹ The choice of a modernist style for its headquarters was no doubt a conscious decision to move away from the more conservative and American “tall office building” style associated with the local private electricity companies, such as the Shawinigan Water and Power Company building, also located on Dorchester Street West (built in 1947) or the Montreal Light, Heat and Power on the corner of Craig and Saint-Urbain streets (1930). The idea of including a modern, abstract, non-commemorative mural in the building’s lobby was also an attempt to continue this bringing up to date, and keep up with recent cultural developments in the city.¹² This part of downtown Montreal had already witnessed the creation of architecturally integrated abstract artworks, such as Richard Lorain’s décor of Bar Dorchester in the Hotel Windsor, located nearby.¹³ The prominent French Canadian art critic Rodolphe de Repentigny (1926–1959), who wrote

for *La Presse*, *Vie des Arts*, and other widely circulating publications, was a strong supporter of this trend towards modern art becoming more accessible to the public by becoming a part of the built environment (de Repentigny was himself a non-figurative painter and photographer affiliated with the Plasticiens group, but better known under the pseudonym Jauran).¹⁴ In his newspaper columns, de Repentigny helped disseminate ideas on the “synthesis of the arts” of the Paris-based Groupe Espace and of figures such as Victor Vasarely (1906–1997), whom Mousseau no doubt knew about as well. In an interview, Vasarely announced that the postwar world marked the dawn of a “transition from the individual to the collective” due to the “evolution of technology.” Vasarely, who dreamed of polychrome cities, further argued that “the plastic arts are ripe for a vast synthesis of painting, sculpture, architecture, and urban planning” and that “the new techniques and their marriage are opening limitless horizons.”¹⁵ Similarly, fellow Groupe Espace member Roger Bordier (1923–2015) saw art as a “social service” and even presented stained glass as a particularly fruitful medium, which, in its abstract guises, could be used in various secular contexts (or what he referred to as “temples built to other ideals,” such as office buildings, meeting rooms, sports centres, etc.).¹⁶

Electrified Abstraction

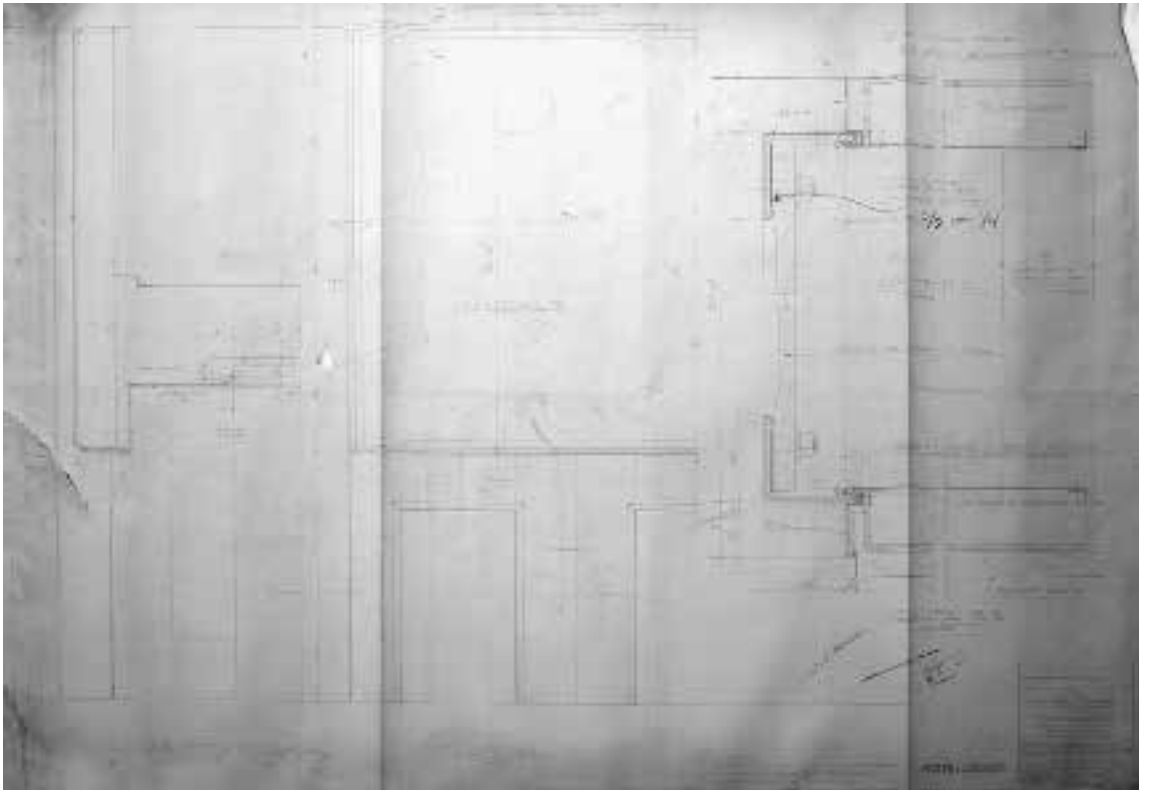
The competition for a public artwork for the lobby of Hydro-Québec’s headquarters was launched in 1961. The commission was certainly a very attractive and high-profile project to put some of these popular ideas of a “synthesis of the arts” into practice. The guidelines put forth by the company for the mural were open-ended. The program specified that the work would be located in the building’s main lobby, above the main elevator doors. Without prescribing a style or the use of specific materials, Hydro-Québec did urge the applicants “to recognize that the panel will adorn the head office building of Hydro-Quebec, whose function is to supply electrical energy generated by water power, a natural resource of the Province, a basis of its wealth.”¹⁷ A total of 71 artists entered the race, many of them emerging artists. Mousseau, thirty-three years young, was the winner, with Armand Vaillancourt (b. 1929) finishing second, and Joseph Iliu (1914–1999), third (Fig. 3).

According to archival records, Mousseau was chosen for both the originality of his proposal and his already impressive resume as a public artist. In the 1950s, Mousseau had amassed notable commissions and awards, having worked in collaboration with the ceramicist Claude Vermette (1930–2006), for the murals of the Beaver Lake Pavilion and of the Collège Notre-Dame, both



3 | Michel Jenson, “Le concours artistique de l’Hydro-Québec: ‘Reconnaissance sociale de l’artiste’, déclare le vainqueur Mousseau, muraliste,” *La Réforme*, 26 Aug. 1961. (Photo: Courtesy of the Mousseau fonds, Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal)

in Montreal, as well as of the headquarters of the Union régionale des Caisses populaires du diocèse de Chicoutimi in Saint-Jérôme de Métabetchouan. With these prominent mosaics, the duo’s goals were to “humanize” the impersonal character of the buildings and to create a living relationship between inside and outside.¹⁸ Mousseau’s later works shared these same goals. He had also experimented with artificial light as a creative source since the late 1950s: in various commissions across the province of Quebec, he produced several lanterns and standing sculptures with light bulbs, as well as neon light murals, such as the ones for Rockland Centre, a shopping mall in the Montreal suburb of Town of Mount Royal (1959), the Jeunesses Musicales concert hall in the town of Orford (1960) and the transit area of the Montreal area Dorval airport (1960). Light murals were also included inside of the new *Montreal Star* headquarters (1961) and the Drummondville courthouse (1961).¹⁹ Shortly afterwards, in 1963, Mousseau would produce another luminous mural, along with lanterns and movable curtains, for *Chez son père* (a restaurant, now closed, on the corner of Craig Street and Saint-Laurent Boulevard in downtown Montreal).



4 | Jean-Paul Mousseau, original blueprints for *Lumière et mouvement dans la couleur*, Montreal, 1962. © Succession Jean-Paul Mousseau / SOCAN, 2019. (Photo: Courtesy of the Mousseau fonds, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal)

It is worth noting that Mousseau quickly developed an extensive network of connections well beyond the boundaries of Montreal. Indeed, Mousseau was in direct contact with the earlier generation of avant-garde artists influenced by the Bauhaus: in 1958, he audited a course titled “Light and Colour” offered by the Hungarian-born artist György Kepes (1906–2001) at the School of Architecture and Planning of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge.²⁰ Like Kepes, Mousseau would design various light murals, as well as stained glass windows, for both secular and religious patrons.²¹ Although they have not been recognized as such, Mousseau’s various creative uses of neon lights were truly at the forefront of the postwar experiments in “light art,” which would be further developed by such Pop and Minimalist artists as Robert Watts (1923–1988), Dan Flavin (1933–1996), Chryssa Vardea-Mavromichali (1933–2013), Bruce Nauman (b. 1941), and Joseph Kosuth (b. 1945).²²

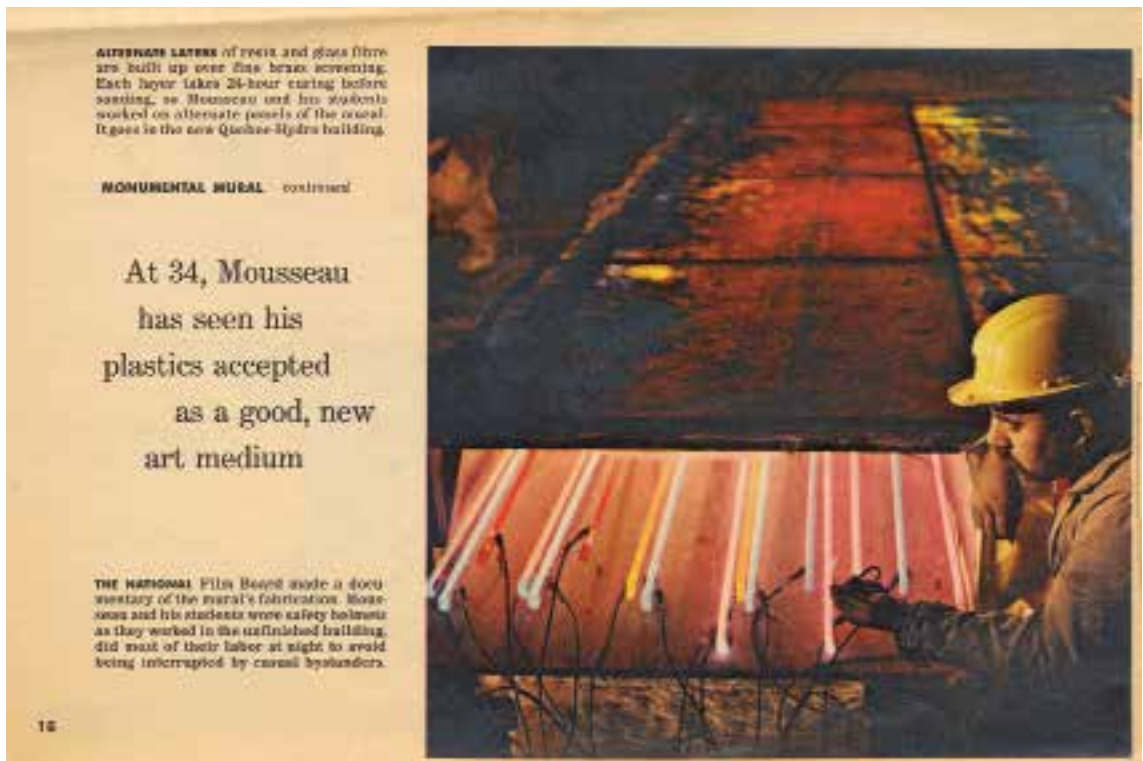
For the Hydro-Québec project, Mousseau produced various preliminary sketches, plans, as well as a model (Fig. 4). In his early drawings, his

mural is divided into a series of vertical lines in eight different colors. The coloured lines are not hard edged: they are somewhat intertwined to create unpredictable forms. An article in the *Montreal Star* explains Mousseau's working process. It consists of "dipping bits of fibre glass in a resin to which dye has been added and affixing them to the base sheet."²³ His action-oriented process, which combines manual labour and mechanical production techniques, can be seen very vividly in the short film *Dimension lumineuse*.²⁴ The movie, which was sent to journalists and also screened at art festivals, begins with a low-angle shot of Mousseau unrolling a long sheet of translucent plastic over the screen. Then, drips of coloured paints begin to fill the frame.

This opening sequence is eerily reminiscent of the popular 1951 film on Jackson Pollock (1912–1956) by Hans Namuth (1915–1990). Likewise, the various photographs of Mousseau at work might have been inspired by those of Pollock, also taken by Namuth, published in *Time* magazine.²⁵ Mousseau's technique for this project is certainly similar, in key respects, to that of the famous Abstract Expressionist artist, who used sticks to pour out paint into a series of aleatory drippings. However, unlike his American counterpart, who embodied the postwar romantic genius, Mousseau is seen wearing industrial work clothes and is sometimes part of a small team (although he is always presented at the forefront of the image, to signal his prominence). Such promotional photographs enact a "performative technological mode of production"²⁶ and present the modern artist not as outsider, but as a creative and team leader.

In a number of photos later published in the Canadian press, we see Mousseau and some of his assistants work together with different layers of plastic sheets, which are mounted on copper mesh fibre glass squares impregnated with colours and resin. According to interviews and working documents, it took a whole day for the work to solidify as a panel that could be mounted. A total of nine such panels were disposed next to each other, which also explains the different hues of the mural's different sections. The complex electronic equipment operating the mural's light circuit was costly and the construction process was time-consuming: it took over four months to complete and the artist's fee and production cost were over \$22,000 (Fig. 5).

For Mousseau, the goal was to enchant the world of technology and to endow modern abstract art with an aura of authenticity, to make it a harbinger of a privileged form of sensorial experience in the city. This is suggested in the first seconds of *Dimension lumineuse*, by the inclusion of a short maxim by French poet and philosopher Paul Valéry (1871–1945). To quote Valéry: "The nobility of an art depends on the purity of the *desire* that gives rise to it, and the artist's uncertainty as to the happy outcome



5 | “Mousseau’s Monumental Mural,” *The Star Weekly*, 17 Mar. 1962. Courtesy of the Mousseau fonds, Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal. (Photo: Marcel Cognac)

of his activity.”²⁷ This passage, taken from a meditation titled “On the Pre-eminent Dignity of the Arts of Fire,” emphasizes the role that chance and unpredictability play in art and craft. The quote was surely chosen by Mousseau to heighten the importance of the artist’s engagement with various materials, and to emphasize the experimental and improvisatory character of this project. It is here electricity, a quintessentially modern, urban, and democratic technology, rather than the ancient fire, that allows the artist to generate surprising and mesmerizing results. The narrator of the film also presents Mousseau’s work as a modern-day continuation of the work of “ancient demiurges” and of “medieval stained glass artists” (I will return to this important connection later on).

Mousseau’s various lumino-kinetic murals were meant to be interactive and included a real (although limited) conception of audience participation. For instance, for the *Montreal Star* model, spectators were invited to engage with, and even to “complete,” the work. Visitors could operate up to six dimmers, which turned on different circuits of lights, each one showing



6 | Mousseau standing beside his prototype for the *Montreal Star* competition, 1961. (Photo: Courtesy of the Archives d'Hydro-Québec, document H02_701258)

different possible formal configurations of the work (Fig. 6). In one of the photos of the *Montreal Star* competition published in their newspaper, Mousseau is seen standing closely next to Québec Premier Jean Lesage, as though explaining to the intrigued politician how his machine actually functions. Similarly, at the unveiling of the Hydro-Québec mural, some of Mousseau's light sculptures (the so-called *Dolmen* series, produced around the same time), were also on display and invited active viewer engagement. Some of the inauguration photographs by Cognac (both those published or others now in the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal archives) prominently

7 | Jean-Claude Lessard leaning to activate a light sculpture (*Dolmen* series) by Jean-Paul Mousseau, lobby of the Hydro-Québec headquarters, Montreal, 1962. © Succession Jean-Paul Mousseau / SOCAN, 2019. (Photo: Courtesy of the Mousseau fonds, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal)



show a well-dressed Jean-Claude Lessard leaning down, as though he was operating a light switch (Fig. 7). Another one shows him holding a remote control, alongside Mousseau and his daughter (Fig. 8). Once the work was permanently included in the lobby, however, the work would re-situate the viewer back into the traditional space of passive, possibly unconscious reception, as people moved through the lobby space into the row of elevators. *Lumière et mouvement dans la couleur* can be contrasted with another Mousseau mural that did manage to retain the participatory qualities of the model by incorporating more direct participation even after its installation. This was his later work for the restaurant *Chez son Père*. There, patrons could, “if the cuisine and the wine inspire them, manipulate six knobs that adjust the patterns of light and color.”²⁸ As Mousseau explained at the time, his goal was to “involve people,” to engage “their judgment and their taste.” In other words, “they become part of the creation and the changes they make reflect their own inner feelings.”²⁹ His later *Mousse Spachèque*, a somewhat mythical



8 | Jean-Claude Lessard, Jean-Paul Mousseau, Katerine Mousseau and other guests at the inauguration of *Lumière et mouvement dans la couleur*, lobby of the Hydro-Québec headquarters, Montreal, 1962. Courtesy of the Archives d’Hydro-Québec, document HO2_701773. (Photo: Marcel Cognac)

nightclub and one of Montreal’s first discos, would also offer an immersive, ludic experience to its visitors.³⁰ Architecture, rather than simply containing modern art, was to become itself a vehicle of creative self-expression, even “national awakening.” Indeed, in Mousseau’s mind modern architecture was a kind of tool through which a new Quebec could be formed. In the concluding pages of Jean-Charles Harvey and Marcel Cognac’s photobook *Visages du Québec*, published shortly afterwards, the duo would similarly include many images of northern hydro-electric dams, juxtaposed to images of downtown Montreal under construction, as visual markers of this nascent Québécois identity.³¹

It is interesting to note that, in the 1950s, Mousseau’s light fixtures (particularly his sculptural lanterns) were described as “luminous psychological objects” (*objets psychologiques lumineux*) by de Repentigny, an expression that suggests a kind of Surrealist or Corbusian lineage (*objet à réaction poétique*). Mousseau, however, would quickly come to prefer the use of the moniker “plastique armé,” a neologism referring to *béton armé* (reinforced concrete). This was no doubt a deliberate gesture to

further distance himself from the more romantic and anarchist outlook of the Automatistes (and the postwar Surrealists) in order to further mimic industrial production and to align himself with the technocratic approaches to the integration of the arts, represented by the likes of Vasarely and Groupe Espace. In many ways, Mousseau's practice would fuse different professional functions. As Gilles Hénault (1920–1996), a Montreal poet and curator, noted in a short article in *Canadian Art*: “For Mousseau the role of the artist, like that of the engineer or the technician or the inventor, is to transform matter, to make use of all its possibilities and to enable the spectator to take part in the creation of a new world, a world in harmony with contemporary sensibilities.”³²

The Machine in the Lobby

In the Hydro-Québec lobby, the painted fibreglass and the steel frame around the light mural concealed all the neon and electrical hardware (Fig. 9). Unlike later minimalist, conceptual and installation artists who sought to dispel the myth of the individual studio artist as genius by presenting the wires and neon tubes “off the peg” (or *readyfound*), as evidence of industrial production and consumption and as a way to make the spectator conscious of the concrete “physical conditions and material operations” of the ambient architectural space,³³ Mousseau uses them to re-endow his neo-Automatiste work with a quasi-magical technological aura. The mural, as though of its own volition, would indeed continuously change its appearance. This was in fact made possible by the combinations generated by a complex electrical circuit used to operate the neon lights: according to official documents, it would take approximately two hundred years before the same composition could be seen again.³⁴ Mousseau's light mural also sought to respond to its immediate physical context and even to transform it. In particular, the artwork enters into a dialogue with the row of square marble columns placed in front of it. Marble itself acts a kind of “sensuous” counterpart to the industrial materials, steel and glass, used throughout the building. At the time, marble was often found in the work of International Style architects such as Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969), who, as Eric Lum explained, “often turned the walls of his buildings into a painterly surface, by employing the bookmatched striations of marble veining to introduce pattern to the wall construction, and the reflective properties of glass to layer an additional, optical depth to his static volumes.”³⁵ The dark marble's rich and unpredictable veining, seen in many photographs, subtly echo and reflect that of the mural's aleatory color fields, further aestheticizing the building's entrance space and making it more photogenic. Mousseau would later remark, somewhat comically, how crucial it is to make aesthetically pleasing such



9 | Jean-Paul Mousseau, *Lumière et mouvement dans la couleur*, Montreal, 1962. Fiber glass, synthetic resin, copper, steel. 4,57 m × 22,86 m. © Succession Jean-Paul Mousseau / SOCAN, 2019. (Photo: Philippe Guillaume)

interstitial spaces as lobbies and corridors: “Why do we make hallways so stupid, insignificant, dumb, even though we spend half of our day in there?”³⁶

By going beyond the limits of the easel, by having his work directly integrated into architectural space, Mousseau no doubt envisioned reaching a broader public. Indeed, his various works using electric lights were meant to avoid some of the pitfalls of an elitist consumption of art objects limited to galleries and museums. Mousseau’s optimism, not to say his faith, in public art’s role in postwar Canadian society has to do with his background and his political orientation: he came from a working-class neighbourhood, and in the immediate postwar years, he even flirted with the Communist Party.³⁷ Yet Mousseau, unlike his Soviet predecessors, was not a radical Constructivist and never abandoned altogether the idea of the painterly surface as a privileged form of creation. Rather, through these mural projects, Mousseau sought to strike a new equilibrium between the subjectivity of the individual gesture and the impersonality of the machine. This quest, at the level of artistic experience, should also be read within the broader context of achieving a new balance between the “two cultures” of science and the humanities, to use the famous expression popularized at the time by the



10 | Jean-Paul Mousseau, detail of the signature in the lower right corner of *Lumière et mouvement dans la couleur*. © Succession Jean-Paul Mousseau / SOCAN, 2019. (Photo: Philippe Guillaume)

progressive scientist and novelist C.P. Snow (1905–1980).³⁸ In other words, his early 1960s aims were much more amenable to the emerging welfare state political structures in place than his past links to the revolutionary Communist party might suggest.

When looked at up close, the Hydro-Québec mural carries much evidence of the human hand, beyond the drippings and other imprints. The mural is also signed and dated by the artist in the lower right corner, like one of his conventional canvases (there is also a dedication, “À Katerine,” in reference to his young daughter) (Fig. 10). This large signature, to quote the words of Benjamin Buchloh, is the sign that “supposedly guarantees the authenticity of authorship and therefore assumes inevitably the functions of a trademark to vouch for the originality of the commodity.”³⁹ Mousseau’s paintings, like his light murals, his luminous sculptures and his objects, are not only signed by hand by the artist, but they all share some Automatiste stylistic traits, which made them recognizable to a discerning buyer or patron. The popularization of abstract art was a key trait of this period. According to the neo-Marxist critic Barry Lord (1939–2017), there was a rapid commodification of abstract art in 1960s Canada: “Artists achieved a certain effect by one or

another exaggerated technique, and then produced a whole body of work in that way. The result was that the artists came to be identified by the ‘look’ of their paintings, exactly like standard brand names.” Lord concludes: “The individuals or corporations who were collecting their paintings had to have ‘a Ferron,’ or ‘a Riopelle,’ which meant any painting that had the brand-name look of these artists about it.”⁴⁰ Many private companies, like department stores and grocery stores, had already included such artworks to their facilities. Clearly, Hydro-Québec felt it expedient to keep up with this trend and to associate with the “Mousseau brand,” one that combined the chic of artistic experimentalism along with a desire to build a more modern Quebec society for future generations (hence, perhaps, the reference to his young daughter).

Jury members were quite open about the fact that Mousseau was chosen precisely because of the fact that his proposed mural was compatible with the values and the commercial interests of the government firm that sponsored it. For instance, one jury member, Dr. Evan Hopkins Turner (b. 1927), an American curator who had recently been appointed director of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, argued that the jury decided upon “the distinguished aesthetic quality of Mousseau’s achievement.” He commended in particular his “splendid study in colour”, adding that “nothing could be more appropriate for the Hydro-Quebec building than a mural depending upon its principal product, electric light power.”⁴¹ Unlike the previous generation of mural painters who celebrated the place of electricity in modern life by showing monumental infrastructures and heroic inventors and workers, such as Fernand Léger’s (1881–1955) *Le transport des forces* (for the Paris Palais de la découverte, 1936), Raoul Dufy’s (1877–1953) *Fée électricité* (for the 1937 Paris World Fair), or Edwin Holgate (1892–1977) and Albert Cloutier’s (1902–1965) work in the Canadian Pavilion at the 1939 World’s Exposition, Mousseau’s work is neither figurative nor commemorative. Rather, electricity itself became the condition for the abstract artwork’s existence and good functioning.

In a letter addressed to the president of Hydro-Québec, Jean-Claude Lessard, Turner even envisioned the work as “a tourist attraction for years.”⁴² The Montreal artist and critic Guy Viau (later director of the Musée du Québec) echoed Turner’s feeling, heralding Mousseau’s mural as working very well with the company’s ongoing public relations campaign: the mural is described alternatively as magical (“féérique”), as a “dominating force” amongst the rush of busy people, as a powerful “symbol of light dominated by man,” and as a “symbol of water.”⁴³ These ideas convey some of the optimism (bordering on hubris) of many of the movers and shakers of the *Révolution tranquille*, who envisioned a bright future, a future where nature could be



11 | Stand with various photographs of the artist for the inauguration of Jean-Paul Mousseau’s *Lumière et mouvement dans la couleur*, lobby of the Hydro-Québec headquarters, Montreal, 1962. (Photo: Courtesy of the Archives d’Hydro-Québec, document HO2_701773_75135-4)

harnessed to give rise to a new progressive culture of seemingly unlimited growth and enchantment.

The “Mousseau brand” went beyond his artworks: the distinctively virile and robust body of the artist himself, seen in countless press photographs dressed alternatively as a blue-collar worker (in his studio) or as a white-collar worker (at various art events), were crucial to his work’s success. On the day of the inauguration, a metal frame stall was erected, on which were placed several of photographs of Mousseau at work in his studio. For their inauguration speeches, both Quebec energy minister René Lévesque and Dutch modern art curator Willem Sandberg (1897–1984), who were invited to speak by Mousseau himself, stood directly in front of these staged photographs (Fig. 11).

In an article by Max McMahon in the *Montreal Star*, the critic notes that Mousseau, with his short crew cut, his thick moustache, and his workingman’s garb “looks more like a labourer than the common concept of the artist.”⁴⁴ In fact, the ubiquitous snapshots presenting Mousseau wearing

overalls and a hardhat were very deliberate and idealized images. As Erving Goffman (1922–1982) explains in his classic study on the modern self, “when the individual presents himself before others, his performance will tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society.”⁴⁵ In many ways, the photos of the young Mousseau embodied the image of the vibrant, efficient, masculine worker, a value that the modernizing Quebec government aggressively sought to promote.⁴⁶ It also conveyed a sense of upward mobility and empowerment to Francophone working-class people, who were presented through the very figure of Mousseau as integral to the new nation-building efforts (the artist himself grew up in Centre-Sud, one of Montreal’s poorest neighbourhood, and his swift rise to fame could certainly be read in those years as a great success story).

It is interesting to note that the images of Mousseau presented at the inauguration and in the press kits sent to various journalists is quite different from the one presented in a segment of the 1954 short film *Artist in Montreal*, produced by the National Film Board of Canada and directed by artist and scholar Jean Palardy (1905–1991). In this movie, produced only eight years before, Mousseau is seen with his family in his modest home filled with experimental paintings and found objects, or drinking coffee and singing at *L’Échourie*, a historic bohemian haunt. By the 1960s, the stakes had changed, and youthful rebellion would gradually become a thing of the past.

Technological Enchantment

The perceived need to move beyond youthful revolt and to embrace the path of technocratic reform in order to build a new and better society was expressed pointedly by de Repentigny in *La Presse*:

We live in an industrial city with a rough climate ... We must understand that we cannot entertain the idea of revolt; revolt was only suitable when it was time to get rid of the norms of the past. But to attack the machine, one must be of a reactionary spirit, which we do not at all need at this time. The only attitude that can lead to our survival is man’s annexation to the machine.⁴⁷

De Repentigny’s point about the role that science and technology would come to play in replacing the norms of the past is an important key to understand the terms used in the press to describe Mousseau’s work. In the early 1960s, there was a gradual but profound shift on Quebec’s political, cultural, and religious scenes. Indeed, this decade was a time of change during which Quebec society went through various phases of

“iconic-making, iconoclastic unmaking, and iconographic remaking of national identifications.”⁴⁸ Some of these transformations can be perceived in the reception of Mousseau’s work. In a way, we can discern in the critics’ writings a tug of war between different forces. For example, many critics pointed to the similarities of Mousseau’s light murals to the long religious tradition of stained glass window (particularly within the Catholic Church). An anonymous reviewer in *Le Samedi* proclaimed: “Neon lights are to this modern-day stained glass window what the sun still is to the cathedrals.”⁴⁹ Likewise, Max McMahon of the *Star* described Mousseau’s mural as “abstract stained glass windows without any leading.”⁵⁰ This comparison to religious stained glass is highly pertinent, both in terms of the artist’s life and the broader social context of 1960s Montreal. Not only was Mousseau brought up and trained in a Catholic milieu at Collège Notre-Dame (operated by the Congrégation de Sainte-Croix) but unlike his mentor Borduas, he continued to work in an ecclesiastical context for a number of years, at a time when the Catholic Church was going through a rapid process of artistic and architectural renewal.⁵¹ Indeed, just as he was working on the Hydro-Québec project, Mousseau was busy with a major project for the Saint-Gérard-Majella church in Saint-Jean-sur-le-Richelieu, in collaboration with the modernist firm of Affleck, Desbarats, Dimakopoulos, Lebensold & Sise (who later received the prestigious Massey Medal in Architecture from the Governor General of Canada). For this project, Mousseau designed, with Gabriel Loire (1904–1996), a French stained glass artisan from Chartres, different abstract windows, as well as *The Virgin with Seven Birds*, a glass-brick stained glass representing the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.⁵² Mousseau’s artist and architect friends were also interested in medieval Christian art and architecture as a source of inspiration.⁵³ In a preface to a book on Gothic architecture, Guy Desbarats (1948–1998) praised the aesthetic and structural merits of great masterpieces of medieval times, such as the cathedral of Salisbury, in England. Desbarats was not a revivalist, and neither was Mousseau. Rather, Desbarats was interested in how the Gothic can serve as a useful structural model in the present day, in the so-called “electronic era,” an era that, through automatization, would not only allow for bold experimentation. The medieval era also would serve as a model of an integrated society in which industry and craft serve the needs both physical and spiritual of people. Desbarats declares: “The Gothic is a subterranean presence that has prodigiously enriched architecture. An entire generation has rediscovered its heritage, hence creating, beyond mere eclecticism, a new fusion, not of forms, but of concepts of growth, structure and light.”⁵⁴ Elsewhere, artist Victor Vasarely spoke of his discovery of the interplay of sunlight and shadows inside of the great Romanesque abbey Notre-Dame de

Sénanque (near the village of Gordes, France) as a key in his move towards an expanded understanding of lumino-kineticism.⁵⁵

Although there is an interesting analogy between the two, Mousseau's electric light murals performed a different function than a traditional stained glass, popularized by Gothic architecture. Instead of the natural light of the sun irradiating the building being transformed into artistic lights in order to "cathechize" – to cultivate piety and to elevate the embodied viewer to the immaterial and divine realities as a kind of mystical gateway to the Triune God, who is the "true light" – it is electricity itself that is supposed to redeem autonomous man here on earth.⁵⁶ In other words, rather than being a vertical path between man below and the divine above, the electric light murals were horizontal, secular and democratic. It is also worth noting that many of Mousseau's "light murals" were introduced in spaces associated in Quebec with the social work done primarily by the Catholic Church, which by the 1960s were gradually becoming laicized. For example, he produced six stained glass panels placed behind the altar of the Roman Catholic chapel of the Boys' Farm and Training School at Shawbridge (a reform school for delinquent boys north of Montreal), as well as one for a local Catholic hospital.

This complex overlap between technological optimism and religious allusions can also be seen at play in a famous electoral ad (produced by the Quebec Liberal Party and published in *La Presse* in 1962) to promote the nationalization of hydroelectricity. Titled "Maîtres chez nous," this ad shows a muscular fist clamping a series of lightning bolts, representative of modern man's control over raw electric power (Fig. 12). Interestingly, the bottom caption, next to a large antique key topped by a *fleur-de-lys* and engraved with a lightning bolt (a sign of political power and of technological authority), intentionally played with the pervasive religious (particularly Catholic) sympathies of much of the Quebec population.⁵⁷ It describes the Liberal Party's plan to nationalize the province's eleven private hydroelectric companies as giving to the population "the key to the kingdom" (a promise which immediately calls to mind a well-known Biblical passage in Matthew chapter 16, in which, according to Catholic interpretation, Jesus designates Peter as the future visible leader of the Church).⁵⁸ It is important to remember that in the 1960s, it was very common for Bishops and Cardinals, such as Paul-Émile Léger, to attend and to bless the inauguration of various *grands projets* alongside politicians. As noted by Don Nerbas, the other modernist icon on the same Dorchester Street, the cruciform towers of Place-Ville-Marie, was presented by one of its architects as infused by Catholic symbolism: "Always a clever salesperson, at the topping-out ceremony in July 1961 [real estate developer William] Zeckendorf implied to Cardinal Léger that the cruciform shape of the tower was intended as a religious reference. This was not true – the tower's shape was built in a form, inspired by Le Corbusier,

12 | Advertisement for the Quebec Liberal Party published in *La Presse*, October 1962. (Photo: the author)



to maximize natural light and valuable corner office space – but it was an idea that allowed Léger and other French-Canadian observers to imagine in Place Ville-Marie an organic link to a French-Canadian, Catholic tradition.”⁵⁹

Mousseau himself was, it seems, conscious that he blended different religious and political concepts in his various public art commissions. In an interview with Hénault, in which he pleaded for a new synthesis of the arts, Mousseau exclaimed that he and his friends felt “the desire to create places where man will be really himself, sacred places.” Mousseau ends the interview with these words: “*C’est un peu religieux, tout ça.*” (It’s a little bit religious, all of that.)⁶⁰ I want to clarify that I do not believe Mousseau was consciously seeking to promote Catholicism. Like many other baptized Québécois, he definitely seemed to have lapsed from his childhood faith. Although he surely found some creative fulfilment in his commissions for Catholic churches and institutions, these were also meant to help further his career and support his young family. Mousseau’s view of “sacred places” would not be limited

to those of traditional Christianity, of which Mousseau had become very critical as a teenager due to its clericalism under Duplessis, but a new kind of progressive and more individualized notion of the sacred oriented towards art, culture, and technology. His religion was that of the postwar humanists and technocrats, albeit one which still bore distinct Catholic traces. This ties in directly with Giorgio Agamben's theological genealogy of economy and government, in which he argued that in the modern era, we witness a "concentration, multiplication, and dissemination of the function of glory as the center of the political system."⁶¹ Indeed, according to Agamben's insightful analysis of political spectacles, "what was confined to the spheres of liturgy and ceremonials has become concentrated in the media and, at the same time, through them it spreads and penetrates at each moment into every area of society, both public and private."⁶²

This is the irony at the very heart of this project: Mousseau, who formerly endorsed through the *Refus Global* manifesto a romantic view exalting the artist's creativity and condemning, in no uncertain terms, both spiritual conservatism and technological hubris, would end up using a quintessentially religious medium, stained glass, to glorify the State's role in dispensing electricity and bringing modern art to the masses. As the sociologist and Reformed theologian Jacques Ellul (1912–1994) once remarked, "contrary to what one might think, modern man takes the idea of the sacred very seriously."⁶³ One of the major consequences of modern technical autonomy, preached by the likes of Mousseau, de Repentigny and Vasarely, is precisely "that it renders technique at once sacrilegious and sacred."⁶⁴ Indeed, says Ellul, "the individual who lives in the technical milieu knows very well that there is nothing spiritual anywhere. But man cannot live without the sacred. He therefore transfers his sense of the sacred to the very thing which has destroyed its former object: to technique itself."⁶⁵

These important, yet at times covert, connections between culture art, religion and the media have been repressed in the recent historiography. For instance, Francine Couture simply characterizes in a footnote Mousseau's participation to the renewal of Christian art as "surprising" given his vocal opposition to the Catholic Church.⁶⁶ This puzzlement and lack of interest in the underlying religious dimensions of Mousseau's education and art practice (and the reception of his work) is no doubt symptomatic of the still dominant view of Quebec history, which equates, at times reductively, the modernization of the province with a rapid dismantling of religion's place in public space and everyday life. While religion's visible presence in everyday life has in some ways diminished, we witness in fact much more a process of absorption and transformation of traditional religious media and forms into new systems of thought and representation. This process of

making and unmaking was a complex and contested one, which Mousseau's mural, immortalized in a series of photographs, can help us to begin to better understand.⁶⁷

NOTES

N.B. All translations from French are by the author, unless otherwise indicated.

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- 1 Other films by Régnier and the people at Artek Film Productions produced at the time include *Art du métal* (on Françoise Sullivan, Ulysse Comtois, and Ivanhoë Fortier) and *Vermette* (on the ceramicist Claude Vermette and his wife Mariette, an accomplished tapestry artist).
- 2 Francine COUTURE, "Les années 60 : Art contemporain et identité nationale," *etc* 17 (1992): 14-17; Francine COUTURE, ed., "Art et technologie : Repenser l'art et la culture," in *Les arts visuels au Québec dans les années soixante. La reconnaissance de la modernité, tome I* (Montreal: VLB Éditeur, 1993); Francine COUTURE, ed., "Mousseau et la modernité globale," in *Mousseau* (Montreal: Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1996), 41-55; Francine COUTURE, "Lumière et mouvement dans la couleur de Jean-Paul Mousseau : La fabrication d'une icône d'entreprise," in *Construction de la modernité au Québec. Acte du colloque international tenu à Montréal les 6, 7 et 8 novembre 2003*, eds. Ginette Michaud and Élisabeth Nardout-Lafarge (Montreal: Lanctôt, 2004), 121-32.
- 3 For a more detailed description of this building, see: France VANLAETHEM, "Siège social d'Hydro-Québec, Montréal, 1959-1962," in *Patrimoine en devenir : L'Architecture moderne du Québec* (Quebec: Les Publications du Québec, 2012), 125. Gagnier also designed several churches in the province of Quebec.
- 4 It is interesting to note that the building was renamed Édifice Jean-Lesage in 2017, after the former Premier of Québec, further evidence between the company and the Liberals' *Révolution tranquille*. See: "55 ans après son inauguration, le siège social d'Hydro-Québec est désigné édifice Jean-Lesage," Hydro-Québec. Accessed 1 Dec. 2018, <http://nouvelles.hydroquebec.com/fr/communiques-de-presse/1242/55-ans-apres-son-inauguration-le-siege-social-dhydro-quebec-est-designe-edifice-jean-lesage/>

- 5 On Montreal's changing urban context at the time, see the exhibition catalogue: *The 60s: Montreal Thinks Big*, ed. André Lortie (Montreal/Vancouver: Canadian Centre for Architecture/Douglas & McIntyre, 2004).
- 6 For a fairly recent political history of Hydro-Québec, see: Stéphane SAVARD, *Hydro-Québec et l'État québécois, 1944-2005* (Quebec: Septentrion, 2013).
- 7 Matthew EVENDEN, "Mobilizing Rivers: Hydro-Electricity, the State, and World War II in Canada," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 99:5 (December 2009): 845.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 853.
- 9 Paul-Émile BORDUAS, "Global Refusal" (1948) in *Écrits/Writings 1942-1958*, ed. François-Marc Gagnon, trans. François-Marc Gagnon and Dennis Young (Halifax: The Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1978), 49. This ironic part of the manifesto was initially brought to my attention by Couture's essay in the 1996 *Mousseau* exhibition catalogue.
- 10 It is worth noting that Gaston Gagnier, who designed the Hydro-Québec headquarters, had, according to Vanlaethem, ties to the Union Nationale (the party that commissioned the building) and was sentenced in December 1966 to a hefty fine and two months in jail for fraud against the federal government. See: "Architecte condamné à \$90,000 d'amende et deux mois de prison," *La Presse*, 14 Dec. 1966.
- 11 The creation of a simplified Hydro-Québec logo, completed by Charles Gagnon (1934-2003) and James Valkus (b. 1932?), would be another move away from more traditional iconography of the original logo, which included heraldic *fleur-de-lys* and beaver motifs. An electrified version of the new Q-shaped logo with a crossing lightning bolt, a landmark of Montreal's urban landscape, would be added to the top of the facade of the Dorchester building in 1964, alongside a Quebec flag. On Gagnon and Valkus's long-term relationship with Hydro-Québec, see Marie-France DAIGNEAULT BOUCHARD, "Manic 5 at Expo 67: Territorial Megastructure or the Connection of Three Spaces," MA thesis, Concordia University, 2013.
- 12 On the popularization of the integration of murals to modern architecture in the postwar period in the Western world, see: Eleanor BITTERMANN, *Art in Modern Architecture* (New York: Reinhold, 1952) and Paul DAMAZ, *Art in European Architecture/Synthèse des Arts* (New York: Reinhold, 1956). On the transmission of such ideas in Canada at the time, see, for example: Jean SIMARD, "Vers une synthèse des arts majeurs," *Liberté* 1:3 (May-June 1959): 145-51 and various early issues of the art magazine *The Structurist*, edited by Eli Bornstein (Saskatchewan).
- 13 See René CHICOINE, "Décor pictural," *Le Devoir*, 8 Oct. 1958.
- 14 On his work as a critic, see the book by the late Marie CARANI, *L'œil de la critique. Rodolphe de Repentigny, écrits sur l'art et théorie esthétique 1952-1959* (Sillery: Septentrion, 1990), 167-200. On his parallel artistic practice: *Jauran et les premiers Plasticiens* (Montreal: Musée d'Art Contemporain, 1977).
- 15 Quoted in Gaston DIEHL, *Vasarely* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1972), 33. Vasarely elsewhere preferred the term "integration," rather than "synthesis of the plastic arts," to further highlight the technical and architectonic dimension of his project. See VASARELY, *Notes brutes* (Paris: Denoël/Gonthier, 1973), 46.
- 16 Roger BORDIER, "L'art est un service social," *Art d'aujourd'hui* 4-5 (May-June 1954): 25.
- 17 "Rules of Competition for Wall Panel in New Hydro-Quebec Office Building, Dorchester Boulevard West, Montreal" (1961), 2. Hydro-Québec Archives, Montreal.

- 18 On the question of the “humanization” of the built environment via public art commissions, see the in-depth study by Danielle DOUCET, “Le monde de l’art public montréalais des années cinquante : Le discours critique tenu sur la production de l’œuvre murale, 1950–mai 1961,” PhD thesis, Université du Québec à Montréal, 2011.
- 19 COUTURE, “Mousseau et la modernité globale,” 42–44.
- 20 Although the MIT Office of the Registrar does not have a record of Mousseau being officially enrolled, it was not uncommon, according to a 2016 conversation during a panel at the College of Art Association conference with my colleague John R. Blakinger (University of Oxford), for Kepes to freely accept outside students. The name of the course, *Light and Color*, could have actually influenced the title of Mousseau’s mural (*Lumière et mouvement dans la couleur*) See: *The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Bulletin, 1958–1959* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1958), 202. I wish to thank the MIT Office of the Registrar for sharing this information with me back in August 2015.
- 21 Notable light murals by Kepes, which could well have influenced Mousseau’s practice, including his projects for Radio Shack in Boston, for KLM in New York City, as well as for St. Mary’s Cathedral in San Francisco and for the First and Second Church in Boston. Kepes also organized the exhibition *Light as a Creative Medium* at the Carpenter Center of Visual Arts, Harvard University, in 1965. On Kepes’s career at MIT, see György KEPES, *The MIT Years, 1945–1977. Paintings, Photographic Work, Environmental Pieces, Projects at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1978) and the study by Anna VALLYE, “The Middleman: Kepes’s Instruments,” in *A Second Modernism: MIT, Architecture, and the ‘Techno-Social’ Moment*, ed. Arindam Dutta (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2013), 144–87.
- 22 On the history of light in modern and contemporary art, see Thomas B. HESS and John ASHBERY, eds., *Light in Art* (New York: Collier Books, 1971) and, more recently, the large catalogue *Light Art From Artificial Light: Light as a Medium in 20th and 21st Century Art* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2006) and *Dynamo : Un siècle de lumière et de mouvement dans l’art, 1913–2013* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2013). Although very comprehensive, neither of the two more recent studies mentions Mousseau’s work, despite its innovative character.
- 23 Max MCMAHON, “Jean-Paul Mousseau: Murals That Light From Within,” *Montreal Star*, 19 Aug. 1961.
- 24 The film was also screened as an art film. For example, the National Film Board of Canada presented at the UNESCO festival on films on art, which took place in Ottawa in May 1963.
- 25 A similar filming technique, which allows seeing the artist paint through a pane of glass (although not from a low angle shot), was previously used by Belgian filmmaker Paul HAESAERT in his short documentary *Visite à Picasso* (1949), as well as by Henri-Georges CLOUZOT for *Le mystère Picasso* (1956).
- 26 This expression comes from Caroline A. JONES’s landmark study, *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 55. It is defined by Jones as an artistic process “that aspires to, or structurally resembles, an industrial process, and/or a self-presentation on the part of the artist that implies a collaboratively generated technological solution or mechanistic goal.”
- 27 Paul VALÉRY, “On the Pre-eminent Dignity of the Arts of Fire,” in *Degas, Manet, Morisot*, trans. David Paul (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960), 1969. It is quite

possible Mousseau initially came across this text as he was working on his ceramic mural projects with Vermette, as it is the specific art form discussed by Valéry in this essay.

- 28 “How to Make Fine Art Out of Bright Lights, and Silence Your Critics,” *MacLean’s* (14 Dec. 1963): 66.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 See Judith BRADETTE BRASSARD, “Jean-Paul Mousseau artiste public : étude de la station de métro Peel, de l’église Saint-Maurice-de-Duvernay et de la Mousse Spachthèque de Montréal,” MA thesis, Université du Québec à Montréal, 2008, 90–118 and Rose-Marie ARBOUR, “Intégration de l’art à l’architecture,” in *Les arts visuels au Québec dans les années soixante*, 227–78.
- 31 See Jean-Charles HARVEY and Marcel COGNAC, “Un peuple en éveil,” in *Visages du Québec* (Montreal: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1964), 191–99. This book would be translated into English a couple of years later as *The Many Faces of Quebec* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1966).
- 32 Gilles HÉNAULT, “Mousseau’s Space and Time Machines,” *Canadian Art* 21 (1964): 127. Hénault would later become director of the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal. He curated one of the two major retrospectives of Mousseau’s work at the MAC.
- 33 See, for example, the article by William S. WILSON, “Dan Flavin: Fiat Lux,” *Art News* 68:9 (January 1970): 48–51 (anthologized in *Light as Art*).
- 34 Guy VIAU, “À Hydro-Québec, Mousseau a imaginé une murale qui, pendant deux siècles, ne sera jamais pareille à elle-même,” official press release (ca. 1962), 2. Fonds Mousseau FA.1996.2, Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal archives. Upon the mural’s restoration in 2001, more complex algorithms allowed the work to become even more unpredictable and aleatory.
- 35 Eric LUM, “Pollock’s Promise: Toward an Abstract Expressionist Architecture,” *Assemblage* 39 (August 1999): 66.
- 36 See the interview “Mousseau parle de son art,” in *Jean-Paul Mousseau : Aspects* (Montreal: Musée d’Art Contemporain, 1968), n/p.
- 37 In the 1940s, at the height of the “Second Red Scare,” Mousseau joined a Canadian brigade that went to Czechoslovakia to attend a socialist youth festival. See François-Marc GAGNON, “Mousseau, automatiste réfractaire?,” in *Mousseau*, ed. Francine Couture (Montreal: Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal/Éditions du Méridien, 1996), 34. Gagnon also mentions that Mousseau had an interest in leftist libertarian thought. See GAGNON, *Chronique du mouvement automatiste québécois* (Montreal: Lanctôt Éditeur, 1998). Mousseau’s politicized involvement in Quebec’s counter-cultural scene is also discussed in Anite DE CARVALHO, “Les oeuvres participatives de l’art underground au Québec (1967–1977) et l’émergence de la démocratie culturelle,” PhD thesis, Université du Québec à Montréal, 2012.
- 38 C.P. SNOW, *Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1959).
- 39 Benjamin H.D. BUCHLOH, “Knight’s Moves: Situating the Art/Object,” in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000), 297.
- 40 Barry LORD, *The History of Painting in Canada: Toward a People’s Art* (Toronto: NC Press, 1974), 163.

- 41 Unidentified press clipping (ca. 1961), fonds Jean-Paul Mousseau FA.1996.2, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal archives.
- 42 Evan. H. Turner letter addressed to M.J.C. Lessard (13 June 1962), fonds Mousseau FA.1996.2, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal archives.
- 43 VIAU, "À Hydro-Québec," 2.
- 44 MCMAHON, "Jean-Paul Mousseau: Murals That Light From Within," 9. Some comments on Mousseau's bodily appearance were in rather poor taste, one anonymous *Maclean's* writer describing his moustache as making him look "like a short-tempered Mongolian bear." See "How to Make Fine Art Out of Bright Lights."
- 45 Erving GOFFMAN, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Social Sciences Research Center, 1956), 23. Some of Goffman's penetrating insights on the modern self are also developed, as it relates to photography, in *Gender Advertisements* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979).
- 46 For a critical discussion of the image of the masculine postwar artist in the North Atlantic world, see Amelia JONES, "'Clothes Make the Man': The Male Artist as a Performative Function," *Oxford Art Journal* 18:2 (1995): 18–32.
- 47 Rodolphe DE REPENTIGNY, "Quand la peinture se colore de l'âpreté de la ville industrielle," *La Presse*, 13 Mar. 1957, 8.
- 48 Geneviève ZUBRZYCKI, "Aesthetic Revolt and the Remaking of National Identity in Québec, 1960–1969," *Theory and Society* 42 (2013): 423.
- 49 "Mousseau invente une verrière et substitute le néon au soleil," *Le Samedi* (January 1963): 30–33.
- 50 MCMAHON, "Jean-Paul Mousseau: Murals That Light From Within," 9.
- 51 It is at Collège Notre-Dame that Mousseau would befriend Frère Jérôme (1902–1994), an experimental art teacher who was part of the Congregation of Holy Cross, a Roman Catholic community of priests and brothers. See: Daniel GAGNON, *Frère Jérôme* (Montreal: Fides, 1990). On Borduas's (and Automatism's) complex relationship to French-Canadian Catholicism, see Jean-Philippe WARREN, *L'art vivant : Autour de Paul-Émile Borduas* (Montreal: Boréal, 2011).
- 52 On the life and work of Gabriel Loire, see Véronique and Xavier DEBENDÈRE, *Gabriel Loire : L'œuvre d'une vie* (Paris: Somogy, 2005).
- 53 Mousseau would also collaborate on important Catholic church projects with his friend, the architect Roger D'Astous. See Claude BERGERON, *Roger D'Astous architecte* (Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2001).
- 54 Guy DESBARATS, "Les structures gothiques : Un modèle fécond," in *Gothique*, ed. Hans H. Hofstätter (Fribourg: Office du Livre/Architecture Universelle, 1968).
- 55 VASARELY, "Image mobile et cinétisme," in *Plasticité : L'œuvre plastique dans notre vie quotidienne* (Paris: Casterman, 1970), 92. It is worth noting that, although he professed that God had expired and that a new system based on "materialism, equity and comfort" could replace him (*Notes brutes*, 176–77), Vasarely nevertheless created polychrome stained glass windows (inspired by the movement and shape of the sun) in an actual Christian church, namely the Église écuménique Saint François d'Assise in Port Grimaud designed by French architect François Spoerry (inaugurated in 1973).
- 56 The Bible contains various references to God as Light, notably in the Gospel of John and First Epistle of John. The Nicene Creed, one of the most widely accepted doctrinal statements of the Christian faith, also describes Jesus, the Son of God, as "light from light." For a complex discussion of the various sources of medieval

theological theories of light (such as Plato, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, etc.), which distinguish between intelligible/divine and visible/corporeal lights (*lux spiritualis, lumen spiritualis*, etc.), see, among other things, John Shannon HENDRIX, *Architecture as Cosmology: Lincoln Cathedral and English Gothic Architecture* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011). Also relevant is the more speculative essay by philosopher Peter SLOTERDIJK found in *Light Art from Artificial Light*, 45–56.

- 57 For a more extensive discussion on the relationship of francophone Catholicism (including Canada) and the question of technological progress, including the place of electricity in modern life, see Michel LAGRÉE, *La bénédiction de Prométhée : Religion et technologie* (Paris: Fayard, 2000).
- 58 “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the *keys of the kingdom* of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Translation used: Revised Standard Version). My emphasis. According to the First Vatican Council (1870), Peter, after Jesus’ resurrection, later became the first Catholic Pope. The Book of Isaiah also speaks, in chapter 22, of God giving the “key of the house of David” to Eliakim (considered by some as a type of Christ). The symbol of the keys of the kingdom and of heaven is also found in parts of the Book of Revelation.
- 59 See: Don NERBAS, “William Zeckendorf, Place Ville-Marie, and the Making of Modern Montreal,” *Urban History Review* 432 (2015): 17. Thank you to my colleague Nathan Brown for pointing out this article to me. On the symbolic name and form of Place Ville-Marie, see the pointed essay published at the time by Hubert AQUIN, “Essai crucimorphe,” *Liberté* 5:4 (1963): 323–26.
- 60 See interview, “Mousseau parle de son art.”
- 61 Giorgio AGAMBEN, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa and Matteo Mandarini (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 256.
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 Jacques ELLUL, *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), 141.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Ibid., 143. On the quasi-religious faith placed in technology’s redemptive power in the 1960s, see also Henri LEFEBVRE’s study: *Position : Contre les technocrates* (Paris: Éditions Gonthier, 1967).
- 66 COUTURE, “Mousseau et la modernité globale,” 53.
- 67 Landmark studies that analyze the complex negotiation between Catholicism and “the secular” in 1960s Quebec are Jean-Philippe WARREN, *Sortir de la Grande Noirceur : L’horizon personnaliste de la Révolution tranquille* (Sillery: Septentrion, 2002) and Michael GAUVREAU, *The Catholic Origins of Quebec’s Quiet Revolution, 1931–1970* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005). On more recent developments in the province, see the anthology *Everyday Sacred: Religion in Contemporary Quebec*, ed. Hillary Kaell (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2017).

De l'automatisme à l'automatisation. À propos de la murale luminocinétique réalisée en 1962 par Jean-Paul Mousseau pour Hydro-Québec

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Le présent essai se veut une étude de l'œuvre *Lumière et mouvement dans la couleur* de Jean-Paul Mousseau, une chatoyante murale composée de fibre de verre polychrome, rétroéclairée au moyen d'une série de tubes néon s'illuminant à intervalles de quelques secondes. Cette gigantesque « fresque lumineuse » d'environ 23 mètres de largeur par 4,5 mètres de hauteur a été commandée pour le siège social d'Hydro-Québec (qui porte depuis 2017 le nom d'« édifice Jean-Lesage »). Elle a été inaugurée en 1962, à la suite d'un concours lancé par la société d'État en 1961. Le programme fixé par Hydro-Québec précisait que l'œuvre serait exposée dans le grand hall de l'édifice, au-dessus des portes des ascenseurs principaux. Sans imposer de style particulier ni de matériaux précis, Hydro-Québec enjoignait toutefois aux candidats de tenir compte de la fonction de l'entreprise : exploiter l'énergie hydro-électrique, décrite comme une source de richesse nationale. Le concours a attiré au total 71 candidats, dont de nombreux artistes émergents. Jean-Paul Mousseau, alors âgé de 33 ans, s'est classé premier, suivi d'Armand Vaillancourt (v. 1929), en deuxième place, et de Joseph Iliu (1914–1999), en troisième.

Dès le jour où Mousseau remporte ce prestigieux concours, l'artiste à l'imposante carrure originaire du centre-sud de Montréal, connu comme le plus jeune signataire du manifeste incendiaire *Refus global* (1948), attire l'attention de nombreux représentants des médias. Tous sont impatients de prendre des photos de l'homme et de sa murale, en compagnie des personnalités qui pilotent les diverses réformes économiques visant à moderniser la province de Québec. D'envergure nationale et d'une ampleur impressionnante, la couverture médiatique de l'événement se déroule selon des conditions dictées par Mousseau et le bureau des relations publiques d'Hydro-Québec. On fait l'éloge de son œuvre dans les grands journaux de l'époque, comme *La Presse*, *The Gazette* et *The Montreal Star*. Dans les magazines et les revues spécialisées – notamment dans *Maclean's* et *Canadian Art* – on célèbre l'inventivité tant formelle que technologique de cette murale. Des clichés de l'artiste et de son œuvre, dont un bon nombre pris par l'artiste québécois Marcel Cognac, sont également publiés à différents

endroits. Un court métrage de Michel Régnier (v. 1934), intitulé *Dimension lumineuse* et montrant un Mousseau travaillant d'arrache-pied à sa murale au son de musiques électroacoustique et jazz, est même produit par Artek Film en collaboration avec Hydro-Québec. Projet d'avant-garde et pionnier du courant luminocinétique, l'œuvre de Mousseau devient, selon la sociologue et historienne de l'art Francine Couture, un emblème de la « modernité globale » du Québec à l'aube de la Révolution tranquille ainsi qu'une formidable « icône d'entreprise ». Dans ses divers articles, Couture célèbre l'œuvre de Mousseau, soulignant en particulier qu'elle a contribué à la reconnaissance de l'art par la classe politique québécoise de même qu'à la naissance de la politique progressiste d'intégration des œuvres d'art à l'architecture communément appelée « programme du 1 % ». Bien que ces travaux d'érudition antérieurs apportent une mise en contexte très précieuses, nous entendons dans le présent essai jeter un regard différent sur l'importance que revêtent la technologie et l'art dans le Canada de l'après-guerre. Nous proposons une analyse de la quête, chez Mousseau, d'une forme de réenchâtement technologique dans le contexte précis de la politique culturelle québécoise ainsi que de la montée de la laïcité. Notre étude explore les diverses stratégies médiatiques qui ont servi à construire le portrait de l'artiste québécois moderne et à projeter une image favorable de l'État et de son rôle dans les affaires culturelles, lequel allait se substituer à l'hégémonique Église dans différents secteurs. Tel qu'il sied à l'examen de cette œuvre de lumière, le présent essai traite également du rôle actif qu'a joué la photographie (et, dans une moindre mesure, le cinéma), en tant qu'éléments constitutifs du discours politique, au moment de la commande et de l'inauguration de la murale. Diverses questions orientent cette recherche. Quel rôle ont joué les images photographiques – tant de Mousseau lui-même que du dévoilement de sa murale luminocinétique – dans la construction de l'identité d'entreprise d'Hydro-Québec ? Quels étaient les termes particuliers utilisés par la presse canadienne dans les textes accompagnant ces images ? À quel point les photographies ont-elles contribué à la consolidation d'une certaine idée de l'artiste masculin moderne des années 1960 ? Comment la construction idéologique et performative de l'artiste s'intègre-t-elle dans l'émergence de la Révolution tranquille en tant que grand récit national ? Quelles sont les similarités et les différences entre cette œuvre d'art technologique et la tradition du vitrail catholique ? Enfin, comment pouvons-nous, plus de cinquante ans plus tard, utiliser ces mêmes documents visuels et textuels pour repenser diverses constructions historiographiques au sujet du Québec des années 1960, et dévoiler des facettes négligées de l'histoire ?

Dans le présent article, nous avançons que Mousseau, qui avait d'abord souscrit – par sa participation au *Refus global* – à une vision romantique

exaltant la créativité de l'artiste et condamnant en des termes on ne peut plus clairs tant le conservatisme spirituel que la mégalomanie technologique, a fini par revisiter un mode d'expression éminemment religieux, le vitrail, pour glorifier le rôle de l'État dans la distribution de l'électricité et la diffusion de l'art moderne auprès des masses. Comme le soutient Jacques Ellul, « contrairement à ce qu'on pourrait penser, l'homme moderne prend très au sérieux l'idée du sacré ». L'une des conséquences majeures de l'autonomie technique moderne, vantée par Mousseau et ses semblables de même que par des critiques comme Rodolphe De Repentigny, est précisément le fait qu'« elle rend ladite technique à la fois sacrilège et sacrée ». En effet, selon Ellul, l'homme moderne « reporte son sens du sacré sur cela même qui a détruit tout ce qui en était l'objet : sur la technique ».

Ces liens importants, mais parfois négligés, entre art, culture, religion et médias ont été occultés dans l'historiographie récente. Par exemple, Francine Couture, dans une note de bas de page, qualifie simplement de « surprenante » la participation de Mousseau au renouveau de l'art chrétien compte tenu de la vive opposition de l'artiste à l'Église catholique. Cette perplexité et ce manque d'intérêt envers les dimensions religieuses sous-jacentes de l'éducation et de la pratique artistique de Mousseau (ainsi que de la réception de son œuvre) sont sans aucun doute symptomatiques de la vision encore dominante de l'histoire du Québec, laquelle assimile, parfois de façon réductrice, la modernisation de la province à un rapide démantèlement de la place occupée par la religion dans l'espace public et la vie de tous les jours. Bien que la présence visible de la religion dans la vie quotidienne ait sans doute reculé, nous observons en fait davantage un processus d'absorption et de transformation des formes et des modes d'expression traditionnels en de nouveaux systèmes de pensée et de représentation. Ce processus de composition et de décomposition était complexe et contesté, ce que la murale de Mousseau, immortalisée dans une série de photos, peut nous aider à mieux comprendre. En montrant comment des trames visuelles et discursives se mêlent dans cette œuvre unique, le présent essai jette une lumière nouvelle sur le travail de Mousseau en lien avec l'histoire de Montréal (et du Canada).

Traduction : l'auteur



No Place Like Home: Comparing Displays of Alex Colville, His Life and Work

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The 2014–15 posthumous “Alex Colville” retrospective organized by the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) in collaboration with the National Gallery of Canada (NGC) presented the largest exhibition of the artist’s works to date, featuring items from the collections of both institutions, along with “iconic” works from other public and private collections. On view at the AGO from 23 August 2014 to 4 January 2015, the show attracted 166,406 visitors, good enough for the tenth-best attended exhibition in the Gallery’s history and the highest attended exhibition of Canadian art, supplanting the 1995–96 Group of Seven show, “Art for a Nation.”¹ It combined a thematic approach to the display of the artist’s work together with “pop culture pairings,” contemporary responses, such as artworks and film clips, to Alex Colville’s (1920–2013) practice by artists, filmmakers, and writers from across North America who either emulate or include Colville’s work in their own, thereby arguably demonstrating the global range of his sway.²

This article examines approaches to exhibiting the artist’s life and work by comparing themes pertinent to understandings of place in the AGO retrospective show with that offered at Colville House. An interpretive facility opened as a public institution in 2009 on the Mount Allison University (MTA) campus in Sackville, New Brunswick, it was the artist’s residence and studio from 1949 to 1973. The AGO exhibition characterized the artist as one whose work evokes a resounding sense of place, the specificity of which is magnified to such an extent that one place could be any place. While this is an interpretation couched within a subtly nuanced national framework,³ Colville House unequivocally consolidates the artist’s connection to a particular locale. We go on to recount how, in 2012, Colville House helped implement a critical pedagogy that interrogated collecting practices. More broadly, we explore how the politics of display or representation – motivated by centrifugal or centralizing forces – operate to serve particular institutional, ideological, and socio-political interests, and how a critical pedagogy premised on site-specificity might destabilize those interests.

Detail, Alex Colville in the attic studio of his Sackville home, ca. 1960, © A.C. Fine Art Inc. (Photo: Mount Allison University)

In comparing the AGO retrospective with Colville House, this article calls attention to how narratives of place contribute to valuations of Colville's art. In the case of the AGO exhibition, we focus on key instances of the coalescence of art and interpretation that evidence most strongly for visitors the show's central thesis: the seemingly global appeal of work produced by an artist deemed to be a "Canadian icon."⁴ This curatorial theme, we suggest, reinforces conventional understandings of home, place, and belonging as inherently and distinctly Canadian paradigms.⁵ For example, then-AGO director and ceo, Matthew Teitelbaum described the exhibition, stating that it promoted the public understanding of "a truly national figure in a new way ... Colville's story is everybody's story ... Life is born of relationships and of the place where you are from, and Colville's work captures that complex sense of place that lies deep in our psyche."⁶ Accordingly, rather than providing a detailed exhibition review, we maintain our focus and interrogate how the AGO retrospective interprets concepts of place, home, and homeland in Colville's art, thereby reinforcing neo-liberal discourse. We then compare it to the restoration and programming at Colville House, which presents opportunities to actively resist or destabilize this discourse. MTA's redeployment of the former residence as a cultural institution, managed by the curatorial staff at the University's Owens Art Gallery, represents institutional efforts to re-collect narratives of Colville and enfold them within a larger story through the lens of a particular locale. However, its use in a critical pedagogy based in disciplinary art history provides new opportunities for exploration, artistic analysis, and intervention.

The AGO retrospective emphasized the so-called global appeal of Colville's "iconic works" while simultaneously labelling them emblematic of daily life in Canada.⁷ Speaking at the AGO's announcement of a "major retrospective"⁸ four months after the artist's passing on 16 July 2013, Teitelbaum recalls, "At the moment of Alex Colville's passing there was an acknowledgement of what he meant to so many people around the country."⁹ (Fig. 1)

Indeed, art galleries and museums across Canada issued official statements of condolence that summer. The majority concluded with the identification of works by Colville they had either on display at that time, stored in their permanent collection, or on loan for exhibition elsewhere.¹⁰ International newspapers, such as the *New York Times* and the UK-based *Guardian*, ran obituaries on the front pages of their arts and culture sections that recounted for readers the upward trajectory and notable accomplishments of Colville's career.

Alex Colville featured more than 110 artworks spanning the artist's career. The works were arranged chronologically and grouped under six themes: "Everyday Colville"; "War Artist"; "Home from Away"; "Animals"; "Inherent

1 | Michael De Adder,
“Alex Colville (1920–2013)
In Memoriam,” *Halifax
Herald*, 17 July 2013. (Photo:
the author)



Danger”; and “Love, Life and Loss.” This arrangement allowed for a strategic recounting of major periods and events in Colville’s life, beginning with his family’s relocation from St. Catharines, Ontario, to Amherst, Nova Scotia, in 1929; his Fine Arts studies and education at Mount Allison University, graduating in 1942; his marriage to Rhoda Wright; his occupation as a war artist throughout western Europe during World War II; his professorship at Mount Allison from 1946 to 1963; and, upon his “retirement,” his turning to painting full time.¹¹ Rather than a focus on the stylistic aspects or formal qualities of the artist’s work, these themed groupings sought to provide visitors with “different entry points.”¹² Ultimately, they highlight Colville’s intense focus on his life and locale, and how this specificity evokes for viewers the universality of life, belonging, home, and art.

Significantly, the introductory text panel establishes from the outset the show’s central thesis, locating the global appeal of Colville’s works within a decisively nationalistic framework. It begins, stating, “Alex Colville’s iconic paintings present scenes of everyday Canadian life.” It goes on to explain that his “meticulously realized” works often provoke profound ruminations regarding the “ordinary and the extraordinary.” In conclusion, it reads, “Exploring issues of anxiety and control, trust and love, Colville’s particular view of the world is always profound.” In its interpretation of the significance of place and the perceived consequent place(less)ness of Colville’s art, the exhibition emphasizes how Colville’s work surpasses geopolitical specificity

to uphold values that might appeal to a “global” audience. Ultimately, however, this representation privileges the individual property-owning, white male so-called artistic “genius” in all his various guises. Doing so reaffirms values associated with, and prized by, Canada’s dominant culture, such as a seemingly stable sense of belonging and entitlement in the face of relatively recent destabilizing events that have generated reverberations around the world.

The early twenty-first century has witnessed “a global pandemic of precarity” triggered by wars, particularly those in Afghanistan and Iraq, civil unrest, ongoing territorial disputes, and uneven reallocations of wealth. This, art historian Claudette Lauzon points out, has compelled a spate of contemporary artists to produce art “that register[s] home’s increasingly uncertain status as a secure locus of stability and belonging.”¹³ Building on Irit Rogoff’s study of “unhomed geographies” of art and visual culture, Lauzon describes how such uncertainties might generate nostalgic yearnings, longings to return to some lost place or ideal. Approaching concepts of longing, belonging, and estrangement in contemporary art and visual culture requires attending to the contingencies of emplacement while simultaneously “maintaining productive relationships with both the past and the politics of location, albeit relationships that are ‘permanently in flux.’”¹⁴ More to the point, as Rogoff explains, discourses on geography and space come together based on the understanding that “power produces a space which then gets materialized as place.”¹⁵ And so analyzing links between art, location, identity, and visibility is imperative because these links “establish references to, and enable the inclusion of, far broader materials,” such as visual culture.¹⁶ Geography, Rogoff stipulates, is knowledge underpinned by nationalism, sustained by forces, such as the bureaucracies of the state and disseminated through art, exhibitions, and visual culture.¹⁷

Nationalist discourse therefore arguably gains currency in the face of nostalgic longings for emplacement, home, and homeland. And so, as co-editors of *Negotiations in a Vacant Lot: Studying the Visual in Canada* Lynda Jessup, Erin Morton, and Kirsty Robertson maintain, to effectively interrogate the project of *Canadian* art history, one must undertake what historian Ian McKay refers to as a “new strategy of reconnaissance.” Foregrounding McKay’s suggestion that Canada be examined as a process-based project founded on a “historically specific project of rule”¹⁸ – liberalism – so as to merge many competing interests into a homogenous whole, Jessup et al. point out that “both the project-of-Canada and the project-of-Canadian-art-history are interrelated yet distinct exercises in liberal hegemony making.”¹⁹ Given that development of Canadian art history

depended upon the expansion of the settler nation over top of existing Indigenous communities,²⁰ a reconnaissance of Canadian art history requires identifying the methods and means that attempt to ensure the enduring installation of a liberal order that privileges the property-owning, white male individual. In such cases, the individual is propped up not so much as a person but, as Jessup et al. write, as “an abstract principle that the political philosophy of liberalism has intellectually advanced in the same way that the discipline of art history has intellectually advanced the category of the ‘artist-genius.’ Indeed, one category cannot be understood in historiographic context without the other.”²¹ This advancement is woven throughout the AGO retrospective, and its validity is amplified by the “pop culture pairings” – the installation of Colville’s artworks alongside film clips and artworks generated by cultural producers across North America – thereby demonstrating Colville’s influence on visual culture.

In characterizing Colville’s “iconic works” as emblematic of “everyday Canadian life,”²² the AGO exhibition’s groupings of Colville’s works under six themes provides a strategic recounting of major periods and events in Colville’s life. Significantly, these groupings ultimately come together, underscoring how Colville’s artistic practice developed in such a way so as to maintain focus on his life, lifestyle, family, and immediate surroundings grounded primarily in Sackville, New Brunswick, and later in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. He concentrated on studying, analyzing, and depicting his immediate surroundings in such precise painted detail so as to infuse his work with what art historian Mark Cheetham refers to as “visual exactitude.”²³ This stylistic precision makes it so that, the exhibition suggests, a particular place could in fact be *any* place, which promotes the international appeal of Colville’s art. Unsurprisingly, in the third section, entitled “Home From Away,” the prioritization of home, place, and belonging came across most strongly. Here, the exhibition positions Colville’s immediate post-war works, like *Soldier and Girl at Station* (Fig. 2), with the setting of the Sackville train station shown on the viewer’s right-hand side, *Family and Rainstorm* (1955), and *Child Skipping* (1958), as those most revealing of his determination to remain at home in Canada where he ultimately found solace.

The introductory section panel read,

Home and place were critical to Colville. After the war, he craved a quiet and ordered life centred on his art and his family ... With clarity and precision, he reinvents the reality of specific locations, transforming Maritime locales into familiar scenes that resonate with viewers across Canada and throughout the world.



2 | Alex Colville, *Soldier and Girl at Station*, 1953, glazed tempera on hardboard. 40.6 × 61 cm, The Thomson Collection, @Art Gallery of Ontario, 103990, © A.C. Fine Art Inc. (Photo: Art Gallery of Ontario)

In referring to Colville’s primary residential settings – Sackville, NB, and Wolfville, NS – collectively as “Maritime locales,” the text downplays the specifics of locale, place, and region. This vague vocabulary seems to operate so as to liberate Colville’s work from any specific regional and/or provincial associations, thereby upholding the primacy of his works’ appeal to one and all. Moreover, this liberation is reinforced by the “pop culture pairings” – connections made between Colville’s artworks and film clips, as well as artworks made by cultural producers across North America, evidencing Colville’s influence on visual culture.

The first room of the exhibition, in fact, contains the title image used in the exhibition’s marketing campaign, as well as on the exhibition’s website and the cover of the accompanying exhibition catalogue. *To Prince Edward Island* (1965) is arguably one of Colville’s best-known works. It depicts Colville’s wife Rhoda on the ferry heading out, as stipulated in the painting’s title, to PEI, looking out at the viewer with a pair of binoculars (Fig. 3). Presumably, the artist himself is sitting on a bench in the middle ground, partially blocked by her.



3 | Art Gallery of Ontario, *Alex Colville* exhibition website home page (screenshot). Accessed 31 Aug. 2016, <http://www.welcometocolville.ca>. (Photo: Author)

On the wall adjacent to the painting, there resides a large-scale (life-size) projection of a clip from director Wes Anderson’s 2012 film *Moonrise Kingdom*. The clip depicts the adolescent heroine Suzy Bishop standing on top of a lighthouse, bringing binoculars up to her face and staring through them out into the distance. While the panel neglects to reference any primary source evidence stipulating that the director himself looked to Colville specifically, it does characterize Anderson’s film as that which “reverberates with visual references to Colville’s work. . . [s]et in 1965 New England,” more specifically on the fictional island of New Penzance. This pairing is revisited in the accompanying catalogue, which displays a film still and the painting side-by-side. The connections between the two media, painting and photography, is echoed in subsequent pairings of Colville’s work with and in other films such as Stanley Kubrick’s *The Shining* (1980) and Canadian filmmaker Sarah Polley’s *Stories We Tell* (2012). As a result, the exhibition sets up Colville’s work as that which generated an enduring interplay of visual phenomena. His work been translated into an array of visual media – or, more broadly, visual culture – such as films, magazines, and book covers. Colville’s practice thus construed, more specifically his intense painterly concentration on specific locations and places, defies geographical, temporal, or art historical confinement. But, as Karen Stanworth points out, in reference to visual cultural studies as a field of inquiry and the interplay of visual phenomena, “Normative images that dominate everyday [visual]



4 | Colville House, 76 York Street, Mount Allison University, Sackville, New Brunswick, Canada. (Photo: Courtesy of Owens Art Gallery)

culture are not normal: they are *normalized* by and through visual practices that are the result of uneven relations of power.”²⁴ Such pairings, like *To Prince Edward Island with Moonrise Kingdom*, therefore set up Colville’s work as the visual evocation of supposedly universal values, such as appreciation for family, home, nostalgia, and a particular locale. It becomes all unabashedly infused with a distinctly Western or, more precisely, “Canadianized” cultural sensibility informed by dimensions of class, gender, and race. While the AGO’s posthumous retrospective endeavoured to liberate Colville’s attachment to and from particular places, Colville House re-inscribes the significance of locale.

The arrangement, interpretation, and programming offered at Colville House on Mount Allison University’s campus emphasizes Colville’s connection to the Sackville community in his art practice (Fig. 4).

Located on the outer perimeter of the Mount Allison University campus and managed by the Owens Art Gallery (Canada’s first university art gallery, opened in 1895), Colville House was the residence of Mount Allison graduate



5 | Alex Colville in the attic studio of his Sackville home, ca. 1960, © A.C. Fine Art Inc. (Photo: Mount Allison University)

and faculty member Alex Colville from 1949 to 1973. In 2009, the residence re-opened as Colville House, a cultural institution and a “portal” designed to explore Colville’s artistic contributions to the surrounding community, open to the public in the months of July and August.²⁵ Our analysis of the house’s development demonstrates the degree to which MTA administrators and curators endeavoured to consolidate the artist’s connection to the locale and subsequently advance the University’s cultural capital. With the museumification of his private family home, they aimed to project Colville’s reputation not only as a Canadian icon but also as one of its most accomplished and prestigious alumni. Significantly, the significance and interpretation of the locale adopted by the site lent itself to the development of a critical pedagogy for the University’s art history courses as well as the exploration of programming that might benefit emerging artists in and from the community.

Like an object of art historical analysis, Colville House functions as a representational sign – an object that, by virtue of its provenance, conservation, and subsequent institutionalization, justifies its purpose. Its development occurred in four distinct phases. First, in 1879, Town Councillor Charles W. Ford commissioned the house’s construction. Second, Colville purchased the home in May 1949 and made significant alterations to the structure, for example, setting up a studio space in the attic (Fig. 5).

Third, in 1981 Mount Allison University purchased the home, transforming it first into a student residence and later into the Conference Functions office.²⁶ The fourth and final phase of the house’s history commenced when the university reconceptualized it as a site “to explore the ideas embedded in [Alex Colville’s] work as an artist who has an international reputation.”²⁷

In 1949, after moving to Sackville and accepting a tenured position in Mount Allison’s Art Department, Alex Colville and his wife Rhoda purchased the house at 76 York Street in a “very bad physical condition,” Colville himself carrying out extensive renovations.²⁸ Notably, the house’s transformation affected Colville as an artist. In a 1982 interview, Colville recalled how he and third-year fine arts student George Slipp “did all the carpenter [sic] work, the roofing, the digging, the reglazing [and] interior woodwork,” which provided “a very interesting experience.” Colville undertook “the actual business of construction and the whole idea of measuring,” which played a pivotal role in the completion of what he called his “first good” painting, *Nude and Dummy* (Fig. 6).

This artwork, he explained, was “a kind of direct product of ... the house building and construct[ion] stuff that I had done in ’49, because [*Nude and Dummy* depicts] an interior scene, in fact an actual room in that house, a bedroom.”²⁹ The work signalled Colville’s first strident painterly deployment of a unified perspectival scheme, and so he “found himself” in this work.³⁰ Accordingly, the house’s preservation, restoration, and subsequent institutionalization depended upon Colville’s association with it *and* work on it, memorialized in various ways. For example, Colville House has not only been designated by the province of New Brunswick as a Local Historic Place, it is also listed in the Canadian Register of Historic Places. Its “heritage value” is evidenced in its architecture, described as “a prime example of the Carpenter Gothic style of architecture in Sackville,” and its “association with the occupants,” Charles W. Ford and later Alex Colville.³¹

In 2000, Mount Allison University and the Town of Sackville called attention to Colville’s connection to the house when they fixed a commemorative plaque to the side of the house naming it “The Colville House.” Recording the dates of the Colville family occupancy, the



6 | Alex Colville, *Nude and Dummy*, 1950, glazed gum Arabic emulsion on board, 60.9 × 81.2 cm, New Brunswick Museum, Saint John, New Brunswick, © A.C. Fine Art Inc. (Photo: New Brunswick Museum)

plaque states: “these were crucial decades in the development of Colville from wartime artist and university professor to one of Canada’s leading professional artists. He restored much of this house, largely with his own hands, the same hands which produced in this place paintings of lasting importance.”³² (Fig. 7)

In preparation for re-adapting the residence in the early 2000s so that it might be of service to the university representing one of its most celebrated alumni, the Owens curatorial team undertook extensive research.³³ They first consulted with Alex and Rhoda Colville who were “adamantly against any kind of recreation,” and so, according to Owens Director/Curator Gemey Kelly, the Owens staff made two primary determinations: the house “would not be a recreation of any kind, and the other was that it would not be a museum” as it holds “no collection, no artefacts are on display, [and] there is no original artwork.”³⁴ And so the team furnished the house “in the most



7 | “The Colville House” plaque, 2009, Mount Allison University. (Photo: Courtesy of the Owens Art Gallery)

functional way” to accommodate onsite programming for visitors. Kelly characterized the institution that opened to the public in September 2009 as “an interpretive centre known as Colville House.”³⁵ As she explained, Colville wanted “for there to be an intellectual activity for the house”³⁶ – for it to benefit “the future, young people, research, outreach, [and] access.”³⁷

From 2009 to 2016, the house, operating in its “nascent stages” of development, has acted, in Kelly’s words, as “a portal for exploring Colville and his work.” At the 17 September 2009 public reception for Colville House’s official opening, the university welcomed guests to “a centre dedicated to the work of renowned Canadian artist and Allisonian Alex Colville.” In its reincarnation as “a centre honouring Colville’s work as both an artist and a teacher,” then-president of Mount Allison University Robert Campbell proclaimed, “the facility will enhance Mount Allison and Sackville making our community one of the most active cultural and artistic centres in the country.”³⁸ It thus operates within a larger institutional framework since the University art gallery manages it, and the University supports both the house and the gallery.

Colville House encourages visitors to appreciate the artist’s contribution to the university, the locale, and the community, as well as “ideas embedded in his work as an artist who has an international reputation.” Programming in place provides a “satellite experience” complementing exhibitions of Colville’s



8 | Front room, Colville House, 2009, Mount Allison University. (Photo: Courtesy of the Owens Art Gallery)

work put on at the Owens Art Gallery and drawing on its collection.³⁹ Since 2009, Mount Allison students employed by the Owens (including Gaudet in 2012) greet visitors to Colville House in the months of July and August, briefly describing the site's institutional history, and calling attention to the full-scale colour reproductions of works Colville completed while living there hanging on the walls.⁴⁰ They also hand out self-guided tour brochures (produced in 2015) that identify how each of the reproductions relates to Colville's practice, local subject matter featuring prominently in each. Visitors then peruse the residence at their leisure, taking in various programming amenities such as a "multi-media presentation" — a computer terminal linked into the Colville Biography website produced by the Owens Art Gallery, as well as a television with a built-in DVD player that plays "Studio: The Life and Times of Alex Colville," originally aired on CBC television in 2001 (as part of CBC's *Life and Times* series)⁴¹ (Fig. 8).

Thus, in the summer months, as Kelly suggests, visitors might "come to the house, experience the house, come down the street, go to the Owens and see Colville in a curated way."

In the fall of 2012, we the authors, along with eleven students, explored artists' dealings with institutional critique to propose more possibilities for Colville House. Given the site's burgeoning programming initiatives and the fact that it is only open to the public during the months of July and August (when students no longer attend classes on campus), the site's purpose, programming, and insular focus provide new and valuable opportunities for critical exploration and pedagogy. Mount Allison's 2012 "Unpacking Museums: History, Theory and Creative Politics" fourth year art history seminar course, designed and delivered by Andrea Terry, explored the socio-political motivations that inform museum programming and how artists might intervene in these institutionalized spaces in order to consider how, collectively, we as a class might (re)deploy Colville House.⁴² Drawing on an assigned list of readings focused on critical museum and heritage studies, tourism studies, and art practices focused on institutional critique, we approached Colville House probing how the site might operate as a "staging ground for dominant culture," and how we might destabilize such stagings. We took into account how, over the past three decades in North America, artists, curators, and heritage practitioners have come together to develop contemporary art exhibitions at historical sites, projects referred to in related scholarship either as "museum interventions" or, more pointedly, "artist-history interventions." Art historians, curators, and practicing artists Jim Drobnick and Jennifer Fisher (b. 1955) define "museum intervention" as "the collaboration between artists and institutions to transform the museum from a *container* of cultural artifacts to a *medium* of contemporary work. In this practice, the museum context becomes the raw material or 'cultural readymade' for artistic analysis, commentary and reconfiguration."⁴³ The class re-conceptualized Colville House, transforming it from an institutional and representational space into a "cultural readymade" for artistic analysis. More specifically, students, including Gaudet, and the instructor, Terry, turned the site into a space of learning exploring connections between Canadian nationhood and Colville's place in the construction of a dominant art historical narrative. In confronting both the utility *and* fallibility of the art historical canon, we faced the project's failure, for "it is in failure," Irit Rogoff writes, "rather than the triumph of being able to see through the seemingly hidden – that produces the affectual aspect of art – that moment which knocks you out of your territory and on the quest for re-territorialization."⁴⁴ In other words, taking into account the socio-political factors motivating the house's museumification encourages students to critically evaluate the messages signalled by the site and how it might be redeployed to liberate it from the politics of place.

The site-specific approach encouraged students to develop critical insights into one of the university's most distinguished graduates and Canada's Painter Laureate,⁴⁵ to ask how such accolades came to be conferred on Colville and, ultimately, to speculate on how artists, curators, instructors, historians, and art historians might move beyond these conceptualizations. In so doing, the course design and approach drew heavily on Rogoff's concept of the "academy as potentiality." As she explains, "education in and of and for, the arts ... is becoming an appropriate proving ground for the necessity to distance and problematize the relations between inputs and outputs in education and to insist on the complete impossibility of knowing in advance where thought and practice might lead."⁴⁶ The exploration of "not-yet-known-knowledge" depends upon a pedagogy that uses the "navigational vectors" of potentiality, criticality, and access, prioritizing efforts rather than outcomes.⁴⁷ As the opposite of actuality, potentiality inhabits the realm of the possible without prescribing it as plan. "[T]hinking 'academy' through 'potentiality,'" Rogoff explains,

means dismissing much of the instrumentalism that seems to go hand and hand with education, much of the managerialism that is associated with a notion of "training" for this or that profession or market. Letting go of many of the understandings of "academy" as a training ground whose only permitted outcomes are a set of concrete objects or practices. It allows for the inclusions of notions of both fallibility and actualisation into a practice of teaching and learning ... [T]here is an excitement in shifting our perception of an educational and training ground which is not pure preparation, pure resolution. Instead it might encompass fallibility and understand it as a form of knowledge production rather than of its disappointment.⁴⁸

As a result, the course design fostered an investigative process where students critically analyzed the site's institutional history and subsequently considered its potential in hosting artistic projects that might destabilize the implied dominant narrative(s).

In-class readings, discussions, and onsite visits, reinforced Foucault's definition of critique to advance our work: "a critique is not a matter of saying things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices we accept rest on."⁴⁹ We held classes in the house, which provided students with opportunities to actively engage with its interior – to explore it, to ponder it, to occupy it. Subsequent to that, we

interrogated relations between the university, its administrators, its Fine Arts faculty, and the Owens Art Gallery curatorial team over the course of six decades that coalesced in the house's institutionalization, requiring that the site convey – through both direct and indirect means – particular messages to its audience. Students then split into two groups and presented their own respective proposals for the site.

The first group conducted research in the Mount Allison University Archives, locating a cassette tape recording of a 1982 interview Colville did with Canadian historian John Reid that sheds a provocative light on Colville's relationship with Mount Allison University. Notably, side B of the cassette had only recently been accessible for research since January 2012, as Colville had requested a thirty-year publication ban on it. While on side A Colville recounts his student years at Mount Allison, his work as a war artist, and the beginning of his teaching career at the university, he chose to keep confidential on side B his problems with the university administration leading up to his resignation in 1963. This included his opinions of named individuals and particular hiring decisions, which he characterized as “hair-raising.”⁵⁰ Regarding his departure, Colville states, “The things that I thought – well I can remember when it was all over and I simply quit ... [B]asically, what I thought is, I am wasting my time – the hell with it, I'm going to get out.”⁵¹ Students proposed that the cassette tape be played in its entirety in the house so that Colville's oral account might make evident tensions in the relationship between artist and institution and the complications that arguably (along with a host of other factors identified elsewhere) led to his abrupt departure in order to “create dialogue” amongst visitors.⁵² Such an inclusion would provide what Bruce Barber calls “an *interruption*, or *mediative action* ... a cultural intervention within a context characterized, for example, by its resistance to change, may encourage several positions (and responses) to be adopted by those engaged in the enactment.”⁵³ Dialogic interventions help problematize institutional monologues and subsequently stimulate the exploration of multiple viewpoints. As architectural specialists Franklin Vagnone and Deborah Ryan write in their 2016 book *Anarchist's Guide to Historic House Museums*, fostering conversations amongst visitors “invites a diversity of opinion, and welcomes discord as a healthy component in civic dialogue.”⁵⁴

The second group proposed to “convert Colville House into a dynamic contemporary art space” through the creation of an artist residency program to “stimulate artistic development” in the Sackville community and “attract new audience[s].”⁵⁵ Such a residency program might not only generate opportunities for “recent Mount Allison graduates and other emerging artists” but also allow for the house to be open for longer periods.⁵⁶ The concept demonstrated great potential, all the more so given the fact that students



9 | Front room, Colville House, 2017. An easel (right) and drafting table (by bay window) along with other objects from the studio of Alex Colville. Installation view at the Colville House at Mount Allison University. (Photo: Courtesy of the Owens Art Gallery)

refrained from naming any individual artists for consideration. They simply outlined the benefits of such an initiative to the Gallery, the university, and to the community as a whole.⁵⁷ More to the point, the students' 2012 presentation to Owens staff underscored the salient imperatives of creativity, collaboration, dialogue, and critical awareness when ushering such projects to fruition. Studies of visual and material culture in Canada such as this one offer opportunities for all those involved to better ascertain discourses of dominance embedded in exhibitions, cultural institutions, and the art historical canon while simultaneously promoting the salience of critical pedagogy and site-specificity.

In 2017, Colville House entered into its fifth and current phase. After Colville's passing, in 2016, his family donated the contents of his studio in Wolfville to Kelly and the Owens Art Gallery, which, in turn, provided Colville House with its own collection. With the assistance of a federal-government Canada 150 grant of \$98,000, the staff at the Owens used the studio contents to produce a permanent installation on the house's first

floor, entitled, “The Colville Studio,” an “interactive learning exhibition ... highlighting Colville’s artistic process, and bringing it to life.”⁵⁸ Select contents installed include Colville’s easels, the lab coat that he wore when working in the studio, furniture he himself made and used in his studio, such as a standing desk, as well as bookshelves and vitrines filled with magazines and literary publications featuring his work on the covers or in the pages (Fig. 9).

In advance of the 27 October 2017 grand opening event, Kelly described the opportunities the site could now afford, stating, “We plan to use it for teaching and learning in a cross-disciplinary way. We can imagine art history, Canadian history, math, computer science, we can imagine commerce students, we can imagine a whole range of interest as we start to develop the house in the university context.”⁵⁹ While it might be tempting to suggest that this installation reinforces the site’s focus on Colville or, more broadly, a “staging ground for dominant culture,” we would argue, as evidenced above with the achievements of the art history students of 2012, the site continues to offer opportunities for the advancement of a critical pedagogy that might coalesce in the advancement of efforts to foster interdisciplinary studies.

NOTES

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- 1 The National Gallery of Canada hosted the exhibition from 23 April – 7 September 2015. Unsurprisingly, the exhibition tagline on the NGC’s minisite on the Internet and all associated marketing and promotional materials, such as billboards posted around the city of Ottawa, read “Alex Colville. A Canadian Icon / Alex Colville. Une Icône Canadienne.” See, for example, <http://www.gallery.ca/colville/en/> and <http://www.byward-market.com/en/events/AlexColville.htm>. “Art for a Nation” appeared at the NGC from 13 October – 31 December 1995 and the Art Gallery of Ontario from 17 February – 5 May 1996.
- 2 “Tickets for the AGO’s groundbreaking Alex Colville exhibition go on sale Aug. 1,” *Art Gallery of Ontario*, 2014. Accessed 15 May 2016, <http://www.ago.net/tickets-for-the-agos-groundbreaking-alex-colville-exhibition-go-on-sale-aug.1>; “Everyday Colville,” *Art Gallery of Ontario*, 2014. Accessed 15 May 2016 <http://www.welcometocolville.ca/everyday-colville>

- 3 See Mark A. CHEETHAM, “The World, the Work, and the Artist: Colville and the Community of Vision,” *Revue d’art canadienne/Canadian Art Review* 15:1 (1988): 61.
- 4 “Alex Colville. A Canadian Icon.”
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Art Gallery of Ontario, “A Fond Farewell to Alex Colville, and Thanks to Our Visitors,” *Art Matters Blog*, 16 Jan. 2015. Accessed 15 May 2016, <https://artmatters.ca/wp/2015/01/a-fond-farewell-to-alex-colville-and-thanks-to-our-visitors/>
- 7 CHEETHAM, “The World, the Work, and the Artist,” 61.
- 8 Murray WHYTE, “AGO to celebrate works of Toronto-born painter,” *The Star* (Toronto), 14 Nov. 2013.
- 9 Art Gallery of Ontario, “A fond farewell.”
- 10 For example, the National Gallery of Canada’s press release, issued on 18 July 2013, read in part, “The National Gallery of Canada (NGC) is saddened by the news of artist Alex Colville’s passing earlier this week ... The NGC collection comprises 64 works by Alex Colville, including *Child and Dog* (1952), *Hound in Field* (1958), and *To Prince Edward Island* (1965), an iconic painting featuring a woman looking out to sea through a pair of binoculars. This past May, the artist donated never-before-seen material from his personal archives to the NGC, including personal and professional correspondence from the 1950s to the present; grade-school textbooks and scribbled drawings and marginalia; photographs that he took; and daily agendas, notebooks, and diaries. This material, which will be received by the NGC next fall, will be available for public viewing once archived.” (NGC, “Press Release: The National Gallery Mourns the Loss of Great Canadian Artist Alex Colville,” <http://www.gallery.ca/en/about/1462.php>). On that same day, the *Hamilton Spectator* ran the article “Hamilton Home to Iconic Colville Painting,” written by reporter Natalie Paddon that begins off, stating, “Alex Colville thought his iconic painting *Horse and Train* was too morbid to sell, so he was thankful when the Art Gallery of Hamilton offered to take it off his hands in 1957. Since then, *Horse and Train* has become one of the most iconic – and often reproduced – paintings in Canadian art. It’s also one of the crowning jewels of the AGH, and their most sought-after work, said Tobi Bruce, senior curator of Canadian historical art. Colville died Tuesday at his home in Wolfville, NS from a heart condition at the age of 92.” Accessed 18 July 2013, <http://www.thespec.com/news-story/3896940-hamilton-home-to-iconic-colville-painting/>
- 11 According to the text panel, “A Brief Biography,” Colville “retired” from Mount Allison University in 1963, turning to painting full time. The significance of this characterization is discussed later on in the article.
- 12 “Alex Colville at the AGO: A Complicated Man.”
- 13 Claudette LAUZON, *The Unmaking of Home in Contemporary Art* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2017), 27.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Irit ROGOFF, *Terra Infirma: Geography’s Visual Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 22.
- 16 Ibid., 20.
- 17 Ibid., 21.
- 18 Ian MCKAY, “The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History,” *Canadian Historical Review* 81:4 (2000): 620.

- 19 Lynda JESSUP, Erin MORTON, and Kirsty ROBERTSON, eds., "Introduction: Rethinking Relevance: Studying the Visual in Canada," in *Negotiations in a Vacant Lot: Studying the Visual in Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 6.
- 20 Ibid., 4.
- 21 Ibid., 9.
- 22 CHEETHAM, "The World, the Work, and the Artist," 61.
- 23 Mark A. CHEETHAM, *Alex Colville: The Observer Observed: A Biography* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1994), 82.
- 24 Karen STANWORTH, *Visibly Canadian: Imaging Collective Identities in the Canadas, 1820–1920* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 9.
- 25 "Colville House Officially Opens at Mount Allison University," *Mount Allison University Marketing and Communications Office*, 18 Sept. 2009. Accessed 26 July 2013, www.mta.ca/news/index.php?id=2128; Gemey Kelly (Director/Curator, Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University), phone interview by Leanne Gaudet, 6 Feb. 2015, voice recording.
- 26 Cheryl ENNALS, "Colville House," Mount Allison University Building and Properties Collection, Mount Allison University Archives, 9 Mar. 2005.
- 27 Leanne Gaudet interview with Gemey Kelly.
- 28 Alex Colville transcript of interview with John Reid, 1982, Wolfville, NS (Sackville: Mount Allison University Archives), 4.
- 29 Ibid, 15.
- 30 "1949," *Colville House: Explore Alex Colville's Life and Work*, <http://www.mta.ca/owens/colville/timeline/index.php>; Colville transcript of interview with Reid, 15. Art historian Helen Dow elaborates on this use of geometry in relation to architecture in the work, writing, "The system employed was a three-to-four rectangle, that is a rectangle three units high and four wide, while the recession is in parallel perspective with a single vanishing-point. The three-dimensionality which results from this combination is so clearly defined that its scale appears to be capable of actual mathematical measurement, an effect which is due in large part to the structural soundness of the composition" (DOW, *The Art of Alex Colville* [Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972], 66). Curator David Burnett writes, in the 1983 retrospective exhibition catalogue *Colville*, "*Nude and Dummy* was the first painting in which Colville used a unified perspectival scheme. It was an important change in procedure for him, taking him away from Impressionist composition 'by eye' to a rational formation of pictorial space. It was, in retrospect, a logical step, arising out of his concern with the reality of the painting itself, that is, with what a painting could 'say.' It was logical also in that he never doubted the business of painting lay in the direct transposition of images from the three-dimensional world into the two-dimensional terms of painting. Painting for him was a matter of construction; its process should be clear and precise" (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1983), 69.
- 31 "Colville House," *Canada's Historic Places*. Accessed 14 Mar. 2015, <http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=6907>. The residence's architectural style emulates the Neo-Gothic using wood instead of stone, and is thus somewhat restrained in its decorative elements, characteristic features of which include the hipped roof, steep centred cross gable, symmetrical façade, and bay window. See also Mathilde BROUSSEAU, *Gothic Revival in Canadian Architecture*

- (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1980); Gaynor AALTONEN, *The History of Architecture* (London: Arcturus Publishing, 2013); James F. O’GORMAN, *Henry Austin: In Every Variety of Architectural Style* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2010), 199, 103; Edmund V. GILLON JR., *Cut and Assemble a Victorian Gothic House* (New York: Courier Corporation, 1995).
- 32 “Colville House,” *Tantramar Historic Sites*. Accessed 19 May 2016, http://heritage.tantramar.com/hs19_1879.html.
- 33 As architectural historian John Leroux records, the house’s renovation took place as part of a university-wide plan. In 2002, the University Board of Regents approved a 20-year Facilities Master Plan, “an evolving blue print intended to guide the university on how best to adapt to the changing needs of its facilities, academic programs and students. The plan was to centre the campus around three primary areas: a residential area, a consolidated academic area and a centralized student area. Highlights (some of which have been acted upon) included: ... Renovation of satellite houses owned by Mount Allison. / The most notable of the ‘satellite houses’ referred to above was Colville House, a circa 1879 residence on York Street that was the home of Alex Colville from 1949 to 1973. This was a seminal period in his growth as an artist, making it somewhat of a shrine to Canadian visual art.” John LEROUX and Thaddeus HOLOWNIA, *A Vision of Wood and Stone: The Architecture of Mount Allison University* (Kentville: Gaspereau Press, 2016), 210–11.
- 34 Leanne Gaudet interview with Gemey Kelly.
- 35 Kelly, quoted in “Artist Alex Colville’s N.B. Home Open to Public,” CBC News New Brunswick, 26 Sept. 2009. Accessed 26 July 2013, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/artist-alex-colville-s-n-b-home-open-to-public-1.806221>
- 36 Leanne Gaudet interview with Gemey Kelly.
- 37 “Artist Alex Colville’s N.B. Home Open to Public.”
- 38 Robert CAMPBELL, quoted in “Colville House Officially Opens at Mount Allison University.”
- 39 Such exhibitions include: “Temporalities – Alex Colville: Student, Colleague and Teacher” (22 May – Sept. 2009), “Colville: The Student Years” (29 June – 2 Sept. 2012) and “The Colville Gift” (3 Nov. 2014 – 16 Mar. 2015).
- 40 According to the 2015 Colville House informational brochure distributed to visitors for self-guided tours, the reproductions depict artworks “either made in this house, or are related to his time in Sackville.” These include, listed here in chronological order: *Sackville Train Station* (1941–42); *Self-Portrait* (1942); *Railroad Over Marsh* (1947); *Nude and Dummy* (1950); *Untitled (Dog and Fireplace)* (1950); *Untitled (Rhoda on Stairs)* (1950); *Child and Dog* (1952); *Soldier and Girl at Station* (1953); *Horse and Train* (1954); *Woman at Clothesline* (1956–57); *High Diver* (1957); *Hound in Field* (1958); *Milk Truck* (1959); *Mr. Wood in April* (1960); *Dog with Bone* (1961); *Oceans Limited* (1962); *Moon and Cow* (1963); *Study for Target Pistol and Man* (1963); *Skater* (1964); *Snow* (1969); and *Seven Crows* (1980).
- 41 If available, they might also distribute copies of “The Colville House Sketchbook,” a small publication described as a “resource designed for Colville House. It is a sketchbook that takes Alex Colville’s approach to observation as its inspiration.” Lucy MACDONALD, *Owens Art Gallery*, 2009. Available: <http://www.mta.ca/owens/publications/catalogues/2009/colvillesketchbook.php>

- 42 “Artist Alex Colville’s N.B. Home Open to Public,” CBC News New Brunswick, 26 Sept. 2009. Accessed 26 July 2013, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/artist-alex-colville-s-n-b-home-open-to-public-1.806221>
- 43 Jim DROBNICK and Jennifer FISHER, *Museopathy* (Kingston, ON: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 2002), 15.
- 44 Irit ROGOFF, “Academy as Potentiality,” in *a.c.a.d.e.m.y.*, ed. Angelika Nollert et al. (Berlin: Revolver Publishing, 2006), 19.
- 45 In 1983, Canadian journalist Robert FULFORD published his essay on Colville, entitled, “Painter Laureate,” in *Saturday Night* 98 (1983): 5, describing the artist’s works as “icons of Canadianism, the visual expression of our spirit.”
- 46 ROGOFF, “Academy as Potentiality,” 14.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 15.
- 48 *Ibid.*, 15–16.
- 49 Michel FOUCAULT, “Practicing Criticism,” in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977–1984* (New York and London: Routledge, 2013), 154–55.
- 50 Colville, transcript of interview with Reid, 18. It is beyond the scope of this paper to describe the extensive problematic dealings Colville described in the interview. For a more extensive description of these dealings, see Mark A. CHEETHAM, *Alex Colville: The Observer Observed*, 47–51.
- 51 Colville, transcript of interview with Reid, 18 and 22.
- 52 Student presentation, “Behind Closed Doors: Recontextualizing the Colvilles” (final presentation presented in the art history class, “Unpacking Museums,” Mount Allison University, Sackville, NB, November 2012), PowerPoint presentation, slide 7. Art historian Mark CHEETHAM also refers to Colville’s departure from Mount Allison as his resignation, *Observer*, 49–50. The Colville Biography website, on the other hand, states that Colville “retire[d] from teaching in order to devote himself to his art practice full time.” See “1963,” *Colville House: Explore Alex Colville’s Life and Work*. Accessed 23 June 2016, <http://mta.ca/owens/colville/timeline/index.php>.
- 53 Bruce BARBER, “Cultural Interventions in the Public Sphere,” in *Public Art in Canada: Critical Perspectives*, ed. Annie Gérin and James Mclean (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 166.
- 54 Franklin VAGNONE and Deborah RYAN, *Anarchist’s Guide to Historic House Museums* (California: West Coast Press, 2016), 82.
- 55 Student presentation, “Colville House: Proposal for a Show and Residency” (final presentation presented in the art history class “Unpacking Museums,” Mount Allison University, Sackville, NB, November 2012), PowerPoint presentation, slide 2.
- 56 *Ibid.*, slide 14.
- 57 Furthermore, the proposal – although not stated explicitly – might also bring in, involve or collaborate with nearby cultural institutions, such as the Struts Gallery and Faucet Media Arts Centre (est.d 1982), an artist-run centre located 850 metres (or an 11-minute walk down the street) from Colville House and the “only media arts centre supporting all forms of media art in Atlantic Canada including audio, film, video and new media.” “History and Mandate,” *Struts Gallery and Faucet Media Arts Centre*, <http://www.strutsgallery.ca/about/history-mandate/>.
- 58 Emily Baron CADLOFF, “Colville Studio is an Open House to Artists,” *Telegraph-Journal* (New Brunswick), 20 (October), Art 1.
- 59 *Ibid.*

On n'est jamais mieux que chez soi : les expositions consacrées à Alex Colville comparées à sa vie et à son œuvre

LEANNE GAUDET ET ANDREA TERRY

L'article décrit des expositions consacrées à la vie et à l'œuvre d'Alex Colville (1920–2013). Il compare, sur le plan des perceptions du lieu, la rétrospective posthume « Alex Colville » proposée en 2014–2015 par le Musée des beaux-arts de l'Ontario (MBAO) en collaboration avec le Musée des beaux-arts du Canada (MBAC) – qui reste à ce jour la plus importante exposition consacrée à l'artiste – et l'exposition proposée à la Maison Colville. Ce centre d'interprétation public a ouvert ses portes en 2009 sur le campus de l'Université Mount Allison à Sackville (Nouveau-Brunswick), dans ce qui fut de 1949 à 1973 la résidence et le studio de l'artiste. L'exposition du MBAO présentait Colville comme un artiste dont l'œuvre évoque un sens du lieu au caractère unique si magnifié que le lieu en question pourrait se situer n'importe où. Alors que cette interprétation reposait sur un cadre national subtilement nuancé, la Maison Colville met en lumière, sans équivoque, le lien de l'artiste avec un endroit particulier. L'article explique ensuite comment, en 2012, la Maison Colville a contribué au déploiement d'une approche pédagogique critique remettant en question les pratiques en matière de collections. Plus généralement, il explore la manière dont les politiques en matière d'expositions ou de représentations, dictées par des forces centrifuges ou centralisatrices, sont au service d'intérêts institutionnels, idéologiques et sociopolitiques particuliers, et sur la façon dont une approche pédagogique critique fondée sur les particularités d'un lieu peut bousculer ces intérêts.

Comparant la rétrospective du MBAO à ce que propose la Maison Colville, l'article attire l'attention sur la manière dont les récits consacrés au lieu contribuent aux analyses de l'œuvre de l'artiste. En ce qui a trait à l'exposition du MBAO, il met l'accent sur les principaux cas de coalescence de l'art et de l'interprétation qui ont le mieux mis en lumière le thème central de l'exposition, à savoir l'attrait apparemment mondial exercé par l'œuvre d'une « icône canadienne » de l'art. Selon l'article, ce thème renforce les perceptions traditionnelles du chez-soi, du lieu et de l'appartenance, présentées comme des paradigmes canadiens inhérents et distincts. Par conséquent, plutôt que d'offrir une description détaillée de l'exposition, l'article cherche en quoi la rétrospective du MBAO constituait une interprétation des concepts de lieu, de chez-soi et de terre natale présents dans l'art de Colville, renforçant ainsi le

discours néolibéral. Suit une comparaison de ce discours à la restauration et à la programmation de la Maison Colville, qui donne l'occasion de résister activement au discours en question ou de le remettre en question. Gérée par les conservatrices et conservateurs de la galerie d'art Owens de l'Université Mount Allison, la transformation de l'ancienne résidence de Colville en établissement culturel témoigne des efforts déployés pour rassembler les récits de Colville en un narratif plus vaste, au travers du prisme d'un lieu particulier. Située en bordure du campus de l'Université Mount Allison et gérée par la galerie d'art Owens (devenue en 1895 la première galerie d'art universitaire), la Maison Colville a été de 1949 à 1973 la résidence d'Alex Colville, lui-même diplômé et membre du corps professoral de l'établissement. En 2009, la résidence a rouvert ses portes et est devenue la Maison Colville, à savoir un établissement culturel et un « portail » consacrés à l'exploration des contributions artistiques de Colville aux collectivités environnantes. Chaque année, elle accueille le grand public en juillet et en août. L'analyse de la conception de la Maison Colville dans le cadre de l'article montre à quel point les gestionnaires, les conservatrices et les conservateurs de l'Université Mount Allison ont voulu consolider le lien de l'artiste avec le lieu et ainsi enrichir le capital culturel de l'Université. En transformant en musée une résidence familiale privée, ils ont voulu présenter Colville non seulement comme une icône canadienne, mais aussi comme l'un des diplômés les plus accomplis et prestigieux de l'établissement. La Maison Colville convie les visiteurs à prendre conscience de la contribution de l'artiste à l'Université, au lieu et à la collectivité, ainsi que des « idées intégrées à l'œuvre de cet artiste de notoriété internationale ». La programmation offre une « expérience satellite » qui complète les expositions sur Colville proposées à la galerie d'art Owens ainsi que les œuvres de l'artiste intégrées à la collection permanente. De 2009 à 2016, les étudiantes et étudiants de l'Université Mount Allison employés par la galerie Owens (dont Leanne Gaudet en 2012) ont accueilli pendant l'été les visiteurs à la Maison Colville. Ils leur exposaient brièvement l'histoire institutionnelle de l'endroit et attiraient leur attention sur les reproductions couleur, grandeur nature, des œuvres de Colville accrochées aux murs et réalisées pendant que l'artiste habitait les lieux. À partir de 2015, ils ont distribué des brochures sur des visites autoguidées indiquant les liens de chaque reproduction avec la pratique de Colville et avec les lieux. Les visiteurs pouvaient ensuite arpenter à leur guise le rez-de-chaussée de la résidence pour découvrir notamment une présentation multimédia proposée au moyen d'un ordinateur relié au site web « Colville Biography » (conçu par la galerie d'art Owens) et, par l'intermédiaire d'un téléviseur à lecteur DVD intégré, le documentaire *Studio: The Life and Times of Alex Colville*, diffusé à la CBC en 2001 dans le cadre de sa série *Life and Times*. L'agencement, l'interprétation et la programmation de la Maison Colville ont favorisé le développement d'une

approche pédagogique critique dans les cours d'histoire de l'art donnés à l'Université Mount Allison ainsi que la mise en place de programmes profitant à encore plus d'artistes.

À l'automne 2012, au côté de 11 étudiantes et étudiants en dernière année à l'Université, les auteures de l'article se sont penchées sur les relations de l'artiste avec la critique institutionnelle, et ce, dans le but de trouver d'autres moyens d'exploiter la Maison Colville. Conçu et proposé en 2012 par Andrea Terry à l'Université Mount Allison dans le cadre des cours d'histoire de l'art de quatrième année, le séminaire « Unpacking Museums: History, Theory and Creative Politics » explore les motivations sociopolitiques à l'origine de la programmation du musée et les modes d'intervention des artistes au sein de tels espaces institutionnels. Il entend notamment engager une réflexion sur les moyens de réinventer la Maison Colville. À partir d'une liste de lecture axée sur les études critiques des musées et du patrimoine, les études touristiques et les pratiques artistiques sur la critique institutionnelle, les participantes et participants se sont demandé en quoi la Maison Colville risquait de devenir un « vecteur de la culture dominante » et comment faire pour empêcher cela. Dans cette optique, ils ont pris en compte la manière dont, au cours des trois dernières décennies en Amérique du Nord, les artistes, les commissaires et les spécialistes du patrimoine se sont alliés pour proposer des expositions d'art contemporain sur des lieux historiques. La littérature spécialisée qualifiait ces expositions d'« interventions muséales » ou encore d'« interventions historico-artistiques ». Plus précisément, les membres de l'effectif étudiant, dont Leanne Gaudet, ainsi que l'animatrice du séminaire, Andrea Terry, ont transformé le site en un espace d'apprentissage explorant les liens entre l'esprit national canadien et le rôle de Colville dans la construction d'un récit historique de l'art dominant. Ce faisant, ils remettent en question à la fois l'utilité et l'infailibilité des canons historiques de l'art occidental. S'appuyant principalement sur le concept évoqué par Irit Rogoff dans *Academy as Potentiality*, le plan de cours et sa présentation ont favorisé un processus d'interrogation qui a conduit étudiantes et étudiants à analyser l'histoire institutionnelle du lieu, puis à réfléchir à son potentiel en matière d'accueil de projets artistiques susceptibles de mettre à mal les récits dominants tacites. De telles études de la culture visuelle et matérielle au Canada permettent de sonder, de mettre en lumière et de remettre en question les discours dominants intégrés aux expositions, aux institutions culturelles et aux canons historiques de l'art occidental. Par ailleurs, elles soulignent la nécessité d'approches pédagogiques critiques, en particulier celles prenant en compte les facteurs ou les aspects pertinents aux particularités des lieux en matière d'histoire de l'art, d'études muséales ainsi que de culture visuelle et matérielle sur le territoire actuellement connu sous le nom de Canada.



1 | "X Magazine Steals from INTERNATIONAL TIMES, New York, 1978," FILE 4:2, Special Transgressions Issue (Fall 1979): 54-55. (Photo: Courtesy of AA Bronson)

General Idea's New York

STEVE LYONS

The cover of the fall 1979 “Transgressions” issue of General Idea’s *FILE Magazine* announces an impressive roster of contributors from the United States and Western Europe: the experimental American writer Kathy Acker, Italian film director Pier Paolo Pasolini, New York fashion and nightlife photographer Jimmy DeSana, French novelist Jean Genet, and David Byrne of the new wave band the Talking Heads. Pasolini appears not as an author but as the subject of a short story by the French theorist Guy Hocquenghem. As for Genet, his writing appears, but not with his knowledge or permission. Toward the back of the issue, we encounter a two-page spread featuring a short editorial written by Genet for *Le Monde* in 1977¹ (Fig. 1). Originally titled “Violence et brutalité,” the text is a passionate defense of the armed tactics of the Red Army Faction (RAF) against the brutality of the West German state.² Published in the midst of a spree of assassinations and kidnappings carried out by the Marxist-Leninist paramilitary group, one can imagine that Genet’s defence was received as a transgression when it was published in France’s most widely distributed newspaper. However, it appears in *FILE* two years later, in a different political context, and as a facsimile of a facsimile. Translated for the left-wing British counterculture newspaper the *International Times* in March 1978, it was quickly reprinted by the French-born New York-based filmmaker Eric Mitchell in the May 1978 issue of *X Motion Picture Magazine*, a short-lived artists’ magazine collectively produced by members of the New York alternative arts organization Collaborative Projects, Inc. (Colab, 1977–1985).³ Replicating the *International Times*’s layout and illustrations and bearing the trace of Mitchell’s scrawled citation – “stolen from *International Times* by Eric Mitchell” – it appears in *FILE* as a kind of palimpsest, a third-generation reprint of an article meant to be digested quickly by readers of *Le Monde*. Passing through the filters of British counterculture and New York alternative art before finally arriving in Toronto, it lands in our hands today as a kind of cipher to be decoded. I will return to this two-page spread. For now, it can be said that *FILE* was enmeshed in a transnational network of communication and exchange, a simple fact that interrupts a developing myth about Toronto art’s “punk years” most forcefully rehearsed by curator and art critic Philip Monk.

Monk's book *Is Toronto Burning? Three Years in the Making (and Unmaking) of the Toronto Art Scene* examines the range of artistic activity taking place in Toronto between 1977 and 1979, at the tail end of which *FILE*'s "Transgressions" issue was released, defining within this emerging scene a central rift between artists and critics who valued "ironic ambiguity" versus those who valued "political earnestness."⁴ On the side of ironic ambiguity were General Idea, Susan Britton (b. 1952), David Buchan (1950–1993), Colin Campbell (1942–2001), and other artists and art groups who drew upon the postmodern forms of camp, parody, and pastiche to build an elaborate collective mythology for the Toronto art scene. *FILE* operated as the principal vehicle through which this faction articulated its position. On the side of political earnestness were Carole Condé (b. 1940) and Karl Beveridge (b. 1945), as well as the Centre for Experimental Art and Communication (CEAC). These collectives aimed to critique privilege and political apathy in the art system, build alliances between artists and the working class, and, most ambitiously, to enlist art – as well as its institutions and forms of dissemination – as weapons in class struggle. Entrenched in Marxist discourse and attentive to international currents in political radicalism, this faction articulated its militant position in exhibitions, public programs, artists' books, and magazines, including *Centerfold/Fuse* and CEAC's journal *STRIKE*. Restricting his field of study to a few city blocks and a pile of archival documents, Monk gains the clarity to animate this antagonism, where he exposes and unpacks some of the core aesthetic and political issues upon which artists in Toronto grouped and divided. So far so good. Unfortunately, his analysis is built upon and justified by an unsubstantiated story that goes something like this: with the rise of pluralism in late-1970s art, New York was knocked off its pedestal as the de-facto centre of the international art world. With the declining influence of New York within the international art system, artists in Toronto and other formerly marginalized cities were finally free to determine their own paths, to "develop according to their own terms outside the imperialist tyranny of New York."⁵ The claim that Toronto, or any art scene for that matter, could only develop in a "vacancy" or "blank space" – to repeat two metaphors used by Monk – can be, and has been, unsettled from a variety of angles.⁶ It fixes the origins of practices and ideas to a specific geographical site, forwarding an isolationist model of culture that simply does not hold in an era defined by networked technology and multinational capitalism – perhaps all the more so in Toronto during the late 1970s, where some of the key artists Monk describes emerged from an international mail art and artist-run centre network cultivated over the previous decade. Some of them had also recently returned from New York. Condé and Beveridge lived in New York from 1969 to 1976; the members of General Idea lived there in 1975 and 1976.⁷

James Clifford has written extensively on the problems built into isolationist models of culture, especially as they were adopted by anthropologists in the first half of the twentieth century. He argues that in assigning the village as a manageable unit for ethnographic study, the anthropologist consequently excludes and erases “the wider global world of intercultural import-export in which the ethnographic account is always already enmeshed.”⁸ To draw the dynamics of intercultural exchange into the frame of ethnographic study, Clifford proposes a different set of questions: “How do groups negotiate themselves in external relationships, and how is culture also a site of travel for others? How are spaces traversed from outside? How is one group’s core another’s periphery?” Such questions de-centre the village as the privileged site of encounter, leading us to ask how local practices are situated within global networks of communication and exchange. Clifford’s line of inquiry is equally relevant to the study of local art scenes. Following him, I argue that art scenes do not take shape in isolation. Rather, while they are shaped by specific material conditions and play out in the form of immediate and local struggles, they are also fed and structured by imported ideas, practices, and people. This, I propose, is as true of an art centre like New York as it is of a regional outpost like Toronto.

The unexplained appearance of Eric Mitchell’s *X* spread in *FILE* offers a concrete manifestation of exchange between art scenes in downtown Toronto and New York. Mitchell was the co-founder of the New Cinema, New York’s only dedicated screening venue for new wave film, as well as the director of several of the city’s most notable new wave films, including *Kidnapped* (1978) and *Red Italy* (1979). This placed him at the centre of New York’s emerging new wave art scene. In New York, the terms “punk,” “new wave,” and sometimes “no wave” were used inconsistently to describe the informal groups of artists committed to advancing the aesthetic grammar of British punk – direct expression, iconoclastic messaging, violent imagery – within the fields of visual art and film. *FILE* profiled this scene in nearly every issue published between 1977 and 1980, bringing it together with Toronto’s own nascent punk scene, which, according to AA Bronson (b. 1946), “was much more of a centre for punk publishing than was New York, and more influential internationally.”⁹ The London punk scene was also deliberately woven into the pages of *FILE*. In all three cities, artists, filmmakers, and musicians adopted punk aesthetics, acted in each other’s narrative films and videos, opened nightclubs, hosted loft exhibitions, produced magazines, and located themselves within self-constructed bohemian communities. They also held a strange fascination with ultra-left armed struggle, a fascination that linked avant-garde artistic and intellectual communities across North America and Western Europe in the late 1970s.¹⁰ *FILE* played a productive role in making the overlap of these scenes visible. It also

rendered them indistinguishable, making them manifest as iterations of one “Global Downtown.”¹¹

If isolationist models of culture tend to extract the local field of study from the broader historical conditions that set their limits, then the alternative proposed by Clifford allows us to situate local identities and practices within the political and economic system that enables connection and exchange. In the late twentieth century, multinational capitalism has constituted the background for cultural production and identity formation in the West. More significantly, it has also played an active role in the shaping of local cultures and identities. Neither General Idea nor their international associates were under the illusion that punk was an authentic expression of anti-capitalist dissent or that it escaped the logic of capitalist recuperation. For them, punk was “about do-it-yourself. In that sense it was anti-corporate but not anti-capitalist.”¹² Together their work thematized the recuperative process at play in the mainstreaming of punk. But how did they come to a shared analysis of punk? What bound the “Global Downtown” together? Such questions are necessary to ask if we are to understand how geographically dispersed art scenes could follow similar patterns despite the supposed pluralism of the day.

This is not an exhaustive study of the dynamic system of international communication and exchange in which General Idea was enmeshed. The group’s significant institutional and interpersonal ties in Europe are only touched on in this study and require further examination. Nor is this a critical review or comprehensive response to Philip Monk’s reading of the history of Toronto art. It is, however, an effort to move beyond Monk’s frame of analysis. My primary interest is methodological: what new knowledge can be gained by reading urban art histories together, by taking their overlap as an object of study? To this end, I zero in on the overlaps between Toronto and New York – cities that could not lay claim to the “invention” of punk, and yet nevertheless spawned distinctive iterations that were informed not only by a reverence for British punk, but also by their own independent histories of artists’ self-organization. By situating the creative and critical endeavours of General Idea and their allies within this expanded field of encounter, this article sheds light on the connective function of Toronto’s art magazines, a function that escapes the localist view.¹³

Feedback

Published by General Idea (AA Bronson, Felix Partz [1945–1994], and Jorge Zontal [1944–1994]) between 1972 and 1989, *FILE* was best known in its early years as a mail art magazine. Featuring selections from the Vancouver group

Image Bank's open access artists' directory – an aggregation of mailing lists assembled by members of Fluxus, the New York Correspondence School, Ant Farm, and Canada's growing artist-run centre network – *FILE* supported an international network for correspondence art linking Fluxus and post-Fluxus art groups. Printed in an edition of 3,000, distributed across North America and Europe, and profiled in magazines such as *Art in America*, *Avalanche*, *Studio International*, and *Flash Art* in its first two years, the magazine played a significant role in expanding the reach of the artists' directory and opening up the mail art network to new constituencies.¹⁴ The magazine featured reproductions of artworks sent to General Idea from their existing contacts in Vancouver, New York, and California. It also featured editorials and essays by the group on their own work and the work of their peers. According to Bronson, *FILE* was conceived as a vehicle to call into being a network of Canadian artists: "We wanted to create a Canadian art scene when there wasn't one. There were the beginnings of one, but there wasn't a real scene, but we thought if we could create the image of a scene then in fact it would exist."¹⁵ He describes *FILE* as a kind of mirror that, once held up to the Canadian artist-run network, could provide a visible form to hold together the diffuse and dispersed activities of artists working across Canada. For him, the magazine was "a means of fabricating a tissue, if not of actual activity (as in the physicality of the New York art scene) at least as a sort of sketch of an art scene – an abstraction, a gesture, a configuration."¹⁶ Merging the language of tabloid journalism with post-Marxist media theory, the editors developed an idiosyncratic discourse on myth, celebrity, fashion, and glamour. Featuring party snapshots, top ten lists, fashion columns, artist profiles, and letters to the editors, the magazine promoted a core group of contributors, representing them as a kind of Canadian equivalent to Andy Warhol's "superstars." Among them were Image Bank members Vincent Trasov (b. 1947) (Mr. Peanut) and Michael Morris (b. 1942) (Marcel Dot/Marcel Idea) and General Idea collaborators Honey Novick (b. 1962) (Miss Honey) and Granada Gazelle.

The spring 1976 issue, aptly titled the "New York City Edition," signaled a substantive shift in the magazine's focus. This issue announced the official discontinuation of the artists' directory.¹⁷ More significantly, with this issue *FILE* began to more programmatically situate itself beyond the Canadian network that constituted its base. Produced during General Idea's stay in New York, the "New York City Edition" included a short story by Kathy Acker, a "Best Dressed" list by Jimmy DeSana, and a lengthy column titled "New York Gossip," which narrated General Idea's interactions with a long list of downtown New York artists, critics, and musicians, many of whom would return in following issues. General Idea's New York was a very specific construction. It did not comprise the city as a whole, its architecture or its

spatial politics. Nor did it involve the uptown commercial galleries or the SoHo alternative art spaces that were formed in the first half of the 1970s. General Idea's New York spiralled around a recurring cast of characters who were part of the city's emerging new wave art and music scene. Among them were Acker, Mitchell, and DeSana (who had been a frequent contributor to *FILE* since 1973), as well as former *Avalanche* magazine editors Liza Béar and Willoughby Sharp, *Interview* magazine editor Ronnie Cutrone, Mudd Club co-founders Diego Cortez and Anya Phillips, *Art-Rite* magazine editor Edit DeAk, Debbie Harry of the new wave band Blondie, punk photographers Bobby Grossman and Marcia Resnick, Lance Loud of the Mumps, punk filmmaker Amos Poe, Düsseldorf-based photographer Katharina Sieverding, who was in New York to study at the Whitney Independent Study Program in 1976, art dealer Tony Shafrazi, Andy Warhol, and artist Robin Winters, who along with Béar, Cortez, and Mitchell, was a member of Colab and contributor to the issue of *X* mentioned above. These and other artists, musicians, filmmakers, critics, and editors appeared in three main ways: as celebrities mentioned in the "Bzzz Bzzz Bzzz" gossip column, which became a regular feature in *FILE* in the "New York City Edition," as contributors of short stories, poems, essays, and images, and as guest editors for special issues. What is significant is that *FILE* did not merely cast a voyeuristic gaze on the happenings of New York's downtown. It also catalyzed a kind of feedback loop between Toronto and New York, producing effects both in and beyond the magazine itself.

General Idea came into contact with New York's downtown scene through Jimmy DeSana, who was a close friend of the group and long-time contributor to *FILE*. Like the members of General Idea, DeSana was gay, fashionable, and well-known within his own community for representing the hedonistic excesses of the young and glamorous. Among DeSana's closest associates in New York was Diego Cortez, who was quickly caught in the feedback loop between Toronto and New York.

Although, according to Bronson, Cortez "was just another bit player in a vast scene, and not especially influential, until somewhat later," Cortez was what Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello would call a "keyholder" in contemporary network jargon: he found himself not only at the centre of New York's downtown art scene, but also between previously divided scenes for art, theory, music, and graffiti.¹⁸ Frequenting punk and new wave venues such as the Mudd Club (which he co-founded), Club 57, and CBGB, Cortez was close with many of the most popular musicians and artists of his generation.¹⁹ He helped to launch the careers of Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring – connecting them with Jeffrey Deitch, who was then an art buyer for Citibank. He collaborated on performances with Acker, facilitated some of the first

collaborations between South Bronx graffiti writers and downtown artists and filmmakers, and curated *New York/New Wave* (1981) at P.S.1, one of the most significant early exhibitions of new wave art. His roommate during this period was Columbia University professor and *Semiotext(e)* editor Sylvère Lotringer. As art director for several issues of *Semiotext(e)* published between 1977 and 1980, Cortez played a leading role in re-inventing this journal with readers like General Idea in mind.²⁰ Lotringer would go on to guest edit the fall 1980 “Foreign Agents”²¹ issue of *FILE* before taking up a lasting role as contributing editor to Eldon Garnet’s *Impulse* magazine in 1983.

Cortez first appeared in *FILE* in the spring 1976 “New York Gossip” column, where he was named for cutting General Idea member Felix Partz out of a recent film.²² He later reappeared in *FILE*’s “Special People Issue,” published in spring 1977, this time finding pride of place on the issue’s cover. Cortez, DeSana, and Anya Phillips would then act as contributing editors for the next issue of *FILE*: “Punk ‘Til You Puke,” published in fall 1977. This issue included an article on punk by AA Bronson, publicity photos and lyrics by British, American, and Canadian punk bands, headshots of a range of musicians and artists from both Toronto and New York (Fig. 2), and a lengthy “BZZZ BZZZ BZZZ” column recounting General Idea’s fictionalized “(God Save) the King is Dead Memorial Party for Elvis.” Cortez’s connections with General Idea during this period – whether through their communication or through their mutual connection to DeSana – gave the Toronto artists access to New York’s new wave scene as it was developing. This dialogue also supplied Cortez with an outlet for his own creative and self-promotional endeavors.

For example, outtakes from *FILE*’s “Punk” issue would end up in an artwork by Cortez displayed in a group exhibition at New York’s Hal Bromm Gallery in time for the magazine’s September 1977 launch (Fig. 3). The work was a study in the punk aesthetics then emerging in downtown New York: overexposed headshots of Cortez and DeSana were blown up on standard photo paper, informally tacked onto the gallery wall, and hastily defaced with the letters FALN in ballpoint pen. FALN referred to The Armed Forces of National Liberation, which had been carrying out attacks over the previous decade in the name of Puerto Rican national liberation. As Cortez notes in the catalogue for the Hal Bromm show, the piece was meant to conjure “a believable sympathy/identification with FALN.”²³ The work involved multiple levels of make-believe: it was an expression of Cortez’s mythical “Latin Heritage” – his legal name was James Curtis, and he was born in Chicago – and it was meant to point to his “involvement with the ESOTERRORISTS,” an invented “street gang” consisting of himself, Phillips, and the writer and translator Duncan Smith.²⁴



2 | “A punk-pourri of new faces washed up by the new wave,” *FILE* 3:4, Punk “Til You Puke! Issue (Fall 1977): 10. Pictured are Diego Cortez (bottom left); Eric Mitchell (bottom third from left), and Jimmy DeSana (bottom, fourth from left). (Photo: Courtesy of AA Bronson)

Cortez’s photo-collage bears a strong aesthetic, thematic, contextual, and structural affinity to Eric Mitchell’s two-page *X* spread republished a year later in *FILE*’s “Transgressions” issue. Both are black and white, defaced with handwritten text, and invoke an unpopular sympathy with ultra-left



3 | Diego Cortez, *My Latin Heritage/El Cansearch Presedente* (from the Esoterrorist Series), 1979, photograph and mixed media, 50.8 × 121.9 cm. (Photo: Courtesy of Diego Cortez)

militancy. In this they reflect an attachment to the figure of the “terrorist” widely held in New York’s new wave scene to which both Cortez and Mitchell belonged.²⁵ Their works also found themselves both connected to and dissociated from *FILE*. If Cortez’s photo-collage was meant for *FILE* but ultimately circulated beyond it, the opposite was true of Mitchell’s spread. Moving in inverse directions across the threshold of *FILE*, they reflect a moment in which images and texts were reformatted and redeployed in multiple contexts with little regard for ownership or proper use. They also suggest an interchangeability of contexts. Both Cortez’s and Mitchell’s works adopted a generic set of conventions that signalled an attachment to punk. They were brash, unskilled, and superficially linked to the politically extreme. These conventions were not exclusively tied to any local context but were rather developed through the exchange of ideas and information between scenes. If the seeds of punk were planted in the UK – common folklore locates the birth of punk in Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood’s *SEX* boutique in London, ca. 1974 – its stylistic conventions mutated as the

idea of punk traveled. The aesthetic grammar of late-1970s punk can only be understood as an amalgam of subcultural practices and styles echoed across North America and Western Europe.

General Idea exploited the generic qualities of punk in their “Bzzz Bzzz Bzzz” column where, as critics and art historians have frequently mentioned, they developed semi-fictional accounts of massive General Idea parties using photographs and testimonies from separate social events taking place in different cities.²⁶ In the “Bzzz Bzzz Bzzz” column of *FILE*’s “Punk” issue, nightlife photographs taken by Bob Gruen, Roberta Bayley, and DeSana in New York were juxtaposed with photos taken by General Idea in Toronto, supplying evidence for the editors to narrate encounters between trend-setting New Yorkers (including Cortez, Debbie Harry, Andy Warhol, and Richard Hell); members of General Idea’s own local scene (including David Buchan, as well as members of Toronto punk bands such as the Viletones, the Diodes, and the Dishes); and influential figures in the London punk scene (including punk fashion designer Vivienne Westwood, John Krivine of the Chelsea punk boutique Acme Attractions, and members of The Damned). Punk musicians and fashion designers from Cleveland, San Francisco, Tokyo, and other “punk Capitols of the world” converged at General Idea’s “monster party” to “pay their dues.”²⁷ With no establishing shots setting the scene, we are left to sift through candid portraits of fashionable young people who flash poses as they dance, smoke, and drink.

To the outsider, the fiction of the column is not immediately apparent. It is revealed only when one takes note of subtle inconsistencies between images. Over the span of the six-page spread, Anya Phillips is captured wearing three different outfits (a bra and leather jacket, a light-coloured blouse and bowl hat, and a striped t-shirt); for his part, David Buchan wears a black t-shirt in one image and a bow tie and jacket in another. Less a collage than a tapestry, the “Bzzz Bzzz Bzzz” column weaves together the downtowns of Toronto, New York, and London, making them appear almost indivisible. Extracting an actual chronology or a sense of locational specificity from the web of artifice would be a daunting, if not impossible task.

The Global Downtown

The network of punk and new wave scenes assembled in the pages of *FILE* constituted what General Idea would come to call the “Global Downtown,” a term describing a kind of generic form that bound downtown scenes around the world.²⁸ The group introduced this concept in the editorial for *FILE*’s summer 1980 issue, where they retroactively marked a shift in their purpose following the decline the correspondence network: “Through rubbing against

the mass media, McLuhan's Global Village has moved downtown. *FILE* finds itself servicing the needs of a new network: the Global Downtown."²⁹ The Global Downtown had no geographical limits, but in the pages of *FILE*, it was largely expressed as a specific constellation of tight-knit groups working in North America and Western Europe. As we have already seen, this network of downtown scenes was bound by a common affinity to punk. The concept of the Global Downtown suggests that we attend to the magazine's role in servicing needs beyond the immediate local context in which General Idea worked, to consider how groups in Toronto, New York, and London situated their practices within contexts external to their own. That central actors in these cities' downtown scenes were in constant communication throughout the late 1970s tells us that that none of these scenes developed in a vacuum, and that there was in fact an external audience for each. But it does not tell us why they found support in each other, why these scenes, which were geographically separated, with different national contexts, funding structures, and political stakes, wound up following similar paths at the same time. What allowed the Global Downtown to emerge? What held this generic form together?

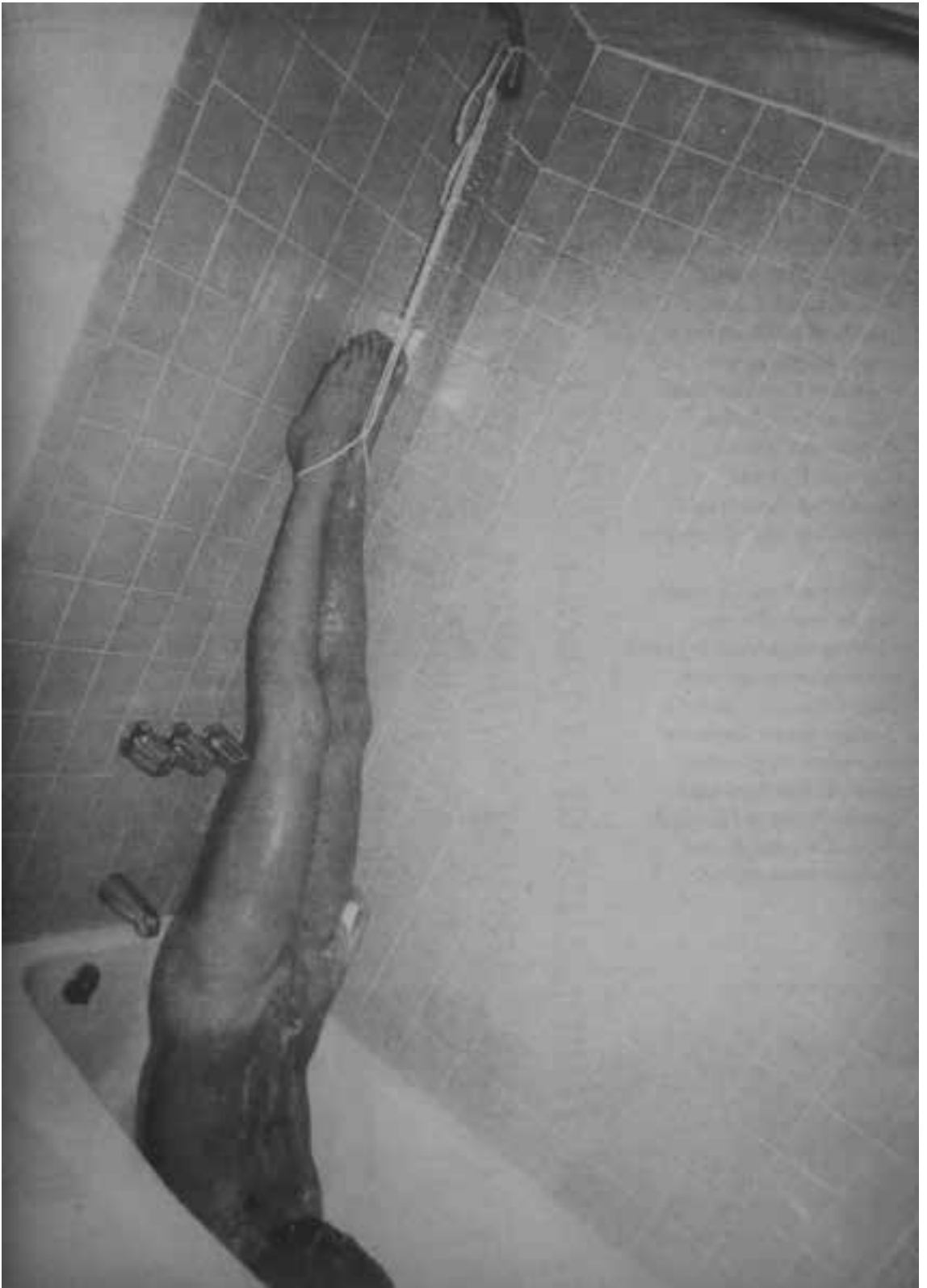
General Idea did not embrace the label of "punk" in the way that either Mitchell or Cortez did. They expressed an allegiance to punk in their local context primarily by supporting emerging bands such as the Dishes and by importing art and film practices that carried the punk banner from abroad.³⁰ S&M-inspired photographs by Jimmy DeSana, Robert Mapplethorpe, and others were frequently incorporated into the magazine, where they echoed General Idea's own work on fetish fashion.³¹ Among DeSana's most iconic photographs is *Noose (Self-Portrait)* (Fig. 4). This portrait captures a naked DeSana hanging from a noose between two rooms in a domestic setting. His penis is erect, lending an ambiguity to the scene: suicide, autoerotic asphyxiation, or death by autoerotic asphyxiation? DeSana's image circulated on the cover of the *FILE*'s fictional October 1973 issue – well before punk had entered New York's downtown scene. It later appeared in the "New York City Edition," and yet again on the cover of a 1979 issue of *VILE*, a *FILE* spin-off edited by Bay Area correspondence artists Anna Banana and Bill Gaglione.³² *FILE*'s "Transgressions" issue revisited this image, featuring on its second page a slapstick revision by General Idea: a male body is suspended in a running shower, hung not by the neck but by the feet, bar of soap still clutched in his right arm³³ (Fig. 5). On one hand, General Idea's rendition of DeSana's widely circulated image can be understood as a kind of improvisation in the key of punk. On the other, it enacts a kind of inversion. If punk tended to emphasize the immediacy of direct expression, General Idea suffused it with irony. They presented punk as a set of conventions



4 | Jimmy DeSana, *Noose (Self-Portrait)*, 1973/77, photograph, 27.9 × 35.6 cm. (Photo: Courtesy of the Jimmy DeSana Trust and Salon 94, New York)

5 (*opposite*) | General Idea, untitled photograph, *FILE* 4:2, Special Transgressions Issue (Fall 1979): 2. (Photo: Courtesy of AA Bronson)

that could be inhabited and pushed toward self-consciousness and parody. For General Idea, punk was not an attitude but a fashion trend that could be examined like any other. From Bronson's perspective, General Idea's interest in punk can only be observed in the punk issue.³⁴ Nevertheless, its investment in do-it-yourself forms and transgressive postures aligned it with



punk, attesting to a distanced fascination – and perhaps even identification – with the emerging phenomenon.

If punk emerged as an outgrowth of the alienation of working-class youth, the rebellion spreading in its name was detached from a consistent political perspective. The confusion surrounding the politics of punk was exacerbated by its decidedly ambiguous redeployment of fascist symbols such as the swastika. According to German filmmaker and gay rights activist Rosa von Praunheim, punk artists were not guilty of gratuitously wielding violent, sexist, and racist imagery. Rather, they saw politically-charged symbols to be part of an arsenal of tools that could be used to disturb the “middle class and liberal thinking” that policed free expression in the West.³⁵ In von Praunheim’s view, there was no point for art to function as social analysis; its task was to expose rather than explain the debased conditions of modern life.³⁶ The volatility of punk depended on the instability of its signifying system. Punk’s deliberate ambiguity must have appealed to General Idea, who laid claim to the subversive power of ambiguity within their own work. General Idea’s interest in ambiguity was based on their reading of the book *Seven Types of Ambiguity* by William Empson, first published in 1930.³⁷ They elaborated this idea in *FILE*’s summer 1978 issue:

We wanted to point out the wildly fluctuating interpretations you, our public, impose on us. Under your gaze we become everything from frivolous nightlifers to hard-core post-Marxist theoreticians. We wanted to point out the function of ambiguity in our work, the way in which ambiguity “flips the meaning in and out of focus,” thus preventing the successful deciphering of the text (both visual and written) except on multiple levels ... Since we give a wide range of choices (and we are conscious of the politics of choice) we are never sure which side you, our readers, will take.³⁸

Art historian Gwen Allen links General Idea’s defense of ambiguity with their broader interest in masquerade, unearthing within *FILE* a sustained critique of gender essentialism, one which both “challenged identity-based approaches to gay liberation politics in the 1970s” and also “anticipated queer theory’s destabilization of gender identity in the 1990s.”³⁹ From this angle, *FILE* is retroactively designated as a radical intervention within the politics of gay liberation. This is an important perspective on General Idea’s influential practice that should not be dispensed with. The predicament is that when set within the network of downtowns in which *FILE* was already enmeshed, General Idea’s discourse on ambiguity can be interpreted both as a subversion of power and as an alibi for indecision, both radical and status-quo.

In a series of articles penned between 1979 and 1981, critic Lucy R. Lippard examined the violent imagery flooding New York's art world in the name of punk and new wave art.⁴⁰ For her, the emerging fashion for "costume militarism, violent porn, pseudoterrorism and ethnic-racial-and-gender-based slurs" taken up by artists associated with Colab and the broader "punk" milieu indicated a backward-looking and rightward-swaying turn in the cultural field, one that, if left uncontested, would reverse the progressive social gains made during the previous decade.⁴¹ She gave this fashion the name "retrochic" to indicate its strange convergence with the reactionary politics of the American right wing. For Lippard, retrochic was not reducible to any particular artistic style; it was, more generally, "a subtle current of reactionary content filtering through various art forms."⁴² Retrochic artists (of which Cortez and Mitchell were prime examples) seized upon the do-it-yourself material processes once supported by Lippard and others for their democratizing potential – xerography and video, for example – but redeployed them without any apparent political commitment.⁴³ Their gestures stood out as disingenuous, vapid, and depoliticized. "Is the artist a fascist or a Marxist or nothing?"⁴⁴ Lippard asked, pointing to the crux of the problem: retrochic could only thrive in a culture of ambivalence, wherein art's political function and social conscience had been hollowed out and replaced with a conservative vision of art as neutral, apolitical, and divorced from its social context. Preying on an art world where "any artist whose work incorporates a newspaper headline, or even a photograph – especially a sleazy, grainy one – is immediately considered 'political,'"⁴⁵ retrochic was nothing more than "a reactionary wolf in countercultural sheep's clothing."⁴⁶

Lippard's critique entered the Toronto art discourse through *Fuse*, a magazine that, as Philip Monk rightly points out, was locked into a longstanding ideological conflict with the editors of *FILE*.⁴⁷ In a 1982 editorial titled "'Dumb' and 'Retrochic' Art: Two Sides of the Same Coin," *Fuse* editor Clive Robertson suggested a kinship between retrochic and what he described as Toronto's "dumb art," an art that "reproduce[s] or manner[s] the dominant values of society in which it is produced."⁴⁸ Robertson was probably not referring to General Idea. Yet his reflection on retrochic points, yet again, to the fact that – as Bronson himself has stressed on numerous occasions – artists in Toronto looked to New York publications like the *Village Voice* and *Artforum*, some of the exact publications in which Lippard advanced her critique of ambiguity.⁴⁹

Were General Idea fascists or Marxists or nothing? They were perceptive analysts. They recognized and strategically twisted the leftist critique of their work, absorbing that criticism as proof of concept. Neither General Idea nor their friends in New York were unaware of their integration into the capitalist

system. However, they spoke for a radically different concept of cultural politics than Lippard, Robertson, and their supporters. General Idea imagined art as a mirror – a reflection of society in all its complexity. By contrast, Lippard supported art that was conceived not as “a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it,” to invoke Bertolt Brecht’s famous dictum. The urgency to forge a politically effective and politically responsible art was Lippard’s prerogative, not General Idea’s. AA Bronson is clear:

We did not consider ourselves “anti-capitalist.” We were “critical” of capitalism in the literal sense of the word, but also fully complicit, with our various boutiques, and our constant output of low-cost editions and publications, which could be purchased at various bookshops, museum shops and fashion outlets in North America and Europe.⁵⁰

In the rare instances when anti-capitalist politics appeared in the pages of *FILE*, they were never delivered straight. Rather, they appeared as image and reference, suffused, like all else, with irony. This was the point, but also the problem.

Diversion

It is worth returning to where we began, to the Genet spread reprinted in *FILE*’s “Transgressions” issue. With its slight displacement from a mainstream French newspaper to a left-wing British counterculture newspaper to Colab’s limited-run *X Motion Picture Magazine* to General Idea’s *FILE*, Genet’s article found itself circulating in different cultural milieus. The text itself advanced a strong argument in defense of the RAF, whose founding members had been found dead in their prison cells the year earlier. Genet argued that violence was the only adequate response to state brutality. Brutality, for him, was a form of structural violence organized by the imperialist state apparatus and diffused across society as a whole, in “the architecture of council housing, bureaucracy, the replacing of words – proper names and other – by numbers, the priority given in traffic to speed over the slowness of pedestrians, the authority of the machine over the person who works it, the quantitative increase in punishments,” and so on.⁵¹ According to Genet, if brutality was concealed in the foundations of the oppressive state apparatus, only violence directed against the agents of oppression could draw it into the open. Describing the political aims of the RAF, he issued a provocation that stood in stark contrast to the mainstream news coverage on ultra-left resistance in the United States and Western Europe: “We owe it to Andreas Baader, to Ulrike

Meinhof, to Holger Meins, to the RAF in general, to have made us understand, not only by their words, but by their actions, outside and inside prison, that only violence can stop human brutality.”⁵²

In the *International Times*, Genet’s article was paired with two drawings, one of Jesus, the other of an unidentified man holding a cigarette. Both were naked, flaccid, crowned in halos, and rendered in the same expressionistic style. The second included a caption that could have functioned as a meta-commentary on the punk and new wave art scenes the article would soon reach: “terrorists as sex objects.”⁵³ Surrounded by columns on mental health and racial discrimination, Aboriginal genocide in Australia, the criminalization of hallucinogens, the state of the Irish Republican Army in Northern Ireland, and other topics of concern for the British Left, it offered Anglophone readers a provocative French perspective on armed struggle at a time when, as art historian Alan W. Moore recalls, the term “‘terrorism’ as being applied to leftist groups committed to armed struggle who/which in fact were not attacking civilians at all. In this, the term was being used simply to demonize opposition to US-allied authoritarian regimes.”⁵⁴

In *X*, Genet’s article reappeared as one of forty unedited contributions by artists associated with Colab – many of the same artists featured in *FILE* during the late 1970s. It was surrounded by an array of sado-masochistic film stills, reprints of news articles on terrorism and armed struggle in Germany, Lebanon, and Israel, ads for sexual services, and grainy photographs of explosions, ritual sacrifice, and downtown icons. The issue opened with a four-page spread on the NYPD Arson & Explosion Squad by new wave filmmakers Beth B. and Scott B. Robin Winters and Coleen Fitzgibbon, who collectively worked under the name X&Y, contributed an impressionistic film scenario, interrupted by block quotations from the US Criminal Justice (Reform) Act of 1978 and illustrated with collages featuring an inventory of weapons and explosives. Cortez and Phillips produced a report on the trial of RAF member Irmgard Möller at Stammheim Prison near Stuttgart, West Germany. Acker published her “Persian Poems,” a handwritten manuscript in English and Persian featuring a sex-addicted teenager named Janey who would become the protagonist of *Blood and Guts in High School* (1984). Interspersed with DeSana’s portraits of Andy Warhol, Anya Phillips, a naked amputee, and notorious Sex Pistols frontman Sid Vicious with his pants down to his ankles, the issue expressed the themes of sex, violence, ultra-left armed struggle, and downtown nightlife that preoccupied New York’s new wave art scene in 1978. It also exhibited the “‘look of concern’ communicated by rough typography, banal advertising images, and blurry, pseudo-porn photographs” that Lippard would associate with the rise of retrochic later in the following year.⁵⁵ Situated within this context and credited as a work of art by Eric

Mitchell, Genet's article took on a different purpose. It did not interrupt the status quo of the restricted audience it was destined for. Rather, it served to justify the lure of armed insurgency already common within the scene surrounding Colab, to provide a radical defense of extreme violence for artists and filmmakers committed to advancing the aesthetic grammar of punk within the fields of visual art and film.

Displaced again in the pages of *FILE*, its function is less immediately clear. Again, Monk provides a clue. One of the more intriguing arguments made in *Is Toronto Burning?* is that conflicts between the editors of magazines in the Toronto arts milieu were expressed not only directly, but also covertly through inference and suggestion.⁵⁶ The intrusion of Genet's "Violence et brutalité" in *FILE* could support this argument. It was only a year earlier, in May 1978 – the same month Genet's article was reprinted in *X* – that Toronto's CEAC had its provincial and federal funding cut after publishing on armed struggle in its journal *STRIKE*. The cover for this issue featured a gruesome image related to the widely reported assassination of Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades, an armed insurrectionist group that split from the broader extra-parliamentary left in Italy five years earlier. More scandalizing, however, was its editorial, which claimed solidarity with the Brigades and their violent tactics: "To maintain tolerance towards the servants of the State is to preserve the status quo of Liberalism. In the manner of the Brigades, we support leg-shooting/knee capping to accelerate the demise of the old system."⁵⁷ As Monk explains,

Even before the issue had been delivered from the printer, it was leaked to the tabloid *The Toronto Sun*, with the expected result: "Our taxes aid 'blood-thirsty' radical paper," the headline read. Then followed the predictable outcome to this funding scandal: questions on the floor of the provincial and federal legislatures and quick revocation of every level of arts council funding.⁵⁸

STRIKE's take on violent revolutionary tactics was less clear than Genet's. If Genet's was an act of solidarity and defence, it was unclear if *STRIKE*'s "support" for Red Brigades-style tactics was a pledge of solidarity with the editors' European comrades or an immanent call to action in their local context. However, in transgressing the dominant liberal position on violent struggle, both Genet and the editors of *STRIKE* invited public controversy.

Were the members of General Idea thumbing their nose at the recently defunct *STRIKE* by mirroring its transgressive posture without themselves taking a stand? Or was their reprint merely a coded and delayed act of solidarity? In reprinting a reprint of a translation of Genet's defence of

armed struggle, they put the French novelist's controversial position back into circulation two years late while extracting it from the context that made it transgressive in the first place. In *FILE*, Genet's text appears out of place. Having traveled from Europe to the United Kingdom to the United States, it arrives in *FILE* already marked by a sequence of alterations.

In a sense, General Idea perform a kind of *détournement* of Genet's text, but one split from Guy Debord's radical theorization of the term. If Debord's *détournement* was an exercise in spinning the detritus of capitalist culture into anti-capitalist propaganda, General Idea's *détournement* diverts us from the source of Genet's passion, turning the author's radical call for solidarity into an image of radicalism. As Bronson explains, "the reprint of the article was so difficult to read that it was not provocative at all ... We published it as a photograph of *X*, not as an article."⁵⁹ The editors redeployed a provocation made in another context without committing to the position or the cause. What is made of Genet's article three times removed? It is split from its context, neutered of its political urgency, and transformed into a record of the overlap of downtowns. As a retrochic facsimile masquerading as a contribution by Jean Genet, there is perhaps no more suitable emblem for a group of artists working in both Toronto and New York whose embrace of ironic ambiguity came at the expense of direct political engagement. It should be noted that the AIDS epidemic that immediately followed the era under study inverted this equation, drawing General Idea along with many of their peers into the world of visual activism, where they would make lasting contributions with their public art and media campaigns. Nevertheless, when we think back on late 1970s-era *FILE*, we can and should see it as an important reference point for the forms of gender performance that became well known in the 1990s. But we should also see it as an early vehicle for the ironic appropriation of anti-capitalist thought and imagery, a perennial fashion in the field of contemporary art.⁶⁰ In both senses, *FILE* remains influential in and beyond Toronto, for better and for worse.

NOTES

- 1 See General Idea, "X Magazine Steals from INTERNATIONAL TIMES, New York, 1978," *FILE* 4:2, Special Transgressions Issue (Fall 1979): 52–53.
- 2 Jean GENET, "Violence et Brutalité," *Le Monde*, 2 Sept. 1977, 1–2.
- 3 See GENET, "Genet on the R.A.F.," *The International Times* 4:3 (March 1978): 18–19. See also Eric MITCHELL, "Untitled" in *X Motion Picture Magazine* 2:4, 5 and 6 (May 1978): unpaginated.
- 4 Philip MONK, *Is Toronto Burning? Three Years in the Making (and Unmaking) of the Toronto Art Scene* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2016), 8.

- 5 Ibid., 19.
- 6 Ibid., 19, 20. Without naming Monk, Louis Jacob has unpacked the colonial processes of resettlement that reinscribed traditional Mississauga territory as “nothing but an empty page waiting to be inscribed at will.” See JACOB, “At Home in Toronto: Framing and Being Framed,” *Asian Diasporic Visual Cultures and the Americas* 2 (2016): 296.
- 7 Expanding on this point, AA Bronson explains: “I would take every issue of *FILE* to NYC personally through the 70s, delivering Warhol’s subscription in person, for example. In this sense we were rather un-Canadian. We certainly were not isolationist in the least.” AA Bronson, email to the author, 23 Oct. 2018.
- 8 James CLIFFORD, “Traveling Cultures,” in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler (London: Routledge, 1992), 100.
- 9 Bronson, email to the author, 23 Oct. 2018.
- 10 This fascination extended into France, as attested by reflections on the Red Army Faction in Guy Debord’s late film *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni* (1978). See Charity SCRIBNER, “Buildings on Fire: The Situationist International and the Red Army Faction,” *Grey Room* 26 (Winter 2007): 30–55.
- 11 General Idea introduced the concept of the “Global Downtown” in “Editorial,” *FILE* 4:3 (Summer 1980): 15.
- 12 Bronson, email to the author, 23 Oct. 2018.
- 13 A focus on *Fuse* magazine would lead to a different (and more politicized) constellation of New York artists and critics such as Tony Whitfield and Lucy R. Lippard.
- 14 Art-Official (General Idea), Ontario Arts Council Grant Application (Request for Assistance), 1972, attached sheets, 4 (in Art Metropole fonds, Art Metropole Collection, National Gallery of Canada: Library and Archives, Ottawa).
- 15 AA Bronson, quoted in David BRITAIN, “F for Filing System: An Interview with AA Bronson,” *Afterimage* 35:3 (November/December 2007): 10. Quoted in Gwen ALLEN, *Artists’ Magazines: An Alternative Space for Art* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press), 148.
- 16 AA BRONSON, “The Humiliation of the Bureaucrat: Artist-Run Centres as Museums by Artists,” in *Museums by Artists*, ed. AA Bronson and Peggy Gale (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983), 30.
- 17 General Idea, “Image Request Lists,” *FILE* 3:2, New York City Edition (Spring 1976): 63.
- 18 See Luc BOLTANSKI and Ève CHIAPELLO, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (1999), trans. Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2005), 116.
- 19 Mateus LAGES, “Beyond a Balancing Point: A Conversation with Artist and Curator Diego Cortez,” *u+mag*, online (1 Aug. 2014). Accessed 25 Feb. 2016, <http://www.umagmag.com/2014/08/diego-cortez/>.
- 20 Diego Cortez co-designed Semiotext(e)’s *Schizo-Culture* issue with a team including filmmaker Kathryn Bigelow, painters Denise Green and Pat Steir, artist Michael Oblowitz, and others. See Sylvère LOTRINGER, ed., *Semiotext(e)* (*Schizo-Culture*, 1978), reprinted as *Schizo-Culture: The Book* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e): 2013). He later designed the “Italian/Autonomia” issue, published in Fall 1980. See LOTRINGER and Christian MARAZZI, eds., *Semiotext(e)* (Italy: Autonomia, 1980), reprinted as *Autonomia: Post-Political Politics* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007).
- 21 Thanks to Corinn Gerber for alerting me to this issue.

- 22 General Idea, "New York Gossip," 26.
- 23 Diego CORTEZ, "My Latin Heritage/El Cansearch Presidente," in *Moving 1977* (New York: Hal Bromm Gallery, 1978), 20.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 For a longer discussion of the figure of the "terrorist" in New York punk and new wave, see Alan W. MOORE, *Art Gangs: Protest and Counterculture in New York City* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2011), 90. See also Lotringer, in Juliette PREMMEREUR, "From New York No Wave to Italian Autonomia: An Interview with Sylvère Lotringer," *Interventions Journal* 3:2, Political Performativity and the Legacy of '70s Radicalism (March 2013). Accessed 25 Feb. 2016, <http://interventionsjournal.net/2014/03/13/from-new-york-no-wave-to-italian-autonomia-an-interview-with-sylvere-lotringer/>
- 26 See for example ALLEN, *Artists' Magazines*, 162–63. See also MONK, *Is Toronto Burning?*, 167.
- 27 General Idea, "Bzzz Bzzz Bzzz," *FILE* 3:4, Punk 'Til You Puke! Issue (Fall 1977): 74.
- 28 General Idea, "Editorial," *FILE* 4:3 (Summer 1980): 15.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 MONK, *Is Toronto Burning?* 186.
- 31 For example, General Idea's "Fetish" t-shirt regularly appeared in the magazine, both in snapshots included in the "Bzzz Bzzz Bzzz" column and as an advertised item for sale.
- 32 General Idea, "New York Gossip," 26.
- 33 See *FILE* 4:2, Special Transgressions Issue (Fall 1979): 2.
- 34 Bronson, email to the author, 23 Oct. 2018.
- 35 Lindzee SMITH, "Rosa Von Praunheim talks with Lindzee Smith at the George Washington Hotel on Lexington Avenue in New York City, 12/3/77," *X Motion Picture Magazine* 2:2 and 3 (February 1978): 4.
- 36 Von Praunheim explains his own perspective on punk ethics: "I show how it is and want people emotionally touched by that and help them to think why it's like this. That's really the thing we have to do. I'm not a teacher to tell them theoretical where does it come from. I can make people aware and make you feel the need to think about it. That's why people are mad about my gay films because I don't show this analysis, how the system represses." See *ibid.*, 6.
- 37 Bronson, email to the author, 23 Oct. 2018.
- 38 General Idea, "Editorial," *FILE* 4:1 (1984): A Year in Pictures Issue (Summer 1978): 7.
- 39 ALLEN, *Artists' Magazines*, 171.
- 40 For example, see LIPPARD, "Retrochic: Looking Back in Anger," *The Village Voice* 24:50 (10 Dec. 1979): 67–69. See also LIPPARD, "Hot Potatoes: Art and Politics in 1980," *Block* 4 (1981): 2–9.
- 41 LIPPARD, "Retrochic: Looking Back in Anger," 69.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 67.
- 43 LIPPARD reassessed these presumptions in the "Postface" to *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (New York: Praeger, 1973), 263–64.
- 44 LIPPARD, "Retrochic: Looking Back in Anger," 68.
- 45 *Ibid.*
- 46 LIPPARD, "Hot Potatoes: Art and Politics in 1980."

- 47 MONK, *Is Toronto Burning?* 141.
- 48 Clive ROBERTSON, "'Dumb' and 'Retrochic' Art: Two Sides of the Same Coin," *Fuse* (February/March 1982): 290.
- 49 For example, see BRONSON, "The Humiliation of the Bureaucrat: Artist-Run Centres as Museums by Artists," in *Museums by Artists*, ed. AA Bronson and Peggy Gale (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983), 30.
- 50 Bronson, email to the author, 23 Oct. 2018.
- 51 GENET, "Genet on the R.A.F.," 18.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Ibid., 19.
- 54 Alan W. Moore, email to the author, 25 Jan. 2016.
- 55 LIPPARD, "Retrochic: Looking Back in Anger," 68.
- 56 See the chapter "Antagonistic Couples" in MONK, *Is Toronto Burning?* 139–53.
- 57 Editors, "Playing Idiots, Plain Hideous," *STRIKE* 2:2 (May 1978): 3.
- 58 MONK, *Is Toronto Burning?* 120.
- 59 Bronson, email to the author, 23 Oct. 2018.
- 60 For a typical report on this enduring tendency, see Tim GRIFFIN, "The Art of Politics," *Artforum* (September 2004): 205.

Le New York de General Idea

STEVE LYONS

Dans son livre *Is Toronto Burning? Three Years in the Making (and Unmaking) of the Toronto Art Scene*, Philip Monk creuse l'histoire marginale de l'art au centre-ville de Toronto à la fin des années 1970, affirmant que la scène artistique s'est définie « en dehors de la tyrannie impérialiste de New York ». En concentrant son champ d'études à quelques îlots urbains et à une pile de documents d'archives, Monk gagne en clarté en faisant ressortir de puissants antagonismes dans la scène artistique torontoise. Toutefois, son affirmation soutenant que l'art de Toronto se soit épanoui dans un « espace vacant » attribue l'origine des pratiques et des idées à un lieu géographique précis. Il favorise ainsi un modèle de culture isolationniste qui est illogique dans une ère définie par la technologie en réseaux et par le capitalisme multinational. Ceci est peut-être vrai à Toronto vers la fin des années 1970, où des artistes parmi les plus influents ont émergé d'un réseau, cultivé au cours des décennies précédentes, d'art postal international et d'un centre d'art autogéré. De plus, certains de ces artistes – tels que Carol Condé, Karl Beveridge et les membres de General Idea – étaient récemment revenus de New York.

Le présent article propose une vision différente de l'étude locale de la scène artistique urbaine, à commencer par la prémisse simple que la scène artistique contemporaine ne se forme pas dans l'isolement. Bien que des conditions matérielles précises la façonnent et se répercutent sous la forme de problèmes locaux immédiats, elle s'alimente plutôt des idées, des pratiques et des personnes de l'extérieur. Cet énoncé est tout aussi vrai pour un centre culturel comme New York que pour un foyer régional tel que Toronto. L'article ne mène pas une étude exhaustive du système dynamique de communication et d'échange international auquel se mêlait la scène artistique de Toronto à la fin des années 1970. Il ne s'agit pas non plus d'une critique ou d'une réponse détaillée à la perspective de Monk sur l'histoire de l'art à Toronto. En revanche, il s'agit d'un effort pour dépasser le cadre d'analyse de Monk. Je demande quelles nouvelles connaissances peuvent être acquises en juxtaposant les histoires de l'art urbain et en prenant leur chevauchement comme sujet d'étude. En me concentrant sur les similitudes entre Toronto et New York à la fin des années 1970, je mets en évidence la

fonction de connexion jouée par les magazines d'art, ce que la vision locale n'aborde pas.

À cette fin, je me concentre sur *FILE Magazine* durant la période de la fin des années 1970. J'analyse le magazine comme étant à la fois un document et un collaborateur qui contribue à une boucle de rétroaction essentielle entre les scènes artistiques punk des centres-villes de Toronto et de New York. Je soutiens que *FILE* a joué un rôle actif en mettant en lumière le chevauchement de ces scènes, tout en les rendant impossibles à distinguer. En conséquence, elles se manifestent donc en itérations d'un unique « centre-ville global ». En première partie de l'article, j'étudie les numéros « New York City Edition » (printemps 1976) et « Punk 'Til You Puke » (automne 1977) de *FILE*, en plus des chroniques « New York Gossip » et « Bzzz, Bzzz, Bzzz ». Le tout afin de mettre en évidence les communications et les collaborations entre les artistes de Toronto et de New York pendant la période en question. En deuxième partie, je cherche à savoir pourquoi les artistes de Toronto et de New York ont trouvé du soutien chez l'un et l'autre – pourquoi leur scène artistique respective a suivi un chemin similaire, en même temps, alors que les deux scènes sont séparées géographiquement et que leurs contextes nationaux, leurs structures fondatrices et leurs enjeux politiques diffèrent. En me penchant sur leur inclination à l'ironie et leur défense de l'ambiguïté communes, en plus de leurs références fréquentes aux conflits armés d'extrême gauche, j'enquête sur la culture de l'ambivalence politique qui prolifère sous la bannière du punk dans les deux villes. En troisième partie, je me tourne vers le numéro « Transgressions » (automne 1979) de *FILE*, en particulier vers une double page écrite par Jean Genet, qui documente un article controversé se portant à la défense des conflits armés. L'auteur avait précédemment paru dans *X Motion Picture Magazine*, un magazine qui n'a pas fait long feu, publié à New York par les membres de Collaborative Projects, Inc. Cette dernière partie explore plus en détail la politique apathique qui sous-tend le prétendu « centre-ville global ».

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