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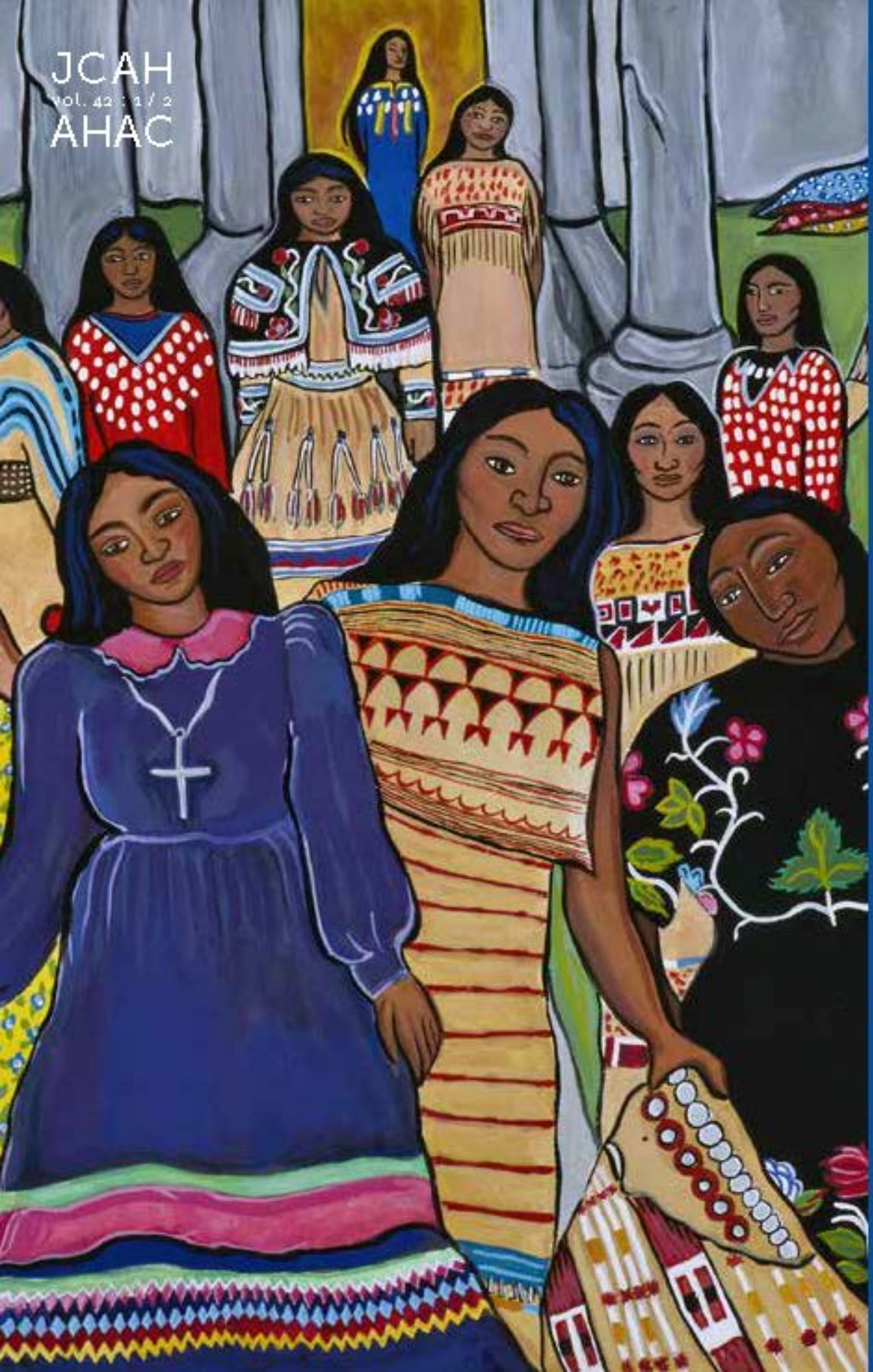

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Sherry Farrell Racette, detail of/détail de *Ancestral Women Taking Back Their Dresses*, gouache and watercolour on paper/gouache et aquarelle sur papier. (Photo: Courtesy of the artist/Courtoisie de l'artiste)

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A *Recapitulation*

This issue of the *Journal of Canadian Art History/Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien* is unapologetically mixed. Longtime readers may nevertheless be struck by its representation of currents and issues that have preoccupied the journal since its foundation.

Based at Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec, *JCAH/AHAC*'s chronicles have participated in unearthing of the foundations of visual art in Quebec's distinct settler-colonial society. Jean Jacques Danel's "Une nouvelle interprétation d'un tableau de frère Luc" extends the identificatory project of distinguished art historian Laurier Lacroix by expanding the aesthetic and institutional context of one work by a painter briefly present in New France. It is by looking at the broader constitution of this territory now known as Quebec that its micro-histories can continue to be written.

Another kind of colonial structure – this one asserting its global ambitions through a charismatic Cold War humanism – was valiantly if ineffectually until now repulsed by a group of Quebec artists who organized a counter-exhibition in the advent of the Museum of Modern Art's exportation of *The Family of Man* to Montreal. As explained by photographic historian Michel Hardy-Vallée in "*Photographie 57*: A Response to *The Family of Man* as the Exhibition of a Medium," the irritation felt by the organizers of this exhibition was not ideological but aesthetic. They were asking more of the medium, and attempted to show alternative creative uses before the Steichen's monument to late modernist straight photography came to dominate the local imagination. With this revelatory exposition, Hardy-Vallée continues his important work of writing Quebec photography history in its specificity.

Women's art practices and their interpretive histories have long found an appreciative audience in *JCAH/AHAC*'s readership. This issue contains examinations of two key bodies of work by Vera Frenkel and Sherry Farrell Racette. That euphemism – bodies of work – gives me time to catch my breath as historian Adam Lauder on Frenkel and Julia Skelly on Farrell Racette explicate the nuances of their production.

Lauder's "Coding the Real: Vera Frenkel's Paracomputational Performances and Installations of the 1970s" decodes Frenkel's early multidisciplinary projects as sites of intersection for new and old linguistic models and technologies. Lauder's rigour and polyvalence are brought to bear on Frenkel and her intellectual powers of translation and transmutation. He conveys what Frenkel knew and saw in a manner that brings her into presence.

Récapitulation

Ce numéro de la revue *Journal of Canadian Art History/Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien* (*JCAH/AHAC*) est résolument diversifié. Les lectrices et lecteurs de longue date seront néanmoins frappés par la façon dont y sont abordés divers courants et enjeux auxquels s'intéresse la revue depuis sa création.

Élaborées à l'Université Concordia de Montréal, au Québec, les chroniques de la revue *JCAH/AHAC* contribuent à mettre au jour les fondements de l'art visuel dans la société distincte du Québec, fondée sur le colonialisme de peuplement. « Une nouvelle interprétation d'un tableau du frère Luc », de Jean Jacques Danel, poursuit le projet d'identification de l'éminent historien de l'art Laurier Lacroix en procédant à une analyse élargie du contexte esthétique et institutionnel d'une œuvre réalisée par un peintre qui a fait un bref séjour en Nouvelle-France. C'est par un examen de la constitution du territoire aujourd'hui connu sous le nom de Québec que l'on pourra continuer à écrire ses microhistoires.

Une autre forme de structure coloniale – qui, dans ce cas-ci, affirme ses ambitions mondiales par un humanisme charismatique typique de la guerre froide – a été vaillamment bien que vainement repoussée jusqu'à présent par un groupe d'artistes québécois qui ont organisé une contre-exposition dans l'éventualité de l'exportation, par le Musée d'art moderne, de l'exposition *The Family of Man* à Montréal. Comme l'explique l'historien de la photographie Michel Hardy-Vallée dans « *Photographie 57* : Une réponse à *The Family of Man* en tant que mise en exposition d'un médium », l'irritation ressentie par les organisateurs de cette exposition n'était pas d'ordre idéologique, mais esthétique. Ils exigeaient davantage de la photographie et tentaient d'en montrer d'autres utilisations créatives avant que l'élogieux événement consacré par Edward Steichen à la photographie pure de la fin du modernisme ne vienne dominer l'imagination locale. Avec cet exposé révélateur, Michel Hardy-Vallée poursuit son important travail d'écriture de l'histoire de la photographie québécoise dans toute sa spécificité.

Les pratiques artistiques des femmes ainsi que leur histoire interprétative suscitent depuis longtemps l'intérêt des lectrices et lecteurs de la revue *JCAH/AHAC*. On trouve dans ce numéro un examen de deux corpus d'œuvres clés produits par Vera Frenkel et Sherry Farrell Racette. Cet euphémisme – corpus d'œuvres – me donne le temps de reprendre mon souffle alors que les historiens Adam Lauder et Julia Skelly analysent les nuances caractérisant la production de la première et de la seconde respectivement.

Skelly's "Painted Textiles: Unveiling Violence and Resilience in Works by Sherry Farrell Racette" brings another multidisciplinary figure into the light. Farrell Racette is a highly respected art historian and educator in the fields of Indigenous object-lives and human life experience. That she performs her findings through the recovery of names, the retelling of stories, and the weaving of kinship is well known to a large community of admirers, some of whom have learned to bead. Skelly takes her place in that community, asking the very legitimate question of why Farrell Racette's visual practice has not received the same attention as her scholarship, and she corrects that imbalance with penetrating and sensitive analysis of the artwork's hybridity – not a bifurcated state but one of *communitas*.

Finally, Ann Davis astutely examines Diana Nemiroff's biographical and institutional history, *Women at the Helm: How Jean Sutherland Boggs, Hsio-yen Shin and Shirley L. Thomson Changed the National Gallery of Canada* through the lens of competency. Unreservedly laudatory of Nemiroff's accomplishment, Davis properly situates it as a museum worker's perspective, to which she closely relates. The key question running through this review is whether a museum is composed of solids – collection, library and archives, exhibition halls, storage vaults, laboratories, offices, ceremonial and visitor service spaces – or of indomitable spirits who care for the objects and communities for which they are held in trust. The former remain, though they might be moved around on the heritage chessboard. The spirits still haunt the halls of the National Gallery of Canada, though they have needed Nemiroff's solid study and Davis's careful review to re-exert their power.

Martha Langford

Dans « Coder le réel : les performances et installations parainformatiques de Vera Frenkel dans les années 1970 », Adam Lauder décrypte les premiers projets multidisciplinaires de Vera Frenkel, considérés comme des sites d'intersection entre anciens et nouveaux modèles et technologies linguistiques. La rigueur et la polyvalence d'Adam Lauder sont mises au service de Vera Frenkel et de ses puissantes capacités intellectuelles en matière de traduction et de transmutation. L'auteur exprime ce que l'artiste savait et voyait d'une manière qui la rend présente.

Dans « Textiles peints : la violence et la résilience dans les œuvres de Sherry Farrell Racette », Julia Skelly jette un éclairage sur une autre figure multidisciplinaire. Historienne de l'art et éducatrice de renom, Sherry Farrell Racette s'intéresse à la vie des objets autochtones et à l'expérience humaine. Une vaste communauté d'admiratrices et d'admirateurs, dont certains ont appris le perlage, est familiarisée avec la démarche de Sherry Farrell Racette, qui passe par la remémoration des noms, la relecture des histoires et l'établissement de liens d'affinité. Julia Skelly appartient à cette communauté et pose une question très légitime : pourquoi la pratique visuelle de Sherry Farrell Racette n'a-t-elle pas reçu la même attention que ses recherches? Elle corrige ce déséquilibre par une analyse pénétrante et sensible de l'hybridité des œuvres de l'artiste – vue non pas comme une division, mais comme une forme de *communitas*.

Enfin, Ann Davis examine avec perspicacité l'ouvrage biographique et d'histoire institutionnelle de Diana Nemiroff, intitulé *Women at the Helm: How Jean Sutherland Boggs, Hsio-yen Shin and Shirley L. Thomson Changed the National Gallery of Canada* sous l'angle de la compétence. Tout en louant sans réserve l'ouvrage de Diana Nemiroff, Ann Davis le situe à juste titre dans la perspective d'une personne qui travaille dans un musée, position avec laquelle elle s'identifie étroitement. La question centrale qui sous-tend cette étude est de savoir si un musée est constitué d'éléments tangibles – collection, bibliothèque et archives, salles d'exposition, chambres fortes, laboratoires, bureaux, espaces de cérémonie et services aux visiteurs – ou d'esprits indomptables qui veillent sur les objets et les communautés qui les lui ont confiés. Les premiers demeurent, même s'ils peuvent être déplacés sur l'échiquier du patrimoine. Les seconds, quant à eux, hantent encore les couloirs du Musée des beaux-arts du Canada, mais ont eu besoin de la rigoureuse étude de Diana Nemiroff et de la minutieuse analyse d'Ann Davis pour retrouver leur pouvoir.

Martha Langford

Une nouvelle interprétation d'un tableau de frère Luc

JEAN JACQUES DANEL

L'église paroissiale de La Présentation-de-la-Sainte-Vierge[1] possède un riche patrimoine artistique et culturel ; on y trouve notamment un tableau représentant la communion d'une sainte.

En 1819, le curé de la paroisse acquit un ensemble de six tableaux lors d'une vente organisée à Québec par John Christopher Raffenstein, un commerçant importateur de diverses marchandises et d'œuvres d'art venues de France. Parmi ces toiles l'une était présentée sous le titre de *La communion de sainte Thérèse*. Dans l'article paru dans la *Gazette du Québec* annonçant la vente, Raffenstein présentait ce tableau comme : « une grande composition et d'un effet lumineux. On y reconnaît le beau pinceau de Philippe de Champagne, qui était l'un des plus grands peintres de l'école Flamande ».

En 1999, l'historien d'art Laurier Lacroix attribue cette œuvre à Claude François (1614-1685), plus connu sous le nom de frère Luc. Ce peintre récollet a séjourné au Québec en 1670-1671[2] et ses œuvres sont conservées aujourd'hui dans plusieurs églises et musées du Canada. En se fondant sur l'attribution du tableau à un peintre franciscain, Laurier Lacroix renomme l'œuvre : *Communion de sainte Claire d'Assise*[3]. Claire d'Assise (1193-1253) était l'amie spirituelle de saint François (1182–1226), et la fondatrice de l'ordre des Clarisses.

Dans le tableau, on voit bien une sainte, agenouillée sur les gradins de l'autel ; elle se prépare à recevoir la communion des mains d'un prêtre assisté de deux diacres. La composition est centrée sur l'hostie, point de convergence des regards et des diagonales qui structurent le tableau (Fig. 1). Dans son commentaire de l'œuvre, Laurier Lacroix soulignait, à juste titre, l'intérêt de la comparaison avec un autre tableau, *Marie et l'Enfant Jésus*, peint par frère Luc pour le sanctuaire de Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré.

Un examen attentif du tableau permet d'y déceler quelques particularités utiles pour éclairer notre compréhension ; les deux diacres qui encadrent le prêtre sont revêtus d'une dalmatique et pourvus, comme sainte Claire, d'une discrète auréole. Il s'agit en fait de saint François d'Assise, reconnaissable à la marque des stigmates imprimées sur ses mains, et de saint Antoine de Padoue

Frère Luc, *La communion de sainte Thérèse d'Avila*, détail. (Photo : auteur)

1 | Frère Luc, *La communion de sainte Thérèse d'Avila*, après 1671 ?, huile sur toile, 260 × 190 cm, église de La-Présentation-de-la-Sainte-Vierge. (Photo : auteur)

2 (*opposite*) | Frère Luc, *La communion de sainte Thérèse d'Avila*, détail. (Photo : auteur)

(1195-1231), habituellement représenté avec un lys. Cependant, aucun écrit, aucune source, ne mentionne la présence simultanée de saint François et de saint Antoine de Padoue auprès de sainte Claire ; est-ce donc bien elle qui est représentée ici ?

Dernièrement, Claire Rousseau, spécialiste de l'art religieux du XVII[e] siècle, a attiré notre attention sur le vêtement de la sainte qui se révèle en fait être celui d'une carmélite et non pas d'une clarisse. On peut différencier l'habit de ces deux ordres par la présence du scapulaire que portent les Carmélites mais pas les Clarisses. Alors, s'agit-il de sainte Claire ou de sainte Thérèse d'Avila (1515-1582), réformatrice du Carmel ?

Finalement, c'est l'identification du prêtre présentant l'hostie qui permet une nouvelle compréhension du tableau. Quoique très effacé, on peut encore distinguer au-dessus de la tête de l'officiant la trace d'une auréole : nous voici donc en présence simultanée de trois saints et d'une sainte !

Ce tableau représente en fait saint Pierre d'Alcantara donnant la communion à sainte Thérèse d'Avila en présence de saint François d'Assise et de saint Antoine de Padoue (Fig. 2). Pierre d'Alcantara (1449-1562) est un

religieux franciscain espagnol qui a initié un mouvement de réforme de son ordre en Espagne. Pour les Récollets qui veulent réformer l'ordre en France, Pierre d'Alcantara, canonisé en 1669, est une figure inspiratrice et un modèle ; on en retrouve la trace dans l'œuvre de frère Luc.

Dans son autobiographie, la sainte d'Avila revient à plusieurs reprises sur l'aide que lui a apportée le frère Pierre d'Alcantara dans son œuvre de réforme du Carmel espagnol, notamment du monastère d'Avila. Après la mort du frère Pierre, ce dernier serait apparu à sainte Thérèse pour l'inciter à poursuivre sa réforme.

Plusieurs ouvrages relatent la vie et les miracles attribués à saint Pierre d'Alcantara ; on y apprend qu'au cours d'une messe célébrée par Pierre d'Alcantara, alors que sainte Thérèse s'apprêtait à communier, saint François et saint Antoine de Padoue seraient apparus, tous deux revêtus de la dalmatique des diacres. C'est précisément cet épisode qui est à l'origine du tableau de frère Luc[4].

Ce récit de communion miraculeuse a inspiré quelques artistes dont frère Luc, mais il s'agit d'un type de représentation assez rare, plutôt présent dans l'art italien et espagnol[5].

Sur ce même sujet de la communion de sainte Thérèse, on peut citer un tableau de Livio Mehus[6] (1630-1691), mais surtout une œuvre de Juan Martin Cabezalero (1645-1673) qu'il est très intéressant de confronter avec le tableau de frère Luc[7]. (Fig. 3)

Pierre d'Alcantara est béatifié en 1622 et canonisé le 4 mai 1669. Cet évènement eut un retentissement certain dans le monde catholique, en particulier chez les Franciscains. Plusieurs couvents récollets lui ont ainsi consacré une chapelle et ont fait représenter ce nouveau saint ; c'est précisément ce qui va être demandé à frère Luc. A ce jour on connaît l'existence de quatre tableaux qu'il aurait peints pour les couvents récollets de Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Paris et Orléans[8]. En ce qui concerne l'origine de *La communion de sainte Thérèse*, il existe plusieurs pistes de recherche.

Dans le couvent des Récollets de Saint-Germain-en-Laye se trouvait une chapelle dédiée à sainte Thérèse d'Avila. La reine Marie-Thérèse (1638-1683), d'origine espagnole, venait régulièrement y prier en tant que tertiaire franciscaine. On pouvait y voir, au-dessus de l'autel, un *saint Pierre d'Alcantara*[9], peint par frère Luc. *La communion de sainte Thérèse d'Avila* aurait pu trouver toute sa place dans cette chapelle, du fait de son iconographie représentant de hautes figures de la spiritualité franciscaine et carmélitaine, dont deux étaient d'origine espagnole ! Saint-Germain-en-Laye pourrait donc être le lieu d'origine de ce tableau[10].

Une autre provenance possible est cependant à prendre en compte. Dans le couvent des Récollets de Paris, situé rue du Faubourg Saint-Martin, une

3 | Juan Martin Cabezalero, *La communion de sainte Thérèse*, vers 1670, huile sur toile, 248 × 222 cm, Madrid, musée Lazaro Galdiano. (Photo : auteur)

chapelle fut dédiée à saint Pierre d'Alcantara en 1671. Là aussi, se trouvait une représentation du saint par frère Luc[11] ; ce tableau, non localisé aujourd'hui, nous est connu par une gravure de Boulanger[12]. *La communion de sainte Thérèse*, aurait pu légitimement trouver sa place dans cette chapelle[13].

Notons enfin que les tableaux du couvent de Paris furent, eux aussi, saisis à la Révolution ; l'un d'eux, de la main de frère Luc[14], a également franchi l'Atlantique pour prendre place en 1817 dans l'église de Saint-Antoine-de-Tilly[15].

La question demeure de savoir où frère Luc a-t-il puisé son inspiration pour ce sujet, pratiquement inconnu dans l'art français du XVII[e] siècle, et quand l'a-t-il peint ?

A la suite de la béatification du saint espagnol en 1622, et à l'occasion de sa canonisation, de nombreux ouvrages hagiographiques ont relaté la vie et les miracles de Pierre d'Alcantara[16]. Frère Luc a vraisemblablement eu connaissance de cette littérature, largement diffusée et a pu s'en inspirer pour ses diverses représentations : « Il [Pierre d'Alcantara] célébra la messe avec une dévotion et un recueillement merveilleux. Dieu, qui voulait donner de nouvelles preuves de l'excellence de son serviteur, permit que deux des plus grands saints du ciel, saint François et saint Antoine de Padoue le servirent à l'autel, le premier faisant la fonction du diacre et le second de sous-diacre[17] [. . .] ».

A partir des éléments connus à ce jour, on peut estimer que frère Luc aurait peint un ou plusieurs des tableaux évoqués plus haut, entre 1650 et 1670. *La communion de sainte Thérèse* semble un peu plus tardive ; elle pourrait avoir été réalisée, après le retour de frère Luc de son séjour en Nouvelle-France, soit entre 1671 et 1680.

Reste aussi la comparaison possible avec le tableau de Cabezalero où l'on retrouve la même disposition des protagonistes et une composition pratiquement identique, structurée par des diagonales qui font de l'hostie le vrai centre du tableau. On peut noter aussi la richesse et le soin apporté au rendu des vêtements liturgiques, un des éléments descriptifs, que l'on retrouve fréquemment dans les récits de ce miracle : « Elle [sainte Thérèse] vit les deux saints revêtus de dalmatiques toutes éclatantes de lumière et des tuniques richement ornées[18] ». Frère Luc a-t-il pu avoir connaissance de ce tableau qui est daté « vers 1670 » ? Peut-être ont-ils une source commune qui reste à découvrir.

La *Communion de sainte Thérèse* est également une œuvre à replacer dans le le vaste courant artistique et spirituel qui a suivi le concile de Trente, en insistant particulièrement sur la place centrale des sacrements dans la vie chrétienne et tout particulièrement l'Eucharistie. En peinture, cela s'est traduit par une floraison d'œuvres présentant les miracles eucharistiques

et l'illustration de scènes représentant la dernière communion de différents saints et saintes, telle *La dernière communion de saint Jérôme*, par Agostino Caracci[19] (1557-1602), ou encore *La dernière communion de saint François*, par Rubens[20] (1577-1640) ; les tableaux de frère Luc *La dernière communion de saint François*[21] ou encore *La communion miraculeuse de saint Bonaventure*[22], n'ont certes pas la notoriété de ces œuvres mais ils s'inscrivent dans ce même courant avec souvent une certaine originalité dans la composition.

Le tableau présent dans l'église de La-Présentation-de-la-Sainte-Vierge est donc tout à fait représentatif de l'art de frère Luc, un art profondément religieux, sensible, et qui porte à la contemplation des mystères de la religion catholique, en prenant modèle sur la vie des saints. C'est aussi un bel exemple de peinture religieuse française du grand siècle qui veut instruire, plaire et émouvoir. La comparaison avec le tableau de Cabezalero montre peut-être les emprunts que frère Luc aurait pu faire à l'art baroque qu'il a connu à Rome où il a séjourné durant quatre ans, emprunts que l'on retrouve notamment dans la composition du tableau et dans la richesse des ornements religieux, mais sous une forme moins démonstrative, moins « théâtrale » et plus intériorisée.

Comme le disait fort justement Laurier Lacroix : « C'est une œuvre importante pour l'art français et l'art canadien », une très belle pièce du patrimoine religieux du Québec, un sujet rare dont l'étude n'est pas terminée.

NOTES

Je remercie Claire Rousseau, Martin Rhainds, et Michael O'Malley, pour leur précieux conseils, et pour l'aide qu'ils ont pu m'apporter dans la rédaction de cet article.

1 Municipalité de La Présentation, près de Saint-Hyacinthe (Québec).

2 Frère Luc fait partie du groupe de six religieux envoyés en 1670 pour refonder les Récollets en Nouvelle-France.

3 Johanne Chagon, Laurier Lacroix, *Œuvres d'art de La-Présentation-de-la-Vierge. Les chemins de la mémoire. Biens mobiliers du Québec*. Tome III ; Québec, Les publications du Québec, 1999. Voir également la fiche établie pour le Répertoire culturel du Québec : Peinture (La communion de sainte Claire). Consulté le 2 fév. 2021. https://www.patrimoine-culturel.gouv.qc.ca/detail.do?methode=consulter&id=93952&type=bien

4 Le récit de cette apparition se trouve notamment dans *La vie de saint Pierre d'Alcantara réformateur et fondateur . . . ,* écrit en italien par le P. Marchese, prêtre de l'Oratoire de Rome, nouvellement traduite en Français à Lyon chez Claude Bourgeot, 1670, p. 241.

5 On ne trouve aucune mention de ce sujet dans le catalogue de l'exposition *L'art du XVII^e siècle dans les Carmels de France, musée du Petit Palais,* Paris, 1982.

6 Livio Méhus, *La communion de sainte Thérèse*, v. 1680, Prato, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo.

7 Juan-Martin Cabezalero, *La communion de sainte Thérèse*, 1670, Madrid, musée Lazaro Galdiano. La notice de ce tableau, établie par le musée Galdiano, précise que le récit de cette communion de sainte Thérèse se trouve dans un ouvrage écrit par le frère franciscain Antonio de la Huerta en 1669 : *Histoire et vie admirable du glorieux Père saint Pierre d'Alcantara.*

8 Le tableau d'Orléans, aujourd'hui perdu, montrait saint Pierre d'Alcantara à genoux sur un nuage et adorant une croix.

9 Archives Départementale des Yvelines série Q. Cf. Marie-Thérèse Laureilhe, « Le frère Luc (1614-1685), Récollet, peintre de saint François », *Bulletin de la Société de l'Art Français*, année 1982 (1984).

10 Par ailleurs, trois autres tableaux de l'église de La-Présentation-de-la-Sainte-Vierge, achetés lors de la même vente que celui de frère Luc en 1819, proviennent de la chapelle de la Congrégation de Saint-Germain-en-Laye ; il est donc bien possible que l'ensemble des tableaux de cette vente provienne d'œuvres saisies dans les églises de Saint-Germain-en-Laye lors de la Révolution française et soit parvenu au Québec et mis sur le marché de l'art, comme cela s'est produit pour les tableaux acquis par les abbés Desjardins.

11 Jean-Pierre Willesme, *Les Récollets du faubourg Saint-Martin*. Cahiers de la Rotonde 15. Paris, Rotonde de la Villette, 1994.

12 B.N. Paris, Est, Da40.

13 Le couvent des Récollets de Paris, orné d'œuvres d'art remarquables, abritait entre autres un cycle de la vie de saint François, peint par frère Luc en 1679. Une *Dernière communion de saint François*, provenant vraisemblablement de ce couvent offre quelques similitudes avec *La communion de sainte Thérèse d'Avila*.

14 *Le Christ dictant la Règle à saint François*. Frère Luc avait peint le même sujet pour le couvent de Sézanne. Pour les tableaux de Paris et Sézanne voir : Jean-Jacques Danel, *Frère Luc, peintre et Récollet*, Université Rennes 2, Mémoire de maîtrise en Histoire de l'art, septembre 2000.

15 Sous la direction de Guillaume Kazerouni et Daniel Drouin, *Le Fabuleux destin des tableaux des abbés Desjardins*, Gand, Éditions Snoeck, 2017.

16 Citons entre autres : *Les Fleurs des vies des saints, et instructions sur les fêtes principales . . . , traduites en Français de l'espagnol du R.P. Ribadeynera, de la Cie de Jésus , par Mr Gaultier conseiller du Roi*, Paris, Chez Sébastien Hure, 1641 ; *La Vie de saint Pierre d'Alcantara religieux de l'Ordre de saint François*, tirée de différents auteurs par le R.P. François Courtot, religieux cordelier, Paris, 1670 ; *La vie de saint Pierre d'Alcantara réformateur et fondateur . . .* , écrit en italien par le P. Marchese, prêtre de l'Oratoire de Rome, nouvellement traduite en Français à Lyon chez Claude Bourgeat, 1670.

17 *La vie de saint Pierre d'Alcantara, réformateur et fondateur . . .* , *op. cit.*, p. 241.

18 *Ibid*.

19 Pinacothèque de Bologne.

20 Musée royal des Beaux-Arts, Anvers.

21 En ce qui concerne ce tableau voir Kazerouni et Drouin, *Le Fabuleux destin des tableaux des abbés Desjardins*, p. 150-53.

22 Ce tableau se trouve aujourd'hui dans la cathédrale d'Amiens.

A New Interpretation of a Painting by Frère Luc: A Work to See and Understand

JEAN JACQUES DANEL

In the church of La-Présentation-de-la-Vierge is a painting by Frère Luc (1614–1685), painter and Recollect, who stayed in Quebec in 1670–71 and played an important role in the arts in New France. The history of this painting, painted in France, is comparable to that of the works imported to Canada in the nineteenth century by the Abbés Desjardins.

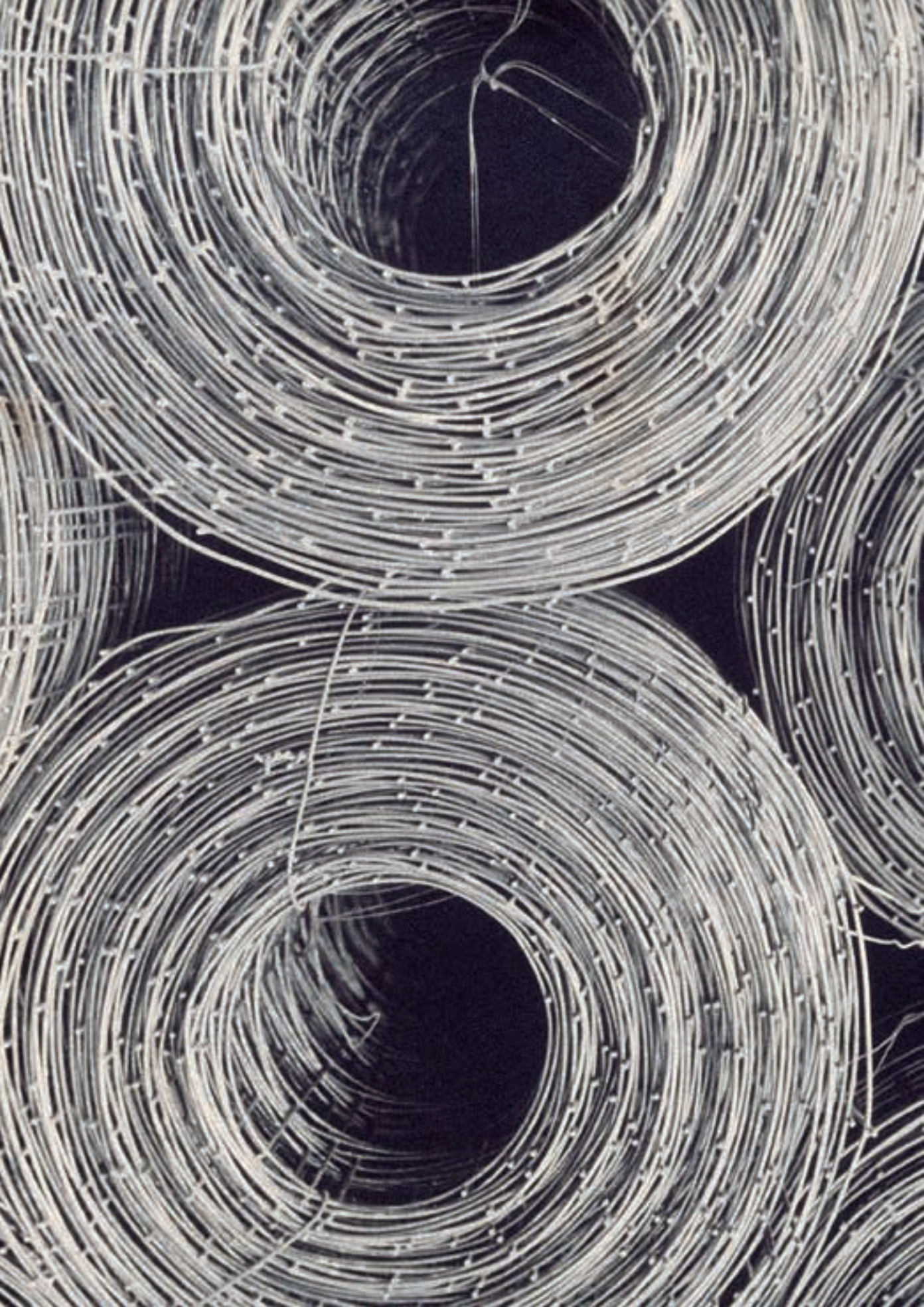
First attributed to Philippe de Champaigne under the title *Communion of Saint Therese*, this work was later attributed, by Laurier Lacroix, to Frère Luc, as a communion of Saint Clare of Assisi.

A careful examination of the figures and of certain details, allows us today to confirm the attribution of the painting to Frère Luc, but leads to a new interpretation of the subject. This is Saint Peter of Alcantara giving communion to Saint Teresa of Avila, in the presence of Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Anthony of Padua; a rare subject in seventeenth-century religious painting. A painting by Juan Martin Cabezalero (1645–1673), *The Communion of Saint Teresa of Avila*, presents an interesting similarity with the work of Frère Luc.

It is from the study of hagiographic literature, on the life and miracles attributed to Saint Peter of Alcantara (1449–1562), that we can understand the meaning and origin of this painting, literature that abounds after his beatification in 1622 and his canonization in 1669.

To date, we know of four works by Frère Luc dedicated to this Spanish Franciscan; it is therefore a visible trace of the importance of this saint for the Recollects in the seventeenth century. As for the origin of the *Communion of Saint Teresa of Avila*, several hypotheses are possible, including the Recollect convents of Paris or Saint-Germain-en-Laye. The study of the context in which these paintings were produced also allows us to put forward some hypotheses for the dating of the works of the Recollect painter, dating that remains problematic and subject to a certain caution.

The rarity of the subject, the science of the composition, the richness of the liturgical ornaments, make this work a masterpiece of the art of Frère Luc and of religious painting of the *grand siècle*. Laurier Lacroix rightly noted this painting as "important for French art and Canadian art."



Photographie 57: A Response to *The Family of Man* as the Exhibition of a Medium

MICHEL HARDY-VALLÉE

Among the crown jewels of architect Ernest Cormier's (1885–1980) career, the Hall d'honneur of the Université de Montréal's main pavilion is stately and symmetrical, combining Beaux-Arts principles with Art Deco accents. Imposing dark marble columns and large ceiling lights are balanced by pale stone on the walls and the floor; brass accents harmonize with the white oak doors. Built at the top of Mont Royal, the university's towering position over the city symbolizes the aspirations of its educated French-speaking middle class. In February 1957, the exhibition *Photographie 57* inserted a Bauhaus-inspired space, asymmetrical and dynamic, into the institution. For a few weeks, more than two hundred photographs by twenty-eight local artists were exhibited as a pre-emptive critique of Edward Steichen's blockbuster photography exhibition *The Family of Man*, which would come to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA) later that year.

The catalogue for *Photographie 57* set its intention in Bauhaus-inspired minuscule sans-serif type: "A few of the works that were first exhibited at Université de Montréal in February '57 by a group who believe that photography is something other than an impersonal medium of reproduction."[1] This "something other" was aesthetic, modern, and personal. In contrast to the picturesque style of salons and camera clubs,[2] it favoured a geometric, angular beauty. Rather than the action shots and decisive moments sought by press photography, the selection offered carefully composed images, suspending time and speaking quietly of their makers' vision. If Cormier's modernist architecture remained attached to the older shapes of religious architecture and European palaces,[3] *Photographie 57* was likewise ambivalently modern, its innovation looking back toward European modernism of the 1920s and 1930s.

In 1957, *The Family of Man* was the most popular photography show ever. Seen by hundreds of thousands of visitors after it opened at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York in January 1955, and then by millions as it

Detail of Jauran [Rodolphe de Repentigny], *Diagramme n° 4*, 1955, gelatin silver print, 25.3 × 20.1 cm, MNBAQ, acquisition no. 1995.340. (Photo: Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec)

travelled around the world, the exhibition mainly used press photography to present humanity's oneness under the growing nuclear threat. Critiqued for its political and historical naiveté, its scenography was nonetheless admired.[4] *Photographie 57* is therefore an unusual critique of *The Family of Man*, taking exception to Steichen's use of photography rather than to his politics. Why did artists mount such a response to *The Family of Man* in Montreal? And what can *Photographie 57* tell us about photography in Quebec during the 1950s, a period still in need of further research? Using newly available materials from the archives of photographers Robert Millet (1934–2021) and John Max [Porchawka] (1936–2011), as well as interviews with participants or their heirs,[5] I provide here the first extensive case study of this landmark exhibition.

After situating *Photographie 57* within the context of the reception of *The Family of Man*, I reconstruct the history of its production, considering both iconography and scenography. On the basis of this extensive new evidence, I argue that *Photographie 57* was a political gesture, insofar as the notion of a modern art medium was a political one in 1950s Montreal. Such a critique of *The Family of Man* also implies that photography could be understood as art in this context thanks to a culturally pervasive practice in which multiple functions of the photographic medium coexisted. Although *Photographie 57* did not unify or institutionalize the field of photography in Quebec around a common denominator, it showed its importance to a multimedia art world preoccupied with the role of the individual within modern humanism. Going against the grain of Steichen's transparent photographic medium at the service of a universalist vision of humanity, *Photographie 57* points toward an unexamined field within the reception of *The Family of Man*: exhibitions made either in protest or in imitation.

Family Reception

Museums had much to gain from photography in the 1950s. A generation earlier, John Dana underlined in *The New Museum* the tension between the increasing cost of acquiring art objects in a specialized market and the imperative for institutions to support communities' educational and cultural needs.[6] Photography provided a solution: it could be used to mount affordable thematic and didactic exhibitions. In 1920s Germany in particular, photographs were integrated into innovative avant-garde scenographies, favouring an interpretive approach that became exemplary.[7] As Andrea Kunard has argued, photography also turned out to be less factional than painting in Canada. The increasingly popular photographic salons proved advantageous to the National Gallery of Canada (NGC): they attracted international artists, were easy to circulate across the country, and

popularized the idea that photography could convey ideas and feelings.[8] All of this was put to patriotic duty during the 1940s in propaganda exhibitions that combined innovative design and high-impact photography. The NGC produced several shows extolling the war effort, while Steichen mounted *Road to Victory* (1942) at MOMA.[9] The years following the war then saw the transfer of these techniques to civilian use. Creative photography exhibitions in 1950s Germany such as *Subjektive Fotografie* (1951) reactivated pre-war scenography to reconnect with artistic models untainted by National Socialism, such as Russian Constructivism.[10] By the time Steichen did the same with *The Family of Man*, audiences in North America and Europe had been exposed to exhibitions of photography that, as Olivier Lugon argues, can be compared to cinema: collective experiences of meaning rather than encounters with precious objects endowed with aura[11] – in short, a mass medium attracting customers en masse to the museum.

In a comprehensive study, Eric Sandeen summarizes the intent behind *The Family of Man* to be "moving people with a positive message, by reminding them of the web of human associations and emotional ties that would buoy the individual above the hazards of life in the nuclear world."[12] Middle-class, middle-brow audiences were majority shareholders in the postwar order of things for Steichen.[13] Capitalizing on a picture economy built by the Second World War, the exhibition used images from the press, agencies, and independent photographers to offer a transparent window onto views of the distant world, delivering a clear and accessible message: all of humanity is like a family and we should care for each other. Steichen's humanism was built into a modernist exhibition derived from Bauhaus design principles: unframed prints of variable size, trimmed to the edge and laid out in space in a dynamic, kaleidoscopic manner.[14] Sequencing and layout de-emphasized the anecdotal aspect of images, which thus functioned as generic statements. *The Family of Man* deliberately subordinated each photograph to its overarching message, fulfilling Walter Benjamin's defence of the medium's power of reproduction to undo the aura of the work of art.[15]

Critiques of *The Family of Man* are typically levelled at its humanistic message. Roland Barthes famously panned the exhibition as a defence of the status quo, blind to the weight of history that brought us to the brink of nuclear holocaust – a point that Susan Sontag reiterated as the need to be distracted and consoled.[16] More nuanced, Robert Frank (who had helped Steichen solicit photographers in Switzerland) doubted that this exhibition could change the world and thought that individual talent was neglected in the final product.[17] In a recent article, John O'Brian analyzed *The Family of Man* for its failure to address the twin horrors of nuclear threat and racial segregation.[18] Finally, Geoffrey Batchen praised Taryn Simon's project on

genealogy and bloodlines *A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters, I – XVIII* (2008–11) for deconstructing Steichen's ideal of a common human nature, while also raising it to the same level of museological ambition.[19]

As an internationally touring exhibition (Barthes saw it in France), *The Family of Man* had a reception that was often variable, revolving around politics and the content of the images. In Guatemala, for instance, its humanistic message derived from the East-West axis of Cold War tensions fell flat with a public living with North-South conflicts.[20] Elsewhere, visitors sometimes snapped a self-portrait beside images depicting something familiar to them (even themselves in some cases). The US Information Agency (USIA), which circulated the exhibition, was keen to record these apparently hospitable gestures; however, audience reactions were not to be identified with the intentions of the USIA, as Sandeen reminds us.[21] *The Family of Man* did not function merely as propaganda or foreign relations, something to which its complex and multi-modal arrangement also contributed.[22] Everywhere it went, the exhibition may have revealed its audience's own concerns about photography more than it delivered a message.

Canada did not figure prominently in *The Family of Man*, but it wanted to be part of the global conversation that the exhibition was generating. Martha Langford remarks that the inclusion of three photographs of Inuit people by Richard Harrington was cause for national pride but also mild annoyance, as they were captioned "Arctic" and not "Canada."[23] Because *The Family of Man* was expensive to show in smaller markets, Steichen and MOMA director of circulating exhibitions Porter McCray designed a reduced-scale version (also known as the panel version) that included all 503 photographs, two copies of which were intended for domestic circulation in the US and Canada.[24] Encouraged by the Canadian photographers included in it, the NGC booked copy II of this more affordable, 650-feet version of the exhibition for 1–22 February 1957.[25] As Kunard notes, this was in line with the presence of photography at the Gallery as a form of mass communication rather than as art between 1940 and 1960.[26] After Ottawa, the 117 panels travelled to Montreal with the help of the local branch of the United Nations Association in Canada (UNAC). The recent uprising in Hungary and the Suez Crisis, which showed Lester B. Pearson's leadership in the creation of a UN Emergency Force, had created a context for stronger Canadian participation in international affairs and the UN.[27] *The Family of Man* had become a valuable message for UNAC to transmit. It opened on 8 March 1957 at the MMFA, where it received some 14,203 visitors by 29 March.[28] In the reduced version, the photos were placed on panels aligned in a single row (Fig. 1), rather than according to the complex original layout. In his review, critic and artist Rodolphe de Repentigny (1926–1959) noted the lack of spectacle in

1 | John Max, opening of *The Family of Man* at the MMFA, 8 March 1957, 35 mm negatives, 24 × 36 mm each, Fonds John Max en dépôt P18, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. (Photo: © The Estate of John Max / Courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery)

2 | John Max, opening of *The Family of Man* at the MMFA, 8 March 1957. Painter Arthur Lismer pointing at photo of atom bomb, accompanied by Prime Minister Louis St-Laurent (*centre right*), Mrs. Francis Raymond Hannen [Winnifred Louise Sorensen], president of the Montreal branch of UNAC (*centre left*), and museum director John Steegman (*left*). 35 mm negative, 24 × 36 mm, Fonds John Max en dépôt P18, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. (Photo: © The Estate of John Max / Courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery)

this version, unlike the original, which created a kind of cinema in reverse – moving audiences and still pictures. He noted an overabundance of literal meaning, though he conceded that certain sections were poetic and that the show had an overall efficacy. Like Barthes, he noted how photographs were drained of their specificity, but he critiqued the lack of cultural diversity more than the omission of historical data. He saw as a typically American trait the exhibition's lack of symbolism, mythology, or intellectual discipline of any kind.[29]

On opening night, Canadian Prime Minister Louis St-Laurent (Fig. 2), also honorary president of UNAC, delivered a revealing speech on the connections between photography and art and praised artists for seeing beauty in the world rather than making or reproducing it.[30] Talking about art using the lexicon of photography while opening a photography exhibition

in an art museum may have been a politician's way of defusing tensions between the two. It is also conceivable that aides had informed him of the recent exhibition at the Université de Montréal in which artists defended photography as more than a medium of reproduction. Against Steichen's transparent window on Cold War anxieties, these artists opposed not the weight of history but a broader photographic culture that had room for individual sensibility and a personal point of view.

Reconstituted Family

Photographie 57 was a community event. It was built on a densely interconnected network of people from various disciplines, constituting a modernist multimedia art world.[31] Institutions supported but did not initiate the exhibition. Participants included the organizers, those working in the graphic arts, visual artists, photographers, and cinematographers; some of them have remained historical enigmas.

Robert Millet worked as a photographer, a journalist, and a cinematographer active in union and cultural circles. In the 1950s, he joined the Association des artistes non-figuratifs de Montréal (AANFM).[32] He organized a photography exhibition in June 1955 at Guido Molinari's modern art gallery L'Actuelle, bringing together artists and professional photographers, that provided the template for *Photographie 57* and could also have been motivated by *The Family of Man*. Rodolphe de Repentigny reviewed this exhibition as a momentous event (he also participated under his pseudonym Jauran), allowing the personal style of photographers to flourish and aligning Montreal with the New York scene.[33] At the Université de Montréal, law student Rémi Mayrand had become president of the Société artistique in 1956. Responsible for inviting professional artists to campus, the Société offered movie screenings, concerts, and art exhibitions, which complemented student-led initiatives such as the occasional photography contest. An older student and a war veteran, Mayrand significantly raised the profile of the organization but also fought epic and very public battles over its finances.[34] Millet's network suited the Société's needs, and Mayrand's partnership ensured sufficient funding and administrative support.[35]

Participants in *Photographie 57* were solicited by a circular letter signed by Millet and Mayrand sent 17 December 1956 – barely more than a week after the UNAC had secured the funds for bringing *The Family of Man* to the MMFA.[36] Recipients were asked to submit large-format prints, mounted on stiff cardboard and trimmed to the edges, that constituted coherent series of original, dynamic, and eloquent work. The timing of *Photographie 57* (14 February – 7 March) dovetailed neatly with that of *The Family of Man*

(8–29 March), but no other reference was made to it. The letter was sent to former participants in the L'Actuelle exhibition, nearly all of whom were included in *Photographie 57*. Noteworthy among the recipients who did not participate are photographer Lutz Dille, cinematographer Wolf Koenig, and artist Rita Letendre, who worked as a photographer and typographer before her painting career took off.[37] A jury composed of Millet, cinematographer Michel Brault (1928–2013), and photographer/serigrapher Jean-Pierre Beaudin (1935–2006) chose the final entries. Key selection criteria were the coherence of the series and the photographers' ability to bring a personal sensibility to their subject. In making their selections in this way, the jury promoted the idea that photographers were comparable to abstract painters, whose vision trumped the choice of any referent to their images. This resulted in the exclusion of three potential participants from Quebec City, François Lafortune, Paul Vézina, and Jean-Paul Morriset; Millet argued that they had submitted mere advertising work.[38]

Of the twenty-eight participants selected, the largest contingent were current or past students at the École des arts graphiques (ÉAG).[39] Freelance and professional photographers constituted the next largest group, alongside visual artists and students at the École des beaux-arts de Montréal (ÉBAM). Film and theatre professionals completed the group, with journalists and academics sprinkled in. Albert Dumouchel (1916–1971) and Arthur Gladu (1918–1998), then both influential teachers at the ÉAG, were instrumental in drumming up interest.[40] Dumouchel had participated in the L'Actuelle exhibition, and although he did not exhibit at *Photographie 57*, many of his students and colleagues did. Gladu was enthusiastic about the whole project, and he submitted a set of images that included both classical studio portraiture and optical experimentations in a New Vision vein.

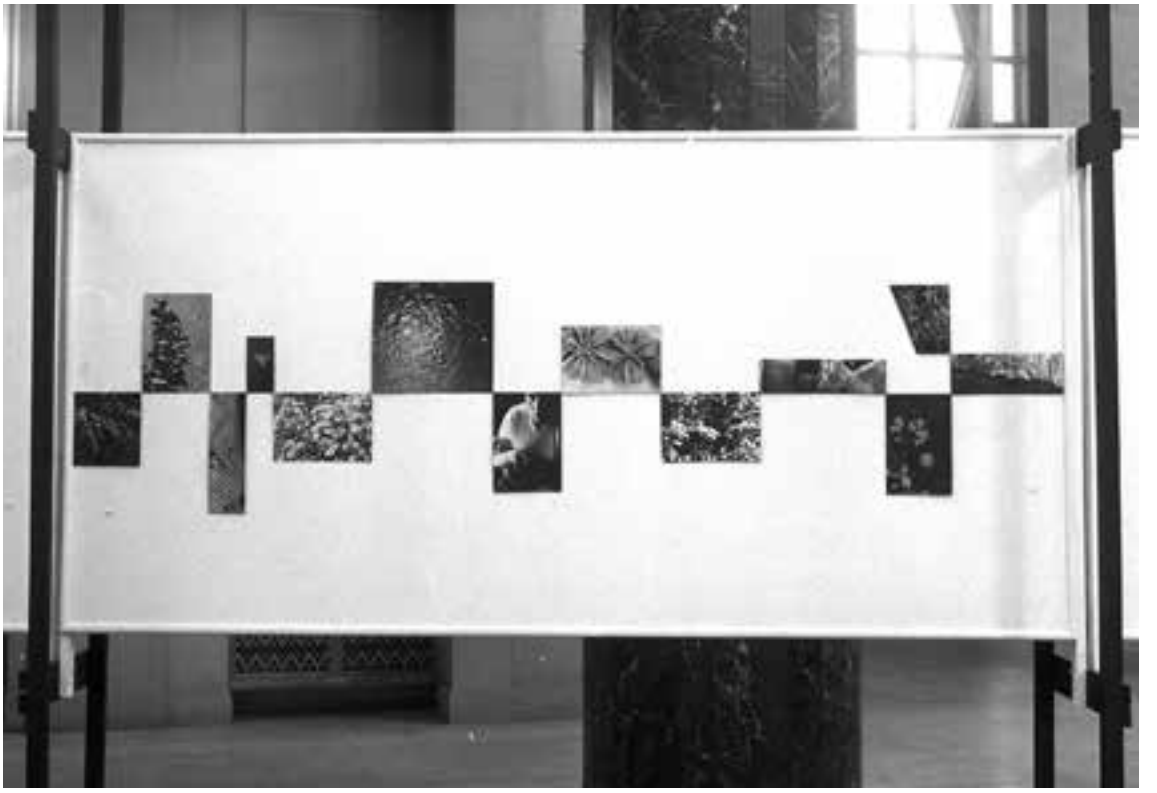
Gilbert Marion (1933–2013) was just about to enter the ÉBAM to further his training and had not yet begun his career as an engraver. After serving in the Canadian Navy and working in the graphic arts industry, he had toured the Gaspé Peninsula on his motorcycle in 1956, a trip that yielded carefully composed studies of seashore life around the village of Percé.[41] He also included a self-portrait, showing him using the Rolleiflex Standard 2¼″ camera that enabled him to produce the sharp details and delicate gradations in the thirteen prints he submitted (Fig. 3). His images bear the trace of the straight photography style championed by Alfred Stieglitz and

3 | *Above*: Gilbert Marion's panel at *Photographie 57*, from broadcast *Carrefour*, 20 February 1957, 16 mm footage, © Société Radio-Canada. *Below*: Gilbert Marion, beach at Percé (Gaspé peninsula), 1956, gelatin silver print, 25 × 34 cm. (Photo: Private collection, courtesy of Mathieu Marion)

Paul Strand, but also of the attachment to the rural world of Quebec modern painters such as Maurice Raymond (a founder of the AANFM).

Dumouchel forwarded the invitation to Jacques St-Cyr (1921–1996), who was working as a designer for the Canadian Exhibition Commission in Ottawa, making him the sole participant from outside Montreal. Today, he is best known for his eleven-point design of the maple leaf on the Canadian flag.[42] Like Marion, he had travelled in 1956, returning to a Europe he had helped liberate during his wartime service with the Canadian Army. His four contributions show Florence, Paris, and rural France in carefully framed, distant views emphasizing composition. However, his Paris photograph stands out for its anecdotal value, having been snapped on the set of the movie *Funny Face* (1957). St-Cyr captured the actor Audrey Hepburn from behind between takes of a scene in which her character pretends to fish off a barge on the Seine while Fred Astaire's character, loosely based on Richard Avedon, photographs her for a fashion assignment (Fig. 4).[43] Because of the lack of captions in *Photographie 57*, this intricate *mise en abyme* of the medium did not accompany St-Cyr's image in Montreal; audiences might have recognized Hepburn, but the movie had not yet been released in Canada. As a result, what could have been a paparazzi picture looked more like a tonal study.

4 | *Opposite*: Jacques St-Cyr's panel at *Photographie 57* from broadcast *Carrefour*, 20 February 1957, 16 mm footage, © Société Radio-Canada. *Above*: Jacques St-Cyr, Audrey Hepburn on the set of *Funny Face* (1957), 1956, 2¼″ negative, 58 × 55 mm. (Photo: Private collection, courtesy of Pierre St-Cyr)



5 | Robert Millet, Jean-Pierre Beaudin's panel at *Photographie 57*, 1957, 2¼″ negative, 58 × 55 mm, P179-Y-01-02-06-P025, Fonds Robert-Millet P179, Archives de la Ville de Montréal. (Photo: With permission of Catherine Beaudin)

Typographer Gilles Guilbeault (n.d.) proposed a motley collection of portraits, nature pictures, and urban scenes,[44] and Beaudin put together a tightly edited set on the theme of nature (Fig. 5). In addition to his jury duty, Beaudin also created a screen print for the cover of the catalogue, the layout of which he produced with Bernard Longpré (1937–2002).[45] Like Guilbeault, Longpré gathered images of children, back alleys, and nature whose coherence is more graphic than thematic. Réal Lafrenière (n.d.), a teacher at the ÉAG, played with strong contrasts that isolated the geometry of his subjects.

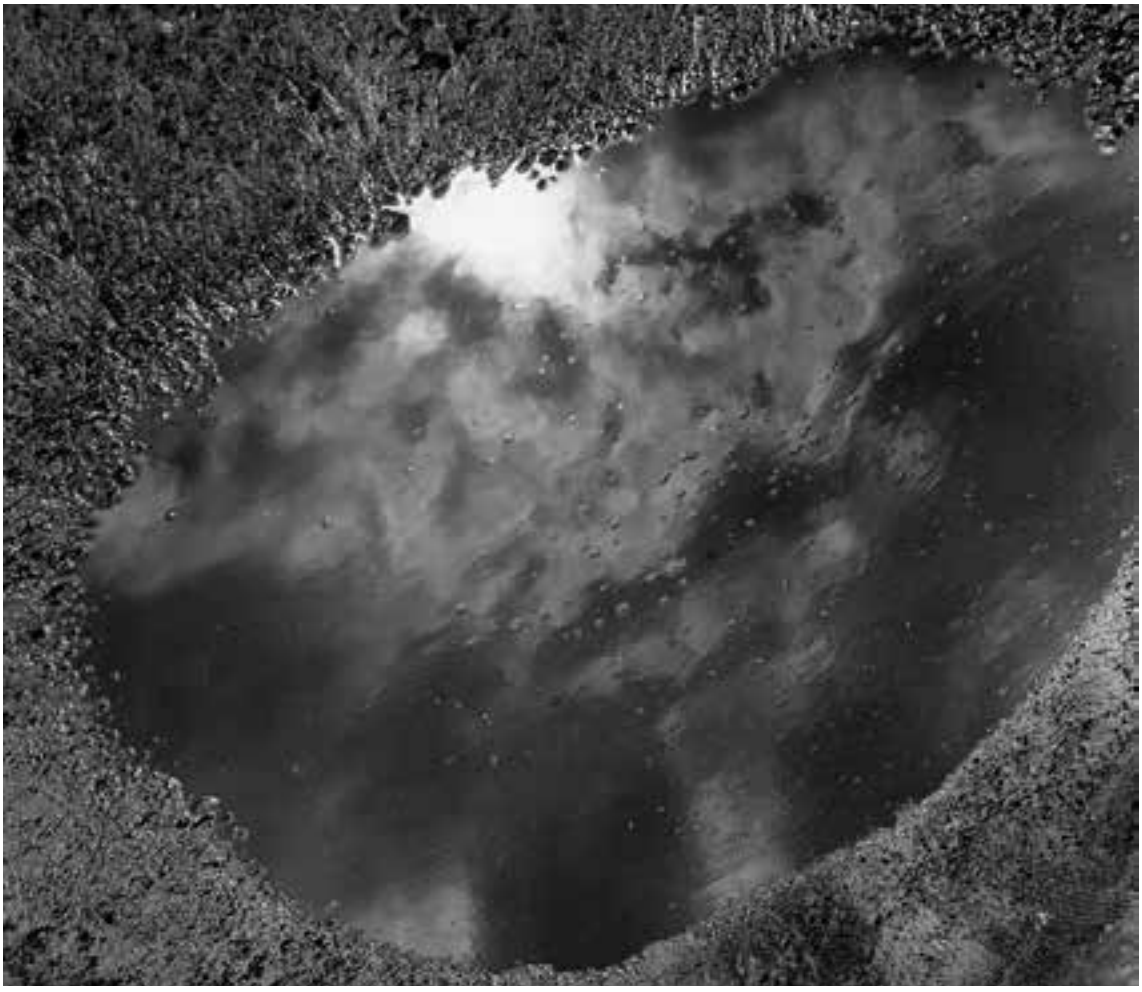
The boundary between the graphic arts and the visual arts was quite porous, as shown by Marion's career and by Dumouchel's subsequent hiring at the ÉBAM. Réal Arsenault (b. 1931) studied with Arthur Gladu, and he put his feet in both photography and painting with his first solo exhibition in 1956 at Université de Montréal.[46] For *Photographie 57*, he combined moody tonalities with geometric structures and scenes in a New Vision style

6a | Réal Arsenault, the first of three photographs from *Photographie 57*: man reading a newspaper, Philips Square, Montréal, c. 1957, gelatin silver print, 27.9 × 20.3 cm. (Photo: Artist's collection, courtesy of Réal Arsenault, with the collaboration of Alphiya Joncas)

6b | Réal Arsenault, the second of three photographs from *Photographie 57*: Saint-Charles river seen from a pressure pipe, c. 1957, gelatin silver print, 27.9 × 20.3 cm. (Photo: Artist's collection, courtesy of Réal Arsenault, with the collaboration of Alphiya Joncas)

6c | Réal Arsenault, the third of three photographs from *Photographie 57*: backyard in Spring, Saint-Urbain street, Montréal, c. 1957, gelatin silver print, 27.9 × 20.3 cm. (Photo: Artist's collection, courtesy of Réal Arsenault, with the collaboration of Alphiya Joncas)

7a | Gordon Webber, *Hot Foot Over Lava* (Mexico, 1954), c. 1956–57, gelatin silver print mounted on cardboard and inscribed with cropping marks, 20 × 25 cm, P179-03-01-D001-009, Fonds Robert-Millet P179, Archives de la Ville de Montréal. (Photo: Archives de la Ville de Montréal)



7b | Gordon Webber, *Mirrored Sky* (Kingston, 1954), c. 1956–57, gelatin silver print mounted on cardboard, 20 × 25 cm, P179-03-01-D001-010, Fonds Robert-Millet P179, Archives de la Ville de Montréal. (Photo: Archives de la Ville de Montréal)

(Figs. 6a–c). Gordon Webber (1909–1965) showed his Bauhaus roots – he had trained with László Moholy-Nagy in Chicago – and his *Prisme d'yeux* commitment to aesthetic freedom, as did his cosignatory Gladu.[47] He exhibited only three pictures, two of which use a skewed angle of view to destabilize the viewer's sense of above and below (Figs. 7a and b). The younger generation of artists also looked toward modern art, as did Jauran, who had recently abandoned painting for photography, with his formal experiments. His steel structure points simultaneously toward his practice as one of the Plasticiens and to Cubism, whereas his close-up views of steel wires and manhole covers present a simplified, quieter formalism (Fig. 8). As

for Jean-Paul Mousseau (1927–1991), a short series of portraits of his daughter Katerine show nothing of his own avant-garde experiments with photography but can be interpreted in light of his conflicted role as a father.[48] His series is nearer in kind to the sensitive portraits of children that Françoise de Repentigny (b. 1928) took while she was still a young mother, before she became a journalist following the death of her husband Rodolphe.

If *Photographie 57* primarily showcased artists or graphic arts professionals employing photography, how did the self-identifying photographers use their medium? Among those from the 1955 exhibition at L'Actuelle, Guy Borremans

8 | Jauran [Rodolphe de Repentigny], *Diagramme n° 4*, 1955, gelatin silver print, 25.3 × 20.1 cm, MNBAQ, acquisition no. 1995.340. (Photo: Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec)

9 | John Max, three-picture sequence from *Photographie 57* as reconstructed by the author, c. 1956–57, gelatin silver prints (contact prints), 24 × 36 mm each, Fonds John Max en dépôt P18, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. (Photo: © The Estate of John Max / Courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery)

had declined Millet's invitation, since he was having his own solo show, *La belle et la machine*, at that gallery.[49] His close friends Vittorio Fiorucci (1932–2008) and John Max were, however, on board. At that time, Fiorucci had yet to become famous for his illustrations, but his photographs were starting to gain him attention, such as one of a snow landfill that would be included in the George Eastman House's exhibition, *Photography at Mid-Century* (1959).[50] In *Photographie 57*, that photograph accompanied two fashionable images of a model in a gravel yard that betrayed a close examination of Irving Penn and Avedon. Using his new pseudonym for the first time, John Porchawka signed as "John Max" his portraits of poet and painter Michèle Drouin taken in Borremans's studio, including a three-picture cinematic sequence (Fig. 9).[51] Max had recently started doing photography, which he had learned in the company of Millet, Borremans, and Fiorucci, and he was inspired by the example of Lutz Dille (who, as noted, had declined the invitation to *Photographie 57*). Millet's proximity to the arts milieu would have also facilitated Max's inaugural career ambition of capturing a collective portrait of the Montreal scene.[52]

Millet drew from his editorial work portraits taken at L'Actuelle (Fig. 10). One of these is the only known depiction of photographer Kika Lasnier [Viktoria Wittova] (1929–1983), whose own participation in *Photographie 57* has not been recorded. Born in Slovakia, she was an occasional contributor to *Le Devoir*. Previously linked romantically to Paul-Émile Borduas, she had recently married industrialist and collector Yves Lasnier, who was also working as a photographer.[53] It is equally uncertain which images from the work of Gilles Coutu (b. 1933) were included. Active as a photographer and graphic designer during the 1960s, he contributed to periodicals in Canada, England, and Japan.[54] Pierino di Tonno (1933–2018) can be counted among the press photographers, but his participation in the exhibition also remains unknown. This is in stark contrast to his later fame photographing his friend, director Federico Fellini, and to his very public (and very sad) travails with his Montreal landlord before his death.[55]

Michel Brault could be considered a photographer in the 1950s, as he worked and exhibited in Montreal, but he was more active as a cinematographer, especially teamed up with director Claude Jutras (1930–1986).[56] Both were working at the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), which had moved its film services from Ottawa to its Côte-de-Liesse location in Montreal in 1956. I can confirm only a single image by Brault in *Photographie 57*: a horse under a tree in the middle of a field, the surrounding landscape disappearing into a white halo due to exposure manipulation in the darkroom. He is, however, the subject of a portrait by Jutras, who showed him facing the implacable geometry of an iron curtain. Millet's exhibition views suggest that Jutras contributed printed enlargements of motion picture

10 | Robert Millet, Rita Letendre and Kika Lasnier at L'Actuelle, 1956, 2¼″ negative, 58 × 55 mm, P179-Y-01-02-05-P147, Fonds Robert-Millet P179, Archives de la Ville de Montréal. (Photo: Archives de la Ville de Montréal)

footage alongside more conventional portraits. His former partner, Johanne Harrelle, appears in an image that would resurface in Jutras's breakthrough movie *À tout prendre* (1963) in which the two co-starred.[57] George Fenyon (1930–1964) also counted among the cinematographers. An Austrian who had immigrated to Australia after the war, having come to Canada by way of England, he was working with Jutras on a television series about local cinema. He also worked on NFB productions and theatre lighting, in addition to his fashion and advertising photography. He provided the only nude, alongside portraits and moody city scenes.[58]

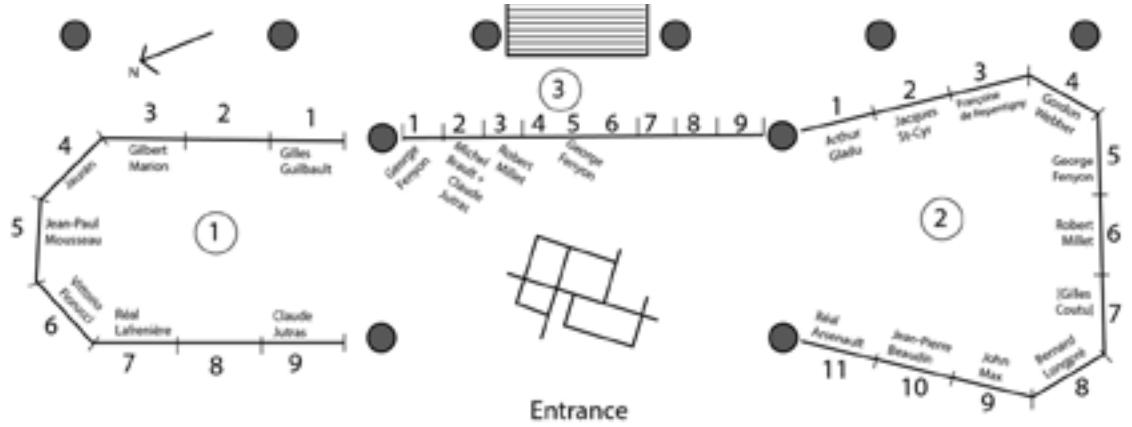
In the final, unfortunate category of unknown contributions, the most famous individual must be Jean-Guy Cardinal (1925–1979). The future vice-premier of Quebec was completing his doctorate in law, while also teaching at the Université de Montréal.[59] Fragmentary information about the others suggests their involvement with the arts. Working at the same university, Stan Jolicoeur was a technical photographer who also did stage photography and put together a solo art exhibition.[60] Jean Laflamme, from the 1955 L'Actuelle exhibition, played bebop on the saxophone.[61] Charles Clermont was possibly a student at the ÉAG who later worked as a photographer.[62] Jean Dufresne was the name of an illustrator who worked on many programs for the Théâtre du Rideau Vert at the time, but it is uncertain whether he is the same person who participated in *Photographie 57*. The name Louise Poirier appears in the pages of the *Quartier Latin*, the university's student newspaper, and also as secretary for the Rideau Vert in the 1970s.[63] About Danièle Clément, sadly, nothing is known nor has been found.

Photography obliquely unites the artists of *Photographie 57*: it was a medium they all worked in, but not necessarily as their primary occupation. However, the participants and invitees constitute a densely woven network, as evidenced by the personal and professional relations among them. The mutual portraits, recurring motifs (children, stranded boats, clotheslines, manhole covers), and overwhelming presence of chiaroscuro indicate common pictorial referents. Such *topoi* in turn allowed for understanding the differences among photographers according to the notion of style in the treatment of a theme or subject. *Photographie 57* was not an epic poem, as was *The Family of Man*, but more akin to a collection of lyric sonnets detailing the subjective variety of common experience – more Petrarch than Homer.

Home Staging

Photographie 57 created an enclosed space within the Hall d'honneur. Passersby walking in could not avoid the tall structure standing right in front of them. It was surrounded by white panels, strategically aligned with the thick stone columns and held up by wooden struts painted black (Fig. 11). This simple setup, built by Millet, could be walked through clockwise. Prints varied considerably in dimensions, from 20 × 25 cm to 76 × 102 cm, most being 40 × 50 cm.[64] Each panel was arranged in a different grid, usually dedicated to a single participant.[65] The setup favoured asymmetrical checkerboard arrangements, occasionally in vertical stacks or horizontal rows. This scenography was designed to strike a balance between individual talents and a unified ensemble.

Visitors were funneled left by the structure crowned by the exhibition logo, on which hung at various heights images of children, street scenes, jazz



11 | Author's reconstructed plan of *Photographie 57* in the Hall d'honneur of Université de Montréal, showing central structure, panels with names of known participants at their respective positions, position of nearby pillars, staircases, and orientation. (Photo: the author)

12 | Robert Millet, installation view of *Photographie 57*, 1957, 2¼″ negative, 58 × 55 mm, P179-Y-01-02-06-P021, Fonds Robert-Millet P179, Archives de la Ville de Montréal. (Photo: Archives de la Ville de Montréal)

13 | Robert Millet, installation view of *Photographie 57*, 1957, showing panels for Réal Lafrenière, Vittorio Fiorucci, Jean-Paul Mousseau, and Jauran, 2¼″ negative, 58 × 55 mm, P179-Y-01-02-06-P027, Fonds Robert-Millet P179, Archives de la Ville de Montréal. (Photo: Archives de la Ville de Montréal)

musicians, cracked concrete motifs, and portraits (Fig. 12). Moving as directed, visitors began with Jutras's cinematic experiments, then saw Lafrenière's chiaroscuros and Fiorucci's environmental portraits. At the apex of the curved path, Mousseau's daughter caused visitors to pause before coming

14 | John Max, Robert Millet and Michel Brault installing *Photographie 57*, 1957, 35 mm negative, 24 × 36 mm, Fonds John Max en dépôt P18, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. (Photo: © The Estate of John Max / Courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery)

to Jauran's geometric tableaus (Fig. 13). Marion's self-portrait functioned as a synecdoche for the photographic medium but also for personal sensibility. A panel of children, nature, and animals (unidentified) followed by Guilbeault's motley collection recall amateur practice, then the exhibition changed pace. A four-metre centre panel sitting on the floor was taller than the side ones. It was painted to complement the photographs of different participants (can be identified: Brault, Jutras, Millet, and Fenyon; see Fig. 14). A jazzy graphic performance, this arrangement was designed by Brault and Millet during installation.

The return path began with Gladu's panel, which superimposed prints onto each other, then St-Cyr's European travels were contrasted against Françoise de Repentigny's photographs of children and people in the street. Webber's diagonal compositions led into street scenes by Fenyon. At the apex of this path, visitors landed on Millet's photographs, facing Mousseau's across the Hall. Gilles Coutu is the likeliest author of the subsequent catalogue of graphic motifs extracted from nature.[66] Longpré worked in the same vein

as Guilbeault, also suggesting collage. John Max was the last portraitist, oscillating between the classic tableau and the sequence, echoing Jutras's opening panel. Beaudin's arrangement (Fig. 5) returned to a tightly controlled pictorial space, and the exhibition concluded with Arsenault's modernist tableaus (Fig. 6).

The exhibition enveloped viewers and monopolized their field of vision with a variety of pictorial and geometric forms along three dimensions, not just at eye level. In this sense, *Photographie 57* clearly reused the means employed by *The Family of Man*, which had been used in didactic exhibitions in Germany in the 1920s and their revival in the 1950s. In the catalogue, however, this exuberance was toned down, probably for expediency's sake, as it was distributed as a program at the exhibition opening. A single checkerboard was made, joining across the binding a photograph by Millet with two from Max's sequence; otherwise, only a single image appeared per page. Some subtle variations in the use of bleeds and margins accommodated the variable aspect ratios of the images, but cropping was also a necessity (Fig. 7). Some photographs not used in the exhibition were included in the catalogue.[67]

Feud and Fallout

When actor and playwright Gratien Gélinas delivered a speech on opening night, he lauded *Photographie 57* for advancing national culture, which in this context meant French-speaking Canada.[68] The event was well attended (Fig. 15) and benefited from good newspaper coverage.[69] Radio-Canada television featured the exhibition in its program *Carrefour*[70] – which, however, led to a tripartite spat in the media between Millet, Mayrand, and Borremans.

Complaining that the host of *Carrefour* had miscast *Photographie 57* as a student exhibition, Millet wrote an open letter protesting that students did not have the necessary clout to bring together professional artists around photography as he had done. Mayrand, not consulted, took umbrage at the letter published in *Le Devoir* and reminded readers in the student newspaper *Quartier Latin* that the exhibition would have been a failure without his financial and administrative contribution. Finally, Borremans took Millet to task in the illustrated weekly *Photo-Journal*, arguing against his disregard for the subject of photography.[71] Such axe-grinding did not help the initial plans to circulate *Photographie 57* to other universities.[72] Around that time, Millet began to drift away from the art scene to become more active in unions and political circles.[73] The arguments of the organizers also represented three different perspectives on the institutional and social foundations of the

15 | John Max, Rodolphe de Repentigny and Gordon Webber at the opening of *Photographie 57*, 14 February 1957, 35 mm negative, 24 × 36 mm, Fonds John Max en dépôt P18, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. (Photo: © The Estate of John Max / Courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery)

photographic medium: Millet defended photography as a formalist artistic discipline; Mayrand situated it within culture as a whole; and Borremans saw it as a means of expressive communication.

As was common with visual arts in 1950s Montreal, the most insightful comments about *Photographie 57* came from Rodolphe de Repentigny.[74] His review underlines the event as a collaboration among different groups united around photography as a means of personal expression through tones, concerned with the emotional impact of images and structures, but not as indices of things in the world. Where other critics appealed to painting in defence of photography,[75] de Repentigny confidently spared his readers any thesis on the artistic status of the medium, implying that the exhibition was proof enough. His untimely death in a 1959 mountaineering accident cut short his contribution to photography as both critic and artist.

The *Photographie 57* network had a brief resurgence with a 1960 exhibition in the town of Val-Morin, north of Montreal. It brought Brault, Jolicoeur, and Fenyon together with Roland Truchon (who was at L'Actuelle

in 1955), filmmakers Louis Portuguais and Gilles Carle, and television editor Jacques Desfossés.[76] Max, Coutu, Arsenault, Beaudin, Fenyon, Jolicoeur, and de Repentigny (posthumously) also all had solo exhibitions of their photographs in subsequent years. The idea of a Canadian *Family of Man* had, however, only just begun its course; the institutional consolidation of the photographic medium over the 1960s would see group exhibitions at the NGC, the NFB Still Photography Division, and Expo '67 modelled on Steichen's epochal approach.[77]

Sticking It to Steichen

A counter-exhibition such as *Photographie 57* opens a new vein of inquiry into the international reception of *The Family of Man*, beyond the direct reactions of visitors and critics. Why did the medium of photography matter to artists in Montreal who were not primarily photographers, and why choose Steichen's exhibition as a target? What prompted them to respond by defending their approach to the medium, rather than with political or ethical statements? The answer is that the notion of artistic medium itself was a politicized topic in French Canada. Leaving aside for a moment the more familiar declarations of the 1948 *Refus Global* manifesto, the "Manifeste des Plasticiens" written in 1955 by Rodolphe de Repentigny hints at a humanism of abstract art more germane to *Photographie 57*: "But while [the Plasticiens] are not seeking to give literal value to any possible unconscious meaning [of their work], they do not rule it out, and therefore it becomes the reflection of their own humanity." This humanism is in turn a spiritual endeavour: "There is no sacred art in 1955; art is sacred. Creation that is also intuition is the sole form of truth."[78]

As the many studies by Esther Trépanier and Yvan Lamonde have shown, the visual arts were ground zero for the debates over modernity in French Canada from the 1930s onward,[79] a situation that Lamonde summarizes as the promotion of a new aesthetics within an intellectual and spiritual totality pleading for a return to the self as a starting point for life.[80] In political circles, this resulted in discourses based around the person rather than the collectivity as a means of taking possession of the world.[81] In intellectual and artistic circles, it led to a reinterpretation of the notion of spiritual primacy, until then a reactionary, ultramontanist doctrine of church over state. It became a socially progressive affirmation of existence as the key to a fulfilling spiritual life by way of personalist Catholic thinkers such as Jacques Maritain and Emmanuel Mounier, who valued "le parti de l'esprit" over "l'esprit de parti."[82] The spirituality to which de Repentigny and the Plasticiens were alluding is indicative of this transition from a rejection of worldly life to

a spirited engagement with it. *Photographie 57* translated to photography some aspects of the Plasticiens' discourse, given its emphasis on individual sensibility and the higher value placed upon form and medium. This was a lightly worn kind of nationalism, but it was nationalism nonetheless, as underlined by Gélinas's opening night speech. Millet and Mayrand were operating in an intellectual paradigm established in the 1930s that would remain coherent more or less until the mid-1960s. By that time, social and intellectual upheavals were chipping away at the primacy of the spiritual to turn Quebec into a more secular society, animated by stronger nationalist and anti-imperialist ideas.[83]

In the way that they defended the photographic medium with their words and images, Millet, de Repentigny, and the other participants in *Photographie 57* branched off from the premise established by Steichen and Alfred Stieglitz at the foundation of the Photo-Secession movement: to seek beauty and spirit through highly formal photographs that would appeal to the viewer's emotions.[84] The referent of a photograph proved to be the doorway to the spiritual for both: Stieglitz derived from the carefully crafted photographic trace of an object a metaphorical, symbolic value leading to deeper spiritual truths,[85] whereas Steichen devised a massive assemblage of photographs showing the entire world as he understood it to depict the essential oneness of life.[86] *Photographie 57* inherited from Stieglitz the spiritual function of the single photograph, but by way of its maker,[87] not its referent; the humanism it shares with Steichen is a personal, not a collective, one.

If Millet was the leading force of the exhibition, he was pulling with him ideas from a larger discourse within the Montreal scene about the fundamental values of art and the artist. This can also be seen at the level of scenography. *Photographie 57* tapped into the same repertoire of installation strategies as *The Family of Man*. However, it achieved a balance between the individual and the collective closer to the ideas of Otto Steinert and his foregrounding of the photographic medium in *Subjektive Fotografie*, possibly by way of exposure to the New York gallery scene, with which de Repentigny was familiar among others.[88]

Making a Medium

Photography was being simultaneously claimed in the 1950s by the press, amateurs, professionals, and museums as a mass medium; the artists behind *Photographie 57* were defending a media ecology more than a home turf. With the benefit of hindsight, *Photographie 57* shows the importance of the graphic arts to the field of photography in 1950s Montreal. Wielding a Rolleiflex was one skill among many that layout designers and pasteup specialists would

keep as sharp as a Rapidograph line. Borrowing Stephen Bann's analysis of photography and engraving in nineteenth-century France for a moment, it can be said that this is another visual economy that has gone virtually unnoticed.[89] Perhaps this failure to memorialize is the oblivion into which common or ordinary things fall.

The rarity of art-photography exhibitions in Quebec during the 1950s is very real, but also relative to the definition of what constitutes an acceptable example. Hélène Sicotte's carefully documented survey of the growing contemporary art market in the 1950s includes few photography exhibitions, among them *Photographie 57*.[90] Suzanne Beauchamp had earlier noted that photography in the 1950s was mainly the province of amateurs, who were seldom interested in exploring the possibilities of the medium itself. Not before the 1970s can photography in Quebec be said to constitute an autonomous field, she argued,[91] an argument that Suzanne Lamarche repeated due to an avowed lack of time to gather evidence to the contrary,[92] and one implied in Sicotte's survey. Likewise, Kunard more recently argued that there was little aesthetic activity in the medium outside of camera clubs before the arrival of the NFB and the NGC during the 1960s.[93] *Photographie 57* points at a category of image professionals whose contribution was easy to miss, especially as their job descriptions made them anonymous or barely visible in magazine mastheads and film credit rolls. Few also found enough success in photography to keep the medium at the centre of their practice, even in their memory. For some of the participants (or their families) whom I have retraced, the scope and ambition of *Photographie 57* was a revelation.

There was more photographic activity in Quebec than is generally chronicled. Considering amateur practice only, photo clubs spanned from Ottawa to Sept-Îles, and Radio-Canada hosted the television program *Chambre noire* ("darkroom") as early as 1954.[94] Looking at professionals, Michel Brault exhibited his photographs in a makeshift space in 1952, but not in a vacuum.[95] At the MMFA the same year, the Association des Photographes professionnels de la Province de Québec was opening its first salon, and the organization Les Amis de l'Art regularly held juried competitions.[96] By 1957, the Museum was hosting the sixteenth edition of the Montreal Camera Club salon, which de Repentigny severely critiqued in *La Presse*.[97] In the newspapers, solo exhibitions were also noted, often by portraitists such as Yousuf Karsh or Gaby.[98] Even Eaton's was presenting an exhibition of portraits by André Larose, which was simultaneously held in a Paris department store.[99] Exhibiting photography as fine art was not exceptional; it was more exceptional to foreground the artists and the medium.

Eric Sandeen has argued that the USIA photographs showing international viewers are fundamental to the study of the reception of *The Family of*

Man.[100] To these must be added direct responses such as *Photographie 57*, comparable counter-exhibitions, and other exhibitions created in emulation of Steichen's methods, which had become synonymous with "photography" for the general public. In Canada alone, many such cases remain to be studied. *Photographie 57* was a prompt declaration of personal insubordination, a defence of the dignity of the individual photographer. It defended photography as modern art, but not as a modernist medium in the Greenbergian sense. Seen in light of subsequent history, it evidenced the seedbed of a growing multimedia art world characteristic of Quebec, but also looked back toward the Bauhaus. Although it did not achieve a lasting consolidation of local photographic actors into durable institutions or an autonomous field, by reactivating the avant-garde, *Photographie 57* brought to the table an agenda for photography that would come to fruition twenty years later.

NOTES

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1 *quelques uns des travaux exposés d'abord à l'Université de Montréal en février '57 par un groupe qui croit que la photographie est autre chose qu'un médium impersonnel de reproduction . . .* (Montreal: Société Artistique de l'Université de Montréal, 1957, our translation).

2 Andrea Kunard, "The Role of Photography Exhibitions at the National Gallery of Canada (1934–1960)," *Journal of Canadian Art History / Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien* 30:1 (2009): 30.

3 Cormier's work for the Université de Montréal is analyzed at length in Isabelle Gournay, ed., *Ernest Cormier and the Université de Montréal* (Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1990). He was also active in photography and cinema, and his studio was a focal point for modern artists of the 1920s, as discussed in Sébastien Hudon, "Enquête sur les films retrouvés de l'entourage d'Ernest Cormier: Relations intermédiatiques entre cinéma, photographie et beaux-arts," *Nouvelles Vues* 21 (2021): 1–46.

4 Roland Barthes, "La grande famille des hommes," in *Mythologies* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1957).

5 Fonds John Max en dépôt, P18, Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal; Fonds Robert-Millet P179, Archives de la Ville de Montréal. I interviewed, by phone or email, Françoise de Repentigny, Mathieu Marion (son of Gilbert Marion), René Derouin (for Gilles Coutu), Pierre St-Cyr (nephew of Jacques St-Cyr), and Réal Arsenault.

6 "We merely hold the theory that in most cases, [collections'] immediate utility is vastly over-rated; that their cost is out of proportion to their value; that their managers usually too greatly exalt their acquisition and forget the entertainment and instructions of those for whom they were professedly acquired." John Cotton Dana, *The New Museum* (Woodstock, VT: The Elm Tree Press, 1917), 14.

7 Olivier Lugon, "Musées sans murs et document: la spatialisation de la photographie dans les expositions des années 1950," *Revue de l'art* 175:1 (2012).

8 Kunard, "Role of Photography Exhibitions," 33, 40.

9 Ibid., 40.

10 Anaïs Feyeux, "La photographie en reconstruction: les expositions photographiques dans l'Allemagne de l'Ouest après-guerre," *Revue de l'art* 192:2 (2016): 51, 55.

11 Olivier Lugon, "The Ubiquitous Exhibition: Magazines, Museums, and the Reproducible Exhibition after World War II," in *The 'Public' Life of Photographs*, ed. Thierry Gervais (Toronto / Cambridge, MA: RIC Books / The MIT Press, 2016).

12 Eric J. Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition: The Family of Man and 1950s America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 2.

13 Ibid., 40.

14 Ibid., 44, 61.

15 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1968 [1936]).

16 Barthes, "La grande famille des hommes," 176; Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 33. For an extensive critique of Barthes's position, see Gerd Hurm, Anke Reitz, and Shamoon Zamir, eds., *The Family of Man Revisited: Photography in a Global Age* (London: Routledge, 2017).

17 Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition*, 163; Kristen Gresh, "The European Roots of *The Family of Man*," *History of Photography* 29:4 (2005): 335–36.

18 John O'Brian, "The Nuclear Family of Man," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 6:7 (2008): 10.

19 Geoffrey Batchen, "Revenant," in *Taryn Simon. A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters, I – XVIII* (Berlin and London: Nationalgalerie Staatliche Museen/ MACK, 2011), 3–4.

20 Eric J. Sandeen, "The Family of Man in Guatemala," *Visual Studies* 30:2 (2015): 128.

21 Eric J. Sandeen, "The International Reception of *The Family of Man*," *History of Photography* 29:4 (2005): 354.

22 Ibid.; Karin Priem and Geert Thyssen, "Puppets on a String in a Theatre of Display? Interactions of Image, Text, Material, Space and Motion in *The Family of Man* (ca. 1950s–1960s)," *Paedagogica Historica* 49:6 (2013): 943.

23 Martha Langford, "Migrant Mothers: Richard Harrington's Indigenous 'Madonnas,'" *History of Photography* 40:1 (2016): 33. Only two photographers, Harrington and Reva Brooks, are labelled as Canadian in the master checklist for *The Family of Man*, 1955, Museum of Modern Art. Whereas Harrington's photographs depict the "Arctic," one by John Philips (American) and two by Ronny Jaques (British) depict "Canada." Jaques is sometimes considered Canadian, as in Rodolphe de Repentigny, "À visiter: 'La famille de l'homme,'" *La Presse*, 9 Mar. 1957. He moved to the country when very young and eventually had a studio in Toronto,

though he went back to England and then lived in New York. See Pamela Fiori, *Stolen Moments: The Photographs of Ronny Jaques* (New York: Glitterati, 2008).

24 Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition*, 96; Antoinette irving, 8 Nov. 1955, Airmail letter to John Steegman, Family of Man – 733, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

25 Kunard, "Role of Photography Exhibitions," 46–47; Porter A. McCray, 12 Apr. 1956, Letter to John Steegman, Family of Man – 733, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

26 Kunard, "Role of Photography Exhibitions," 40.

27 R.J. Perry, 8 Dec. 1956, Letter to John Steegman, Family of Man - 733, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

28 "L'hon. St-Laurent inaugurera l'expo Famille de l'homme," *La Presse*, 1 Mar. 1957; "Musée des Beaux-Arts," *Le Devoir*, 17 Aug. 1957. McCray, Letter to John Steegman.

29 de Repentigny, "À visiter,'" 74.

30 "L'hon. St-Laurent inaugurera l'expo Famille de l'homme." Adrien Robitaille, "Quand un ministre nous parle d'art," *Photo-Journal*, 17–23 Mar. 1957.

31 Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds*, 25th anniversary ed. (Berkeley, ca: University of California Press, 2008 [1982]).

32 On the aanfm, see Sandra Paikowsky, "L'Association des artistes non figuratifs de Montréal / The Non-Figurative Artists Association of Montreal," *Vie des arts* 26:103 (1981); Sandra Paikowsky, *The Non-Figurative Artists' Association of Montreal / L'Association des artistes non figuratifs de Montréal*, trans. Sylvain Allaire (Montreal: Sir George Williams Art Galleries, Concordia University, 1983); Sandra Paikowsky, "The Girls and the Grid: Montreal Women Abstract Painters in the 1950s and Early 1960s," in *Rethinking Professionalism: Women and Art in Canada, 1850–1970*, ed. Kristina Huneault and Janice Anderson (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012). The association held its second annual show at the mmfa from 22 Feb. to 17 Mar., thus overlapping with both *Photographie 57* and *The Family of Man*.

33 Rodolphe de Repentigny, "Une exposition de photographies," *La Presse*, 2 July 1955.

34 Marie-Sol Hone, "Interview avec Rémi Mayrand," *Le Quartier Latin*, 29 Nov. 1956. Rémi Mayrand, *La curiosité ne tue que par accident: Autobiographie* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2010), 235. Mayrand was given c$360 to organize the exhibition, but he was blamed for not having received the proper authorizations, Gilles Prévost, "Nos édiles au travail," *Le Quartier Latin*, 24 Jan. 1957. His administrative abilities were severely criticized by the governing student association, André Brossard, "L'A.G.E.U.M. en ébullition," *Le Quartier Latin*, 24 Jan. 1957.

35 Rémi Mayrand, "Lettre ouverte: réponse à M. Robert Millet," *Le Quartier Latin*, 7 Mar. 1957.

36 Perry, Letter to John Steegman.

37 Guy Robert, "Le peintre Rita Letendre," *Vie des arts* 27 (1962): 44. Dille had a studio on Stanley Street in Montreal at that time. In Canada, his photographic work was first collected in Lorraine Monk, ed., *The Many Worlds of Lutz Dille/Lutz Dille et son univers*, image (Ottawa: National Film Board of Canada/Office national du film du Canada, 1967). At the time, Wolf Koenig was co-directing, with Colin Low, the landmark still-in-motion documentary *City of Gold*, National Film Board of Canada, 1957, 21 min, 16 mm.

38 Jean-Paul Morisset, 7 Jan. 1957, Letter to Robert Millet, Fonds Robert-Millet P179, Archives de la Ville de Montréal; Robert Millet, 11 Jan. 1957, Letter to Jean-Paul

Morisset, ibid., Archives de la Ville de Montréal. A professional photographer, François Lafortune later published a photobook that would have been more to the taste of the *Photographie 57* jury. François Lafortune and Gilles Vigneault, *Où la lumière chante* (Quebec City: Les presses de l'Université Laval, 1966). Paul Vézina was a photographer who had just joined the new Service de ciné-photographie (later the Office du film du Québec), a provincial institution comparable to the nfb, Jean-Pierre Tadros, "Après vingt ans à la caméra, pour Paul Vézina c'est le temps d'y voir," *Cinéma Québec* 4:8 (1975): 33. Jean-Paul Morisset was the son of art historian and curator Gérard Morisset, who also wrote the first sketch of the early history of photography in Quebec, "Les pionniers de la photographie canadienne" (*La revue populaire* 44:9 [1951]: 14–15, 58, 60–63). In 1957, the younger Morisset was working with his father as a photographer for the Inventaire des oeuvres d'art of the Musée de la province (the ancestor of today's Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec), which aimed to systematically catalogue the province's material heritage. His brother Denys was also a painter and a photographer. Myriam Magnan, "Quand le peintre se fait photographe: Entrevue avec Denys Morisset," *Culture Vivante* 6 (1967).

39 The École des arts graphiques was a Montreal trade school for all occupations related to printing. It changed its name to Institut des arts graphiques in 1958 and was eventually folded into Collège Ahuntsic, a general and technical higher education college (cégep). Many important Quebec photographers, including Normand Grégoire and Michel Campeau, were trained there.

40 On Dumouchel and photography, see Guy Robert, *Albert Dumouchel, ou La poétique de la main* (Montreal: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1970). A catalogue raisonné of his oeuvre is currently under way (Nicole Milette, uqam, and Ginette Deslauriers). On Gladu, see his autobiography Arthur Gladu, *Tel que j'étais: Récit autobiographique* (Montreal: L'Hexagone, 1988). The Gladu-Dumouchel collaboration is part of the broader context analyzed in Sébastien Dulude, *Esthétique de la typographie: Roland Giguère, les Éditions Erta et l'École des arts graphiques* (Montreal: Nota bene, 2013).

41 Jacques Guay, "La gravure, un art méconnu," *Popular Technique/Technique pour tous* 1962. Email from Mathieu Marion to author, 16 Sept. 2023.

42 Jacques St-Cyr, 26 Dec. 1956, Letter to Robert Millet, Fonds Robert-Millet P179, Archives de la Ville de Montréal. John Geddes, "The Quebec nationalist who designed Canada's flag," *Maclean's* 2015. St-Cyr later changed his name to Saint-Cyr in what could be interpreted as some sort of nationalist statement. Email from Pierre St-Cyr to author, 23 Oct. 2023.

43 Email from Pierre St-Cyr to author, 1 Sept. 2023.

44 Gilles Guilbeault did the layout for the short-lived *Nouveau Journal*, a newspaper edited by publisher Jean Paré to which Millet contributed as a photographer and a journalist. He also designed book layouts for Atelier Pierre Guillaume and L'Hexagone. His name is sometimes spelled "Guilbault." "Le maquettiste de La Presse au palmarès de 'Typographie 62,'" *La Presse* 1962; Catalogue for the Typography 62 competition, Canadian Typography Archives, Halifax, 1962.

45 Robert Millet and Rémi Mayrand, 15 Dec. 1956, Draft of a letter to M. Beaudoin, Fonds Robert-Millet P179, Archives de la Ville de Montréal. Longpré is better known as an innovative animator with the nfb, where he began to work in 1957. He studied at Collège Stanislas, as did Brault and Jutras, and had Dumouchel as a teacher at the École des arts graphiques. André Leroux, "Bernard Longpré," *Séquences: la revue*

de cinéma (1978); Bernard Longpré biography and filmography, Fonds CA NFB-DCM, National Film Board of Canada.

46 Rémi MAYRAND, "Réal Arsenault," *Le Quartier Latin*, 26 Jan. 1956. This exhibition was organized by Mayrand and Robert Bourassa (premier of Quebec in 1970–76 and 1985–94). Email from Réal Arsenault to author, 5 Sept. 2023.

47 About Webber and *Prisme d'yeux* see Bruce ANDERSON, *Gordon McKinley Webber: Memories of an Artist, Designer and Teacher* (Montreal: McGill University School of Architecture, 1996); Esther TRÉPANIER, *Scott, Brandtner, Eveleigh, Webber: Revisiting Montreal Abstraction of the 1940s* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022); Anne WHITELAW, Brian FOSS, and Sandra PAIKOWSKY, eds., *The Visual Arts in Canada: The Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). The Bauhaus presence in Montreal also included Werner David Feist, former student at the Dessau school, who emigrated because of National Socialism. "Décès du Montréalais David Feist, un des derniers survivants du Bauhaus," *La Presse*, 2 Apr. 1998.

48 Some of Mousseau's little-known photographic oeuvre, which included formal and technical experiments, was recently exhibited by Hudon and can be seen in Alexis DESGAGNÉS, "Making Light: The Emergence of Modernist Photography in Quebec Revealed," *Ciel variable* 89 (2011). Jacques DOYON, "Sébastien Hudon, Discovering and Collecting Modern Photographs in Quebec," *Ciel variable* 91 (2012). Katerine Mousseau was rejected by her family at a very young age. *Les enfants de Refus global*, directed by Manon Barbeau, 1998, 74 mins, video.

49 For an overview of Borremans's career, see Sébastien HUDON, *Une saison chez Guy Borremans* (Quebec City: Varia, 2007); Ariel BORREMANS and Guy BORREMANS, *Ma mère dans l'œil de mon père: Luce Guilbeault photographiée par Guy Borremans* (Montreal, QC: Les éditions du passage, 2016).

50 *Photography at Mid-Century* (Rochester, NY: George Eastman House, 1959), 40. For an overview of Fiorucci's career, including his photographs, see Marc Henri CHOKO, *Through the Eyes of Vittorio* (Montreal: Juniper Publishing, 2015).

51 Verso inscriptions, John Max, 1956, Contact sheet for negative 325, Fonds John Max en dépôt, P18, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. At the time, Michèle Drouin was the partner of poet Jean-Paul Martino, whose work was inspired by Automatisme and Surrealism, and who produced a poem on photography for the catalogue that appears to have been unused, Jean-Paul Martino, n.d. 1957, Introduction à *Photographie 57*, Fonds Robert-Millet P179, Archives de la Ville de Montréal. For more about Max, see Michel HARDY-VALLÉE, "The Photobook as Variant: Exhibiting, Projecting, and Publishing John Max's *Open Passport*," *History of Photography* 43:4 (2019).

52 Jean-Claude GERMAIN, *La femme nue habillait la nuit: Nouvelles historiettes de la bohème* (Montreal: Hurtubise, 2010), 89.

53 The couple eventually separated, and she moved to Paris before returning to Canada. Enregistrement de mariage Yves Lasnier – Viktoria Wittova, 22 June 1954, Le LAFRANCE (Baptêmes, Mariages et Décès), Généalogie Québec; Paul-Émile BORDUAS, "À Kika Wittova," in *Écrits ii*, ed. André-G. Bourassa and Gilles Lapointe, Bibliothèque du Nouveau Monde (Montreal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1997); Kika Wittova, décès du Québec 1926–1997, Le LAFRANCE (Baptêmes, Mariages et Décès), Généalogie Québec.

54 In 1957, Coutu was working as a draftsman for the Aluminium Rolling Mills Ltd. He won a two-month trip to Japan in a photography contest in 1963 and would later win

the first prize for the design of the 1967 Centennial logo, although it was not used. Philip Pocock, "Photography and the Image of Canada," *Canadian Art* (November/December 1961): 413; *Photography 63/An International Exhibition* (Rochester, NY: George Eastman House, 1963), 88; Gilles Coutu, 1967, Curriculum vitae, Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal. René Derouin email to author, 1 Sept. 2023.

55 Serge Dussault, "Tout Fellini à la Cinémathèque québécoise: que la fête commence!," *La Presse*, 31 Dec. 1994. Jason Magder, "Photographer of Dali, Chaplin, faces eviction from Little Italy apartment," *Montreal Gazette*, 6 Mar. 2016.

56 Both Brault and Jutras had careers that are foundational to filmmaking in Quebec. However, Jutras was posthumously revealed to have been a pedocriminal by his biographer, and his legacy is still being re-evaluated. Yves Lever, *Claude Jutra: biographie* (Montreal: Boréal, 2016). I am using the spelling "Jutras" instead of "Jutra" to reflect his usage at that time, as in the *Photographie 57* catalogue.

57 Another might show the future co-producer of *À tout prendre*, Robert B. Hershorn, a close friend of Leonard Cohen's. Vittorio Fiorucci designed the poster for the movie.

58 Françoise de Repentigny, "Pour George Fenyon, les sujets importent peu: La femme l'inspire," *La Presse,* 22 Nov. 1960; Gilbert Marion, "1 homme et 50 femmes," *Le Quartier Latin*, 6 Dec. 1960; "Deux cinéastes canadiens seront directeurs de la photographie pour le film 'ashini,'" *La Presse*, 1961. George Fenyon geneological data, Ancestry.ca.

59 Robert Millet, "Lettres au 'Devoir': Exposition de photographie," *Le Devoir* 1957; *quelques uns des travaux exposés d'abord à l'Université de Montréal en février '57 par un groupe qui croit que la photographie est autre chose qu'un médium impersonnel de reproduction. . .*; Assemblée Nationale, "Jean-Guy Cardinal," https://www.assnat.qc.ca/fr/deputes/cardinal-jean-guy-2383/biographie.html.

60 Gaétan Benoit, "Chasse et pêche," *La Patrie du dimanche*, 6 Dec. 1959; Jean Sarrazin, "Noir sur blanc," *La Presse*, 31 Oct. 1959.

61 Photograph of Jean Laflamme by Robert Millet, 1954, P179-Y-01-03-P005, Fonds Robert-Millet P179. Email from Alfie Wade to author, 15 Feb. 2024.

62 "La boîte à échos," *Le Devoir*, 18 Aug. 1976.

63 Louise Poirier, "Politique et mal de tête," *Le Quartier Latin*, 24 Jan. 1957; Théâtre du Rideau Vert, "L'amante anglaise, programme" (1971), 22.

64 Robert Millet, 1956–57, Budget and bill of materials, Fonds Robert-Millet P179, Archives de la Ville de Montréal.

65 At least on those I could identify. I did not find views for three panels, and although I have views for all the others, there are some that I am not able to relate to specific names.

66 Coutu published a photo of a bird in flight that is very similar to that in *Photographie 57* in *Photography 63/An International Exhibition*, 23. René Derouin concurred that Coutu was the most likely candidate for this panel.

67 In the catalogue, Millet used a photo he took of Mousseau that was not included in the exhibition.

68 "Langage de la photographie," *Le Quartier Latin*, 21 Feb. 1957. Gratien Gélinas was not a photographer, but he owned a Leica and was keenly interested in the medium and its social role.

69 "Exposition de photographies à l'Université," *Le Devoir*, 13 Feb. 1957; "Le grand hall de l'Université transformé par une exposition," *La Presse*, 16 Feb. 1957; Jean Bouthillette, "Le sujet n'est qu'un matériau," *Photo-Journal* 1957. A selection of

photographs was reproduced in "Photographie 57," *La Presse, supplément rotogravure*, 9 Mar. 1957.

70 *Carrefour*, Radio-Canada, Montréal, 20 Feb. 1957, 1 min 40 sec, TV.

71 MAYRAND, "Lettre ouverte"; MILLET, "Lettres au 'Devoir'"; Adrien ROBITAILLE, "Borremans contredit R. Millet," *Photo-Journal*, 10–16 Mar. 1957.

72 Robert Millet, 2 Jan. 1957, Letter to Jacques St-Cyr, Fonds Robert-Millet P179, Archives de la Ville de Montréal.

73 Just after *Photographie 57*, on 10 Mar. 1957, miners went on strike at Murdochville. Millet photographed and filmed the epoch-making event. He later joined the team of the short-lived *Nouveau Journal* and was among the founders of the election-jamming absurdist Parti Rhinocéros with writer Jacques Ferron.

74 Rodolphe DE REPENTIGNY, "Quelques aspects de 'Photographie 57,'" *La Presse*, 16 Feb. 1957.

75 Marie-Sol HONE, "Exposition de photographies," *Quartier Latin*, 21 Feb. 1957.

76 "Exposition de photo à l'Auberge du Mont-Sauvage," *La Presse*, 14 Jan. 1960.

77 KUNARD, "Role of Photography Exhibitions," 49; Martha LANGFORD, ed. *Contemporary Canadian Photography from the Collection of the National Film Board / Photographie canadienne contemporaine de la collection de l'Office national du film* (Edmonton, AB: Hurtig, 1984); *Exposition internationale de photographie: Regards sur la terre des hommes / International Exhibition of Photography: The Camera as Witness* (Toronto: Southam Press, 1967).

78 Roald NASGAARD and Michel MARTIN, *The Plasticiens and Beyond: Montreal, 1955–1970* (Quebec City and Markham, ON: Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec and Varley Art Gallery, 2013), 152.

79 See in particular Esther TRÉPANIER, *Peinture et modernité au Québec, 1919–1939* (Quebec City: Nota bene, 1998); Yvan LAMONDE and Esther TRÉPANIER, eds., *L'avènement de la modernité culturelle au Québec* (Quebec City: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2007); Yvan LAMONDE, *La modernité au Québec* 1: La Crise de l'homme et de l'esprit, 1929–1939 (Montreal: Fides, 2011); Yvan LAMONDE, *La modernité au Québec* 2: La victoire différée du présent sur le passé, 1939–1965 (Montreal: Fides, 2016).

80 LAMONDE, *La modernité au Québec* 1: La Crise de l'homme et de l'esprit, 1929–1939, 269.

81 Ibid., 276.

82 Ibid., 286–87. In French, "l'esprit de parti" refers to one's loyalty to a political party, whereas "le parti de l'esprit" implies that one is on the side of education, culture, and free thinking rather than bound to a specific ideology.

83 Ibid.

84 Katherine HOFFMAN, "Sowing the Seeds/Setting the Stage: Steichen, Stieglitz and *The Family of Man*," *History of Photography* 29:4 (2005): 321.

85 Kevin SALEMME, "Chasing Shadows: Steichen's Dream of the Universal," *History of Photography* 29:4 (2005): 373–74.

86 Ibid., 376.

87 In the Quebec context, an early record of the modernist idea that photography is an art when it reflects the photographer's personality using medium-specific means (rather than copying the effects of other media) can be found in Fernand PRÉFONTAINE, "À propos d'une exposition de photographies," *La Patrie*, 24 Apr. 1926.

88 Steinert exhibited in New York in the 1950s. Lili Corbus Bezner, "Helen Gee in the Limelight," *History of Photography* 20:1 (1996): 78.

89 Stephen Bann, "Photography, Printmaking, and the Visual Economy in Nineteenth-Century France," *History of Photography* 26:1 (2002): 16.

90 Yves Robillard, "Les lieux de la nouvelle expression de 1940 à 1980," *etc* 12 (1990): 11; Hélène Sicotte, "Un état de la diffusion des arts visuels à Montréal. Les années cinquante: lieux et chronologie, deuxième partie, 1955 à 1961," *Journal of Canadian Art History / Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien* 16:2 (1995): 41.

91 Suzanne Beauchamp, "Traveling – Photo-Québec – 1970–1979," *Cahiers du département d'histoire de l'art de l'Université du Québec à Montréal* (1987): 78.

92 Lise Lamarche, "La photographie par la bande: Notes de recherche à partir des expositions collectives de photographie à Montréal (et un peu ailleurs) entre 1970 et 1980," in *Exposer l'art contemporain du Québec: Discours d'intention et d'accompagnement*, ed. Francine Couture (Montreal: Centre de diffusion 3d, 2003), 226.

93 Andrea Kunard, *Photography in Canada 1960–2000* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2017), 170, note 17.

94 Clément Fluet, "Entrevue-instantané avec 'Kid Kodak' Drouin," *Radiomonde et Télémonde*, 3 July 1954. cbc/Radio-Canada launched the first Canadian television stations in 1952.

95 His photographs were shown alongside André Jasmin's drawings. Rodolphe de Repentigny, "Deux formes d'art à l'exposition Michel Brault-André Jasmin," *La Presse*, 13 Nov. 1952.

96 Its purpose was the advancement of photography both as art and as medium of communication. "Exposition de photographie professionelle," *Le Clairon*, 14 Mar. 1952; "Photographes groupés en association," *La Presse*, 5 July 1951; "Gazette officielle de Québec / Quebec Official Gazette," Gouvernement de la Province / Provincial Government, Quebec, 26 May 1951; "Le second Salon d'art photographique," *Le Devoir*, 28 Oct. 1953.

97 Rodolphe de Repentigny, "Un Salon que perd l'esprit de routine," *La Presse*, 8 June 1957.

98 "Cover photograph," *Le Clairon Maskoutain*, 10 May 1955; "À l'Expo de Québec, Art et Photographie," *Le Bien Public*, 1 June 1955.

99 "Photographies-portraits," *Le Devoir* 1958.

100 Sandeen, "International Reception," 354.

Photographie 57 : Une réponse à *The Family of Man* en tant que mise en exposition d'un médium

MICHEL HARDY-VALLÉE

En février 1957, une exposition collective de photographie fut montée à l'Université de Montréal. Durant quelques semaines, plus de deux cents photographies par vingt-huit artistes locaux furent exposées comme une critique préemptive de l'exposition-événement *The Family of Man* d'Edward Steichen, qui serait présentée plus tard cette année-là au Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal dans une version condensée. À ce moment, *The Family of Man* était l'exposition de photographie la plus courue. Vue par des centaines de milliers de visiteurs dans sa forme initiale au Museum of Modern Art à New York en 1955, puis par des millions d'autres alors qu'elle circula à travers le monde, cette exposition était principalement constituée de photographies de presse qui présentaient l'unité des humains sous la menace nucléaire grandissante. Critiquée pour sa naïveté politique et historique, sa scénographie était néanmoins admirée.

Photographie 57 présentait le travail de vingt-sept Montréalais et un résident d'Ottawa qui se définissaient professionnellement comme peintres, cinéastes, maquettistes ou même biologiste, bien que peu d'entre eux étaient des photographes à plein temps. Des épreuves réalisées par des artistes modernes majeurs comme Jean-Paul Mousseau (1927–1991), Jauran [Rodolphe de Repentigny] (1926–1959) ou Gordon Webber (1909–1965) côtoyaient des personnes aujourd'hui peu connues comme Kika Lasnier [Viktoria Wittova] (1929–1983) ou George Fenyon (1930–1964). Comme le soulignait le catalogue de l'exposition, les participants étaient unis dans leur conviction que la photographie était « autre chose qu'un médium impersonnel de reproduction », faute qu'ils attribuaient à l'exposition-rouleau compresseur d'Edward Steichen.

Photographie 57 était ainsi une critique inhabituelle de *The Family of Man*, qui s'adressait à l'usage que Steichen faisait de la photographie plus qu'à ses positions politiques. Pourquoi le médium photographique importait-il à des artistes à Montréal qui n'était pas principalement des photographes, et pourquoi choisir l'exposition de Steichen comme cible? Qu'a pu les pousser à répondre par une défense de leur approche au médium plutôt qu'avec des

affirmations politiques ou éthiques? La réponse tient en ce que la notion de médium artistique elle-même était un sujet politique au Canada Français à cette époque. Dans les cercles intellectuels et culturels, les discours sur l'engagement et l'ouverture sur le monde étaient centrés autour de la personne plutôt que la collectivité. Ceci résultait d'une réinterprétation de la notion de primauté du spirituel, auparavant une doctrine conservatrice, comme étant un engagement socialement progressif dans l'existence comme clé d'une vie riche et significative.

L'avant-garde artistique de la période, comme les peintres du mouvement des Plasticiens, voyaient l'art comme une démarche spirituelle, et le choix de se dédier à l'art (en particulier lorsqu'il était non-figuratif) était une affirmation d'une forme personnelle d'humanisme politique. *Photographie 57* traduisit dans le contexte photographique certains aspects de ce discours, mettant de l'avant la sensibilité individuelle et la valeur supérieure accordée à l'exploration de la forme et du médium artistique. De par la manière qu'ils défendaient le médium photographique, les participants de *Photographie 57* prenaient une tangente de la prémisse établie par Steichen et Alfred Stieglitz lors de la fondation du mouvement Photo-Sécession : la recherche de la beauté et de l'esprit par le biais de photographies hautement formelles qui parlent aux émotions de ceux qui les regardent. Si Stieglitz attribuait une fonction spirituelle à la photographie unique de par son choix de sujet, les participants de *Photographie 57* donnaient plutôt une valeur spirituelle à leurs œuvres à cause de la dignité inhérente à leurs créateurs.

À l'aide de documents récemment tirés des archives des photographes Robert Millet (1934–2021) et John Max [Porchawka] (1936–2011), ainsi que d'entrevues faites avec les participants ou leurs descendants, cet article présente une étude de cas détaillée de *Photographie 57*. Après avoir situé l'exposition dans le contexte de la réception de *The Family of Man*, je reconstruis l'historique de sa production, prenant en considération tant l'iconographie que la scénographie. Sur la base de ces faits nouvellement établis, j'affirme que *Photographie 57* était un geste politique, puisque la notion moderne de médium artistique était un sujet politisé dans le Montréal des années 1950. Une telle critique de *The Family of Man* implique également que la photographie puisse être comprise en tant qu'art dans ce contexte grâce à une pratique culturelle répandue au sein de laquelle coexistent plusieurs fonctions du médium, allant de l'art au journalisme, des usages vernaculaires aux initiatives communautaires. Bien que *Photographie 57* n'ait pu unifier ou institutionaliser le champ de la photographie au Québec autour d'un dénominateur commun, elle en a montré l'importance au milieu des arts et à ses multiples médias, préoccupé par le rôle de l'individu au

sein de l'humanisme moderne. Allant à contre-courant de la transparence photographique prônée par Steichen au service d'une vision universaliste, *Photographie 57* pointe vers un domaine encore peu examiné de la réception de *The Family of Man*, soit les expositions faites en guise de protestation ou d'imitation.

Coding the Real: Vera Frenkel's Paracomputational Performances and Installations of the 1970s

ADAM LAUDER

There is an absolute untranslatable – the Real – before every translation, condemned moreover by the Real to its foreclosure.[1]

In the sixties was the word. From slogans scrawled in the streets of Paris and Montreal by student protestors amidst the uprisings of '68, to the rise of a novel genre of entrepreneurial DIY literature aimed at countercultural readers exemplified by *The Whole Earth Catalog*, the decade bore witness to a veritable logomachy between calls for institutional reform and anti-institutional voices both counter-cultural and neo-liberal.[2] By the 1970s, a novel panoply of language-based frameworks – retrospectively bracketed as the linguistic turn[3] – was undergoing a widespread process of institutionalization in university departments across North America. In parallel with this normalization of the epistemological rupture wrought by the late 1960s, artists were beginning to conjugate the propositional stratagems of Conceptual art with structuralist methods drawn from anthropology as well as nascent computational media and methodologies.[4] "As elsewhere in the West," notes art historian Anne Bénichou, "artistic and critical practices in Canada were marked by an interest in the human sciences, notably linguistics and semiotics."[5] Beginning her career as a poet and printmaker, multidisciplinary artist Vera Frenkel was uniquely situated to cast a skeptical eye on these period yearnings to render the Real legible as text. The artist's installations of the mid- to late-1970s enact this compulsion to inscribe the Real within emergent paracomputational infrastructures and imaginaries.

Frenkel's transitional installation *Map with Gates* (1973–74, Figs. 1 and 2) operationalized the conceptual infrastructure of computation to generate a participatory theatre probing the limits of Marshall McLuhan's populist paradigm of media translation. As described by Peter Perrin for *artscanada*, *Map with Gates* consisted of "a 'bank' of words and poems," printed on

Detail of Vera Frenkel, *Map with Gates* (Toronto installation), 1973–74, paper, poems, words, wood, rope, photo-collages, Queen's University Archives, Vera Frenkel fonds, 2303.20-2-26-2. (Photo: Queen's University Archives)

1 | Vera Frenkel, *Map with Gates* (Toronto installation), 1973–74, paper, poems, words, wood, rope, photo-collages, Queen's University Archives, Vera Frenkel fonds, 2303.20-2-26-2. (Photo: Queen's University Archives)

sheets of paper, from which viewers were invited to assemble a "landscape" by pinning selected sheets to rows of clotheslines provided by the artist.[6] The functional topology constituted by *Map with Gates* bears a striking resemblance to the computer architecture theorized by Alan Turing in his influential 1936 article "On Computable Numbers, with an Application to the Entscheidungsproblem." Turing's paper described a hypothetical device that could be programmed using "a 'tape' (the analogue of paper) running through it, and divided into sections (called 'squares') each capable of bearing a 'symbol.'"[7] The external storage imagined by Turing differed from the single-memory computer architecture subsequently described by John von Neumann in his influential 1945 report on the University of Pennsylvania's EDVAC computer, in which both data and memory were stored in a common address space.[8] Like Turing's ideal computer (and in contrast to the automation of most subsequent computational media), Frenkel's environment

2 | Vera Frenkel, *Map with Gates* (Toronto installation), 1973–74, paper, poems, words, wood, rope, photo-collages, Queen's University Archives, Vera Frenkel fonds, 2303.20-2-26-1. (Photo: Queen's University Archives)

needed to be animated by an embodied operator. As George Dyson has noted, in theorizing his universal machine, Turing "began with an informal idea of a computer . . . not a calculating machine, but a human being, equipped with pencil, paper, and time."[9] Just as the "behaviour" of Turing's notional machine was to be determined by a conjugation of finite "conditions" and the symbolic contents of the tape's constituent squares when "scanned," Frenkel's installation evolved as visitors proceeded to re-arrange its paper-based linguistic elements within an invariant "configuration" established by the artist (i.e., tablets of printed paper, lines of string).[10] Documenting the installation at regular intervals, Frenkel generated its titular map as a photographic archive akin to the external memory of Turing's machine: its paper tape of scanned squares.

Structural correspondences between Frenkel's *Map with Gates* and the universal machine envisioned by Turing's paper run deeper than

architectural/functional homologies, however. Much like Turing's U-machine – a thought experiment devised to analyze the theoretical computability of irrational numbers and, more broadly, the generalizability of mathematical proofs by mechanical means – Frenkel's *Map with Gates* was an instrument for ciphering through the "patterns of randomness and control" set in motion by a participatory installation.[11] James Gleick astutely observes that "Turing had titled his great paper 'On Computable Numbers,' but of course the real focus was on *un*computable numbers."[12] Turing proposed that "a number is computable if its decimal can be written down by a machine"; however, Gleick underscores that he "proved that some numbers are uncomputable. (In fact, most are.)"[13] On a basic level, this is because the majority of numbers are irrational, with decimals that continue to infinity without ever repeating. But Turing also recognized the existence of some algorithms that would cause the U-machine to "to march along, performing its inscrutable business, never coming to a halt, never obviously repeating itself, and leaving the logical observer forever in the dark about whether it would halt."[14] This condition of algorithmic suspension meant that, for Turing, "an uncomputable number is, in effect, an undecidable proposition."[15]

In marked contrast to the discrete identities endorsed by the logical positivism that characterizes mainstream (New York-based) Conceptual art, exemplified by Joseph Kosuth's "identification of art and logic," both Frenkel and Turing enshrine uncertainty (the latter, following David Hilbert, would say undecidability) at the very heart of calculation.[16] As such, both are implicated within the trajectory of ternary computing recently retraced by Leif Weatherby, comprised of figures who attempted to conceive multi-value machine logics "beyond the binary" of conventional digital computation.[17] But where the Cold War computer scientists discussed by Weatherby were motivated by an attempt to represent the third term, *synthesis*, in Hegelian logic, Turing's earlier treatment of the processing capacities of computational machines also admitted three alternatives: computable (1) and uncomputable (0) as well as undecidable numbers and functions that remain perpetually in process.[18] In the Laruellian terms introduced below, the undecidability authorized by Turing's U-machine – the uncertain decimal values and contingent functions that it is materially capable of processing without achieving mathematical resolution – evades the dyadic representational logic of Western metaphysics, expressed in the computational domain as the binary values of 0 and 1, by suspending outcomes. Jacob Gaboury draws attention to undecidability as the motor of Turing's speculative approach to computation, writing that "Turing also established in this work ['On Computable Numbers'] the limits of computation, identifying the existence of uncomputable problems that cannot be solved through

a definite method."[19] Gaboury views Turing's treatment of the so-called halting problem – in which "a machine reaches one of these ambiguous configurations [of undecidability], [and] cannot go on until some arbitrary choice has been made by an external operator" – as materializing a queer computation premised on externalities to technical systems.[20] In contrast to the information theory of Claude E. Shannon (though influenced by Turing's paper), it is important to underscore that the computational undecidability sketched by Turing is ultimately embodied by the human operator invoked by his 1936 thought experiment, rather than by the binary hardware of switching circuits that shaped and constrained Shannon's theorization of information as a statistical measure of the uncertainty, or "freedom of choice," between the multiple possible message contents encoded by a given electronic transmission.[21]

In Frenkel's hands, uncertainty would emerge as a powerful resource in her deepening interrogation of contemporary creative and intellectual projects that proposed to recover a fantasized Adamic language; notably, McLuhanite and Benjaminian theories of translation and the contemporary artistic practices that they propelled. McLuhan's *Understanding Media* (1964) had optimistically hypothesized that information systems were poised to retrieve "all previous technologies that are mere . . . extensions of our bodies," the computer's supposedly boundless capacity for translation thereby promising to realize "a Pentecostal condition of universal understanding."[22] Walter Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator" gave voice to an allied "yearning for that language which manifests itself in translations," an imagined "pure language" exceeding conventional distinctions between human languages.[23] If the historically gendered technologies of clotheslines and clothespins mobilized by *Map with Gates* presage the feminist encodings of Frenkel's paracomputational installations of the late 1970s, discussed below, her work of the mid- to late-1970s is also characterized by a critical navigation between structuralist and McLuhanite frameworks.

Structuralism was a characteristically late arrival to the Canadian art establishment, where neo-Kantian and other formalist paradigms maintained their dominance well into the 1970s. Furthermore, English Canada's strong vernacular traditions of epiphylogenetic theory, grounded in a somatic conception of the co-shaping of linguistic media and perceptual régimes epitomized by McLuhan's extension thesis, discussed below, resulted in influential alternatives to mainstream linguistic models associated with the names Northrop Frye and Marshall McLuhan.[24] If a recurring critique of structuralism has been its static modelling of historical process, the Toronto School of communication – a significant stimulus for progressive art in Canada during the sixties – has, conversely, been described as a

transformation theory:[25] a performative epistemology whose objects of study are notoriously subject to mutation under observation, and whose hypothetical observer is equally subject to sensorial and cognitive fluctuations associated with the shifting dynamics of socio-technical arrangements.

Notwithstanding an entrenched tendency to place them in opposition, in hindsight it is possible to recognize that the transformational quality of Anglo-Canadian media theory actually paralleled the growing dynamism of mainstream critical theory during the same period, as continental post-structuralist currents troubled the perceived ahistoricism of New Criticism as well as the idealized matrix of semiotics, while retaining their shared linguistic bases. In fact, the performative aporias of deconstruction are productively compared to the dissonant forms of ambivalence unleashed by McLuhan's paradoxical "probes."[26] Today, the non-philosophy of François Laruelle emerges as a powerful resource in identifying the residual theological investments common to these dynamic theories of language, cognition, and perception.

Laruelle argues that deconstruction and other post-structuralist frameworks were inadequate to the task of depotentializing the lingering metaphysical imperative of modernist critical philosophers such as Husserl and Heidegger. He attributes the inadequate deconstruction performed by standard post-structuralist approaches to the Western metaphysical tradition to their residual "dyadic" apparatus, in which, he argues, "difference is dispersed" across the linguistic field without definitively suspending the specular foundations of representational thought.[27] Laruelle argues that seemingly diverse philosophical positions, including the various manifestations of post-structuralism, are organized by an invariant "'empirico-transcendental' doublet,"[28] in which human consciousness is both implicated in an imagined relay with the Real, and invested with a hallucinatory capacity to transform it. Laruelle's non-philosophy, or non-standard philosophy as he also terms it, sets out to undo this circular infrastructure, which continues to haunt contemporary projects of deconstruction in the form of a representational economy of difference.

Laruelle's non-philosophy substitutes a "*unilateral duality*" that proceeds from a Real-One foreclosed to philosophical capture by the specular dyadism which continues to propel contemporary "philosophies of Difference."[29] In distinction to the logic of alterity underpinning mimetic frameworks (including post-structuralism), Laruelle proposes a startlingly unfamiliar "duality-without-scission," by means of which the Real is apprehended "in-One."[30] Laruelle's unilateral duality trades the alienation generative of the classical dyad for a non-representational description – or clone – of the real-One. Irreducible to linguistic schema of difference, Laruelle's clone is embodied by what he terms the Stranger in "flesh-and-blood."[31]

The proliferation of unilateral dualities unleashed by Laruelle's theory of clones clarifies the recurring motif of twins and twinned narratives in Frenkel's multidisciplinary practice as a critique of representation itself: an insistence upon the inadequacy of representation and representational epistemologies to translate the Real. Near identical contemporaries, Frenkel and Laruelle share a number of conceptual points of departure in common; notably, an "agnostic" or even explicitly "nonreligious" engagement with, and radical reworking of, mystical (variously alchemical, Gnostic and kabbalistic) as well as neo-Platonic traditions.[32] In Frenkel's case, this critical and creative redescription of non-dualist epistemologies proceeds primarily through linguistic strategies that bring her practice into the orbit of early computational discourses on image processing as an encoding of the visual.[33]

A still underdeveloped dimension of the historiography of early computational arts is the contemporaneity and parallelism between language-based approaches to computer visualization and the constellation of textual media configurated by deconstruction's linguistic modes of analysis. Paradigmatically, Zabet Patterson has likened the S-C 4020 microfilm plotter – the device employed to generate analogue manifestations of early computer graphics including the iconic *Computer Nude (Studies in Perception I)* (1967, discussed in detail below) – to a "language machine," whose graphical capabilities were reliant on textual coding.[34] Grant Taylor has drawn attention to the linguistic bases of logico-mathematical approaches to computer visualization, which drew upon the theories of logical positivists such as Ludwig Wittgenstein and Alfred Ayer.[35] "Through picture processing," writes Taylor, "the mechanisms of logic internalize traditional pictorial representation in revolutionary new ways."[36] Writing in reference to Stan VanDerBeek's computer-animated *Poemfields*, Patterson relatedly writes that "language is reimagined as picture."[37] In the 1970s, then, computer visualization was primarily a *linguistic* problem – a collective imperative to enunciate the visible.

The early installations and video art of Vera Frenkel dramatize this force field of interconnected, if to some extent competing, linguistic and computational logics within an idiosyncratic theatre of institutional critique defined by themes of feminized labour and ironic personal detection. Anne Bénichou notes that in the Canadian context the linguistic turn was manifest through the proliferation of artists' publications in tandem with the establishment of a cross-country network of artist-run centres, in which Frenkel was an active participant. "Many believe that *No Solution* responds to [this] paradigm shift in art practices," writes Bénichou, "Language was invading 'visual' works with conceptual art and 'narrative' practices."[38]

It has become common practice to discuss Frenkel's work from a post-structuralist, and particularly deconstructionist, standpoint, drawing attention to the proliferation of discursive traces of epochal traumas within the artist's palimpsestic narratives. The present analysis marks a departure from this tradition, proposing instead the foreclosure of the Real as the founding gesture of Frenkel's artistic investigations. In this, I take my cue from Lydia Haustein, who observes that Frenkel's *Signs of a Plot: A Text, True Story & Work of Art* (1978) prompts "us to question the relationship between art and reality."[39] This recognition propels new paths of interpretive approach inspired by the thought of Laruelle. In particular, the inaccessibility of the Real dramatized by Frenkel's early installations and performances, which bring into focus the "preoccupation with absence" that would become the driving motor of her later work, will be re-examined from the vantage of Laruelle's immanent redescription of Kant's noumenon.[40] "The Real," writes Laruelle in *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, "is more like Kant's 'thing-in-itself': unknowable and even unthinkable, but with the difference that it is not so from transcendence but from immanence."[41] Heretically asymptotic to the transcendent dogmas of Greenbergian aesthetics,[42] Frenkel's narratives orbit around a tantalizingly immanent but maddeningly foreclosed Real, thereby standing apart from dominant formalist and neo-conceptual paradigms then active within the Toronto context.

Finally, the computational focus of this article marks a detour from earlier research on Frenkel within electronic arts/new media frameworks. Media theorist Alexander Galloway has convincingly situated Laruelle's non-philosophy within contemporary discourses on computation as a protest "against the digital"; that is, as a refusal of standard philosophy's invariant matrix of empirico-transcendental binaries.[43] Frenkel's paracomputational interventions of the 1970s foreshadow this critical vantage on what German media historian Claus Pias has relatedly termed the "digital" or "cybernetic illusion."[44] But while rejecting the possibility that non-philosophy could be operationalized by computer programming, Laruelle admits that his non-standard philosophy nonetheless "resembles a machine."[45] Clarifying this potentially misleading likeness, Laruelle proposes an alternative to the computing/anti-computing dyad; in Galloway's apt paraphrase, "non-computation."[46] Reversing the terms of AI, here it is humanity that simulates the machine.

This non-philosophical "detour out of the machine" implicitly retrieves a prehistory of contemporary computational labour, in which calculations were performed by (primarily female) "human computers," or clerical staff.[47] As Laruelle scholar Katerina Kolozova reminds us in her recent gloss on the non-philosopher's speculations on computation, human clerical labour

was the precondition for Alan Turing's theoretical computer, of which Laruelle's non-computation could be considered to be a contemporary reactivation.[48] Frenkel's performances and installations of the 1970s propose a human-centred (yet non-humanist) vision of computing allied to those of Kolozova, Laruelle, and Turing; one that views computing as a process of symbolization rather than calculation.[49] Suspending the lingering metaphysical motivation of the Saussurean sign, these theorists divest computational acts of inscription of their semantic contents, foregrounding instead the "mindless" but embodied act of coding itself. What notably eludes these theorists, yet constitutes the kernel of Frenkel's paracomputational investigations, is the gendered contexts of this human-centred history – and hypothesized futurity – of computing.

Migrant Media

The radical multimodality of Vera Frenkel's installations of the 1970s manifests a working-through of the artist's formative encounter with the "migration effect" generated by early paracomputational media through her renowned 1974 video performance, *String Games: Improvisations for Inter-City Video (Montreal-Toronto, 1974)* (Fig. 3).[50] Haustein observes that, "Vera Frenkel breaks the received patterns of representation above all by using the material instruments of information transfer in an unexpected context."[51] The innovative teleconferencing framework of *String Games* was an unintended consequence of external pressures of format migration. Having established herself as a printmaker, Frenkel had initially anticipated turning an invitation from two Montreal institutions – Véhicule, an artist-run centre; and Espace 5, a commercial gallery – into an opportunity to explore the graphic capabilities of fax transmission, a technology previously utilized by first-generation conceptual artists including N.E. Thing Co., whose co-presidents, Iain and Ingrid Baxter, were then teaching alongside Frenkel at York University in Toronto.[52] Fortuitously (as it turned out), the cost of installing the cable to establish Frenkel's envisioned "circuit" between Véhicule and Galerie Espace 5 proved prohibitively expensive, with Bell Canada engineers citing a $15,000 price tag.[53] Nonetheless, Frenkel's discussions proved to be well-timed: the engineers were eager to test a new teleconferencing facility linking the company's Toronto and Montreal operations, inviting the artist to realize her technologically-enabled artwork on their premises.

The distinct affordances of Bell's then state-of-the-art teleconferencing studios decisively shaped the resulting real-time video performance. Frenkel has described how the organizing cat's cradle framework of *String Games* was inspired by arcing consoles installed at the twinned teleconferencing centres,

each equipped with five fixed seats; McLuhan-fashion, Frenkel re-imagined each bank of seats as a telematic appendage or "hand" (Fig. 4).[54] Adapting a classical tradition of sensorial epistemology traceable to Aristotle's *De anima* to describe the convergent properties of electronic information media, the haptic is central to McLuhan's theorization of the media as "translators" in *Understanding Media*:

> Our very word "grasp" or "apprehension" points to the process of getting at one thing through another, of handling and sensing many facets at a time through more than one sense at a time. It begins to be evident that "touch" is not skin but the interplay of the senses, and "keeping in touch" or "getting in touch" is a matter of a fruitful meeting of the senses, of sight translated into sound and sound into movement, and taste and smell.[55]

McLuhan hypothesized that information systems would supersede touch as the primary medium for enacting this inherent metaphoricity of the senses and their technological extensions: "all previous technologies," he wrote, "will be translated into information systems."[56] Frenkel's rhetorical transformation of the arcing Bell consoles into "hands" is a pun on this emergent digital/ity of new media. The implied tactility of the cat's cradle matrix of *String Games* dramatizes both McLuhan's theses on emergent information media as remediating the tactile "common sense" of Aristotelian and Thomist ways of knowing, as well as the comedic potential when things "fail to translate."[57]

During the course of Frenkel's performance – comprising three separate "transmissions" staggered over a three-week period – teams of participants located in Toronto and Montreal mimed a repertoire of actions inspired by

3 (*opposite, above*) | Vera Frenkel, *String Games: Improvisations for Inter-City Video (Montreal–Toronto, 1974)*, 1974, from Toronto, during the video-performance, Queen's University Archives, Vera Frenkel fonds, 2303.20-2-33-play2. Names of *String Games* participants from left: Bill Dwyer, Julia Grant, Tom Stiffler, Ellen Maidman, Stephen Schofield. (Photo: Queen's University Archives)

4 (*opposite, below*) | Vera Frenkel, *String Games: Improvisations for Inter-City Video (Montreal–Toronto, 1974)*, 1974, inside the Bell Canada Teleconferencing Studios, Montreal, during the video-performance, Queen's University Archives, Vera Frenkel fonds, 2303.20-33-play4. Names of *String Games* participants, from left: Tom Graham, Vera Frenkel, Miriam Adams, Linda Kelly, Lawrence Adams. (Photo: Queen's University Archives)

the conventional figures of the ubiquitous children's game of cat's cradle, but translated into codes compatible with the architectural and technical limitations of Bell's studio facilities, thereby establishing a generative relay, or cybernetic "feedback loop," between the two cities.[58] Media scholar N. Katherine Hayles has written that, "Central to the construction of the cyborg are informational pathways connecting the organic body to its extensions . . . Moreover, . . . feedback loops can flow not only *within* the subject but also *between* the subject and the environment."[59] Frenkel's appropriation and computational redescription of the embodied game of cat's cradle, extended by the tropes of parodic detection deployed by the subsequent serial installation project *No Solution: A Suspense Thriller* (1976–79), set in motion a facetious, quasi-cybernetic quest for a "communal Ur-language," inspired, in part, by the writings of Walter Benjamin.[60]

The emergence of *String Games* in response to accelerated cycles of format migration is axiomatic of the transmedial permutations that propel Frenkel's subsequent output. Langill observes that "Frenkel's works embrace new platforms as they become available . . . ", articulating an aesthetic of "media migration" in the process.[61] On several occasion, Frenkel has herself insightfully reflected upon the dynamics of remediation motivating her practice, beginning with a 2006 text for the journal *Intermédialités* partially inspired by her meeting of Alain Depocas, Head of Research at the Daniel Langlois Foundation, an organization that would sponsor a DOCAM (Documentation and Conservation of the Media Arts Heritage) case study of her archives at Queen's University.[62] In her text for *Intermédialités*, Frenkel defines remediation as "what persists of the work's essence despite media-imposed transformations."[63] For Frenkel, remediation is synonymous with "media migration," or a "movement from one medium to another," thereby inscribing migration at the level of the work's materiality in addition to its narrative content.[64] In the context of her discourse on remediation, Frenkel also invokes McLuhan, whom she credits as "contribut[ing] to the formative climate of ideas I found myself in as a young artist after leaving Montreal."[65] In particular, Frenkel recognizes an affinity between her conception of remediation and the media analyst's "assertion that each new medium ingests its predecessor."[66] This thematic of the hybridization of old and new media must be distinguished from the previously mentioned topos of media as translators.

I borrow the term "migration effect" to describe the constitutive dis/locations unleashed by *String Games* from crime fiction scholar Christiana Gregoriou, who proposes it in the context of an original theorization of the detective genre's singularly incorrigible tendency to spawn "migrant forms": adaptations and franchises crossing multiple cultures, media (cinema,

novel, television), and languages (translations).[67] Gregoriou's description of the migratory condition negotiated by the crime genre offers a compelling framework for historicizing Frenkel's thematization of the transformational affordances of computational media through idiosyncratic interventions in the protocols of detective fiction inflected by her own lived experience of exile and migration, "[a]s a Czech Jew who immigrated to Canada via England" during the Holocaust.[68] Dot Tuer has previously drawn attention to this dimension of Frenkel's work, observing that "the migration of images, characters, and themes from one tape to another multiplies potential interpretations and meanings."[69]

Decrypting the Real: McLuhan's Hallucinatory Hermeneutics

The internally complex, iterative structure of Frenkel's multi-part installation and video work *No Solution: A Suspense Thriller* (*NSAST*) is homologous to the layered media ecology that supported early image processing applications – the context in which Frenkel had initially intended to intervene with *String Games* (originally conceived as an exchange of images via networked fax machines). Zabet Patterson has meticulously analyzed the "hybrid material conditions" that supported the migration of images from analogue photographs to paper or microfilm plotter registration via the intermediaries of scanner, magnetic tape, and computer processor.[70] This fluid field of pictorial migration is brought into appropriately fraught visibility by *Computer Nude (Studies in Perception I)* (1967), a now iconic example of early computer art that began as a sexist practical joke. This putative demonstration of computer processing by Bell Labs engineers Leon Harmon and Ken Knowlton depicts the Judson Theatre dancer Deborah Hay. It was subsequently presented as a work of art in contexts ranging from the Howard Wise Gallery in New York City – an early hotbed for art-and-technology partnerships and computational art, including Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.) – to Jasia Reichardt's epochal travelling exhibition, *Cybernetic Serendipity* (1968). According to Patterson, the unresolved gestalt of *Computer Nude* – the way that the image deliberately oscillates between discrete alpha-numeric symbols ranged in pixel arrays and a representational photograph, never settling into one register or the other – functions relationally, "insert[ing] the observer back into the loop."[71] Similarly, curator Louise Dompierre has observed of Frenkel's participatory detective fictions that they "activate the deductive powers" of the beholder.[72] The self-conscious hybridity and phenomenological equivocity of Harmon and Knowlton's image is in sharp contrast to the crisp geometry of the vector-based graphics employed by Edward Zajec to program the earliest computer film using the

S-C 4020: *Simulation of a Two-Gyro Gravity-Gradient Attitude Control System* (1963).[73] The irreducibility of Harmon and Knowlton's nude manifests a Turing-like logic of computational undecidability akin to the "undecidables" arrested by Derridean deconstruction. Frenkel's early installations transform this thematic of suspended computability, or linguistic irreducibility, into a unilateral vision anticipatory of the non-aesthetics theorized by Laruelle in relation to contemporary artists such as James Turrell.[74]

The driving narrative and conceptual irresolution of *NSAST* manifests a refusal of dialectic synthesis or closure that might suggest analogies with Derrida's performative explorations of *différance*. Writing in the pages of *Vanguard* in 1977, Frenkel asserted that "we tend to see the world in dichotomies, and . . . it is the job of the artist to expose these as false."[75] The artist would reprise this non-dual thematic in "Benign Ignorance," the second instalment in a four-part series published by *artscanada* in 1977–78, which Anne Bénichou rightly interprets as a *de facto* manifesto. The "unfocused awareness" prized by Frenkel in that text as a tool of artistic discovery operationalizes the artist's recognition that "[t]he more conflicting knowledge a work can hold suspended in a transforming ignorance, the better it teaches us to see."[76] The non-dual vision liberated by the artist's targeted suspension of the "mazeway of dichotomies" that structures dominant ways of seeing and world-making strikingly anticipates Laruelle's more recent theorization of "vision-in-One."[77] Laruelle describes vision-in-One as a critical apprehension of the transcendental apparatus constituted by standard philosophical practice; "vision-in-One," he writes, "consists in 'seeing' philosophy – [its] structural rule of Unity-of-contraries . . . – through the One." [78] Like Laruelle's non-philosopher, the generic artist posited by Frenkel's early writings is "someone suspended between the perceived dualities of existence."[79] The recurring figure of the sleuth in Frenkel's early installations is an avatar of this generic artist.

Prototypically twinned, like the unworldly clones generated by Laruelle's methodology for undoing the representational apparatus of Western metaphysics, Frenkel's detectives are agents of demythologization as well as embodiments of a non-specular visuality. Laruelle's procedure of "dualysis" suspends the metaphysical sufficiency of philosophy's recurrent doublets while continuing to exploit their experimental potential as material for original thought.[80] Dualysis refuses philosophical closure by unilateralizing the terms implicated in philosophical doublets, which it treats as "non-constitutive of the Real."[81] Instead, non-philosophy approaches what Laruelle terms the "Philosophical Decision" – that is, philosophy's invariant mixture of doublets with an enabling element of undecidability, expressible as the fractional triad 2/3 – as a "non-specular clone of the real-One."[82]

Dualysis thus constitutes a critical intervention within the specular dynamics of philosophical systems of representation as an immanent pragmatics of the undivided clone. Laruelle's theory of cloning retrospectively elucidates the originality of Frenkel's departure from the representational infrastructure of McLuhan's media metaphysics, and, in particular, McLuhan's deployments of the literary figure of the sleuth as a theoretical device, with which Frenkel's narratives of foreclosed detection must not be confused.

McLuhan's engagement with the detective genre is a consistent feature of his early writings, beginning with his first published text, a 1936 article on G.K. Chesterton for the *Dalhousie Review*. Praising the Catholic detective writer as a "practical mystic," McLuhan had seized upon Chesterton's celebrated paradoxes as a concrete model for retracing the "daily miracles of sense and consciousness."[83] This was a paradigm for both literary creation and criticism to which he would return in his subsequent writings on Edgar Allan Poe and James Joyce. Poe's detective Dupin embodied an ideal of "encyclopedic learning" that McLuhan associated with a tradition of "gentlemanly education" traceable to Renaissance prototypes including Bacon and Leonardo as well as classical antecedents such as Cicero.[84] As the personification of the Renaissance ideal of comprehensive knowledge, McLuhan's articulation of the sleuth archetype is notable for anticipating the recuperation of da Vinci and the associated trope of the Renaissance man in 1970s computer art discourse.[85]

Though McLuhan dismissively likens the aesthetic interest of the average whodunit to the mechanical pleasures of "an acrostic," he reads Poe's story "A Descent into the Maelström" more sympathetically.[86] Indeed, he recognizes nothing less than a model for his own expanded practice of literary criticism in the latter text. In his preface to *The Mechanical Bride*, McLuhan returns to and extends his previous analysis of Poe's story, published five years earlier in *The Sewanee Review*: "Poe's sailor saved himself," he writes in 1951, "by studying the action of the whirlpool and by co-operating with it."[87] Detection is here recast as an immanent pragmatics of environmental literacy.

McLuhan's approach to detective fiction would evolve in parallel with his deepening interest in the materiality of news media. Returning to Poe in a 1954 article for *The Sewanee Review,* McLuhan argued that Poe's exposure to the procedures of newspaper layout led him to innovate the detective story through a "method of composition in reverse."[88] McLuhan extracted from Poe's compositional process a working model for the "reconstruction of all the layers of culture and existence embedded in the present forms of words and speech gesture" subsequently performed by the writings of James Joyce.[89] This correspondence between the generic conventions of detective fiction and the metaphysical framework of Joycean aesthetics was also posited by

an earlier article McLuhan published in the journal *Renascence*, in which he explored the Thomist pedigree of Joyce's conception of "the creative process itself [as] a retracing of the states of apprehension."[90] In a subsequent article for *Explorations*, McLuhan generalized this poetics of "reversal and reconstruction" as an instrument of media analysis:[91]

> It is the technological equivalent of the process by which we recreate within ourselves the exterior world. The artist arrests his cognitions by recognition. He then reverses the process and embodies in an exterior work the drama of apprehension. The stages of apprehension, reversed and embedded in new matter, enable us to contemplate, purge and dominate the drama of cognition, the dance of existence. This reversal leading to contemplation is a catharsis.[92]

The metaphysical investments of this framework are clear from McLuhan's gloss on the sleuth-like artistic labours of Joyce and T.S. Eliot as "revealing, or epiphanizing, the signatures of things," a formulation that harkens back to what historian James Bono has termed the "bookish culture" of the early modern period, and to literary technologies employed to interpret what natural philosophers, following Neoplatonic precedent, conceptualized as the Book of Nature: a universal codex inscribed by the divine Word, or *Logos*.[93]

A privileged point of departure for this project of decrypting the Book of Nature was the presumed Adamic basis of human language. "Typically," writes Bono, "Renaissance authors contend that the Adamic language mirrored the nature of things themselves, that the 'names' Adam gave to creatures in the Garden of Eden . . . captured their true essence."[94] Adam's exercise of a "signatory art" was believed to have transformed nature itself into a text bearing the stamp of God's Word.[95] Whether, and in what form, this natural language remained accessible to human readers in postlapserian times and following the destruction of the Tower of Babel was subject to debate.

Bono demonstrates that this discourse underwent a significant mutation in the writings of Francis Bacon, who was an enduring touchstone for McLuhan. Bacon contended that the Adamic inheritance was irretrievable, "while embracing a new hermeneutics of deinscription, or description."[96] Rather than extending Renaissance predecessors' backward-looking efforts to restore an (irrecoverable) Adamic prototype, Bacon cast the project of constituting a perfected language matching nature's own "language of things" in futural terms.[97] Such a Baconian orientation is notably absent, however (or at least significantly muted), in McLuhan's early writings of the mid-1930s through the mid-1950s. His above-quoted comments on the revelatory

capacity of modernist poiesis elaborate, rather, a recognizably medieval, and specifically Thomist, discourse of prelapsarian restoration via the retracing of God's signatures through processes of analogy. It is this theological construction of the translatability of the Real within which Frenkel's work of the later 1970s makes a feminist intervention.

Detecting Fictions: *No Solution: A Suspense Thriller*

If McLuhan identifies the generic sleuths of pulp fiction as the unwitting embodiments of the Thomist imperative of analogical retrieval, Frenkel's detectives are entangled in interminable labours of decryption of another sort.[98] In *Signs of a Plot*, the Investigator – a role played by Frenkel herself – pronounces that the events surrounding the alleged disappearance of protagonist Art Broom "were signs of a plot that I must decipher."[99] The artist's archival notes for *Signs of a Plot* confirm the viewer's suspicions that Broom's neighbour, a vigilant housekeeper tellingly named Nellie Rubric, may be knitting in code:

> The pattern:
> They thought it was a code at first. K1, Y.O., K2Tog , PSSO. It was the pattern she had been working on when they found her. It was written on a folded scrap of paper. One young reporter had the idea that Nellie might be ~~trafficking in~~ knitting codes, ~~knitting them up~~. It didn't seem likely, but we let him think what he pleased [to think].[100]

But Nellie's coded knits are not McLuhan's theological signatures. The noumenon that they encrypt is, rather, the socialized invisibility of women's work. Frenkel deftly harnesses knitting as a medium of institutional critique – specifically, a critique of the institutional invisibilization of gendered labour – in a manner consonant with the critical interventions within gendered norms of underpaid and unpaid domestic and maintenance work performed by artist contemporaries including Mary Kelly, Martha Rosler, and Mierle Laderman Ukeles. Helen Molesworth has written illuminatingly that, though excluded from canonical histories of Conceptual art and Minimalism, these artists "were each bound up with a critique of the institutional conditions of art."[101] Like Frenkel, Molesworth's cadre of institution-critical artists expose how the public sphere, inclusive of institutions of cultural legitimation such as the museum, has been constituted in symbolic opposition to occluded spaces of domesticity and forms of feminized maintenance work, upon which the exercise of publicness is dependent in ways that remain largely unacknowledged. Looking to the Canadian context, Kristy Holmes has

explored Joyce Wieland's thematization of the erasure of sexual difference under Trudeauvian liberalism in the artist's iconic *Reason over Passion* series, which, Holmes writes, "uses the medium of craft and forms of filmic experimentalism in order to destabilize the masculine category of the liberal individual as the foundation for a democratic welfare state."[102] Wieland's *The Water Quilt* (1970–71), a work first exhibited in the artist's 1971 solo exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada *True Patriot Love*, similarly incorporates the anti-imperialist writings of James Laxer, co-founder of the Waffle splinter group of the leftist NDP party, all the while drawing attention to how the Waffle and the NDP were, in Holmes's words, "unable to truly offer an alternative political ideology that majority-culture women could identify with."[103] In effect, Frenkel extended Wieland's interventions within universalizing discourses of citizenship and labour, adopting novel hybrid formats to render visible the normative occlusion of alterity in technological arenas.

In selecting to inscribe Nellie's knitting with a coded institution-critical content, Frenkel's *NSAST* also anticipates the subsequent insight of cyberfeminist Sadie Plant that "[w]eaving was already multimedia."[104] Arguing that "women have not merely had a minor part to play in the emergence of . . . digital machines,"[105] Plant has carefully traced the gendered prehistory of digital computing to technologies of textile manufacture such as the Jacquard loom, and further back, to the textile handicrafts and even braiding practiced by women from time immemorial:

> The yarn is neither metaphorical nor literal, but quite simply material, a gathering of threads which twist and turn through the history of computing, technology, the sciences and arts. In and out of the punched holes of automated looms, up and down through the ages of spinning and weaving.[106]

In *Signs of a Plot*, Frenkel's alter ego/narrator employs a similar metaphor: "Her [Nellie's] main skill, though, was taking a yarn and turning it into a flexible fabric made up of motifs long forgotten."[107] As the elusive embodiment of this obscured genealogy of computation's gendered origins, Nellie conjures such fabled precursors as Ada Lovelace, who authored the world's first algorithm for Charles Babbage's Analytical Engine in 1843 – a calculating machine that repurposed the punch-card infrastructure of the Jacquard loom.

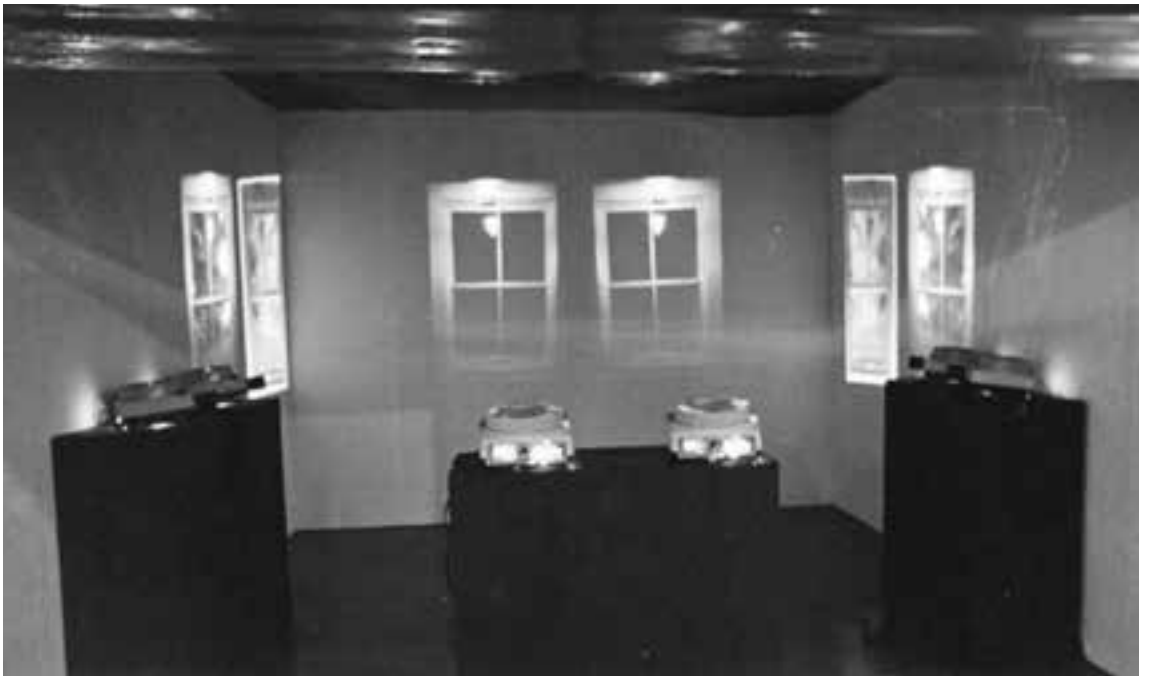
In its initial presentation at York University's I.D.A. Gallery in 1976, *No Solution: A Suspense Thriller No. 1* (*Mystery Window*) was constituted as a matrix of twelve black and white photographs, whose dramatic framing by

patterned drapes reinforced the titular inference to an Albertian window. In addition to accompanying Frenkel's 1977 *Vanguard* essay, these component photographs would be recycled in subsequent versions of *NSAST* in both slide and video formats.[108] Scattered on the floor were window frames gun-labelled with narrative fragments in addition to grids of unframed glass and three-dimensional props materializing plot elements, the latter including a knitted red "X" and the picture book *More Wild Animals*.[109]

Mystery Window is a consequential pivot in Frenkel's transition from an early, successful practice as a printmaker to the increasingly experimental installation, performance and video works that followed in the wake of *String Games*, a new media performance whose gallery presentations nevertheless retained print-based elements.[110] The metaphorical fenestration constituted by the photographic arrays of *Mystery Window* extends the "juxtaposition and . . . interaction between real space and a formal space" interrogated by transitional multi-panel works, which integrated the artist's black and white prints with "mirrors and empty frames."[111] The photographic format of *Mystery Window* also recalls the photo-collage casements revealed when viewers had torn the textual sheets from *Map with Gates*'s participatory "tablets."[112] This correspondence with the earlier language-based work underscores the structuralist referent of fenestration in *Mystery Window*, and in the *NSAST* series as a whole; the perpendicular axes of the window motif circulating as a proxy for the metaphysical matrix of the Saussurean sign.[113]

Another precedent for *Mystery Window* is *The Knowles Window* (1973) (Fig. 5). A thirteen-minute looped slide projection piece, the latter work deploys six projectors to display paired, "window"-like photographs of the pastoral environs of a Bath, Ontario property owned by friends, which Frenkel documented while housesitting for the eponymous couple.[114] Through the course of her summer-long retreat in Bath, the artist came to view the figure of the window as "a paradigm for perceptual change."[115] Never one to indulge in solipsism, Frenkel's meditations were productive, rather, of a recognition that, through the mediation of the Knowles's window, "[i]nner and outer imagery became one another."[116] The window thereby joined Frenkel's personal store of non-dual "framing devices," including "constructed frames (filled or empty), windows, mirrors, graphs, words, movement and sound."[117] Consequently, the window motif offered Frenkel a suitably multivalent instrument for "examin[ing] the influence of the framework upon itself" that paralleled the institution-critical gestures of contemporaries such as Daniel Buren and General Idea.[118]

This institution-critical function of the window or "X" motif as it circulates in Frenkel's practice of the 1970s is clear from the artist's own comments.[119] Frenkel herself associates the X with Pier Paolo Pasolini's "sign



5 | Vera Frenkel, *The Knowles Window* (Toronto installation), 1973–74, 13-minute looped slide projection using 6 projectors, Queen's University Archives, Vera Frenkel fonds, 2303.20-2-28-1. (Photo: Queen's University Archives)

of contamination" as an allied injunction to work across disciplines.[120] This multi-modal imperative also notably matches the hybridity of mainframe computing documented by Patterson: the constitutively anti-Kantian, and thus anti-formalist, layering of media and formats implicated in early computational imaging systems.

The artist has approvingly cited the comments of art critic Gary Michael Dault, who wrote in the catalogue for the Vancouver Art Gallery's 1978 exhibition *Lies & Truths* that, "An X is [Frenkel's] neatest, most compact sign for the collapsing of logical impossibilities into transcendent unities."[121] Dault's exegesis of Frenkel's X motif is remarkably compatible with the Laruellian procedure of dualysis, introduced above, in which the component terms of the ubiquitous philosophical doublet are arrested to produce what Laruelle would term a unilateral duality: a reworking of metaphysical oppositions into a transcendental stance, but a transcendence "grounded in the One as immanent posture that sees everything 'in' its immanence without needing to be split."[122] Dault's incisive gloss builds on Frenkel's own reflections in an earlier performative text, "X is a Window," in which the artist proposed that, "X is the mark that embodies the twoness of existence.

X is the window or moment between alternatives."[123] Dault fruitfully extends his dualizing interpretation of Frenkel's polymorphous X to Nellie's knitting in *Signs of a Plot: A Text, True Story & Work of Art*. He quotes Frenkel as stating that, "Knitting . . . is going back and forth dualistically making the linear (the yarn, so to speak) into space."[124] Frenkel here anticipates Laruelle's unilateral apparatus but adds a materialist-feminist twist, suggesting that the act of knitting can be understood as an expression of, in Dault's paraphrase, "[t]he one in the many."[125]

The enigmatic plot of *NSAST* unfolds as an investigation into the (possible) disappearance of a young man with the punning moniker "Sample Art Broom"; an inquiry that remains – as the work's subtitle promises, or perhaps cautions – perpetually suspended like Turing's uncomputable number. A sequence of eighty black and white slides accompanied by an audio-tape voiceover narrated by Frenkel comprise the second installment in the series, *Introduction to Some of the Players* (1977). This work follows the conventions of detective fiction in presenting the stereotyped dramatis personae of *NSAST* in inventory format. This instantiation of the series was incorporated into an expanded presentation at Harbourfront Art Gallery in Toronto the same year (*No Solution: A Suspense Thriller No. 4, The Lab*), which cannibalized the labelled window frames of *Mystery Window*, but incorporated an extended catalogue of three-dimensional "evidence," this time displayed in vitrines. This latter version of the work also exists as a 22-minute video that recycles the slide projection and audio components of the installation.

Conclusion

Frenkel's *NSAST* stages an epistemological investigation that unfolds through an appropriation and canny deformation of the generic conventions of detective fiction. The "unfocused awareness" vaunted by Frenkel in articles penned for *artscanada* and *Vanguard* and operationalized by *NSAST* can be likened to the modality of conceptual fiction theorized by Laruelle in his texts on non-photography as the (non-)aesthetic complement of a quantum matrix that affirms the foreclosure of the Real; that is, its imperviousness to philosophical, or artistic, transformation.[126] Writing in *artscanada* in 1977, Frenkel sounds Laruellian *avant la lettre*:

> I have said that a work of art is as good as the amount of knowledge it holds suspended in a matrix of transforming ignorance. I'm thinking about work that carries its complex burden of information as if it is innocent.[127]

For Frenkel, the figure of the detective is emblematic, not of the certainties promised by positivist epistemologies, but, rather, of the irrevocable foreclosure of "solutions": the elusiveness of historiographic truth, in other words. At the same time, Frenkel's innocent detectives actively resist the utopian claims marshalled in the name of an information society, embodying a counterthematic of "benign ignorance as an antidote to too much knowledge."[128]

This thematic marks a clear departure from the McLuhanesque concerns of an earlier formation of new media artists including Intersystems and the N.E. Thing Co. Ltd., who pursued technology's imagined capacity to effect sensorial and, indeed, ontological transformations at the level of the Real itself: a quixotic search for that "harmony of all being" foretold by the Toronto media analyst.[129] In *NSAST*, Frenkel fearlessly undoes the media analyst's Parmenidean correlation of thought and Being, spinning fictions with an asymptotic relation to the Real.[130] In contrast to McLuhan's attempted etymological recovery of Thomist "analogy and equivocity,"[131] Frenkel's detectives personify a Benjaminian quest for an utopian Ur-language that remains foreclosed within a postlapsarian multiplicity of discourses that, in turn, indirectly manifest the "hybridity of 1960s mainframes," which Frenkel encountered first-hand during the making of *String Games*.[132]

NOTES

1 François Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, trans. Nicola Rubczak and Anthony Paul Smith (1996; trans., London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 14.

2 See Blake Stimson, "What Was Institutional Critique?," in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 20–42; Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

3 "In the second half of the twentieth century, academic disciplines of all sorts, ranging widely across the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, grew increasingly self-reflexive, taking stock of their underlying assumptions and retheorizing their core disciplinary practices. In a great many cases, . . . they came to recognize the extent to which the specific features of the language that they worked within shaped the scholarly findings they produced . . . – [a shift] that we now often refer to as 'the linguistic turn.'" Rob Carson, "The Linguistic Turn and the Cultural Turn," in *The Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of Shakespeare*, ed. Bruce R. Smith (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 1754.

4 See, especially, Joseph Kosuth, "The Artist as Anthropologist," in *Art after Philosophy and After: Collected Writings, 1966–1990*, ed. Gabriele Guercio (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 107–28.

5 Anne Bénichou, "The Detective, the Thread, and the Traces: The Art of Clues in *No Solution: A Suspense Thriller*," in *Vera Frenkel*, ed. Sigrid Schade (Ostfildern, DE: Hatje Cantz Verlag), 79.
6 Peter Perrin, "Mapping Time: Three New Works by Vera Frenkel," *artscanada* 31:1 (1974): 36.
7 Alan Turing, "On Computable Numbers, with an Application to the Entscheidungsproblem," *Proceedings of the London Mathematical Society* 2:42 (1937): 231
8 See John von Neumann, "First Draft of a Report on the EDVAC" (Philadelphia: Moore School of Engineering, University of Pennsylvania, 1945).
9 George Dyson, *Turing's Cathedral: The Origins of the Digital Universe* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012), 247.
10 Turing, "On Computable Numbers," 231.
11 In Turing's own words, "there can be no general process for determining whether a given formula **U** of the functional calculus **K** [*Principia Mathematica*] is provable, i.e. that there can be no machine which, supplied with any one **U** of these formulae, will eventually say whether **U** is provable." Turing, "On Computable Numbers," 259; Perrin, "Mapping Time," 36.
12 James Gleick, *The Information: A History, A Theory, A Flood* (New York: Pantheon, 2011), 330, emphasis in the original.
13 Turing, "On Computable Numbers," 230; Gleick, *The Information*, 211. "The computable numbers do not, however, include all definable numbers." Turing, "On Computable Numbers," 230.
14 Gleick, *The Information*, 211. "Turing made the seemingly mild statement that numbers might exist that are somehow nameable, definable, and not computable." Ibid., 207.
15 Ibid., 211.
16 Guercio, "Introduction," xxvii.
17 Leif Weatherby, "Hegel 2.0," *Cabinet* 65 (2018): 35.
18 Although a strictly mathematical view of undecidability might class it as a subset of the uncomputable, in Turing's application of this concept to the material constraints of computer processing, this third value is indefinitely suspended.
19 Jacob Gaboury, "On Uncomputable Numbers: The Origins of a Queer Computing," *Media-N* 9:2 (2013), 4–5.
20 Turing, "On Computable Numbers," 232.
21 Warren Weaver, "Recent Contributions to the Mathematical Theory of Communication," in *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*, by Claude E. Shannon and Warren Weaver (1949; repr., Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963), 9. Gleick documents Shannon's prior awareness of Turing's "On Computable Numbers," and its conclusions regarding the suspended values of some decimal numbers as well as the ultimate undecidability of computational proofs, when formulating his own theses on information in the applied engineering contexts of wartime cryptography and telephony. See Gleick, *The Information*, 191. Like Turing's undecidability, Shannon's articulation of uncertainty embraces the limits to representability as a positive definition – of computability (Turing), and of information (Shannon), respectively.

22 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 57, 80.

23 Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1968), 77, 74.

24 Bernard Stiegler defines epiphylogenesis as the structuration of human experience by the "already-there" of media. Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 2: Disorientation*, trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford, ca: Stanford University Press, 2009), 41. See also Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, nj: Princeton University Press, 1957).

25 McLuhan influentially distinguished his own, qualitative and dynamic approach to communication from the quantitative and linear character of classical Information Theory in terms that have come to describe the Toronto School of Communication as a whole: "I want to mention, by way of explaining my own approach to these matters, that my kind of study in communication is a study of transformation, whereas information theory and all the existing theories of communication that I know of are theories of transportation." Marshall McLuhan, "Living in an Acoustic World," public lecture, University of South Florida, 1970, https://www.marshallmcluhanspeaks.com/media/mcluhan_pdf_6_JUkCE00.pdf. See also Richard Cavell, "Marshall McLuhan and Spatial Communication" *Western Journal of Communication* 63:3 (1999): 348–63.

26 See Karl Precoda, "From New Criticism to Cultural Pluralism: The Southern Legacy of Marshall McLuhan, *Mosaic* 29:3 (1996): 3.

27 Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, 30, 203.

28 Ibid., 31.

29 Ibid., 23, 37, emphasis in the original

30 Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-philosophy*, 132; Laruelle, *Principles of Non-philosophy*, 31.

31 Laruelle, *Principles of Non-philosophy*, 190.

32 Vera Frenkel, "The Pleasures of Uncertainty . . .," in *Vera Frenkel: Cartographie d'une pratique = Mapping a Practice*, ed. Sylvie Lacerte (Montreal: sbc galerie d'art contemporain, 2010), 58; François Laruelle, *Christo-Fiction: The Ruins of Athens and Jerusalem* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), xv. See also Vera Frenkel quoted in Gary Michael Dault, "Vera Frenkel's Lies and Truths," in *Lies & Truths: An Exhibition of Mixed Format Installations by Vera Frenkel* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1978), 9; Lydia Haustein, "The Transformative Power of Memory: Themes and Methods in the Work of Vera Frenkel," in *Vera Frenkel: . . . from the Transit Bar* (Toronto: The Power Plant, 1994), 74.

33 "In Harmon and Knowlton's *Studies in Perception: Gargoyle*," writes Grant D. Taylor, "discrete symbols are combined to produce the pictorial work." Grant D. Taylor, *When the Machine Made Art: The Troubled History of Computer Art* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 97–98.

34 Zabet Patterson, *Peripheral Vision: Bell Labs, the s-c 4020, and the Origins of Computer Art* (Cambridge, ma: mit Press, 2015), 83. See also Carolyn L. Kane, *Chromatic Algorithms: Synthetic Color, Computer Art, and Aesthetics after Code* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 145.

35 See Taylor, *When the Machine Made Art*, 77–78.

36 Ibid., 97.

37 Patterson, *Peripheral Vision*, 76.
38 Bénichou, "The Detective, the Thread, and the Traces," 79.
39 Haustein, "The Transformative Power of Memory," 63.
40 Vera Frenkel quoted in Frenkel, "The Pleasures of Uncertainty," 53.
41 Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, 222.
42 In analytic geometry, an asymptote is a line that comes infinitesimally close to intersecting with a curve, but ultimately diverges from it.
43 See Alexander R. Galloway, *Laruelle: Against the Digital* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).
44 See Claus Pias, "Analog, Digital, and the Cybernetic Illusion," *Kybernetes* 34:3/4 (2005): 543–50.
45 François Laruelle, "The Transcendental Computer," trans. Taylor Adkins and Chris Eby, *Speculative Heresy* (2013), https://speculativeheresy.wordpress.com/2013/08/26/translation-of-f-laruelles-the-transcendental-computer-a-non-philosophical-utopia/.
46 Galloway, *Laruelle*, iii.
47 Laruelle, "The Transcendental Computer," n. pag.; Victoria Salinger, "'Writing Calculations, Calculating Writing': Hanne Darboven's Computer Art," *Grey Room* 65 (2016): 39.
48 See Katerina Kolozova, *Capitalism's Holocaust of Animals: A Non-Marxist Critique of Capital, Philosophy, and Patriarchy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), chp. 2.
49 "[C]omputer languages," writes Kolozova, "[are] a form of signification, and its erroneous fetishization as a product of mathematics leads to a strange mystification of its operation." Kolozova, *Capitalism's Holocaust of Animals*, 56.
50 Christiana Gregoriou, *Crime Fiction Migration: Crossing Languages, Cultures and Media* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 2.
51 Haustein, "The Transformative Power of Memory," 69.
52 For an insightful discussion of netco's telecopier and Telex projects as precursors of Frenkel's *String Games*, see Earl Miller, "Information Remote," in *Vera Frenkel's String Games* (Kingston, on: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 2011), 17–22.
53 Caroline Seck Langill, "Vera Frenkel's *String Games* and the Germination of New Media Art," in *Ensemble Ailleurs = Together Elsewhere*, ed. Louise Poissant and Pierre Tremblay (Quebec: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2010), 378.
54 Dot Tuer, "Beyond the New Media Frame: The Poetics of Absence in Vera Frenkel's *String Games*," in *Vera Frenkel*, ed. Sigrid Schade (Ostfildern, de: Hatje Cantz, 2013), 47.
55 McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 60.
56 Ibid., 57.
57 Aristotle quoted in Daniel Heller-Roazen, *The Inner Touch: Archaeology of a Sensation* (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 36; McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 59.
58 See Langill, "Vera Frenkel's *String Games*," 375–76.
59 N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 2, emphasis in the original.
60 Frenkel, "The Pleasures of Uncertainty," 58.
61 Langill, "Vera Frenkel's *String Games*," 380.
62 See Vera Frenkel, "Letter to A. and A. (About moving on, moving through . . .)," *Intermédialités* 6 (2005): 145n1; Depocas, "Les archives de Vera Frenkel," 31–33.

63 Frenkel, "Letter to A. and A.," 143.
64 Ibid., 146.
65 Ibid., 164.
66 Ibid.
67 Gregoriou, *Crime Fiction Migration*, 3.
68 Haustein, "The Transformative Power of Memory," 73.
69 Dot Tuer, "Threads of Memory and Exile: Vera Frenkel's Art of Artifice," in *Mining the Media Archive: Essays on Art, Technology, and Cultural Resistance* (Toronto: YYZ Books, 2005), 36.
70 Patterson, *Peripheral Vision*, 54.
71 Ibid., 57.
72 Louise Dompierre, "Introduction," in *Likely Stories: Text / Image / Sound Works for Video and Installation: Works by Vera Frenkel*, exh. cat., 3–15 (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1982), 5.
73 See Patterson, *Peripheral Vision*, 11.
74 See Jonathan Fardy, *Laruelle and Art: The Aesthetics of Non-Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020); François Laruelle, "A Light Odyssey: La découverte de la lumière comme problème théorique et esthétique" (Poitiers: Le Confort Moderne, 1991).
75 Vera Frenkel, "On Balance: Considering what Artists Do," *Vanguard* 6:1 (1977): 3.
76 Vera Frenkel, "Benign Ignorance," *artscanada* 34:2 (1977): 27.
77 Frenkel, "On Balance," 3. François Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-philosophy*, trans. Taylor Adkins (1989; trans., Minneapolis, MN: Univocal, 2013), 16.
78 Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, 44; Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-philosophy*, 16.
79 Frenkel, "On Balance," 4.
80 See Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, chapter 5. Dualysis involves a critical transformation of the dyads of philosophy (One/multiple, Subject/Other, etc.) into unilateral dualities that proceed *from* the One.
81 Ibid., 177.
82 Ibid.
83 Marshall McLuhan, "G.K. Chesterton: A Practical Mystic," *Dalhousie Review* 15:4 (1936): 455.
84 Marshall McLuhan, "Footprints in the Sands of Crime," *The Sewanee Review* 54:4 (1946), 624.
85 See Taylor, *When the Machine Made Art*, 103.
86 McLuhan, "Footprints in the Sands of Crime," 630.
87 McLuhan, *The Mechanical Bride*, v.
88 Marshall McLuhan, "Joyce, Mallarmé, and the Press," *The Sewanee Review* 62:1 (1954): 55.
89 Ibid.
90 Marshall McLuhan, "Joyce, Aquinas, and The Poetic Process," *Renascence* 4:1 (1951): 5.
91 McLuhan, "Joyce, Mallarmé, and the Press," 55.
92 Marshall McLuhan, "Notes on the Media as Art Forms," *Explorations* 2 (1954): 7–8.
93 McLuhan, "Joyce, Aquinas, and The Poetic Process," 4; James J. Bono, *The Word of God and the Languages of Man: Interpreting Nature in Early Modern Science and Medicine* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 6.

94 Bono, *The Word of God and the Languages of Man*, 55.
95 Ibid., 20.
96 Ibid., 21.
97 Ibid., 19.
98 Anne Bénichou observes that Frenkel herself "seems to have initiated understanding of her work by the decryption of indexes and traces." Bénichou, "The Detective, the Thread, and the Traces," 79.
99 Frenkel, *Signs of a Plot: A Text, True Story & Work of Art*, 1978 [Video].
100 Vera Frenkel, "S.O.A.P. Mystery Voice Texts 1978," 1978, box 4, file 247, Vera Frenkel fonds, Queen's University Archives, Kingston, on.
101 Helen Molesworth, "House Work and Art Work," *October* 92 (2000): 82.
102 Kristy A. Holmes, "Negotiating Citizenship: Joyce Wieland's *Reason over Passion*," in *The Sixties: Passion, Politics, and Style*, ed. Dimitry Anastakis (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 46.
103 Kristy A. Holmes-Moss, "Negotiating the Nation: 'Expanding' the Work of Joyce Wieland," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 15:2 (2006): 33.
104 Sadie Plant, *Zeros + Ones: Digital Women + the New Technoculture* (London: Fourth Estate, 1997), 65.
105 Ibid., 37.
106 Ibid., 12.
107 Frenkel, *Signs of a Plot*.
108 See Frenkel, "On Balance," 3–6.
109 Bénichou, "The Detective, the Thread, and the Traces," 64.
110 In 1971–72, the National Gallery Extension Services toured twinned exhibitions of Frenkel's expanded printmaking practice, "Métagravure/Printmaking Plus," to a total of 22 venues across Canada.
111 Dompierre, "Introduction," 3.
112 Perrin, "Mapping Time," 37.
113 Strengthening this association, in her contribution to a 1976 exhibition catalogue, Frenkel appended "[l]anguage as a framing device" as an overarching interpretive matrix to an inventory of personal "framing devices" that also included "windows." Vera Frenkel, "The Big Book and Related Works," in *The Big Book & Related Works* (Stratford, on: The Gallery, 1976).
114 Perrin, "Mapping Time," 40. See also Martha Langford, Karla McManus, Elizabeth Anne Cavaliere, Aurèle Parisien, Sharon Murray, and Philippe Guillaume, "Imaged Communities: Putting Canadian Photographic History in its Place," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 49:2 (2015): 296–354.
115 Vera Frenkel quoted in Perrin, "Mapping Time," 40.
116 Ibid.
117 Frenkel, "The Big Book and Related Works," n.p.
118 Daniel Buren quoted in Miwon Kwon, "One Place after Another: Notes on Site Specificity," *October* 80 (1997): 88. See also Philip Monk, *Glamour is Theft: A User's Guide to General Idea: 1969–1978* (Toronto: Art Gallery of York University, 2012).
119 "X . . . is the window." Vera Frenkel, "X is a Window," in *The Big Book & Related Works* (Stratford, on: The Gallery, 1976), n.p.
120 Pier Paolo Pasolini quoted in Vera Frenkel, "Work/Life Fragments," in *Vera Frenkel*, ed. Sigrid Schade (Ostfildern, de: Hatje Cantz Verlag), 27.

121 Gary Michael Dault quoted in ibid., 28. See also Dault, "Vera Frenkel's Lies and Truths," 9.
122 Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-philosophy*, 61.
123 Frenkel, "X is a Window," n.p. See also Dault, "Vera Frenkel's Lies and Truths," 9; Vera Frenkel quoted in Frenkel, "Work/Life Fragments," 28.
124 Vera Frenkel quoted in Dault, "Vera Frenkel's Lies and Truths," 9.
125 Dault, "Vera Frenkel's Lies and Truths," 9.
126 Vera Frenkel quoted in Bénichou, "The Detective, the Thread, and the Traces," 72; see also François Laruelle, *The Concept of Non-Photography*, trans. Robin Mackay (Falmouth, uk/New York: Urbanomic/Sequence, 2011); François Laruelle, *Photo-Fiction: A Non-Standard Aesthetics*, trans. Drew S. Burk (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2012).
127 Frenkel, "Benign Ignorance," 28.
128 Ibid.
129 McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 5.
130 "Viewers interrogate the fiction that springs from the real and vice versa." Bénichou, "The Detective, the Thread, and the Traces," 78.
131 McLuhan, "Joyce, Aquinas, and The Poetic Process," 9.
132 Patterson, *Peripheral Vision*, 50.

Coder le réel : les performances et installations parainformatiques de Vera Frenkel dans les années 1970

ADAM LAUDER

Cet article propose de réexaminer les premières œuvres moins connues de l'artiste pluridisciplinaire Vera Frenkel (née en 1938) dans le contexte de l'ambition de l'époque de rendre le réel lisible en tant que texte. De l'adoption de la théorie structuraliste dans le domaine des sciences humaines et sociales jusqu'aux déclarations historiques du penseur des médias Marshall McLuhan, la période qu'on appelle les « Long Sixties » a été le théâtre d'un large éventail de projets visant collectivement à inscrire le monde dans le discours, un phénomène que l'on appelle rétrospectivement « le tournant linguistique » (*linguistic turn*). Ayant commencé sa carrière comme poète et graveuse, Frenkel était particulièrement bien placée pour jeter un regard sceptique sur ces aspirations de l'époque, qui trouvaient leur expression ultime dans le traitement codifié des médias informatiques naissants. Le présent article dresse des parallèles entre les manifestations prémonitoires de Frenkel concernant les limites de ces fantasmes de transparence discursive et le réalisme non philosophique de François Laruelle.

En partant de l'installation transitoire *Map with Gates* (1973-1974) de Frenkel, l'article examine comment l'artiste s'est emparée de l'infrastructure conceptuelle de l'informatique pour créer un théâtre participatif sondant les limites du paradigme populiste de Marshall McLuhan concernant la « traduction » des médias, tel qu'il est décrit dans *Understanding Media* (1964). À l'instar de « l'ordinateur » humain imaginé par Alan Turing dans sa théorie fondatrice de l'informatique *On Computable Numbers* (1936), *Map with Gates* matérialise l'indécidabilité au cœur du calcul informatique par le biais de l'interaction avec l'utilisateur. La thématisation par l'artiste de l'intraduisibilité du réel dans cette première œuvre est développée dans *String Games : Improvisations for Inter-City Video (Montréal–Toronto, 1974)* (1974), où les codes personnels élaborés par des équipes de participants répartis dans les deux villes en question manifestent l'inaccessibilité du réel. Ces dynamiques illustrent la recherche constante de l'artiste sur la migration des médias et les « formes migrantes » instables qui en résultent, à la fois comme phénomènes techniques et métonymies de la condition diasporique de l'artiste en tant que personne juive ayant été déplacée par l'Holocauste.

En parallèle, l'article introduit des concepts et des ressources théoriques issus de la non-philosophie de François Laruelle (né en 1937) pour interpréter l'exploration par Frenkel de la chaîne infinie de reports mise en mouvement par la migration technique, en commençant par la redescription que fait *String Games* du jeu d'enfants éponyme comme une performance de téléconférence qui anticipe les interactions en réseau sur le Web. Contrairement aux « philosophies de la différence » qui alimentent l'herméneutique discursive associée au tournant linguistique, Laruelle fonde ses analyses sur ce qu'il appelle la « Vision-en-Un ». Aux dyades philosophiques du jeu représentationnel (Un/multiple, Sujet/Autre, etc.) qui continuent de propulser le poststructuralisme, Laruelle substitue un cadre non spéculaire de dualités unilatérales qui procèdent de l'Un. Rappelant les traditions néo-platoniciennes, gnostiques et kabbalistiques antérieures, le « Réel-comme-Un » inaccessible de Laruelle offre de nouvelles perspectives à l'exploration « agnostique » de ces traditions intellectuelles par Frenkel dans *No Solution: A Suspense Thriller (NSAST)* (1976-1979). La structure interne complexe et itérative de ce projet en plusieurs parties reste relativement peu étudiée. La présente analyse aborde *NSAST* comme une critique approfondie de l'influent paradigme de traduction de McLuhan et de sa conception trompeuse, néo-aristotélicienne et néothomiste du traitement informatique.

Le polar métaphysique de Frenkel parodie l'utilisation par McLuhan des conventions du genre de la fiction policière pour articuler la dynamique analogique de la traduction des médias. À la place des détectives métaphysiques de G.K. Chesterton et d'Edgar Allan Poe vantés par McLuhan, la dramatisation par l'artiste d'une poétique séculaire de détection et de décryptage déjoués anticipe la visualité unilatérale de l'esthétique non spéculaire de Laruelle. Ainsi, les détectives de Frenkel incarnent « l'effet de migration » théorisé par Christiana Gregoriou, spécialiste du roman policier, qui le propose dans le contexte d'une théorisation originale de la tendance du genre policier à engendrer des adaptations et des franchises traversant de multiples cultures, médias et langues. La description par Gregoriou de la condition migratoire négociée par le genre policier offre un cadre convaincant pour historiciser la thématisation par Frenkel des possibilités de transformation des médias informatiques par le biais d'interventions idiosyncrasiques dans les protocoles du roman policier, influencées par sa propre expérience de l'exil et de la migration.

En tricotant en code, l'enquêteuse de *Signs of a Plot: A Text, True Story & Work of Art* (1978) de Frenkel attire l'attention sur l'invisibilisation du travail genré comme autre contexte critique sondé par la série *NSAST*. En inscrivant le tricot de Nellie dans un contenu institutionnel codé, Frenkel anticipe les réflexions ultérieures de la cyberféministe Sadie Plant sur le tissage en tant

que précurseur des multimédias contemporains. En ce sens, la Nellie de Frenkel évoque des précurseurs légendaires de l'informatique numérique tels qu'Ada Lovelace, auteure du premier algorithme au monde pour la machine analytique de Charles Babbage en 1843 – une machine à calculer qui réutilisait l'infrastructure de cartes perforées du métier à tisser Jacquard. Ces manifestations s'inscrivent dans la lignée des interventions critiques sur les normes sexospécifiques du travail domestique et d'entretien, peu ou pas rémunéré, réalisées par des artistes contemporains tels que Mary Kelly, Martha Rosler et Mierle Laderman Ukeles.


A SKIN

Painted Textiles: Unveiling Violence and Resilience in Works by Sherry Farrell Racette

JULIA SKELLY

In 1990, Métis artist and scholar Sherry Farrell Racette (b. 1952, Timiskaming First Nation in northwestern Quebec) produced a gouache and watercolor on paper entitled *Ancestral Women Taking Back Their Dresses* (Fig. 1). In 2018, the painting was one of over 160 artworks by Indigenous female artists to be chosen as part of *Resilience, the National Billboard Exhibition Project*. Other artists selected for the billboard project included Rebecca Belmore (b. 1960) and Nadia Myre (b. 1974).[1] This translation of media – a painting depicting textiles transformed into a billboard that was part of a major political project – invites an extended consideration of Farrell Racette's interdisciplinary practice as both artist and scholar. Surprisingly, in major group exhibitions of contemporary Indigenous artists her work is rarely, if ever, included. This is the case for major exhibitions such as *indigena* (1992, at the then-named Canadian Museum of Civilization) and, more recently, *Sakahàn: International Indigenous Art* (2013, National Gallery of Canada). Even in exhibition catalogues that Farrell Racette herself edits, her work is rarely reproduced.[2] Her work has been included in several smaller group exhibitions, but as is often the case, these exhibitions' catalogues are difficult to find.[3]

The tide, however, may be turning, as indicated by the fact that Farrell Racette's painting *Ancestral Women Taking Back their Dresses* was chosen for *Resilience*, a project that received media attention across Canada during the summer of 2018 and is now being discussed in art-historical literature. This article sets out to demonstrate that Farrell Racette's scholarship and art practice function as inextricably linked modes of political activism in Canada, a settler society that has violently and repeatedly tried to erase Indigenous peoples through genocidal policies and strategies such as residential schools.[4] Glen Sean Coulthard has argued that, in fact, the Canadian government's "politics of recognition," which has replaced the explicit violence of colonial domination, continues the settler-colonial power imbalance, but in more insidious forms.[5] Farrell Racette's scholarship and art practice are therefore still urgent calls for resistance, not just from Indigenous peoples, but also from

Detail of Sherry Farrell Racette, preparatory sketch for *A Skin for a Skin*, c. 2008. (Photo: Courtesy of the artist)

white settler individuals who must become willing to be unsettled by her work and her words.[6] Importantly for my purposes here, Julia Bryan-Wilson, drawing on Roland Barthes, has noted the etymological link between "texts" and "textiles" (from the Latin *texere*, "to weave") as "at once interwoven and unfinished."[7] This insight is useful for the following discussion, as I examine Farrell Racette's painted textiles in relation to her art-historical texts in order to engage with her Métis-feminist project. Her painted textiles and texts are, as Barthes understood, interwoven, and her decolonizing body of work is unfinished and ongoing.[8]

In what follows, I discuss three paintings by Farrell Racette: *Ancestral Women Taking Back their Dresses* (see Fig. 1), and the pendant paintings *Hudson's Bay Company Coat of Arms* (2008; see Fig. 3) and *A Skin for a Skin* (2008; see Fig. 4), which have the Hudson's Bay Company multi-coloured stripe blanket as their backgrounds. These painted works are not craft, which has been defined as the skilled, hand-made production of objects using materials such as thread, beads, and clay.[9] However, the discursive concept of craft is still crucial to the theorizing of Farrell Racette's works as hybrid objects that bring together painting and textiles. I propose that in *painting textiles*, Farrell Racette is producing hybrid artworks that put traditional Indigenous forms (textiles) into dialogue with a European medium (painting). This hybridity was characteristic of post-contact Métis clothing and other cultural products, which combined traditional Indigenous craftwork with European materials (such as silk and beads), design (floral decoration) and forms (Euro-Victorian styles of clothing and painting). According to Cheryl Troupe, "Métis artistic expression is influenced by their unique social and cultural traditions, which blended European and First Nations customs, beliefs and values."[10]

Homi Bhabha has described hybridity as "camouflage, as a contesting, antagonistic agency . . . which is a space in-between the rules of engagement."[11] I suggest that Farrell Racette, in painting textiles, is not simply embracing painting as a superior medium as per the so-called art/craft hierarchy; I contend, rather, that she is engaging in a meta-critique of painting, one that reveals the *failure* of painting to adequately replace (and represent) the powerful materiality (or agency) of objects such as dresses made by Métis women. If this uniquely Métis-feminist gambit does not precisely upend the Western art/craft hierarchy, it does work towards illuminating the fallacy that painting's mimesis is superior to craft's affective objecthood, simultaneously contributing to the increasingly accepted knowledge that the art/craft hierarchy is a Euro-patriarchal discursive construct. Farrell Racette's paintings therefore contribute to Indigenous epistemologies related to the power of objects made by Métis women with thread and other traditional materials.

Farrell Racette's painted textiles unveil the fact that painting as a medium is merely a simulacrum that can never fully capture the cultural importance and personal significance of textiles in Indigenous cultures and communities. Her hybrid artworks are not simply a combination of media; they are political statements about violent contact between cultures, the importance of dress and the complicated, sometimes deadly, relationships Indigenous peoples have had with specific kinds of textiles, namely blankets. In this vein, I also wish to argue that although none of these paintings explicitly depict violence or violent acts, they can be productively read through a framework that attends to both historical and contemporary colonial violence against Indigenous women, which includes the discursive violence of erasing Indigenous female artists from Canadian settler art history. In choosing not to represent scenes of violence, Farrell Racette does not ignore histories of violence, abuse, and intergenerational trauma, but rather illuminates the resilience and survival that is engendered in the face of violence by Indigenous peoples through various means, including dress and artistic production.

Allison Hargreaves writes in *Violence Against Indigenous Women: Literature, Activism, Resistance*: "Violence against Indigenous women is an ongoing crisis with roots deep in Canada's colonial history."[12] In early June 2019, the Canadian federal government released the final report on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, which had been launched in September 2016. The final report determined that "specific colonial and patriarchal policies . . . displaced [Indigenous] women from their traditional roles in communities and governance and diminished their status in society, leaving them vulnerable to violence."[13] Farrell Racette's artistic practice and scholarship, though not always explicitly related to violence against Indigenous women, is nonetheless undergirded by this context, illuminating both the ongoing violence and persistent resilience experienced by Indigenous women. As Farrell Racette has remarked, "Resilience is the capacity to recover and cope with adversity. Resistance is a struggle against oppression."[14] The paintings discussed in this text are productive in illuminating the tangled histories of colonial violence and Indigenous resilience.

On Methodology: Settler-Colonial Art History

As a white feminist art historian, I am positioning this text as part of settler-colonial art history and drawing on the methodologies of other settler-colonial art historians as a model for writing about an Indigenous female artist. In his article "Settler-Colonial Art History: A Proposition in Two Parts," Damian Skinner writes that settler-colonial art history "will engage with the implications of settler colonialism in settler and indigenous

cultural practices."[15] Skinner subsequently offers ten propositions for the writing of settler-colonial art history. I will not list all ten propositions here, but I do wish to highlight two in order to contextualize the work that I hope to do with this article. The first proposition is: "Settler-colonial art history will work to destabilize existing art historical narratives."[16] I want to complicate this proposition by highlighting what a feminist settler-colonial art history must do when considering both settler and Indigenous cultural practices. One of the major "art historical narratives" in Western (and settler) art history is the myth of the individual creative white male genius. A feminist settler-colonial art history will not only look closely and critically at the work of female Indigenous artists but will also attend to the ways that ongoing colonialism and colonial violence have impacted the production of female Indigenous artists, and, simultaneously, at the ways that settler art history continues to overlook and erase female Indigenous artists in publications, exhibitions, and classrooms.

The second proposition offered by Skinner that I would like to highlight is significant for the rigorous study of many female Indigenous artists living and working in Canada historically and in the present historical moment because of their use of "traditional" or "craft" materials in their artistic production. One of Skinner's propositions reads: "Settler-colonial art history will pay attention to craft (and other forms of visual culture), thus upending the hierarchy of genres that continues to hold for art history in general."[17] As white feminist art historians such as Rozsika Parker have demonstrated, craft, textiles, and embroidery have long been denigrated and dismissed within the confines of western art history, justified by the so-called art/craft hierarchy.[18] According to Skinner, "Settler-colonial art history cannot ignore craft because of the ways in which art history in settler societies is challenged by indigenous art and the genres of objects that require attention."[19] Ironically, in the contemporary context, Indigenous artists are often expected to use "traditional" materials to be considered "authentic" Indigenous artists, but when they do, their art is often still categorized as craft.[20]

Indigenous "Craft" in Canadian Art History: Making a Case for Visual Culture

The history of Indigenous art production in Canada is fraught, not least because of the Canadian government's genocidal program, which was enacted through various policies, such as residential schools, where Indigenous children were punished for speaking Indigenous languages,[21] and where sexual, emotional, and physical abuse was rampant.[22] In the art-historical context, nineteenth-century Indigenous creative production,

including basketry, beading, and weaving, was categorized as artifact (or craft) rather than art, and while it was extensively collected, the objects were placed in anthropological and ethnographic museums rather than "fine art" institutions.[23] Carmen Robertson has noted that the designation of Indigenous artistic production as artifacts and craft does "not relate to Indigenous ways of knowing or Indigenous aesthetics, and, in fact, such classifications have the effect of diminishing the artistic achievements of these artists and the caliber of their work."[24] The justification by white settler collectors and anthropologists for collecting Indigenous art objects was that Indigenous individuals were dying out and their cultural products would eventually disappear. This was supported by the concept of the "Vanishing Indian" that was both a mythology and an actual agenda on the part of the Canadian government.[25]

Indigenous creative producers recognized a market for their artworks, incorporating some of the Western desires and tastes so that their work eventually became tainted by the stigma of "souvenir art" and hybridity.[26] Ruth B. Phillips has undermined this stigma by showing the formal innovation and cultural value of so-called souvenir art. She has also argued for the importance of the concept of visual culture in the context of Indigenous art production, remarking that:

> I work, first of all, from an assumption that historians of twentieth-century art, like other academic practitioners, need to seek more pluralist understandings of their objects of study, and that these understandings need to incorporate the responses of aboriginal people to the representations of their cultures that were featured in this art . . . It is impossible, however, to recover a sense of the Native presence in early twentieth-century art history if we limit ourselves to the fine arts. An empty space gapes in accounts of the history of Native art during most of the modernist century; in standard accounts, the production of "authentic" and "traditional" art is perceived to end in the reservation period, while a contemporary art employing Western fine art media did not begin until the early 1960s.[27]

According to Phillips, Indigenous people who wanted to participate in mainstream "fine art" practices could not because of economic and racial barriers that prevented them from attending professional art schools. One consequence of these obstacles is that museum collections do not hold examples of painting or sculpture made by Indigenous artists during the first half of the twentieth century. She concludes that the Indigenous artist "has been written out" of western art history. Phillips contends that,

> A partial solution to this dilemma lies in the recent movement in art history towards a redefinition of its field of study as "visual culture." In an essay on the interdisciplinary emphasis in recent art-historical work, W.J.T. Mitchell asks whether "art history [should] expand its horizon, not just beyond the sphere of the 'work of art,' but also beyond images and visual objects to the visual practices, the ways of seeing and being seen, that make up the world of human visuality." As we have seen, in the case at hand the question is more basic still: How can we understand Native people either as subjects or as objects within modernist/anti-modernist debates if we *don't* address these more generalized "ways of seeing and being seen"? Working across disciplines in this way, as feminist art historians point out, acts as a strategy of defamiliarization that fosters the interrogation of long-standing assumptions about art.[28]

Phillips's statement is particularly significant for Indigenous creative production, because material culture such as beadwork, basketry, and textiles have long been left out of the category of "art" and indeed the discipline and study of art history, which has resulted in not only many female artists being left out of the canon, but has doubly impacted Indigenous artists, both past and present.

In Phillips's article "Performing the Native Woman," she examines early twentieth-century Indigenous performance as a site of resistance. Farrell Racette's body of work, both textual and artistic, is also dedicated to redressing the gaps and biases in Canadian art history, and art history more generally, illuminating the ways that Indigenous producers have been deliberately "vanished" from art history. This is highly relevant for scholars of textiles, because of the importance of textiles for historical and contemporary Indigenous art production.

Farrell Racette writes an Indigenous-feminist art history that attends to both historical legacies of trauma and survivance and to contemporary artwork that speaks of resilience and resistance. Her own art practice also addresses these themes, employing traditional Indigenous materials such as cloth (and painted references to cloth) to create a material activism that addresses Indigenous viewers while also redressing Canadian art history and its violent, deliberate lacunae. As Farrell Racette writes in her important article "'I Want to Call Their Names in Resistance': Writing Aboriginal Women into Canadian Art History, 1880–1970": "Until very recently, Aboriginal women have been written out of Canadian art history, or rather art history has been written around us. How do we write ourselves in? It falls far beyond simple forgetfulness, an oversight, a neglecting of the obvious."[29]

1 | Sherry Farrell Racette, *Ancestral Women Taking Back Their Dresses*, 1990, gouache and watercolour on paper, 50 × 62 cm. (Photo: Courtesy of the artist)

In her article Farrell Racette resists the historical anonymity of female Indigenous creative producers, developing new art-historical methodologies for recuperating as many names as possible, for example, employing social media to "call" for names that have not been recorded in official Canadian art histories. In a related way, her paintings that depict historically loaded textiles (dresses and blankets) rebel against the deliberate erasure of Indigenous women by using her own artistic (and, I would add, affective) labour to unveil the affective and physical labours of both historical and contemporary Indigenous women.

Names are important not only in art history but also in the "official" histories of Canada.[30] One male scholar has written that although many Métis women married European fur traders, "for the most part they lack even a name in their husbands' journals. But it is not always so. Sometimes we

2 | Humphrey Lloyd Hime, *Susan, a Swampy Cree Métis, MB, 1857–58*, photograph, 17 × 14 cm, McCord Museum, Photography – Documentary Coll., MP-0000.1453.29. (Photo: Courtesy of the McCord Museum)

come across one who stands out, living and real, among the museumlike [*sic*] figures."[31] This revealing statement, positioning Métis women as museum-like figures akin to Indigenous "artifacts" in anthropological museums, is resonant for Farrell Racette's painting *Ancestral Women Taking Back Their Dresses* (Fig. 1), which is a subtle but trenchant critique of colonial collecting and archiving practices. Her painting also undermines the lack of agency suggested by the passage quoted above. Likewise, the photograph of *Susan, a Swampy Cree Métis*, taken in the mid-nineteenth century, belies the ostensible namelessness of Métis women (Fig. 2). This image is one of several photographs in the McCord Museum's collection taken by Humphrey Lloyd Hime (1833–1903) that depict Indigenous subjects.[32] Rather than being regarded in a straightforward manner as a documentary image, the photograph must be considered in light of white settler photographers' desire to depict "authentic" Indigeneity. Edward S. Curtis (1868–1952), for instance, inserted props and costumes accordingly. In the photograph, Susan sits leaning against a tree, her braided hair touching the bark and her hands crossed at the wrists in her lap. She wears a striped high-collared top with wide sleeves and a long skirt with a different striped pattern; moccasins peak out from under the hem of her skirt, nestled in the bed of leaves. Susan's lips are pursed, and she looks to the viewer's left, out of the frame. Her expression is thoughtful, perhaps a bit uncomfortable, but she appears to be fairly at ease. Just to the left of her torso and head, hanging from a tree, is a pelt. It is very possible that Hime added this detail to signify Susan's position vis-à-vis the fur trade. She may have been married to a fur trader, for instance. This photograph brings together multiple threads that Farrell Racette addresses in her art and scholarship: Métis women's dress, Indigenous female subjectivity and agency, the fur trade, and photo-colonialism.[33] Although taken as part of an ethnographic project to capture authentic Indigenous people for albums intended to be viewed by other white settlers, Susan's photograph functions as an index of this particular Métis woman's presence in the Red River settlement, as well as of her subjectivity, interiority, appearance and (possible) choice of clothing. Susan (surely her English moniker) survives in this photograph, and the women in Farrell Racette's paintings call out her name in resistance.

The Power of Dress and Redress[34]

"Yet is there not also power in the act of dressing."[35]

Dress in painting is frequently political. In her article "Tuft Life: Stitching Sovereignty in Contemporary Indigenous Art," Farrell Racette quotes Algonquin artist Nadia Myre as stating: "Beading is political, whether it's

simply the personal contributions to an age-old continuum or consciously reworking loaded imagery. I really do see beading as an act of silent resistance."[36] The same could easily be said for Indigenous clothing. In the context of Indigenous visual culture, Farrell Racette's paintings and larger artistic practice position cloth and clothing as hyper-political art forms that contribute(d) to individual and collective identities. Emma LaRocque reminds us, however, that not all Indigenous women will find dresses resonant as a symbol of resilience and resistance because of their associations with gendered expectations, biological determinism and colonialism.[37] Nonetheless, Farrell Racette's comments about *Ancestral Women Taking Back Their Dresses* demonstrate her belief that Indigenous dresses are powerful, important objects:

> When I was working on my first research grant I traveled to museums throughout Europe. I was overwhelmed by the sheer volume of indigenous cultural material from across the globe that could be found in these museums. There were bones, preserved heads, clothing and sacred objects sitting on shelves, stacked in drawers, and piled in warehouses. As I returned home, I felt sad to leave all those beautiful things behind. When I got back the first thing people would ask was "Did you bring them back?" It was difficult to explain to the older people why I couldn't bring those things back. I couldn't explain it to myself. Although we have talked to different politicians and administrators about repatriation, the issues of housing, education and racism always seem to take priority. One day when I was feeling very frustrated I thought, "The only way we're ever going to get that stuff back is if the women just go there and get it." So in my imagination I created a wonderful scenario where our female ancestors fly across the ocean, invade the museums and take back our possessions. In *Ancestral Women Taking Back Their Dresses* the women have blasted open the doors of the museum, thrown their trade cloth dresses away and have taken their traditional dresses back. I felt much better after I finished. By painting it I took something back. There is one Algonquin/Mohawk dress, the purple one, that I always put in my paintings now. I have painted it three times and every time I paint it I feel like I'm taking it back. Pretty soon it's going to be hanging in my closet.[38]

Farrell Racette's statement illuminates the colonial violence of museums' collecting practices. I argue that, viewed as a meta-critique, this artwork also unveils the failure of painting that depicts Indigenous textiles to adequately

re-present culturally, spiritually, and personally significant textile objects such as dresses. And yet, for Farrell Racette, the *act* of painting this work was indeed an act of resistance as well as an act of re-possession and repatriation. The fact that the Indigenous women are taking back their dresses – an act of agency[39] and resistance – from a museum is Farrell Racette's institutional critique from outside the walls of the museum, which, as Ruth B. Phillips has shown, was and is a colonial institution that has enacted material and discursive violence upon Indigenous individuals and their artistic products.[40]

As Farrell Racette has suggested, "Perhaps the work of Indigenous artists best illustrates our troubled relationships with museums – the spaces we negotiate to see and touch the objects of our material heritage – and the authoritative voices who have defined, analyzed and categorized the objects within them."[41] Nineteenth-century colonial practices of collecting, often enacted in the name of the "salvage paradigm," resulted in Indigenous artworks and spiritual objects being categorized as artifacts and displayed, often incorrectly, in ethnographic and anthropological museums.[42] These collecting practices have also resulted in the ubiquitous "Maker unknown" label attached to the vast majority of objects made by Indigenous creative producers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see Fig. 6).

There are seventeen Indigenous women represented in *Ancestral Women Taking Back Their Dresses*; they fill the foreground, middle ground and background. The smallest figure, the furthest back, is exiting a large stone structure with columns, which identify the building as a generic neo-classical western museum, but in fact Farrell Racette seems to be specifically critiquing anthropological and ethnographic museums in this painting. Each female figure wears a colorful, decorative dress. This detail is helpful in identifying possible significations of the dresses imaged and imagined by Farrell Racette. As Cheryl Troupe has remarked, in the nineteenth century, the "colour of most Métis women's clothing was dark," but women "also produced an assortment of bright and decorative clothing for festive occasions."[43] It is possible to speculate, then, that some of the Métis dresses that Farrell Racette viewed in the museum archives and depicted in this work were specifically created for special occasions.

A remarkable detail in this painting is the white cross that one of the female subjects in the foreground wears around her neck. This woman wears a particularly colourful dress, primarily of blue material, with a pink collar and multi-coloured stripes on her skirt. According to Troupe, "By the end of the nineteenth century, Métis women, particularly those who adhered to Catholicism, abandoned the brighter colours of their grandmothers and adopted more conservative attire."[44] She adds that "The increasing importance of Catholic devotion among the Métis can also be seen in the

large crucifixes worn by women."[45] The cross in Farrell Racette's painting is a visual sign signifying contact between Indigenous peoples and European missionaries. Although the negative consequences of missionaries' influence upon Indigenous peoples is invisible in this painting, it is nonetheless signified by the cross, a symbol that evokes not only religion but also oppression, abuse, residential schools, and the loss of language and traditional spiritual beliefs. Not insignificantly, "silk thread was first made available to Métis students at boarding and residential schools."[46] It is worth considering then, in the context of Indigenous clothing, the complex relationships amongst thread, trauma, and resilience. Métis clothing as visual or material culture, Farrell Racette argues, is an important archive that is often separated from its histories and can contain the traces of trauma in its fibres. In an essay on Indigenous research methodologies, Farrell Racette recalls:

> A few years ago, while viewing an exhibition, I came upon a disconsolate young Indigenous women [sic] weeping before a dress. She kept saying, "It shouldn't be here. It shouldn't be here." She had no previous knowledge of the dress; her distress was spontaneous. Later, the curator told me the dress had a disturbing story, and shouldn't have entered the museum collection. Somehow the dress communicated its pain. A heightened sensitivity to objects and stories is entangled within Indigenous methods; whether it is love stitched into beadwork, bravery honored or a wrenching story of trauma and loss.[47]

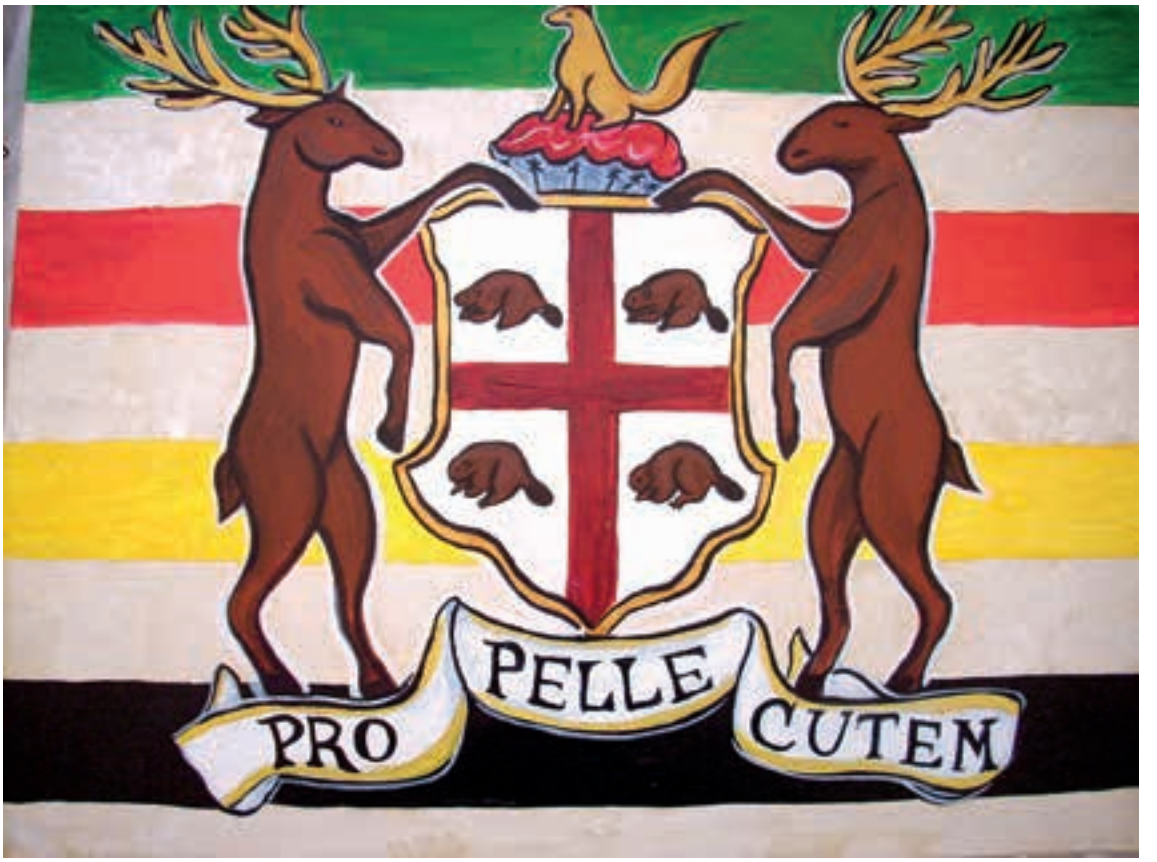
The serenity on the women's faces in Farrell Racette's painting is an affective resistance to the violence of colonial collecting practices and other abuses, and in the contemporary context, resilience in the face of ongoing settler-colonial unequal power relations.

Glen Sean Coulthard has challenged "the ways in which Canadian reconciliation politics tends to uncritically represent Indigenous expressions of anger and resentment as 'negative emotions' that threaten to impede the realization of reconciliation in the lives of Indigenous peoples and communities on the one hand, and between Indigenous nations and Canada on the other." He continues: "I argue that in the context of ongoing settler-colonial injustice, Indigenous peoples' anger and resentment can indicate a sign of moral protest and political outrage that we ought to at least take seriously, if not embrace as a sign of our critical consciousness."[48] The Indigenous women in Farrell Racette's painting emanate calm and serenity, but that does not mean that the work is unrelated to anger as a guiding force or as a potentially transformative affect. The afterlife of the painting in

Resilience demonstrates that the painting speaks to those who are enraged about the ongoing violence against Indigenous women. The painting was adopted as part of a political project guided by what Coulthard calls "reactive emotions" (such as anger and sadness) that are being harnessed to engender awareness and social change. However, as Farrell Racette herself has observed: "The arts can play a key role in the process of decolonization and the unraveling of those ideas, but change is not easy."[49]

From Painting to Billboard: *Resilience, the National Billboard Exhibition Project* (2018)

From 1 June until 1 August 2018, the work of fifty female Indigenous artists from multiple generations was shown on 160 billboards and large-scale posters across Canada. *Resilience, the National Billboard Exhibition Project*, which was initially proposed by Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (a Winnipeg-based non-profit organization) and curated by Kanien'kehá:ka scholar Lee-Ann Martin, originated as a direct response to one of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's "Calls to Action."[50] The project was billed as a "public celebration and commemoration of the work of Indigenous women artists," and it was an ambitious and calculated occupation of public space (and, significantly, unceded Indigenous territories) on a grand scale.[51] Further to this, it not only reached an enormous new audience, many of whom may not be interested in art or in entering galleries or museums, it also forced people driving by to visually consume the work of Indigenous women artists, many of whom, including Farrell Racette, have addressed ongoing violence against Indigenous women in their work. Significantly, two of the billboards were positioned along British Columbia's Highway of Tears, which is infamous for being a dangerous public site for Indigenous women.[52] Many scholars of historical and contemporary Indigenous art have underscored the importance of Indigenous artists taking up space both physically and vocally.[53] The *Resilience* project undertook this political strategy on the largest scale possible, and in so doing, previously smaller-scale works such as Farrell Racette's 50 × 61.7 cm painting were photographically enlarged and positioned within a spatial context that demanded visual attention from those driving by, even if those drivers only caught sight of the works out of the corner of their eye and did not know what they had seen. This is one of the challenges of political billboard art: without didactic labels and an exhibition catalogue, viewers, accidental or otherwise, may not understand what they are looking at, or the histories that are being referenced and critiqued.[54] Nonetheless, the immense undertaking of the *Resilience* project, demonstrating the sheer number of Indigenous female artists who have worked and continue to work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in the territory now known as Canada, will likely have an impact on the Canadian art landscape, even if it will take time for the ripple effects to reveal themselves in media and scholarship.

Blanket Statements[55]

Farrell Racette has observed that,

> In much of what is now Canada, encounters between Europeans and First Nations involved an exchange of material goods for either economic or diplomatic purposes. The Hudson's Bay Company offered warm woolen blankets in exchange for soft, worn beaver robes. Gifts of beads, cloth, blankets and shawls were used to negotiate peaceful and mutually beneficial relationships. *Blankets and cloth* slipped into the ceremonial and symbolic space previously occupied by fur robes and painted hides.[56]

This statement is taken from the 2009 exhibition catalogue *Clearing a Path*, and it is resonant for Farrell Racette's companion paintings *Hudson's Bay Company Coat of Arms* (Fig. 3) and *A Skin for a Skin* (Fig. 4).[57] The first painting represents two moose standing alongside a coat of arms adorned with four beavers and a fox sitting atop the coat of arms. At the bottom of the painting the Latin words *Pro Pelle Cutem* [a pelt for a skin] are inscribed on a white banner. The background of the painting is comprised of the green, white, red, yellow, and black lines that are now widely recognized as characteristic of the Hudson's Bay Company's brand. This background is not explicitly a Hudson's Bay Company woolen trade-blanket, but I read it as such in order to underscore that these two works have textiles as their conceptual cores as well as the ground for the paintings. This reading was confirmed by Farrell Racette. She told me that in their initial display, "the two paintings were accompanied by a large 'flour' bag and box installation that included text and photographs transferred to fabric and stitched onto the 'flour' bags. It was really about women's labour. I used the HBC blanket as a visual code because most viewers wouldn't recognize the HBC coat of arms."[58]

3 (*opposite, above*) | Sherry Farrell Racette, *Hudson's Bay Company Coat of Arms*, 2008, acrylic on canvas, 41 × 51 cm. (Photo: Courtesy of the artist)

4 (*opposite, below*) | Sherry Farrell Racette, *A Skin for a Skin*, 2008, acrylic on canvas, 41 × 51 cm. (Photo: Courtesy of the artist)

5 | *Hudson's Bay Company Blanket*, 1900–1925, wool, 235 × 180 cm, McCord Museum, M975.27, Gift of Norman M. Scott, Esq. (Photo: Courtesy of the McCord Museum)

Hudson's Bay Company woolen blankets were made in a range of colours in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Fig. 5). The now-iconic green, red, yellow, white, and black striped blankets are familiar to contemporary settler Canadian viewers in particular, thus functioning as a slippery signifier that can evoke a range of things from nostalgia and patriotism to domestic comfort.[59] However, the Hudson's Bay Company blanket is not an innocent or safely domestic textile, and indeed, blankets have played a violent, deadly role in colonialism in the North American context. Anthropologist Fiona P. McDonald has previously studied the various roles woolen blankets have played in artworks by Indigenous artists.[60] In her 2014 doctoral thesis, McDonald includes a list of artists based in North America who have engaged with the multi-coloured stripe point blanket (or trade blanket). Farrell Racette is not included in this list, but her work can be read productively alongside blanket works by, for example, Ron Noganosh (1950–2017), Rebecca Belmore, and Teresa Burrows (n.d.) among several others.[61]

As McDonald outlines, the woolen blanket has had various significations for Indigenous peoples. Some artists, such as Noganosh, have used woolen blankets to engage critically with histories of land theft and treaty agreements. McDonald notes that the "giving and gifting of woolen blankets for land in treaty agreements with the British Crown was common practice in many settler states" including Canada and the United States.[62] No less historically and affectively complicated is the historical relationship between woolen blankets and disease in Indigenous communities. McDonald writes that "The specific use of blankets in what is called germ warfare in the United States in particular is traced back to documentation and statements made by General Amherst around 1763."[63] Here McDonald is referring to the practice of traders giving Indigenous people woolen blankets infected with smallpox, thus spreading the disease throughout communities and decimating the Indigenous population.[64]

Although Farrell Racette's pendant paintings are not explicitly about smallpox or unjust treaties enacted through the trading of blankets for land, by using the Hudson's Bay Company blanket as the background for her paintings, Farrell Racette is calling back to these problematic histories, inviting her viewers – both Indigenous and non-Indigenous – to consider the painted blankets as signifiers of colonial violence. The flattening out of these blankets through paint is not a flattening or erasure of history, but rather an appropriation of the material object that caused so much damage and a translation into new forms and new meanings. The textiles' significations are multiple and mobile.[65] There are layers of affective meaning in these paintings: on top of histories of violence, there are signifiers of resilience, survivance, and futurity.

Farrell Racette's second painting, *A Skin for a Skin* (Fig. 4), has the same blanket background as *Hudson's Bay Company Coat of Arms*, but here two Indigenous women stand to each side of the coat of arms, which now has two beavers chewing twigs in the lower left and right quadrants, while the upper quadrants are now occupied by stretched beaver skins. As Joseph Robson wrote in 1752: "the beaver skin was the measure of everything else" in the North American fur trade.[66] Troupe has written that "the basic dress for Métis women was long skirts, colourful long sleeved blouses with a pleated bodice and puffed sleeves, a blanket or shawl, leggings and moccasins."[67] This description is remarkably similar to what Susan wears in the mid-nineteenth-century photograph discussed earlier (Fig. 2). Like coats, pouches, blankets and leggings, Métis-made moccasins were often decorated with floral beading. Glass beads, which were introduced to the Métis by European traders, became ubiquitous in their creative production, both for men and women, Métis and settlers.[68] An extant early twentieth-century saddle blanket in the

6 | Maker unknown, *Saddle Blanket*, Northern Plains, Métis, 1875–1925, velvet, glass beads, cotton thread, hide, metal, 121 × 98 cm, McCord Museum, M6686, Gift of Mabel Molson. (Photo: Courtesy the McCord Museum)

McCord Museum's collection is decorated with a characteristic beaded floral design (Fig. 6). The Métis became so closely aligned with beaded objects that they became known as the flower beadwork people.[69] In nineteenth-century journals and narratives written by male fur traders, the men frequently made note of Métis women's clothing. Métis women of the Red River settlement were noted to be "tidy" in their dress (Fig. 2).[70] Robert Ballantyne wrote in 1848: "With beads, and brightly coloured porcupine's quills, and silk, they work the most beautiful devices on the moccasins."[71] Cheryl Troupe has discussed Métis clothing and design at length. She observes that after the

7 | Sherry Farrell Racette, preparatory sketch for *A Skin for a Skin*, c. 2008. (Photo: Courtesy of the artist)

1870s, Métis women's clothing was increasingly a combination of European (English) style and traditional Indigenous articles of clothing, including leggings, moccasins, and usually a blanket.[72] Troupe remarks that blankets were indispensable textile objects for Métis women in all seasons, as they infrequently wore hats. Métis women wore blankets on the shoulders or on the head, depending on the season.[73] European men sometimes criticized Métis women's habit of wearing blankets, with one male settler stating that blankets gave the women a "stooping gait."[74]

In Farrell Racette's second painting (Fig. 4), the Latin words *Pro Pelle Cutem* have been translated into English. In *The Savage Country* (1960), Walter O'Meara writes: "All over North America, the fur hunters ruthlessly killed beaver . . . Pro pelle cutem' was the motto of the greatest and the grandest of the trading companies; or, less delicately, 'A skin for a skin.' It could have served them all."[75] "Pro pelle cutem," the Hudson's Bay Company's motto, has also been translated as "we risk our lives for pelts."[76] In *A Skin for a Skin*, the two Indigenous/Métis women do not appear to be in distress or to be experiencing the "reactive" or "negative" affects described by Coulthard

in *Red Skin, White Masks*. This reading is supported by Farrell Racette's preparatory sketch for *A Skin for a Skin*, in which the woman on the right is clearly smiling or even laughing (Fig. 7). In the painting, the Indigenous woman on the left appears to be attempting to push the coat of arms away from her, or alternatively, hold it up. The woman on the right, clothed in a long-sleeved blue-green dress, stands at ease, one hand resting on the top of the coat of arms, while her left hand is placed on her left hip. The women are not obviously at risk nor are they explicitly the survivors of violence. Nonetheless, the title, *A Skin for a Skin*, hints at material violence. As Farrell Racette explains about the Hudson's Bay Company motto, "A skin for a skin," it is "rather chilling when you think of the violence against animals and women that was part of the fur trade. One interpretation is that traders lost skin to get skin – implying human cost . . . *If anyone lost skin so the HBC could get skins it was women.* They're the ones who actually skinned the animals, dealt with men on both sides of the exchange, and raised children."[77] Elsewhere, Farrell Racette has observed that,

> women's experiences with the fur trade had a darker side. Women and their children were often cast aside . . . The violent sexual exploitation and commodification of women's bodies introduced during the fur trade and the progressive devaluing of women were justified by depicting them as naturally promiscuous and wanton. This depiction subsequently absolved European men of guilt and responsibility for their actions, creating a representation of Indigenous sexuality that has persisted to the present time.[78]

The exploitation of Indigenous women reveals a racist ethos that positioned them as expendable and animal-like within the context of the fur trade. The fact that the two Indigenous women in *A Skin for a Skin* have replaced two animals could also be interpreted as unveiling the historical perception of Indigenous women as "savage" and uncivilized.[79] Nonetheless, the woman pushing against (or holding up) the coat of arms indicates strength, if not resistance, while the women's calm aspects seem to undermine the violence implied by the title. There is ambiguity in this work that forces us to consider the paradoxical affects and lived experiences of Indigenous women during the fur trade era. Indigenous women were recognized for their physical strength and were often in relationships with white European men who benefited greatly from the knowledge First Nations and Métis women had about surviving in the Canadian climate, including their skills in creating clothing.[80]

As previously noted, Farrell Racette has observed that the second painting in the pair is largely concerned with Indigenous women's labour.[81] Many craft

scholars have discussed textiles as labour and the concomitant affective labour that is often, if not always, woven into the final products. Julia Bryan-Wilson, for instance, refers to the "affective politics fostered in sewing circles."[82] Most of these scholars are concerned, explicitly or implicitly, with white female producers. However, Bryan-Wilson observes "a basic fact about textile production: it is grounded in racialized, gendered systems of labor."[83] What of the affective labour of the Indigenous-feminist artist and scholar? Farrell Racette has written of being a "warrior researcher," a phrase that denotes strength, but also points to the need for strength and resilience in the face of ongoing colonialism in the Canadian context (including in the Canadian academy).[84] The ambiguous pose of the woman on the left in *A Skin for a Skin* speaks to various kinds of strength, including physical and psychological strength. The woman on the right, on the other hand, stands upright, striking a casual but formidable pose. Kristina Huneault has noted that the hand-on-the-hip pose is characteristic of historical portraits of male figures of power.[85] In her discussion of Indigenous female performance artists, Carla Taunton has underscored the importance of taking up space with the body, both in terms of land rights and the affective power of staking a claim to an individual's own site or space.[86] The women in this painting are not shown engaging in labour such as sewing or cooking, but their bodies speak volumes about the layers of affective labour that Indigenous women have had to enact in the face of colonization and ongoing colonial violence. Read through the lens of Indigenous feminism, these two women embody survivance and the thick skin of the resilient Indigenous woman. Their colorful clothing as a "second skin" signifies the power of Métis material culture to speak of tradition, contemporaneity and futurity all at once. The term "second skin" has been used by psychoanalysts to describe the sense of containment that babies need to feel safe and secure in their environments.[87] The phrase was also recently used by Carly Brascoupé in a 2018 article entitled "Indigenous Fashion: Our Second Skin."[88] Clothing, fashion, dress, textiles, craft: these are words and concepts that were long dismissed by art historians but are now analyzed by many scholars for what they illuminate about societies and individuals. In the context of Indigenous visual and material culture, clothing is a matter of survival, resilience and resistance, holding onto the threads of the past while looking to the future. To further emphasize this point, it is worth noting that the first ever Indigenous Fashion Week took place in Toronto in 2018.[89]

In Farrell Racette's three paintings, there are no explicit representations of physical violence against Indigenous women. This is remarkable, considering the ubiquitous victimization of Indigenous women in popular and visual culture. Instead, Farrell Racette depicts calm, labouring, resilient Indigenous women. And yet, if settler scholars are willing to look beyond the frames of

her paintings, there is much to learn not only about colonialism and historical colonial violence, but also about ongoing violence against Indigenous women. Farrell Racette's paintings point viewers toward hard truths as well as toward Indigenous epistemologies. Further to this, viewers also have the opportunity to learn much about how First Nations and Métis women have long employed traditional materials to fashion clothing and objects for survival and survivance, resistance and resilience, pleasure and livelihood. In her 2017 article "Tuft Life: Stitching Sovereignty in Contemporary Indigenous Art," Farrell Racette writes: "Artists describe the transformative power of traditional materials that enable them to revitalize and mobilize endangered knowledge, and to confront trauma and hidden histories, while affirming the ongoing vitality and sovereignty of their communities."[90] While Indigenous women were long written out of official Canadian settler art history, Farrell Racette's Indigenous-feminist body of work rebels against those gaps and silences, filling those lacunae with words and knowledge and paint and textiles.

NOTES

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1 For an extended discussion of all three of these artists, see Julia Skelly, *Skin Crafts: Affect, Violence and Materiality in Global Contemporary Art* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022).

2 Sherry Farrell Racette, *Métis Art, 1880–2011: Resilience/Resistance* (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 2011).

3 See, for example, *Rielisms* (Winnipeg: The Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2001). Farrell Racette's work was also included in a more recent exhibition, *Li Salay* (Michif for "the sun"), which was organized by the Art Gallery of Alberta in Edmonton. The show (25 May–9 Sept. 2018) was advertised as the first major survey of Métis art at a large public institution. See Agnieszka Matejko, "Shining a Light on Métis Culture," 8 June 2018. Accessed 15 June 2019, http://www.gallerieswest.ca/magazine/stories/shining-a-light-on-métis-culture/

4 Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8:4 (2006): 387–409.

5 Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 3.

6 Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010).
7 Quoted in Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Fray: Art and Textile Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 4.
8 Farrell Racette identifies as both a painter and a textile artist, and she also produces beaded artworks, in addition to working with other materials.
9 Glenn Adamson, *The Invention of Craft* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).
10 Cheryl Troupe, *Expressing Our Heritage: Métis Artistic Designs* (Regina, SK: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2002), 7.
11 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 193.
12 Allison Hargreaves, *Violence Against Indigenous Women: Literature, Activism, Resistance* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2017), 1.
13 *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (2019). Accessed 9 June 2019, https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/
14 Farrell Racette, *Métis Art, 1880–2011*, 7.
15 Damian Skinner, "Settler-Colonial Art History: A Proposition in Two Parts," *Journal of Canadian Art History / Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien* 35:1 (2014), 132–33.
16 Ibid., 141.
17 Ibid., 161.
18 Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010; originally published 1984). See also Elissa Auther, *String, Felt, Thread: The Hierarchy of Art and Craft in American Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Julia Skelly, *Radical Decadence: Excess in Contemporary Feminist Textiles and Craft* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), especially the introduction.
19 Skinner, "Settler-Colonial Art History," 161.
20 Ibid., 162. See also Ruth B. Phillips, *Museum Pieces: Toward the Indigenization of Canadian Museums* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011).
21 David B. MacDonald, "Genocide in the Indian Residential Schools: Canadian History through the Lens of the UN Genocide Convention," in *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America*, ed. Andrew Woolford, Jeff Benvenuto, and Alexander Laban Hinton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 315.
22 Sherry Farrell Racette, "Haunted: First Nations Children in Residential School Photography," in *Depicting Canada's Children*, ed. Loren Lerner (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2009), 49–84.
23 See Phillips, *Museum Pieces*.
24 Carmen Robertson, "Clearing Paths," in *Clearing a Path: New Ways of Seeing Traditional Indigenous Art*, ed. Carmen Robertson and Sherry Farrell Racette (Regina, SK: University of Regina/Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2009), 11.
25 See Marcia Crosby, "Construction of the Imaginary Indian," in *Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art*, ed. Stan Douglas (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1991), 267–91.
26 See Phillips, *Museum Pieces*, 109. See also Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700–1900* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998); Ruth B. Phillips, "Nuns, Ladies and the 'Queens of the Hurons': Souvenir Art and the Negotiation of North American

Identities," in *Local/Global: Women Artists in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Deborah Cherry and Janice Helland (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 155–77; Ruth B. Phillips, "From 'Naturalized Invention' to the Invention of Tradition: The Victorian Reception of Onkwehonwe Beadwork," in *Rethinking Professionalism: Women and Art in Canada, 1850–1970*, ed. Kristina Huneault and Janice Anderson (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), 327–56.

27 Ruth B. Phillips, "Performing the Native Woman: Primitivism and Mimicry in Early Twentieth-Century Visual Culture," in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, ed. Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 28–29.

28 Ibid., 29.

29 Sherry Farrell Racette, "'I Want to Call Out Their Names in Resistance': Writing Aboriginal Women into Canadian Art History, 1880–1970," in *Rethinking Professionalism*, 285.

30 For critical engagements with settler-colonial discourses in the Canadian context, see Erin Morton, ed., *Unsettling Canadian Art History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022).

31 Walter O'Meara, *The Savage Country* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960), 113.

32 Hime was an Irish-Canadian photographer, settler, and politician who took photographs of Indigenous peoples while accompanying Henry Youle Hind on his 1858 Assiniboine and Saskatchewan expedition, which was intended to ascertain the possibility of settling Western Canada. See Andrea Kunard, "Photography, Ethnology, and the Domestic Arts: Interpreting the Sir Daniel Wilson Album," in *The Cultural Work of Photography in Canada*, ed. Carol Payne and Andrea Kunard (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 49–51.

33 Sherry Farrell Racette, "Returning Fire, Pointing the Canon: Aboriginal Photography as Resistance," in *The Cultural Work of Photography in Canada*, 70–90.

34 See *The Rebel Yells: Dress and Political Re-dress in Contemporary Indigenous Art* (Montreal: fofa Gallery, 2015). Loris Beavis and Rhonda L. Meier curated the Concordia University exhibition.

35 Sherry Farrell Racette, "Sewing for a Living: The Commodification of Métis Women's Artistic Production," in *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past*, ed. Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005), 41.

36 Quoted in Sherry Farrell Racette, "Tuft Life: Stitching Sovereignty in Contemporary Indigenous Art," *Art Journal* 76:2 (2017): 115.

37 Emma LaRocque, "Métis and Feminist: Ethical Reflections on Feminism, Human Rights and Decolonization," in*Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, ed. Joyce Green (Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2007), 64–65.

38 Sherry Farrell Racette, "Artist's statement," Saskatchewan Arts Board, undated. Accessed 5 Oct. 2018, http://collection.artsboard.sk.ca/items/1018/

39 For Homi Bhabha, the signs of agency are intentionality and purpose. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 199.

40 Phillips, *Museum Pieces*. See also Shannon Bagg and Lynda Jessup, eds., *On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery* (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2002).

41 Sherry Farrell Racette in conversation with Alan Corbiere and Crystal Migwans, "Pieces Left Along the Trail: Material Culture Histories and Indigenous Studies," in *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies,* ed. Chris Andersen and Jean M. O'Brien (London: Routledge, 2017), 224.

42 See Phillips, *Museum Pieces*, 111–31.

43 Troupe, *Expressing Our Heritage*, 8–9. Additionally, in 1851 Swiss Artist Rudolph Friederich Kurz met a group of Red River Métis, and afterwards wrote that they were "dressed in bright colors." Quoted in ibid., 15.

44 Ibid., 10.

45 Ibid., 11.

46 Ibid., 58.

47 Farrell Racette, "Pieces Left Along the Trail," 224.

48 Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 22.

49 Sherry Farrell Racette, "*Tawâyihk*: Thoughts from the Places in Between," *Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 41:1 (2016): 30.

50 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *They Came for the Children: Canada, Aboriginal Peoples, and Residential Schools* (Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2012).

51 Stacey Abramson, "Resilience Billboard Project," 21 May 2018. Accessed 31 Oct. 2018, http://www.gallerieswest.ca/magazine/stories/resilience-billboard-project/.

52 Claudette Lauzon, "What the Body Remembers: Rebecca Belmore's Memorial to Missing Women," in *Precarious Visualities: New Perspectives on Identification in Contemporary Art and Visual Culture,* ed. Olivier Asselin, Johanne Lamoureux, and Christine Ross (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 155–79.

53 See Lee-Ann Martin, ed., *Making a Noise! Aboriginal Perspectives on Art, Art History, Critical Writing and Community* (Banff: The International Curatorial Institute, 2004).

54 Jennifer Doyle, "Queer Wallpaper," in *A Companion to Contemporary Art since 1945*, ed. Amelia Jones (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 350–51.

55 Robert (Bob) Boyer (Métis Cree) created a series of artworks entitled *Blanket Statements* beginning in the early 1980s, including *Smallpox Issue* (1983). McDonald, "Charting Material Memories," 94.

56 Sherry Farrell Racette, "Traditional Arts and Media: Resilience and Survivance," in *Clearing a Path*, 25. Emphasis added.

57 The Hudson's Bay Company, one of two major fur trade enterprises in Canada, was founded in 1670. Sherry Farrell Racette, "Nimble Fingers and Strong Backs: First Nations and Métis Women in Fur Trade and Rural Economies," in *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labor to Activism*, ed. Carol Williams (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 149. The paintings *Hudson's Bay Company Coat of Arms* and *A Skin for a Skin* are not discussed or reproduced in *Clearing a Path.*

58 Sherry Farrell Racette, e-mail to author, 12 Sept. 2018.

59 See Eileen Stack, "'Very Picturesque and Very Canadian': The Blanket Coat and Anglo-Canadian Identity in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century," in *Fashion: A Canadian Perspective* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 17–40.

60 Fiona P. McDonald, "Woollen Blankets in Contemporary Art: Mutable and Mobile Materials in the Work of Sonny Assu," *Material Culture Review* 76 (Fall 2012): 108–16;

Fiona P. McDonald, "Charting Material Memories: An Ethnography of Visual and Material Transformations of Woollen Blankets in Canada, Aotearoa New Zealand and the United States," PhD thesis, University College London, 2014.

61 McDonald, "Charting Material Memories," 88–102. For a pertinent discussion of Belmore's work, see Ellyn Walker, "Resistance as Resilience in the Work of Rebecca Belmore," in *Desire Change: Contemporary Feminist Art in Canada*, ed. Heather Davis (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017), 135–48.

62 McDonald, "Charting Material Memories," 100n29,

63 Ibid., 98.

64 See Adrienne Mayor, "The Nessus Shirt in the New World: Smallpox and Blankets in History and Legend," *The Journal of American Folklore* 108 (1995): 54–77. This particular brand of colonial violence has been linked with the practice of European settlers giving Indigenous individuals alcohol to deliberately enact harm. Sylvia Van Kirk, for instance, has noted that Indigenous wives of fur traders were "more exposed" to the dangers of European diseases and alcohol. Sylvia Van Kirk, *"Many Tender Ties": Women in Fur-Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670–1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing, 1980), 86. Walter O'Meara wrote of "the systematic debauchery" of Indigenous peoples with alcohol, noting that the "rum of the fur trade was not just something to barter – like blankets, guns and trinkets – for beaver. It was a deliberate means of reducing the natives to a state of groveling dependence." O'Meara, *The Savage Country*, 103. For more on this see Peter C. Mancall, *Deadly Medicine: Indians and Alcohol in Early America* (London: Cornell University Press, 1995). For a discussion of contemporary art by Indigenous artists who resist damaging stereotypes and discourses related to alcohol and addiction, see Julia Skelly, "Alternative Paths: Mapping Addiction in Contemporary Art by Landon Mackenzie, Rebecca Belmore, Manasie Akpaliapik, and Ron Noganosh," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 49:2 (Spring 2015): 268–95.

65 McDonald, "Woollen Blankets in Contemporary Art."

66 Joseph Robson, *An Account of Six Years Residence in Hudson's-Bay, from 1733 to 1736, and 1744 to 1747* (London, 1752), 39. Accessed at the McCord Museum.

67 Troupe, *Expressing Our Heritage*, 8.

68 Ibid., 15.

69 Ibid., 7.

70 Van Kirk, *'Many Tender Ties,'* 102.

71 Quoted in Farrell Racette, "Sewing for a Living," 27. Robert Ballantyne, *Hudson Bay, or Everyday Life in the Wilds of North America* (London: W. Blackwood, 1848), 106–107.

72 Troupe, *Expressing Our Heritage*, 101.

73 Ibid., 12.

74 Quoted in Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 86.

75 O'Meara, *The Savage Country*, vii–viii.

76 McDonald, "Charting Material Memories," 102.

77 Sherry Farrell Racette, e-mail to author, 4 Oct. 2018. Emphasis added.

78 Sherry Farrell Racette, "'This Fierce Love': Gender, Women, and Art Making," in *Art in Our Lives: Native Women Artists in Dialogue,* ed. Cynthia Chavez Lamar and Sherry Farrell Racette with Lara Evans (Sante Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press, 2010), 35.

79 See Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997). O'Meara notes that Métis women were often described in terms of their "Gallic vivacity and provocative beauty," as well as their ostensible lack of morals. O'Meara, *The Savage Country*, 112.

80 Farrell Racette, "Nimble Fingers and Strong Backs," 149.

81 Sherry Farrell Racette, e-mail to author, 4 Oct. 2018.

82 Bryan-Wilson, *Fray*, 6.

83 Ibid., 8.

84 Sherry Farrell Racette, "Confessions and Reflections of an Indigenous Research Warrior," in *Material Histories: Proceedings of a workshop held at Marischal Museum, University of Aberdeen* (Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen, 2007), 57–67.

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86 Carla Taunton, "Performing Aboriginality at the Venice Biennale: The Performance of Rebecca Belmore and James Luna," *Revista Mexicana de Estudios Canadienses* 13 (2007): 55–68.

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Textiles peints : la violence et la résilience dans les œuvres de Sherry Farrell Racette

JULIA SKELLY

En 1990, l'artiste et érudite métisse Sherry Farrell Racette (née en 1952, membre de la Première Nation de Timiskaming, dans le nord-ouest du Québec) a créé une œuvre intitulée *Ancestral Women Taking Back Their Dresses* (gouache et aquarelle sur papier). En 2018, la peinture a été choisie parmi plus de 160 œuvres réalisées par des femmes autochtones pour faire partie de *Résilience, le projet d'exposition nationale sur panneaux publicitaires*, qui prévoyait le placement d'une série de panneaux le long des routes et des autoroutes du Canada, de Victoria à St. John's. Cette métamorphose de l'œuvre – une peinture représentant des textiles transformée en panneau publicitaire s'inscrivant dans un projet politique – est une invitation à considérer de façon plus large la pratique interdisciplinaire de Sherry Farrell Racette, c'est-à-dire à la fois en tant qu'artiste et qu'intellectuelle. Étonnamment, son travail ne figure presque jamais au programme des expositions collectives d'envergure d'artistes autochtones contemporains. Ce fut le cas pour d'importantes expositions comme *INDIGENA* (en 1992, à l'ancien Musée canadien des civilisations) et, plus récemment, pour *Sakahàn. Art indigène international* (en 2013, au Musée des beaux-arts du Canada). Même dans les catalogues d'exposition réalisés par Sherry Farrell Racette elle-même, ses œuvres sont rarement reproduites. Elles ont en revanche été incluses dans plusieurs expositions collectives de plus petite envergure, dont les catalogues sont souvent difficiles à trouver.

Les choses semblent toutefois en train de changer, comme le laisse croire la sélection de la peinture *Ancestral Women Taking Back their Dresses* dans le cadre de *Résilience,* un projet qui a attiré l'attention des médias de tous les coins du Canada au cours de l'été 2018 et a aujourd'hui droit de cité dans les ouvrages d'histoire de l'art. Le présent article vise à démontrer que la démarche intellectuelle et la pratique artistique de Sherry Farrell Racette constituent des modes inextricablement liés de militantisme politique au Canada, société coloniale qui a violemment et systématiquement tenté d'éliminer les peuples autochtones au moyen de politiques et de stratégies génocidaires telles que les pensionnats. Le chercheur Glen Sean Coulthard a fait valoir que la « politique de la reconnaissance » mise de l'avant par le

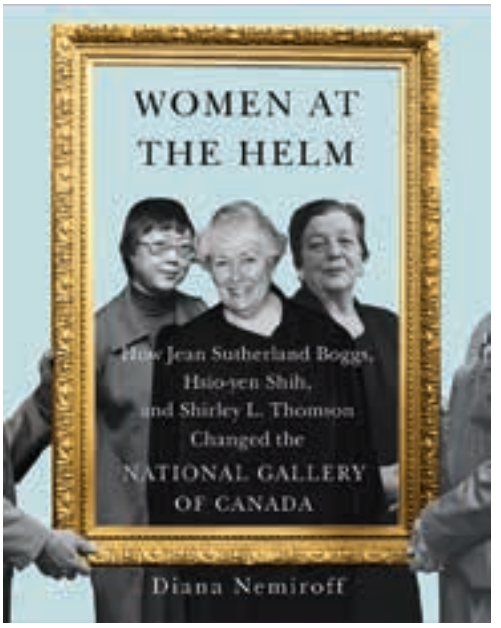
gouvernement canadien a remplacé la violence explicite de la domination coloniale tout en maintenant, bien que de façon plus insidieuse, les rapports de pouvoir inhérents au colonialisme de peuplement. La recherche théorique et la pratique artistique de Sherry Farrell Racette constituent donc des appels urgents à la résistance, de la part non seulement des peuples autochtones, mais aussi des allochtones blancs qui doivent accepter d'être déstabilisés par le travail et les paroles de l'artiste. Dans la discussion qui suit, j'examine les textiles peints de Sherry Farrell Racette en relation avec ses textes sur l'histoire de l'art pour rendre compte de son projet métis et féministe. Ses textiles peints et ses textes sont interreliés, et son corpus d'œuvres axé sur la décolonisation est encore inachevé et continue de se déployer.

Dans les lignes qui suivent, j'aborde trois œuvres peintes de Sherry Farrell Racette : *Ancestral Women Taking Back their Dresses* (1990) ainsi que les œuvres correspondantes *Hudson's Bay Company Coat of Arms* (2008) et *A Skin for a Skin* (2008), dont l'arrière-plan est constitué par les rayures multicolores qui ornent les couvertures de la Compagnie de la Baie d'Hudson. Ces œuvres peintes ne sont pas de l'artisanat, défini comme la confection d'objets à la main fondée sur un savoir-faire et à l'aide de matériaux tels que le fil, les perles et l'argile. Cependant, le concept discursif entourant l'artisanat demeure essentiel pour appréhender les œuvres de Sherry Farrell Racette en tant qu'objets hybrides qui allient – sur le plan de la forme et du contenu – peinture et textile. Je suis d'avis qu'en *peignant sur du textile*, Sherry Farrell Racette produit des œuvres d'art hybrides qui font entrer en dialogue les formes traditionnelles autochtones (le travail du textile) et une technique européenne (la peinture). Cette hybridité caractérisait également les vêtements et d'autres produits culturels métis de la période suivant l'arrivée des colons; ces produits combinaient l'artisanat autochtone traditionnel à des matériaux (comme la soie et les perles de verre), des motifs (décoration florale) et des formes (styles vestimentaires et picturaux eurovictoriens) issus d'Europe.

Selon moi, en appliquant de la peinture sur du textile, Sherry Farrell Racette n'adopte pas la peinture en tant que mode d'expression noble en vertu de la soi-disant supériorité hiérarchique de l'art sur l'artisanat, mais elle se livre plutôt à une métacritique de la peinture qui révèle l'échec de celle-ci à remplacer (et à représenter) adéquatement la puissante matérialité (ou agentivité) d'objets tels que les robes confectionnées par les femmes métisses. Si cette astuce typiquement métisse et féministe n'a pas précisément pour résultat de renverser la hiérarchie établie en Occident entre l'art et l'artisanat, elle contribue néanmoins à mettre en lumière la fausse croyance selon laquelle la mimèsis de la peinture serait supérieure à l'objectité affective de l'artisanat; elle vient également renforcer l'idée de plus en plus largement

admise que la hiérarchie entre l'art et l'artisanat est une construction discursive europatriarcale. Ainsi, les peintures de Sherry Farrell Racette constituent une contribution aux épistémologies autochtones liées au pouvoir des objets créés par les femmes métisses à l'aide de fils et d'autres matériaux traditionnels.

Les textiles peints de Sherry Farrell Racette révèlent que la technique picturale n'est qu'un simulacre qui n'arrive jamais totalement à capter l'importance et la signification personnelle des textiles dans les cultures et les communautés autochtones. Ses œuvres d'art hybrides ne sont pas simplement le fruit d'une combinaison de techniques; elles constituent des prises de position politiques sur les contacts violents entre les cultures, l'importance des vêtements et les relations compliquées, parfois funestes, que les peuples autochtones ont entretenues avec certains types d'objets textiles, notamment les couvertures. Je souhaite également faire valoir que, bien qu'aucune des peintures de l'artiste ne représente explicitement de la violence ou des actes violents, elles peuvent être lues de manière productive à travers un prisme qui tient compte de la violence coloniale historique et contemporaine commise à l'égard des femmes autochtones, ce qui inclut la violence discursive consistant à ne tenir aucun compte des artistes autochtones féminines dans l'histoire de l'art allochtone du Canada. En choisissant de ne pas représenter de scènes de violence, loin de passer sous silence l'histoire des agressions, des sévices et des traumatismes intergénérationnels, Sherry Farrell Racette met plutôt en lumière la résilience et l'instinct de survie des peuples autochtones, exprimés de diverses façons, notamment par la production vestimentaire et artistique.



Women at the Helm: How Jean Sutherland Boggs, Hsio-yen Shih, and Shirley L. Thomson Changed the National Gallery of Canada

DIANA NEMIROFF

Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021
552 p.

Ann Davis

What is Competency in the National Gallery of Canada?

Women at the Helm is a masterful examination of the tenure of three important directors, but do not think that this volume will focus on serious feminist justifications for their management styles. Do not attempt to understand and interpret their activities through a feminist lens. Nemiroff, admiring Thomson and having worked for all ten years of her mandate, explained her purpose as a "tribute to . . . [Thomson's] indefatigable energy and to the goals and dreams she shared with her [two female] predecessors." Nemiroff realized she would have to justify her gender-neutral approach when dealing with the unusual fact of three women directors. To do so, she looked at the work of Sylva M. Gelber on the challenges traditional prejudices posed for women. Gelber concluded that competency was the best weapon women could wield. Nemiroff went further, noting that later studies revealed an overemphasis on gender differences "obscuring rather than advancing an understanding of leadership." This book is therefore centred on three "distinctly individual leadership styles," three personalities, and three biographies.

This book, however, is as much the biography of an institution as that of its women directors. It is an insider's report, since Nemiroff was a curator at the National Gallery of Canada from 1984 to 2005. From her position she understood the complexity of a large museum, especially a national one dependent on government funding and located in the national capital. She recognized, for example, why Shih instituted written justification for acquisitions. She understood that both museum professionals and the general public would be interested in, perhaps even surprised to learn of, Brydon Smith's experiments with different works of art to find the right hanging in the room devoted to the *Voice of Fire*. This breadth

of research extends to the social and political context, a welcome feature of this important volume. The author emphasizes the changes directors made: increased professionalization, expansion of the collection and exhibition areas, a push for international recognition, improvement of the user experience, and education. These Nemiroff deems progress, thus uncritically accepting traditional museological tenets such as the need to constantly expand the collection.

Shortly after taking up the position of Director in 1966, Jean Sutherland Boggs started to work on her revealing book *The National Gallery of Canada*. It was organized in two sections. The first, a succinct 68 pages, encompassed the history of the museum, including a final chapter on what Boggs wanted to accomplish. The second, two-hundred and twenty-two plates (of which thirty-two were in colour) with attendant text, examined the most important acquisitions. While the collection was clearly what Boggs was most interested in featuring and developing, her analysis of the museum's past shows hints of what is to come. She organized her historical text by director, making sure to find nice things to say about them whenever possible, being a positive and generous person. But, being also a realist, she noted some of the problems. She commented favourably on the strong and successful personalities of two of her predecessor, Eric Brown and Alan Jarvis, while she noted among the problems the pressing need for a new suitable building, recurring questions of governance, the constant desire for more money, and rather frequent controversies. By the time this book was published in 1971, Boggs most likely recognized that personality, building, governance, and controversy would be her lot as well. In fact, these four themes, along with collections and exhibitions, define the tenure of the three important directors in *Women at the Helm*.

Apart from going to the gallery as a visitor, I intersected with the directors and staff on a number of occasions. The first was in 1965 and 1966 when I was a summer student working in the National Gallery library. My job was to file clippings, a seriously boring endeavour. So, we delighted when visitors came in, including Fred Varley. Once I delivered something to the director Charles Comfort, a round man in a grey three-piece suit, in his cramped office in the Lorne Building. We summer students, with the hubris of undergraduates, were convinced that Comfort, who had been president of the Royal Canadian Academy, wanted that Academy to run the National Gallery of Canada, something the Academy had hoped to do in the past and still seems to want today.

When Jean Boggs became director, she left no ambiguity as to who ran the National Gallery. She quickly tackled the problem of the unsuitable, crowded Lorne building and started her long, frustrating push for a new home. Perhaps recognizing that a solution would not be easy, she then turned

her hand to what she could (and did) change and thus instituted a marked professionalization. This includes a big expansion of the curatorial staff, a new emphasis on research and publications, more international presence and an expanded scope for the collection to include contemporary American art and photography. But governance became increasingly difficult after the 1968 creation of the National Museums Corporation, which was charged with the administration of the four national museums. That Boggs was able to accomplish so much in her ten-year tenure was due, in part, to stronger government financial support, but also to her personality, her warmth, intellect, and vision. Her staff certainly lauded her people-centred approach, for she gave her curators the freedom to work creatively, while ensuring that the public would feel more at home in the museum.

The gallery Boggs left in 1976 was almost unrecognizable internally, but it was still housed in the very inadequate Lorne Building. Boggs had pressed on. Initially, by 1969, there was the sense that there would be a new building by 1980, the centennial of the gallery's founding. In late 1974, after discussions about an appropriate site, the Secretary of State announced that the new National Gallery would be constructed on Wellington Street West, a decision on location that Boggs accepted, although she was not happy with it. But the relationship between Boggs and the secretary-general of the National Museums Corporation Bernard Ostry disintegrated, particularly over space allocation in the plans for the new building. In June 1976, Boggs resigned, accepting a position to teach at Harvard university. Luckily for us, this was not the end of Jean Boggs's work on suitable accommodation for the National Gallery of Canada.

By early 1982, four years after Jean Boggs left the National Gallery, the problem of accommodation had still not been solved. Unexpectedly, on 18 February in the ornate Confederation Room of the West Block of Parliament the Minister of Communications announced "a firm go-ahead to the creation of new homes for the National Gallery of Canada and the National Museum of Man." The Minister was followed by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who explained that he saw "the arts as an enrichment of the Canadian identity," a part of "democratization and decentralization" – wording that still resonates today. The Minister further announced a surprise: that Jean Boggs would manage the budget and staff of a new Crown corporation, the Canadian Museum Construction Corporation. Boggs set about finding sites and architects, such that almost exactly a year later the government accepted the recommendations of the Corporation that Moshe Safdie design the National Gallery and Douglas Cardinal design the National Museum of Man, astute and political recommendations. Regrettably, after these major accomplishments, things did not go well for Boggs. She found Safdie difficult and the proposed

budget inadequate. In 1985 the newly elected Mulroney government cancelled the construction corporation and removed Boggs from its oversight, but did agree to provide more money to complete the project. Nemiroff concluded that the two completed museums, "tangible symbols of national pride," owe their existence to "Boggs's vision and drive" and that she considered Boggs to be the best director the National Gallery has ever had.

The next director, Hsio-yen Shih, like Boggs held a PhD and was unmarried. But her art historical knowledge and experience – Far Eastern art – was outside the gallery's then current collections, although it did support the government's multicultural aims. Problems arose. The staff, needing strong leadership after Boggs's departure, were distressed that, at meetings, Shih tended to listen and knit before making important decisions. At the same time, the economic picture was one of austerity. Shih, keen to introduce Asian art to Canadians, quickly accepted an exhibition of Chinese peasant paintings and moved to acquire the large Heeramaneck collection of South Asian art, two-hundred and seventy items for one million US dollars. When public acquisition funds were not available, Shih for the first time sidestepped the government acquisition allocation and approached Max Tanenbaum, a Toronto philanthropist who donated the collection to the gallery. Other Indian, Nepalese, and Tibetan donations followed, for Shih was aiming to have the gallery reflect the diversity of Canada's peoples. Yet a curatorial department of Asian art was never created.

Other changes in the scope of the collection occurred. In 1980 controversy arose over the donation of the Henry Birks Collection of Canadian Silver, when the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts argued that they were the most appropriate destination for this material. This national-provincial squabble was to be repeated in later years. At the same time, to celebrate the centennial of the founding of the gallery, important exhibitions, including *To Found a National Gallery* and *Reflections in a Quiet Pool* demonstrated the substantive scholarship that Boggs had initiated. However, the financial picture deteriorated further, with the National Gallery's operating budget in the year 1979–1980 cut by twenty-eight per cent and one million dollars removed from the acquisition budget. Nor was there progress on new accommodation. In April 1981 Shih left the gallery, ahead of her five-year mandate. She was the wrong person at the wrong time.

By the 1980s it was clear that the role of the National Museums Corporation needed examination. This was precipitated in part by Boggs's and Shih's frequent complaints. But the corporation also recognized its internal ambiguity, in that it served the four national museums in addition to provincial and local museums. As a departmental corporation, it was subject to the same controls as a government department, which weakened or negated the arm's-length principle of cultural policy.

Specifically, this involved a "significant loss of flexibility, especially in the areas of hiring and staffing" and the authority to approve major, expensive acquisitions.

Three important contemporary reports touched on the National Museums Corporation and the National Gallery. The first was the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, colloquially called the Applebaum-Hubert Committee after its co-chairs. As heritage staff member for the committee, I drafted the heritage chapter based on briefs and hearings collected from across the country, after distillation by the committee members. They recommended that the National Museums Corporation be truncated, retaining administrative responsibility for the four national museums, but changing its departmental status to allow it arm's-length flexibility and accountability. The committee also marked a strong need for collections to include Indigenous and contemporary art. These collection concerns were echoed in the 1983 report compiled by the Canadian Artists Representation/ Le Front des artistes canadiens, which went further than the Applebaum-Hebert committee to recommend that the Gallery be an independent cultural organization. The third group, the Task Force Charged with Examining Federal Policy Concerning Museums, the Withrow-Richard task force, concurred. As a result, by the end of 1986, Minister of Communications Flora MacDonald went about the difficult task of dismantling the National Museums Corporation and making the four national museums autonomous. This twenty-one-year experiment in museum decentralization and democratization had failed. Now was the time to rebuild the National Gallery with a new director.

When Shirley Thomson assumed her duties in October 1987, two of the enormous problems that had bedeviled Boggs and Shih had been solved. New accommodation had been built, but the opening exhibitions needed to be installed. The much-hated National Museums Corporation had been cancelled, but the complicated transition to separate employer status was yet to be done. It was a tall order. Thomson immediately engaged, promising "excellence and access." On the eve of the public opening, she held a grand party to which all the artists who had works in the initial installation were invited all expenses paid. The *Montreal Gazette* noted Thomson's determination to make the building "a lovely, approachable place for artists and the general public, not a mausoleum for worshiping treasures from the past." Inuit art and the Rideau Chapel interior were on display for the first time. Three weeks after the grand opening, the massive *Degas* exhibition partly organized by Jean Boggs was unveiled. Soon the gallery turned to shoring up its national role through the exhibition of contemporary art with the *Canadian Biennial of Contemporary Art*, conceived as the first in a series of biennial exhibitions that were to be organized by provincial galleries across the country. While a laudatory goal, this did not work

out since provincial galleries did not have the financial resources to mount national exhibitions.

In planning for the opening of the new building, one idea was to purchase a major work of art. Barnett Newman's abstract *Voice of Fire* was chosen, although some felt, I am glad to know, that a Canadian work might have been preferable. When the expensive acquisition was announced in March 1990 at US $1.5 million, a major controversy erupted, enflamed by both the high price and the painting's great simplicity (three vertical stripes). Thomson, initially unprepared, did not do well. Ditto for the Gallery's communications strategy. Now its hard-won arm's-length principle was threatened. Thomson recovered: using her sense of humour, she complimented one of the most vociferous complainers, Felix Holtmann, on his dress, a red tie flanked on either side by a blue jacket, mimicking the *Voice of Fire.* Eventually the heat was turned down and Thomson gained respect for her refusal to be intimidated.

I had the most contact with Shirley Thomson. This started in 1968 when, as head of the Bishop's University art committee, I approached Shirley to lend us material for an exhibition. She kindly agreed to do so. My next meeting with her came in early 1992. By then I was the director of The Nickle Arts Museum at the University of Calgary, where the exhibition *Jana Sterbak: States of Being*, curated by Diana Nemiroff and circulated by the National Gallery, was about to open. The show had provoked controversy in Ottawa over one piece, *Vanitas: Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic,* and was threatening to do the same in Calgary. The *Calgary Herald* announced provocatively "Meat Dress comes to cow town," a reference to the colloquial name for *Vanitas*, since the piece was constructed of flank steak. I was summarily called into the President's office and instructed to defend the exhibition before the University's Board of Governors. Shirley stepped up, rapidly agreeing to fly to Calgary and deliver a lecture on controversy in art, one of a series in a hastily organized, extensive education program. Wanting to avoid another problem like that over the *Voice of Fire*, she had learnt the importance of addressing and, if possible, containing controversy. Renewed complaints about the Meat Dress would not only reflect badly on The Nickle Arts Museum but also on the National Gallery of Canada.

A people person, Thomson's respect for the gallery staff, especially the curators, "inaugurated a period of openness and opportunity." The results were noteworthy, with Nemiroff calling the years between 1992 and 1997, "the golden years for exhibitions initiated by the Gallery's curators." One of the most important was the Indigenous show, *Land, Spirit, Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada*, curated by Diana Nemiroff, Charlotte Townsend-Gault and Robert Houle. A major North American production, this included a substantial catalogue, introduced by

three penetrating essays, one by each of the curators. In looking over the list of artists included, I was struck by how perceptive and prescient the curators were for most of the artists in the show are recognized today as Indigenous artistic leaders. Nemiroff concluded that "The most important way Thomson changed the gallery was to restore its national leadership position" with the "reinstatement of the travelling exhibition program . . . an important first step." *Land, Spirit, Power: First Nations at the National Gallery* was one of the shows to travel across the country, including to my museum, The Nickle Arts Museum.

Women at the Helm is beautifully written and meticulously researched. Cogent analysis characterizes every chapter. Everyone working in a museum should consider the lessons revealed here. Those interested in museums would also be entranced. All three featured women were dedicated and intelligent with vision. But leadership needs more; competency has further demands. It requires the ability to work with people – "with" being the operative word. Boggs carefully chose her senior staff then gave them the freedom to be creative. Thomson, interested in all, always curious, was highly supportive. Shih was more aloof, forever the academic. She did not make strong links with politicians, community, or staff in the way Boggs and Thomson did. Does this help to identify the current problems at the National Gallery of Canada? Museum leadership – in any museum – almost always involves staff, money, buildings, and governance. If you are lucky not all are problematic at the same time. And then there is controversy. Here we have clues to competency.

JEAN JACQUES DANEL est historien d'art, diplômé de l'École du Louvre, et licencié en Théologie catholique. Enseignant et conférencier, il s'est spécialisé dans l'étude conjointe de la peinture et des courants spirituels du Grand siècle. En particulier, à travers l'œuvre du récollet Claude François, dit frère Luc (1614–1681), en France et en Nouvelle France. Menant ses recherches en France et au Québec Il est l'auteur de différents articles et contributions à des colloques : « Frère Luc, nouvelles découvertes, nouvelles questions et appel à collaboration ! », *La Tribune de l'art* (juin 2015) ; « Frère Luc, peintre et récollet, son œuvre en Nouvelle-France », à l'occasion du colloque : *Les Récollets en Nouvelle-France Traces et Mémoire*, Université Laval, 2015. Paul-André Dubois, dir., *Les Récollets en Nouvelle-France. Traces et mémoire*, Université Laval, 2018 ; et « Frère Luc, peintre et récollet son œuvre à Amiens et en Picardie ». Paru dans le bulletin de la *Société des Antiquaires de Picardie*, 2020. Il entretient également des contacts avec le Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec et Musée d'Amiens et avec des historiens d'art canadiens et français ; afin de promouvoir l'œuvre de ce peintre dont l'œuvre constitue un patrimoine commun Franco-Canadien.

ANN DAVIS is retired as the Director of The Nickle Arts Museum at the University of Calgary, where she also initiated and taught in the program of Museum and Heritage Studies. Holding a PhD from York University and a Certificate in Arts Administration from Harvard, Davis has been involved with museums and universities since 1965. Her publications include eight books, most recently *Museum & Place*, and numerous catalogues and articles. She is the Past President of the Canadian Art Museum Director's Organization, and the Past President of the International Council of Museums Committee for Museology. She organized the major pre-Columbian gold traveling exhibition *Ancient Peru Unearthed: Golden Treasures of a Lost Civilization* and was an external advisor to the Acquisition Committee of the National Gallery of Canada. Recently she was given an honorary doctorate by St. John's College, University of Manitoba. She is working with a dedicated group attempting to create a Portrait Gallery for Canada.

MICHEL HARDY-VALLÉE, PhD (art history), is a historian of photography, independent curator, and critic. He is a Visiting Scholar at the Gail and Stephen A. Jarislowsky Institute for Studies in Canadian Art, Concordia University. His main research interests include the history of photography in Quebec since 1945, the photographic book and printing, visual narration, graphic novels, interdisciplinary artistic practices, and the archive. He has contributed articles to the journals *History of Photography*, *Anales de Historia del Arte*, and *American Review of Canadian Studies* in addition to numerous

book chapters and conferences, and he contributes regularly to *Ciel variable: Art, photo, médias, culture*. He is preparing his first scholarly monograph with McGill-Queen's University Press, *John Max: Belonging Photography*.

ADAM LAUDER, graduated with a PhD from the Department of History of Art at the University of Toronto in 2016. Lauder was co-curator with Mark P. Hayward of *Computational Arts in Canada 1967–1974* (2020) at Western University's McIntosh Gallery, and has contributed articles to scholarly journals including *Afterimage, American Indian Quarterly, Canadian Journal of Communication*, *PUBLIC*, and the *Journal of Canadian Art History*, as well as features and shorter texts to magazines including *Border Crossings, C, Canadian Art, e-flux, esse*, and *Flash Art*. In 2017–2019, Lauder was SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow at York University, and is currently an adjunct professor at OCAD University.

JULIA SKELLY is a specialist in nineteenth-century British art and visual culture, contemporary feminist art, textiles, excess, decadence, and addiction. Her publications include *Wasted Looks: Addiction and British Visual Culture, 1751–1919* (Ashgate, 2014), *The Uses of Excess in Visual and Material Culture, 1600–2010* (Ashgate, 2014), *Radical Decadence: Excess in Contemporary Feminist Textiles and Craft* (Bloomsbury, 2017), and *Skin Crafts: Affect, Violence and Materiality in Global Contemporary Art* (Bloomsbury, 2022). Skelly's next book, *Intersecting Threads: Cloth in Contemporary Queer, Feminist and Anti-Racist Art*, is forthcoming from Bloomsbury in 2025. Skelly teaches in the Department of Art History at Concordia University.

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