

The Journal
of
Canadian
Art History

Annales
d'histoire
de l'art
canadien

VII/2 1984



**The Journal
of
Canadian
Art History**

**Annales
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de l'art
canadien**

**Studies in
Canadian Art,
Architecture and
the Decorative Arts**

**Études en
arts, architecture
et arts décoratifs
canadiens**

Editorial office/Bureau de la rédaction: Concordia University/Université Concordia
VA 432
1395 ouest, boul. Dorchester
Montréal, Québec H3G 2M5

Subscription Rate/Tarif d'abonnement: \$14.00 per year/annuel
\$8.00 per single copy/le numéro

This publication is listed in the following indices/ Index où est répertoriée la publication:

Architectural Periodicals Index, ARLIS (California, U.S.A.), *Art Bibliographies, Art Index, Canadian Almanac and Directory, Canadian Literary and Essay Index, RADAR (Répertoire analytique d'articles de revues du Québec), RILA* (Massachusetts, U.S.A.).

Design: Israël Charney

Translations/Traductions: Translation Service, Concordia University
Arlette Francière Beissel
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Word processing/Traitement de textes: Käthe Roth
Typesetting/Typographie: Mark J. Co. Ltd.
Printer/Imprimeur: Presses Élite

Published twice yearly by/
Publiées deux fois l'an par: Owl's Head Press.

ISSN 0315-4297 Deposited with: National Library of Canada;
Bibliothèque nationale du Québec.
Dépôt légal: Bibliothèque nationale du Canada;
Bibliothèque nationale du Québec.

Printed in/Imprimé au Canada

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Acknowledgments/Remerciements

The editors of *The Journal of Canadian Art History* gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the following institutions/Les rédacteurs des *Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien* tiennent à remercier de leur aimable collaboration les établissements suivants:

Ministère de l'Éducation, Gouvernement du Québec
Concordia University, Faculty of Fine Arts, Montréal

The editors wish to announce the institution of the category of Patron of *The Journal of Canadian Art History*. A donation of \$100.00 minimum to *The Journal* will entitle the donor to a three years' subscription. In addition, unless otherwise indicated, the names of Patrons will be published on this page. Receipts for the purposes of taxation will be issued./Les rédacteurs annoncent l'institution des Amis des *Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien*. Un don de \$100.00 minimum vaudra un abonnement de trois ans au donateur. En outre et sans avis contraire, le nom des Amis sera publié sur cette page. Des reçus pour fins d'impôt seront envoyés.

Contents/Table des matières

J. Russell Harper 1914-1983	100
Bibliography/Bibliographie	106
 Articles	
St. Paul's, Halifax, Nova Scotia and St. Peter's, Vere Street, London, England	113 Philip McAleer
RÉSUMÉ	137
 William H. Eagar: Drawing Master of Argyle Street, Halifax	138 Alexandra E. Carter
RÉSUMÉ	155
 Claude Tousignant: sculpter pour peindre	156 France Gascon
RÉSUMÉ	179
 Book Reviews/Comptes rendus	
Sylvia Antoniou <i>Maurice Cullen 1866-1934</i>	181 Sylvain Allaire
Terrence Heath <i>Stanley Brunst: Radical Painter</i>	185 Liz Wylie
Dennis Reid <i>Alberta Rhythm: The Later Work of A. Y. Jackson</i>	187 Christopher Varley
 Publication Notice/Note de lecture	
Gemey KELLY <i>Arthur Lismer: Nova Scotia, 1916-1919</i>	189 Christopher Varley
 <i>List of articles, short notes, sources and documents, book reviews and publication notices previously published (vol. i/1 to vol. vii/1)</i>	
<i>Liste des articles, notes et commentaires, sources et documents, comptes rendus et notes de lecture déjà parus (vol. i/1 à vol. vii/1)</i>	191



J. Russell Harper
1914-1983

J. Russell Harper

1914-1983

The Publishers and Editors of *The Journal of Canadian Art History*, with sorrow, note the passing of J. Russell Harper on November 17th, 1983. His loss will be felt keenly by all those individuals involved in the research, teaching, exhibition and publication of Canadian art history; also by his colleagues and former students fortunate enough to have known him personally and to have worked with him, and who shared his interest in, and passion for, the field.

Russell Harper will be remembered as a completely dedicated and thorough scholar who stressed, through his own example, the vital need to establish a clear and reliable base upon which to build the study of Canadian art history. Although, as the Chronological Bibliography that follows would indicate, Harper's interests could span many areas in the field, both in the geographical and historical sense, his own special interest lay in the topographical and narrative traditions of the early and mid-nineteenth century.

Harper pursued his career in many locations in central and eastern Canada and we should recall his special interest in local history wherever he found himself. It is not surprising, therefore, that his approach to art history was a societal one, beginning almost literally from the grassroots level. A clear reflection of his interest in Canadian art as a product of the special concerns of its people was the exhibition of 1973, and the publication of 1974, *A People's Art: Primitive, Naïve, Provincial and Folk Painting in Canada*. Harper's colleagues will recall his struggles, in the year preceding the exhibition, to sort out the thorny problem of defining the "Primitive," the "Naïve" and the "Folk" aspects for his publication. The selection of pieces for the exhibition was a far easier task for Harper, given his reliable eye; the only difficulty he encountered here was the need to restrict the number of items to accommodate the exhibition. His choices, here, as in other situations, were based as much upon his recognition of the unique qualities of

the individual artists as upon purely aesthetic judgment. Former students of Harper's will recall the stress that he laid upon giving due place to the artist as an individual, in addition to seeing interconnections and influences in Canadian art.

In all his publications Harper combined his flair for archival research, his intellect and eye, with a lucid and accessible style of prose that serves to bring pleasure as well as knowledge to his readers. He reached out, in fact, beyond the still comparatively narrow field of scholarship in Canadian art history, to find a wider public, through his writing and through the exhibitions for which he was responsible. In his role as a teacher he succeeded in conveying to his students the fact that the art of Canada was a subject worthy of serious study and as much possessed of interest and fascination as that of the traditional fields of art historical research. Harper was notoriously unselfish, both of his time and breadth of knowledge, in his lectures and seminars with undergraduate and graduate students alike at Concordia University. In this respect he demonstrated the necessity for sharing information and for open discussion of problems encountered in the field, and he established himself as a model in this, to be followed by a new generation of art historians.

Russell Harper's own contribution represents a paradigm of these concerns and, as a consequence, it will continue to serve both as a foundation and an inspiration upon which to continue the building of Canadian art history. Key texts such as *Painting in Canada: A History* and the dictionary entitled *Early Painters and Engravers* will stand for many years as invaluable and essential reference works and as the standard against which future scholarship in the field will be measured.

The Publishers, Editors and Harper's colleagues on the Advisory Board of *The Journal* wish to extend their deepest sympathies to his widow and his family.

Les éditeurs et rédacteurs des *Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien* sont affligés par le décès de J. Russell Harper survenu le 17 novembre 1983. Sa perte se fera durement sentir auprès de tous ceux et de toutes celles qui travaillent dans la recherche, l'enseignement, l'organisation d'expositions et l'édition de l'histoire de l'art canadien ainsi qu'auprès des collègues et anciens élèves qui ont eu la chance de le connaître personnellement et de travailler avec lui, et qui partageaient son enthousiasme et sa passion pour ce domaine.

On se souviendra de Russell Harper comme d'un professionnel entièrement dévoué qui a souligné, par son exemple, le besoin essentiel d'établir clairement de solides fondations sur lesquelles bâtir l'étude de l'histoire de l'art canadien. Bien que, comme la bibliographie chronologique qui suit tendrait à le montrer, Harper s'intéressât à plusieurs aspects de l'histoire de l'art canadien, tant sur le plan géographique que chronologique, il cultiva une préférence pour les traditions topographiques et narratives du début et du milieu de dix-neuvième siècle.

Harper poursuivit sa carrière en différents endroits à l'est et au centre du Canada et il est bon de rappeler à quel point il s'intéressait à l'histoire locale où qu'il se trouvât. Il n'est donc pas surprenant que sa démarche en histoire de l'art se développa dans une perspective sociale. Il remontait toujours aux sources. Son exposition de 1973 et la publication en 1974 de *A People's Art: Primitive, Naïve, Provincial and Folk Painting in Canada* ont clairement reflété l'intérêt qu'il porta à l'art canadien en tant que produit des besoins spécifiques d'une communauté. Les collègues de Harper se souviendront de ses efforts acharnés, durant l'année qui précéda l'exposition, pour résoudre le problème épineux de la définition des termes "primitif", naïf" et "populaire" dans le cadre de son ouvrage. Etant donné la sûreté de son jugement, c'est avec beaucoup plus de facilité qu'il sélectionna les pièces à exposer. Sa seule difficulté fut d'en restreindre le nombre en fonction de l'exposition. Là, tout comme dans d'autres situations, il se basa autant sur son appréciation des qualités uniques de chaque artiste que sur un jugement purement esthétique. Les anciens élèves de Harper se rappelleront qu'il insistait toujours pour que l'artiste soit reconnu en tant qu'individu en plus d'être placé dans le contexte de l'art canadien.

Dans toutes ses publications Harper alliait sa perspicacité pour le travail de recherche d'archiviste, son intelligence et son oeil critique à un style lucide et à la portée de ses lecteurs qui en retirent plaisir et connaissances. Il s'efforça d'ailleurs de ne pas se limiter au domaine encore relativement restreint de la recherche en histoire de l'art et de toucher un plus vaste public grâce à ses écrits et aux expositions dont il fut responsable. En tant que professeur, il réussit à communiquer à ses étudiants le fait que l'art canadien était un sujet digne d'études sérieuses et tout aussi intéressant et fascinant que les domaines traditionnels de la recherche en histoire de l'art. Harper était bien connu pour sa disponibilité et sa générosité à partager ses vastes connaissances avec tous ses étudiants dans ses cours et séminaires à l'université Concordia. A cet égard il témoigna du besoin de partager ses connaissances et de discuter ouvertement des problèmes rencontrés et il

restera un exemple à suivre pour une nouvelle génération d'historiens de l'art.

La contribution de Russell Harper représente un paradigme de ces considérations et, par conséquent, elle continuera de servir de base et d'inspiration à l'épanouissement de l'histoire de l'art canadien. Des textes fondamentaux tels que *La Peinture au Canada, des origines à nos jours* et le dictionnaire intitulé *Early Painters and Engravers in Canada* demeureront des ouvrages de référence inestimables et indispensables et serviront de point de repère pour les recherches futures.

Les éditeurs, rédacteurs et collègues de Harper, membres du Comité consultatif des *Annales/The Journal* offrent leurs sincères condoléances à sa veuve et à sa famille.



- 1914 *Born, April 15, Caledonia, Ontario*
- 1926-31 *Caledonia High School*
- 1931-32 *Hamilton Normal School, 1st class teacher's certificate, Elementary art teacher's certificate*
- 1932-33 *Teacher, primary school level, Haldimand County*
- 1933-35 *McMaster University, part-time student*
Secretary to R.S. Colter K.C. in law office, Cayaga, Ontario
and after his appointment as Chairman of Ontario
- 1937-41 *Municipal Board with R.S. Colter as secretary and court stenographer to the Board, Toronto*
- 1938-40 *Ontario College of Art*
- 1941-45 *Royal Canadian Air Force*
- 1946 *Victoria College, University of Toronto, B.A.;*
Art and Archaeology
- 1948 *University of Toronto, Graduate School, M.A.;*
Art and Archaeology

- 1947-51 *Various archaeological excavations in southern Ontario*
- 1951-55 *Curator of Ganong Collection and doing archaeological excavations
New Brunswick Museum, Saint John*
- 1956 *Research in Paris*
- 1957-59 *Assistant to Lord Beaverbrook in London and Fredericton*
- 1959 *Archaeologist, preparing report on potential for restoration of
Louisbourg Fortress, Department of Indian and Northern
Affairs*
- 1959-63 *Curator of Canadian Art
National Gallery of Canada/Galerie nationale du Canada*
- 1965-68 *Chief Curator
McCord Museum, McGill University*
- 1965-79 *Professor of Art History
Concordia University, Montreal*
- 1974-83 *Advisory Board, Journal of Canadian Art History/Annales
d'histoire de l'art canadien*
- 1976 *Special Report on Folk Art in Canada
Secretary of State Department, Ottawa*

Academic Awards and Distinctions:

- 1956-57 *Royal Society of Canada Fellowship, for research in France*
- 1957-58 *Social Science Research Council Grant, for research in Rome
and Great Britain*
- 1960 *Humanities Research Council of Canada, publication grant*
- 1972 *Doctor of Letters, University of Guelph*
- 1974 *Fellow of Royal Society of Canada, elected 1974
Officer of the Order of Canada, investiture 1974*
- 1982 *Doctor of Fine Arts, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design*



J. Russell Harper, O.C., D.Litt., D.F.A., F.R.S.C.

A Chronological Bibliography*

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* J. Russell Harper did not always sign his own writings (such as his short book reviews in *Choice*), and some of his texts in catalogues and in books edited by others are not noted under his name in indices, data bases, and library shelf-list catalogues; (short, miscellaneous book reviews in *Quill and Quire*, for instance, are not listed). The following bibliography should therefore be considered as a thorough, but not necessarily exhaustive, study. We welcome additional information from our readers.

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The authors wish to express their thanks to Jennifer Harper for her assistance.

Photograph of J. Russell Harper taken in 1982. (Photo: Brian Merrett.)

St.Paul's, Halifax, Nova Scotia,

and

St.Peter's, Vere Street, London, England



fig.1 **St.Paul's Church, Halifax, exterior, view from north, 1970.**

(Photo: R.E. Merrick, by permission of Nova Scotia Museum, Halifax.)

The Anglican church of St.Paul's is, in parts, the oldest building still standing in Halifax (fig.1). It was founded in the same year as the city, 1749, and is often identified as the oldest Protestant church building in Canada.¹ Located at the south end of the parade grounds of the then newly laid out city, St.Paul's still occupies a conspicuous position in downtown Halifax. It

now faces the Victorian structure of the City Hall, across the formal flower beds of the Grand Parade, and still manages to assert a strong presence among the banal and brutal buildings of the twentieth century that surround and tower over it. Because of its position in the chronological and spatial framework of the city, it has continued to be the object of affection and interest.

However, the architectural fabric of the church has received little serious study. An indication of this is the fact that locally, the design of the building has often been vaguely associated with the work of Sir Christopher Wren (1632-1723) and, in a somewhat more specific manner, with that of the architect James Gibbs (1682-1754), one of the most influential architects to succeed Wren in eighteenth-century England. This is the aspect of the history of St. Paul's that I would like to examine briefly in this paper: is the design of St. Paul's to be properly associated with the work of either architect — directly or indirectly — and, if so, to which buildings in their *oeuvres* is St. Paul's most closely related? The attempt to answer these two specific questions will involve surveying the building history of St. Paul's in order to establish its appearance at the time it was built; detailed comparisons with those buildings that appear to be related to it will then be made. The latter process seems particularly necessary, as so many church buildings of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries belong to the same general type. The formal differences or similarities can be best understood and appreciated on the level of architectural "detail": the nature of the mural articulation, the character of the door and window surrounds, the specifics of the Order used and the types of vaulting imitated for the ceilings.

The Exterior

At the time that Halifax was initially planned, provision was made in the plans for the inclusion of a church for the established religion, that of the Church of England. The site finally chosen was a conspicuous one, at the south end of the parade grounds, directly under the position of the Citadel, and between it and the harbour below. Perhaps because of the strong slope, the building was placed with its long axis north-south; as a result, its main entrance was at the north, and the chancel was at the south, instead of west and east, respectively. The church that was to be St. Paul's was one of the first permanent structures erected in the fledgling town.²

St. Paul's, as it now stands (figs. 1, 2), has been significantly altered from the form in which it was first constructed in 1750, but much of the original structure still exists. Fortunately, its exterior appearance in the eighteenth



fig.2 St.Paul's Church, exterior, view from south, 1983. (Photo: the author.)

century is recorded in the views of Halifax prepared by Richard Short, purser on the *Prince of Orange*, which was in Halifax in May of 1759 with the British Fleet, on its way to the siege of Québec. Engravings, based on paintings after Short's drawings, were later published in London in 1764 and again in 1777.³

The most important of Short's views for our purpose is *The Church of St. Paul and the Parade at Halifax, Nova Scotia* (fig.3).⁴ It depicts the newly built church — then only nine years old — from the south, so that the liturgical "east" and the actual east wall are shown. From this view it can be seen that the original St. Paul's was a box-like building with two rows of seven windows down each side (implying the existence of interior galleries); the lower ones were shorter than the upper and both rows had arched heads and alternating quoins. The south end was dominated by a large Venetian window which appears to have been of the Tuscan order, with an emphasized keystone in the centre arch. Below the levels of the sill of this window, on east and west sides, were rectangular doors, with bracketed lintels, approached by flights of four or five steps. Above each door, and to either side of the Venetian window and on the level of the upper side windows, was a single window similar to the latter. The basic box was further articulated, vertically and horizontally, by a plain double belt course

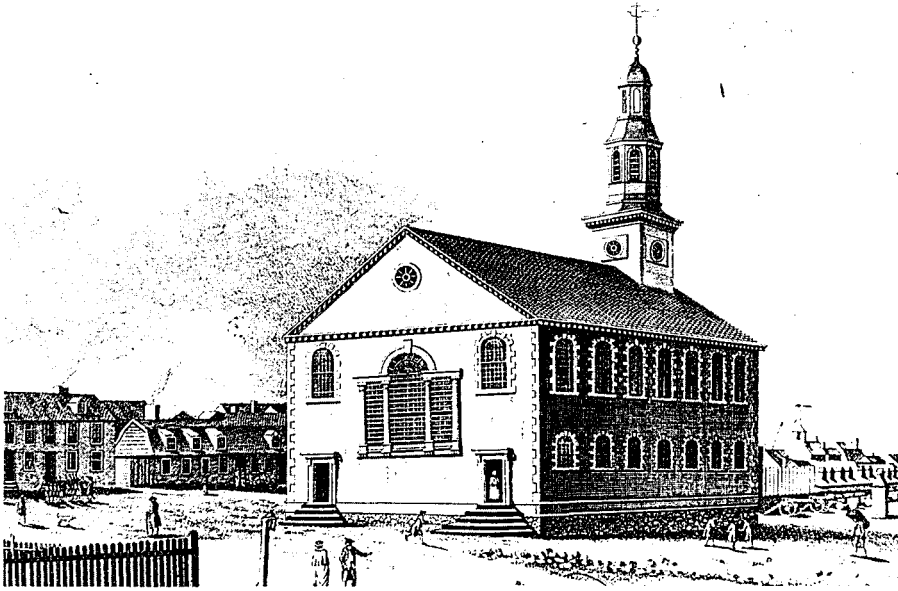


fig.3 The Church of St. Paul and the Parade at Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1764, engraving (after R. Short), 35 cm. x 49.5 cm., detail. Coll.: St. Paul's Church, Halifax. (Photo: P. Toman.)

that ran around the base of the building: alternating quoins that emphasized the corners, and brackets, which were placed under the eaves and which outlined the gable in pediment-like fashion. Finally, a round window was centered in the gable.

On the north or entrance façade, that faced toward the Parade, only the tower can be seen in Short's engraving. It sat on the roof and, as its first element, had a square base with an oculus set in a square surround on each face, and bracketed eaves. Its two upper stages were both octagonal; openings with semi-circular arches were found on each face. The intermediate roof between the stages had a slight curve and the capping roof was given the exuberant form of an ogee-curve and, consequently, the appearance of a small cupola rather than a steeple.

Unfortunately, there is not a comparable view among Short's drawings of Halifax that shows the church from the north and which would, therefore, give a precise record of the main façade. St. Paul's does appear in another view by Short, *The Governor's House and St. Mather's Meeting House in Hollis Street ...*,⁵ but it is distantly seen from the northeast, and lower buildings in the city block the view of the north façade. Only part of the gable with an oculus, and a window on the upper east corner, are visible; these are, however, features that are similar to those at the south end.

The entrance façade is clearly shown in a later watercolour, *National School of Halifax, Nova Scotia*, executed ca.1819 by Joseph Partridge (1797-?) (fig.4).⁶ This view, however, was made after the first significant alterations to the original structure had been completed. In 1812, the church had been extended the equivalent of one bay by the addition of a vestibule extending the full width of the church, and including new sets of stairs giving access to the gallery. This extension involved the dismantling of the tower and its rebuilding over the vestibule. This form apparently duplicates the original⁷ as seen in Short's views (figs.1,3).



fig.4 J. Partridge, *National School at Halifax, Nova Scotia*, ca. 1819, watercolour, 27.4 cm. x 39.1 cm. Coll.: PANS. (Photo: courtesy PANS.)

The design of the north façade as rebuilt in 1812 is quite similar to the south one of 1750. The major difference, of course, is the presence of a central portal. It is placed under a small pedimented porch supported by columns and with pilaster responds. The porch is flanked by windows similar to those of the lower tier of the side elevation. In addition, there is a Venetian window, rather smaller than the south one, above the main door.

Early views of the entrance façade occur in the works of two other artists who worked in Halifax. Although less detailed than Partridge's view, they confirm its accuracy. A sepia wash sketch by J.E. Woolford (1778-1866), of 1818,⁸ shows similar features, as does a watercolour by William Eagar (ca. 1796-1839), which was probably executed in the 1830's.⁹ However, a

projecting porch such as that appearing in the early nineteenth-century works is not shown in the very distant glimpse of the church included in another of the engravings after Short, *The Town and Harbour of Halifax in Nova Scotia as they appear from the opposite shore called Dartmouth*.¹⁰ While the entire façade is visible, and the view of it is unobstructed by other buildings, no details are included, even though the scale of the original engraving would have allowed at least the general depiction of a porch.

Despite the fact that a porch is not shown in Short's rendering, there is some non-visual evidence that suggests that a small porch over the main portal on the north probably formed part of the initial design. In 1783 the Vestry Minutes for June 30 recorded expenditures for the erection of four new columns and the repair of mouldings.¹¹ The wording of the entry is explicit, and is concerned with the repair of an existing feature rather than the construction of a new one.¹² Nevertheless, even if a projecting porch is accepted as part of the original church, a problem about its form remains. The 1783 entry refers to *four* columns while the early nineteenth century views all indicate only a single column at each outer angle of the porch. That Partridge's view, and the less detailed ones of Woolford and Eagar, are correct in this respect is confirmed by the earliest daguerreotype of the church, taken in 1853 by David J. Smith.¹³ It shows that the open porch had only two columns, one at each angle. It would then appear most probable that when the porch was rebuilt at the time of the construction of the vestibule, the number of columns was reduced from four to two.

Later alterations in the nineteenth century were more extensive; they were also more obvious and somewhat better documented. They affected parts of the church well recorded in Short's major view of St. Paul's. Most conspicuously, double-decker aisles were added in a Romanesquoid style during 1868-69 and, a few years later, in 1872, a flat-ended projecting chancel was constructed (fig. 2).¹⁴ Consequently, all the side windows shown in Short's elevation have disappeared, as well as the original form of the "east" end. The major feature of the old south elevation is perpetuated by the new, round-headed and very large window in the opulent Corinthian order, and with three lights of quasi-Gothic tracery. Thus today, of the exterior as first built, nothing remains. But the drawings by Short and the watercolour by Partridge allow a reasonably precise reconstruction of the exterior, making it possible to compare St. Paul's in this respect with the works of Gibbs and Wren.

The search for parallels for the first design of St. Paul's is not a difficult one. In his 1949 book on the history of the church, R.V. Harris drew

attention to letters written by the Rev. William Tutty, Anglican minister of the newly founded city, and the Hon. (Col.) Edward Cornwallis, Governor of Halifax.¹⁵ These letters state unequivocally that the frame of the church was being constructed in Boston during the winter of 1749-50.¹⁶ Both writers also referred to the fact that the church framing was based on a specific model: "... it is exactly the model of Mary'bone Chapel," (Tutty to the Venerable Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 17 March 1750) and "... the plan is the same with that of Marybone," (Cornwallis to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, 19 March 1750). Harris pointed out that the Marybone Chapel referred to by both was not the famous London parish church which stood on the High Street, St.Marylebone, between Marylebone Road and Devonshire Street, but rather the church now known as St.Peter's, Vere Street, located between Henrietta Place and Oxford Street in London.¹⁷



fig.5 James Gibbs, St.Peter's, Vere Street, London, 1721-24, exterior, view from northwest.
(Photo: courtesy Courtauld Institute of Art, London.)

St.Peter's, Vere Street (fig.5) was built by James Gibbs in 1721-24. It was originally the chapel of the estate, newly laid out on the old Marylebone Fields, centering around Cavendish Square. From an early date it was known as Oxford Chapel after the most important owner of the estate, Edward Harley, Earl of Oxford and Mortimer, and husband of Henrietta, daughter of John Holles, Duke of Newcastle, who had purchased the Fields in 1708.¹⁸ At

first, however, the chapel was known as Marybone Chapel.¹⁹ On the basis of this identification of Marybone Chapel as St.Peter's, Harris accepted James Gibbs as "indirectly [the architect] of St.Paul's Halifax." He quoted several Haligonians regarding the close resemblance between St.Paul's and St.Peter's. For example, Dr. Hill, in his history of St.Paul's, wrote, "It cannot be doubted that St.Paul's church, as it was until 1812, was identical in architecture and size and even in the most minute particulars, such as the size of the panes of glass, with St.Peter's, Vere Street, Oxford St., London." A Mr. John Y. Payzant wrote in 1903, "Strange to say, the church itself [St.Peter's] looks just as St.Paul's used to look before the wings were added." Harris added that "many others have noted the resemblance of the two buildings,"²⁰ but he did not examine the particulars of this resemblance in his history of the church. Writing of St.Paul's in 1962, Alan Gowans commented:

Traditionally it is supposed to have been modeled on a London church (Marylebone Chapel, or St.Peter's, Vere Street, are usually suggested), but since all records indicate that the frame of the church was shipped over from Boston, the design probably came from there too, and like so much church architecture of the period in New England, derived from James Gibbs' *A Book of Architecture*.²¹

Harris and Gowans, two of the major authorities on St.Paul's to appear in print, thus connect the church with James Gibbs, one through the model of a specific building, the other through the medium of printed representation, suggesting two slightly different routes, one direct from London, the other from London via Boston.

Gibbs' St.Peter's, Vere Street still exists and, although made of brick, its exterior (figs.5,6) even today bears a close resemblance to St.Paul's original exterior. It is a simple rectangular box, seven bays long. The double tier of windows of the long walls is similar, but not identical, to St.Paul's; at St.Peter's the lower windows have segmental heads, and neither tier has quoins, but rather brick voussoirs. However, the stone angle quoins alternate and the cornice and pedimented gable are bracketed. At the east end, there is a Venetian window flanked by a tall window above a portal, as at St.Paul's. A podium runs along the lower slope of the roof; this feature is not recorded as having been at St.Paul's. A round oculus occupied the east gable as well as the west one.

The east front (fig.6) of St.Peter's has three portals, the two lateral ones under arched pediments and the central one, not in itself much larger, under a



fig.6 St.Peter's, Vere Street, exterior, west façade and tower. (Photo: courtesy PANS.)

projecting Tuscan portico with a pediment and two pairs of columns responded by fluteless pilasters on the west wall. The façade wall under the portico is faced with stone. The porch pediment, level with the sill of the upper lateral windows, rises high enough to preclude the appearance of a Venetian window at the west, as was present at St.Paul's. The presence of the porch does reinforce the likelihood that there was originally a porch at St.Paul's, with *pairs* of columns at the outer angles, thus accounting for the four columns repaired or replaced in 1783. The designs of the towers of both

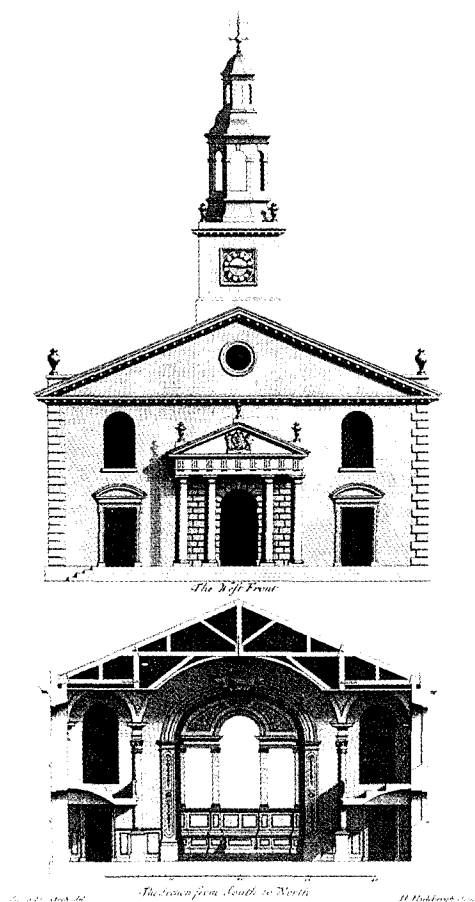


fig.8 St.Peter's, Vere Street, west façade and section, engraving,
from James Gibbs, *A Book of Architecture*, pl. XXIV.
(Photo: R.E. Merrick, by permission of Nova Scotia Museum.)

wall would have had to have been invented, as its exterior elevation was not included in Gibbs' plates.²³

Compared to St.Peter's, Gibbs' more famous London churches, St.Mary-le-Strand (1714-17) and St.Martin's-in-the-Fields (1721-26), also published in his book,²⁴ have exteriors of much greater complexity and pretense, as they are articulated by engaged columns or giant pilasters and are not left as flat walls adorned only by window frames. One can understand why the simpler exterior form of St.Peter's was chosen as the model for execution in wood, especially as the carpenters available in Nova Scotia were, no doubt, more skilled in straightforward joining than in the carving of the Orders. However, one aspect of St.Paul's does seem to derive from St.Martin's: the quoined window surrounds, which suggest a dependence on Gibbs' book rather than only upon the building.²⁵

At this stage in the investigation it is obvious that the Haligonians of a century ago were correct in their perception of a strong resemblance between St. Paul's and St. Peter's, even if they were not particularly concerned with the mechanics of the dependence. Now it is necessary to look at the interior to see if the similarity holds and if its nature suggests the way in which the design was transferred to the New World from the Old.



fig.9 St. Paul's Church, interior, view to chancel, 1971.
(Photo: R.E. Merrick, by permission of Nova Scotia Museum.)

The Interior

There are no early views of the interior of St. Paul's comparable to those of the exterior. Indeed, there are no views of the interior until the 1860's. It is therefore fortunate that the later expansion has left the core of the first building intact. Although the effect of the interior space has been greatly altered by the addition of outer aisles, the addition simply doubled the width of the original aisles; the outside walls and windows have been lost but the elevation of the nave, along with the plaster barrel vault covering it, was not modified (fig.9). The earlier extensions at the north (the vestibule) also did not affect the nave.

Square piers with Tuscan capitals separate the nave from the single side aisles and support a gallery over each of them. An entablature, with an

architrave of two fasciae, a plain frieze and a moulded cornice, breaks out slightly over the tiers. The solid front of the gallery is panelled and is brought forward in the vertical line of the piers. The second tier of piers is also square, but in this case the piers are fluted — seven flutes per side. The order is once again Tuscan and is somewhat more elaborate than the order below as the echinus is carved with egg and dart and the three other mouldings with leaf, bead and reel, and bead and leaf. The arcade arches, of a very depressed curve, are formed in the design of a bent architrave of two fasciae with a large flat keystone. The nave is covered by a plain ceiling in the form of a barrel vault. The gallery and inner aisles are now covered by continuous flat ceilings which are probably original, at least in form if not in structure.

It is here in the interior that the design of St.Paul's most definitely — and rather unexpectedly — does not follow St.Peter's, Vere Street, nor indeed any of the church interiors designed by Gibbs. On the interior of St.Peter's (fig.10), tall Corinthian columns on pedestals rise in front of the gallery, placed over each side aisle, and support a barrel vaulted ceiling. Arches spring across the gallery from the entablature blocks of the capitals to volute brackets on the exterior wall. In between the arches, the bays are covered by groin vaults. Although both churches have naves flanked by single aisles with a gallery above, there is nevertheless a significant difference in the natures of their nave elevations and in the systems of the ceilings over their naves, aisles and galleries.

The significance of St.Peter's, Vere Street in the career of James Gibbs has long ago been pointed out by Sir John Summerson. Internally, St.Peter's looks like a "preliminary model" for the better-known St.Martin-in-the-Fields.²⁶ The significance of St.Martin's in the evolution of church design in the eighteenth century, as also demonstrated by Summerson, was the use of the *single* tall order instead of the double tier of supports used by Christopher Wren in his churches with aisles and galleries: "Wren had always hesitated between emphasis on the gallery and on the order (compare St.Bride's with St.James's, Piccadilly). Hawksmore awarded pre-eminence to the order, and at St.Martin's Gibbs agrees with him."²⁷ As has been seen, this is also true for St.Peter's. The designs of both churches were initiated by Gibbs at the same time in 1721, although the smaller church was finished earlier. Even in the circular and domed first version of St.Martin's, the single order of pedestals was used. Thus, it is evident that the supports of the gallery and the nave vault in St.Paul's are in the form of the two-tier system favoured by Wren and that the significant innovation of the single tall order closely associated with Gibbs has been avoided — or missed.



fig.10 St.Peter's, Vere Street, interior, view to west.
(Photo: courtesy National Monuments Record, London.)

Wren had used the two-tiered system in three notable churches: St.Andrew by the Wardrobe (1685-95), St.James's, Piccadilly (1680-84), and St.Andrew's, Holburn (1686-87). In the latter two, piers of a slightly cruciform shape below the galleries support round, unfluted columns above the galleries. At St.Andrew's by the Wardrobe (fig.11), the upper level is composed of square, panelled Tuscan piers with egg and dart on the echini. They rest directly on the lower entablature, which consists only of a triple fasciaed architrave, so that the gallery front fits in between the piers. This is in contrast to both the St.James's and St.Andrew's, Holburn, where the columns begin at the top of the gallery front, which has been emphasized so as to create a pedestal for each upper column, a device that strengthens the vertical line from floor to arches.



fig.11 Christopher Wren, **St.Andrew by the Wardrobe, London, 1865-95**, interior view to chancel. (Photo: courtesy National Monuments Record, London.)

The elevation of St.Paul's as a whole bears a strong resemblance to that of St.Andrew by the Wardrobe because of the double tier of square piers, but the horizontal between the tiers follows the principle used at the other two Wren churches. These similarities do not necessarily mean that St.Paul's was directly derived from these London churches; a two-tiered system, similar to that of St.Andrew by the Wardrobe, had already appeared in North America in Christ Church (Old North Church) in Boston, built in 1723 (fig.12). That church features square panelled piers supporting the balcony, with square fluted ones rising from the top of the gallery front, just as in St.Paul's. This system was repeated almost without variation two years later (1725-26) at Trinity Church in Newport, Rhode Island, which is attributed to the builder Richard Munday.²⁸

As might be expected, Wren used various systems of imitation vaults for his plaster ceilings. The nave of St. Andrew by the Wardrobe was covered by a barrel vault which was penetrated in each bay by one of the severies of the groin vaults over the galleries, in a manner similar to the later St. Peter's, Vere Street (figs. 10, 11). This system was not followed at either Christ Church or Trinity Church in New England. In both of these churches, entablatures are extended across the galleries, from the upper tier of columns, to serve as lintels from which barrel vaults spring — a device that Wren had used at St. James's, Piccadilly. In contrast to that church, the nave of Christ Church is covered by an elliptical barrel vault that springs from a horizontal cornice above the level of the gallery barrels (fig. 12); the nave vault of Trinity Church is an almost flat, cove-like groin vault. Neither of the New England churches copies the full barrel of St. James's, which is penetrated by the lateral barrels over the galleries. As has been seen, St. Paul's did not have either barrel vaults resting on transverse lintels over the galleries, or a series of groin vaults. Its much simpler scheme, a nave barrel flanked by flat gallery ceilings, did not imitate the Wren churches or their North American counterparts, nor was it adapted from St. Peter's, Vere Street.²⁹ No doubt flat ceilings were considered more economical to build and



fig. 12 Christ Church, Boston, 1723, interior, view to entrance. (Photo: Boston Public Library.)

the display of significant form was restricted to the nave, where it would be most obvious, and was not extended to the galleries, where its absence would be less noticeable.

The chancel walls of these buildings also were or are not identical. At St. Andrew by the Wardrobe there is a straight wall with only a large arched window over the altar (fig.11); a shallow apse was introduced at Christ Church, whereas Trinity Church originally had a straight wall with a single arched window.³⁰ None of them had a Venetian window as was found at Gibbs' St. Peter's, Vere Street (fig.13) and St. Martin-in-the-Fields, or at St. Paul's, the design of its chancel wall being a consequence of the model used for the exterior.



fig. 13 St. Peter's, Vere Street, interior, view to east.
(Photo: courtesy National Monuments Record, London.)

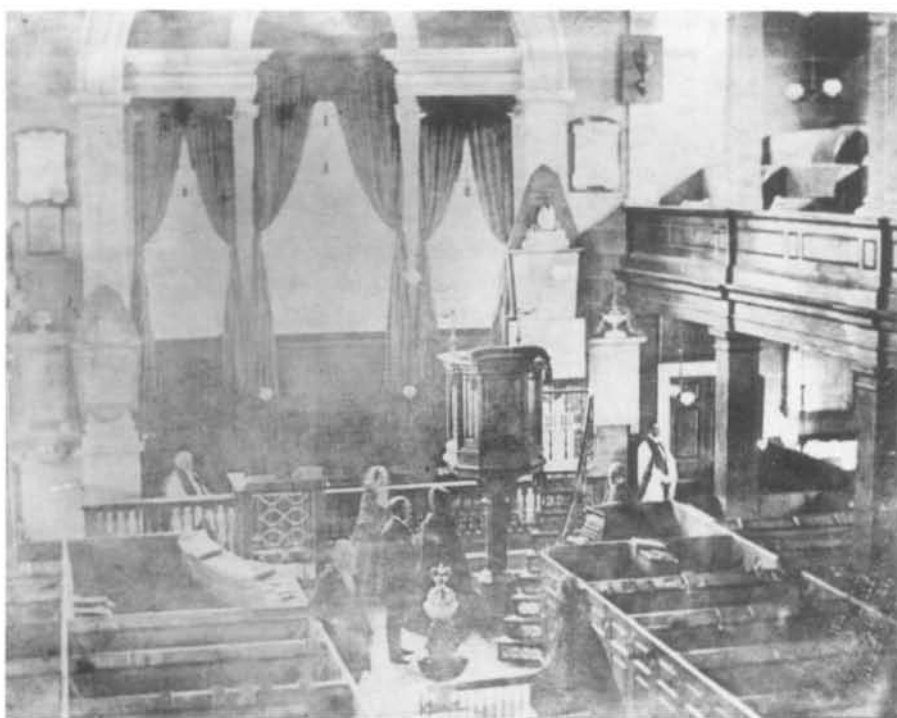


fig. 14 **St. Paul's Church**, interior, view of original chancel of 1750, ca. 1860-68, photograph by Wellington A. Chase. Coll.: St. Paul's Church. (Photo: P. Toman.)

In addition to the differences in the natures of the supports and ceilings, there was also a significant alteration in the character of the spatial organization between St. Paul's and St. Peter's. Originally, St. Paul's was simply one big box of space, divided from chancel wall (south) to entrance wall (north) by two rows of supports. As a result, the chancel was flanked by the last bays of the aisles and was looked down upon by the gallery bay above (fig. 14).³¹ At the opposite end, the stairs to the galleries must have been placed in the northernmost bay, one on each side. At St. Peter's, the gallery stairs were enclosed, forming a vestibule bay between them. At the east end, the bays flanking the chancel were also enclosed vestibules. Perhaps more significantly, as an arch separated the nave space from the chancel, the effect of a distinct, projecting chancel was created, having a slightly lower and flatter barrel vault than the nave.³² The nave at St. Peter's was therefore only five bays long, as opposed to seven at St. Paul's.

In spite of the interior similarities to St. Paul's, neither Boston's Christ Church nor Newport's Trinity Church bears any particular resemblance to St. Paul's on their exteriors. Both are quite plain, with two tiers of equal-size

windows down the side walls and at the west and east, although Christ Church is built of brick and Trinity of wood. Both churches also had west towers rising from the ground, fully projecting in front of the west wall — and neither spire bore any similarity to that of St.Paul's, as they were probably somewhat loosely based on Wren's St.Lawrence Jewry (1670-86).

We can conclude that St.Paul's does indeed seem to have been based on Gibbs' Marybone Chapel/Oxford Chapel/St.Peter's, Vere Street, but only as far as the exterior design is concerned. No doubt it was based on the plates of Gibbs' book. Gibbs had, in fact, published the book in order to provide models to be used "especially in the remote parts of the Country, where little or no assistance for Designs can be procured. Such may here be furnished ... which may be executed by a Workman who understands Lines, either as here Design'd, or with some alteration, which may be easily made by a person of Judgement...."³³ The alterations to the exterior design seem to have been primarily the appropriation of the window surrounds of St.Martin's, the reduction in the size of the portico and of the number of "west" entrances from three to one, the insertion of a Venetian window over the entrance portico and the elimination of the roof podium and urns — all relatively minor changes, little affecting the spirit of the original, but very much in the spirit of Gibbs' intentions as cited above.

However, as has been seen, neither the spirit nor the letter of the original had been retained in the interior of St.Paul's (fig.15). It resembles Gibbs' work only insofar as there is a general resemblance between the churches of Gibbs and Wren; their styles are certainly related, although the particulars are significantly different. Whether or not Gibbs would have approved of the reversion on the interior to the Wren system of gallery and ceiling supports is another matter. Nonetheless, the use of Boston's Christ Church as a model in this respect is not surprising, considering the evidence for St.Paul's having been prefabricated in Boston in order to be shipped to Halifax. But one may wonder why a Wren-like interior was inserted into a Gibbs exterior. Neither Christ Church nor Trinity Church owes anything to Gibbs, although they are contemporary constructions to Gibbs' St.Peter's and St.Martin's. N.M. Isham has pointed out that Christ Church and Trinity Church are the only examples in the United States to use the (Wren) two-tier system for supports, as opposed to a single order rising from floor to ceiling.³⁴ It should be noted that the examples he cites of the latter, King's College Chapel, Boston (1749-58), St.Paul's Chapel, New York (1764-66) and the First Baptist Meeting House, Providence (1774-75) are all later than Gibbs' publication.³⁵



fig. 15 St. Paul's Church, interior, view to north, ca. 1891, photograph by William Notman Studio. Coll.: PANS. (Photo: courtesy PANS.)

It is therefore clear why neither Christ Church nor Trinity Church followed the Gibbsian model — they were built before his book was published — but why did St. Paul's, in 1749-50, revert, if not to a Wren church, then to a Wren-inspired design as at Christ Church of 1723?³⁶ One can only suggest that it was due to the ease with which the small square piers of the Tuscan order could be constructed, as opposed to the giant round columns of the Corinthian order. Both Christ Church and Trinity Church used the Tuscan order, although in the year St. Paul's was being prepared in Boston, Peter Harrison (1716-65) was beginning King's Chapel, which has pairs of fluted Corinthian columns rising in Gibbs' fashion from floor to ceiling.³⁷ This does raise the question of how much of St. Paul's was constructed or prefabricated in Boston and how much was left for execution from drawings in Halifax.³⁸

Although the interior system of St. Paul's does resemble Christ Church in Boston, the proportions of the two buildings are very different (figs. 12, 15). St. Paul's is low and broad in the Gibbs manner, rather than tall and narrow.

Christ Church was clearly not the model for any other aspect of St. Paul's, especially the exterior. While one might expect an influence of Wren's London churches via Christ Church, this is not evident. Christ Church was a significant and conspicuous church in Boston, but it does not seem to have been of any particular significance to those concerned with the establishment of Halifax, particularly Lord Halifax, Chairman of the sponsoring Board of Trade and Plantations, nor to Col. Cornwallis or Rev. Tutty, who were sent out from England. There may be some truth to the assertion that Lord Halifax chose his parish church, St. Peter's, Vere Street, as the model for the church of the new town,³⁹ and he no doubt would have known that the plans, etc., of it were available in Gibbs' publication, and that its relatively modest character vis-à-vis St. Martin's, for instance, would recommend it to the new colony and military outpost.

As was mentioned earlier, two main explanations have been proposed as to the method of conveying the design of St. Peter's, Vere Street to Halifax for St. Paul's. One, based on the writings of contemporaries, implies the design was sent directly to Halifax from London and then, presumably, to Boston, where the building was to be framed. The other explanation suggests that the design came from Boston. In either case, the source could have been Gibbs' *Book of Architecture*, either known to the Englishmen involved with establishing the new town or recommended to them (by Lord Halifax?), or else in the possession of the contractor or some other person in Boston who was responsible for arranging for and/or supervising the "framing." Whatever the route, it is clear that the exterior design of St. Peter's was not slavishly followed, but was "interpreted," especially in regard to the "west" façade. The east façade, which was more closely followed at St. Paul's, was not represented in the plates. Does this imply the participation of someone with first-hand knowledge of the actual building?

The choice of Boston as the site for the framing of the new church is not a surprising one, because Boston was the nearest major city to Halifax, and one with a long established building trade and facilities. What really is surprising is that having chosen the model of St. Peter's (because of Lord Halifax's connection with it?) as the prototype for St. Paul's, the plates from Gibbs' *Book of Architecture* were not more closely followed. If St. Peter's was the meaningful model, why was not its interior form also followed? If it is suggested that the Wren system of small square piers, known in Boston twenty-five years earlier, was easier to make than were giant round Corinthian columns, then does that imply that only the framing, literally, was done in Boston (where craftsmen were capable of making the Corinthian

columns), and that the design was altered because those parts were to be executed in Halifax? Was it then for reasons of economy and the lack of social skills that the interior design of St. Peter's was abandoned? Did this decision take place in Halifax, London or Boston? There seems to be no evidence to supply any definitive answers, especially to the last question. Whatever the answers, we clearly have at St. Paul's a Bostonian Wren building inside a Gibbsian box.⁴⁰

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Notes

¹ i.e., Allan DUFFUS, Edward MACFARLANE, Elizabeth PACEY and George ROGERS, *Thy Dwellings Fair: Churches of Nova Scotia, 1750-1830* (Hantsport, N.S.: Lancelot Press Limited, 1982), p. 47. For a concise history, plan, and photographs of St. Paul's present state, see pp. 45-52.

² The cornerstone was laid on 13 June 1750 and the church was first used for services on 2 September 1750, although apparently the interior furnishings were incomplete. In December 1760 it was still "almost finished," according to Reginald V. HARRIS, *The Church of St. Paul in Halifax, Nova Scotia: 1749-1949* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1949), pp. 17-18. c.f. also George W. HILL, "History of St. Paul's Church," *Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society*, I (1878), pp. 35-38, II (1879-80), pp. 63-99, and III (1882-83), pp. 13-70; (facsimile ed., Belleville, Ont.: Mika Publishing Company, 1976), I, pp. 43-44. The work of Hill is still the fundamental history of the church; that of Harris is heavily dependent on it for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The early plans of Halifax show that the site originally selected for the church was at the north end of the parade grounds. The church was not officially named St. Paul's until 1759 (HARRIS, pp. 14, 20).

³ HARRIS, p. 19. Also F. St. George SPENDLOVE, *The Face of Early Canada* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1958), pp. 11-12, pls. 22-24.

⁴ The church of St. Paul's owns a copy of each edition of this plate.

⁵ Reproduced in: SPENDLOVE, pl. 22; GOWANS, *Building Canada*, pl. 87; and Pierre MAYRAND and John BLAND, *Three Centuries of Architecture in Canada/Trois siècles d'architecture au Canada* (Montréal: Federal Publications Service/Georges Le Pape, 1971), p. 77.

⁶ Reproduced in HARRIS, pl. opp. p. 132; see also p. 151. The original watercolour is now in the Public Archives of Nova Scotia (PANS). For J. Partridge see Harry PIERS, "Artists in Nova Scotia," *Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society*, XVIII (1914), pp. 101-65, 121; also Mary SPARLING and Scot ROBSON (eds.), *Great Expectations: The European Vision in Nova Scotia, 1794-1848. An Exhibition Organized by the Art Gallery, Mount St. Vincent University, Halifax*. 17 October — 23 February 1980 (Halifax, N.S., 1980), no. 5-19, pp. 62, 63, 70.

⁷ HARRIS, pp. 152, 249.

⁸ Woolford's sketch is in Special Collections (W.I. Morse Collection), Kilham Library, Dalhousie University; see Eugenie ARCHIBALD (comp.), *Catalogue of the William Inglis Morse Collection of Books, Pictures, Maps, Manuscripts, etc.* (London: Curwen Press, 1938), p. 114 and pl. between pp. 60 and 61. For more on Woolford by SPARLING and ROBSON, pp. 28-33.

⁹ Now in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto; see Mary ALLODI, *Canadian Watercolours and Drawings in the Royal Ontario Museum* (Toronto: The Royal Ontario Museum, 1974), no. 742; SPENDLOVE, pp. 32-33, watercolour reproduced facing p. xv. For more on Eagar, see SPARLING and ROBSON, pp. 38-47. Eagar's watercolour was the basis for a lithograph, *Argyle Street, Halifax*, published by Jenkins & Colburn of Boston ca. 1839. (Charles P. DE VOLPI, *Nova Scotia: A Pictorial Record* (Longmans Canada Limited, 1974), pl. 91).

¹⁰ SPENDLOVE, pl. 24.

¹¹ HILL, II, p. 71, and HARRIS, p. 55, identified it as "the portico at the south end." This is an error; the north end was intended. In the next paragraph HARRIS says, "These columns remained until the church received an addition at the north end in the year 1812," which is a near quote from HILL (II, p. 71), who refers to it as the portico at the north end. All doubt is removed by reference to the Vestry Minutes of St. Paul's for 30 June 1783. I wish to express my appreciation to the rector, Rev. Peter Mason, the curate, Rev. Michael Knowles, and the church guide, (Mrs.) Rhoda P.N. Weldon, for their permission to search the Vestry Minutes in order to confirm the accuracy of Hill's statement and also to ascertain the exact year, which was not cited by Hill and was implied by Harris as being 1780.

¹² The Vestry Minutes also reveal a payment for repairing the "Platform of the Porch" in 1765. (The north is most likely meant, as the southern entrances were not covered by porches). On 19 January 1774, the Governor of Nova Scotia was petitioned (unsuccessfully) to remove the artillery barracks "so closely situated and nearly in the front of the Church Portico." The artillery barracks were located on the site of the present Parade Ground, immediately to the north of the Church. I think these references make it certain that a north entrance, with a projecting portico, was part of the original design.

¹³ For the daguerreotype, which is in the Nova Scotia Museum (acc. no. 75.70.2), see: Jim BURANT, "Pre-Confederation Photography in Halifax, Nova Scotia," *Journal of Canadian Art History*, IV (No. 1, Spring, 1977), pp. 35-44, fig. 4.

¹⁴ Two photographs of ca. 1860 by Joseph Rogers (Rogers Collection, pl. 76), and Wellington A. Chase, PANS, include partial views of St. Paul's from the east. They show that prior to the addition of the aisles and the Romanesquoid windows in 1868-69, the windows had already been altered. Simple moulded frames had replaced those with quoins delineated by Short, and the lower windows appear with segmental heads. In addition, pilasters at angles of the main box had replaced the quoins that had formerly been there; angle quoins are clearly depicted in the watercolour by Partridge, although the façade windows have simple moulded frames like the ones in the later photographs.

¹⁵ HARRIS, pp. 14-15. Tutty's letters were published in full in "Papers Relating to the Early History of the Church of England in Nova Scotia," *Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society*, VII (1889-91), pp. 89-127. See especially pp. 96-108, 110-114.

¹⁶ A second New England centre is mentioned without authority in *Founded Upon a Rock: Historic Buildings of Halifax and Vicinity Standing in 1967* (Halifax: The Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia, 2nd ed., 1971), p. 12: "The oak frame and pine timbers were brought by sea from Boston, and Portsmouth, New Hampshire." (my italics)

¹⁷ HARRIS, pp. 15-16. The old parish church, rebuilt ca. 1400 and remodelled by James Gibbs ca. 1741, should not be confused with the present parish church of St. Mary, a building of 1813-17 by Thomas Hardwick (1752-1829), on a different site on Marylebone Road. Upon the completion of Hardwick's new church, the old church became the parish chapel. It was damaged in World War II, and was demolished in 1949. See: L. Russell MUIRHEAD, ed., *The Blue Guides: Short Guide to London* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 8th ed., 1956), p. 66.

¹⁸ Harris' account is confirmed by John SUMMERSON, *Georgian London* (rev. ed., Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1962), pp. 105-110, and by Nikolaus PEVSNER, *The Buildings of England: London (except the cities of London and Westminster)* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1952), pp. 323-324, 331 (St. Peter's).

¹⁹ Neither SUMMERSON nor PEVSNER refer to it as Marybone Chapel but cf. MUIRHEAD, p. 58: "Opposite is St. Peter, Vere Street (formerly Marylebone Chapel), a neat little church by Gibbs (1823-4 [sic])." The unnamed authority for both Harris and Muirhead would appear to be the architect James Gibbs, who, in the notes on p. vii to pls. XXIV and XXV of his *A Book of Architecture* (London: 1728), refers to St. Peter's as "Marybone Chapell."

²⁰ HARRIS, p. 17; HILL, I, pp. 36-37.

²¹ [Alan GOWANS], "New England Architecture in Nova Scotia," *The Art Quarterly*, XXV (No. 1, Spring, 1962), p. 17, fig. 8; repeated in *Building Canada: An Architectural History of Canadian Life* (Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), pl. 53. Gowans does not pursue the particulars of the relationship suggested.

²² Curiously enough, this design of the open arcaded, octagonal stage(s) is identical or very similar to that found at a great number of québécois churches, which often have a spire instead of the upper ogee cupola. More interestingly, many of these, whether of one or two tiers, are also rotated: see Gérard MORISSET, *L'architecture en Nouvelle-France* (Québec: Charrier et Dugal, 1949), pls. 53, 54, 55b, 58, 59, 61, 64, 77, 78, 80, 81.

At Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré (pl. 75), there is an ogee cupola with a tower almost identical to that of St. Paul's and St. Peter's, dated at the end of the seventeenth century.

²³ From the plan (pl. XXIV), the two east portals and the chancel window are obvious; the section (pl. XXV) gives the interior elevation of the chancel window, but the frames of the portals, the exterior form of the window, and the two upper windows, would all have had to be improvised.

²⁴ Plates XVI-XXII, and I-VII, respectively, in GIBBS, *A Book of Architecture*.

- ²⁵ Similar quoined window surrounds were used on the first circular designs for St. Martin's, pls. X, XXV, and for All Hallows in Derby, pl. XXVI. Marcus WHIFFEN, "The Progeny of St. Martin-in-the-Fields," *Architectural Review*, C (No. 595, July, 1946), pp. 3-4, and *Stuart and Georgian Churches: The Architecture of the Church of England Outside London, 1603-1837* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1947-48), p. 33, drew attention to the use by Gibbs of this treatment of windows in a series, a treatment which was very influential.
- ²⁶ John SUMMERSON, *Architecture in Britain, 1530-1830* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1953), p. 211.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 212. On p. 211, Summerson had emphasized the enormous and wide influence of St. Martin's: "Through the fine engravings of it in Gibbs's book, it became the type of the Anglican parish church and was imitated wherever in the world English was spoken and Anglican worship upheld."
- ²⁸ Norman M. ISHAM, *Trinity Church in Newport, Rhode Island: A History of Fabric* (Boston: 1936). Pp. 37-49 contain a detailed comparison between the Newport and Boston churches and the Wren buildings on which they seem most dependent. Cf. SUMMERSON, *Architecture in Britain*, p. 340. The arrangement of the stairs to the galleries at Christ Church (fig. 12) may well have been employed at St. Paul's. The stairs are very narrow, "single-file," "flying" staircases, one at the end of each aisle. No evidence survives at St. Paul's for the original form.
- ²⁹ I am not certain if the present vault is the original. Photographs by William Notman, now in the PANS (nos. 1964, 1965, 70039) and probably dating to the early or mid-1890's, show the vault surface subdivided into small rectangular panels with a series of simple medallions down the centre. The relatively new chancel vault has the same pattern, as does the gallery ceiling. These could have been painted designs rather than actual mouldings. More interestingly, the Notman photographs clearly show the nave vault springing from a series of curved lines paralleling the depressed curves of the arcade arches and, possibly, creating a series of curved segments to the main vault. The existing vault springs from an absolutely straight and level horizontal line just above the arcade arches. Harris does not record a rebuilding of the vault in the 1890's, and the Vestry Minutes for the nineteenth century are not available.
- ³⁰ It was lengthened in 1762 and a shallow apse was included in the rebuilding. See ISHAM, pp. 103-104.
- ³¹ This is the only known photograph of the interior of St. Paul's before the extension of the chancel. According to Wellington A. CHASE, it probably dates between 1859 in 1868; copies are at St. Paul's and in the PANS. It shows the chancel only, and reveals that the Venetian window was encompassed by a large arch supported by tall pilasters. The flanking end bays of the aisle and gallery are clearly included.
- ³² This is also the case at St. Martin-in-the-Fields.
- ³³ GIBBS, p. i (Introduction).
- ³⁴ ISHAM, p. 46.
- ³⁵ WHIFFEN, in *Stuart and Georgian Churches*, p. 45, observes that "vulgar error" more often credits Wren than Gibbs as an influence on American eighteenth-century church architecture.
- ³⁶ St. John's, Wolverhampton (Staffordshire) (1755-60) by William Baker seems to be a similar example of a retardataire design and split personality. Although the exterior is a version of St. Martin's, the interior has two tiers of supports in the Wren manner; the lower ones are panelled piers and the upper are Doric columns with the gallery front between them. The ceiling is a barrel vault with penetrations from the gallery vaults; see WHIFFEN, "Progeny," p. 5. The two-tier system appears to have been revived in the nineteenth century, as at St. Thomas's, Stockport (Cheshire) (1825) by George Basevi (1749-1845); see WHIFFEN, *Stuart and Georgian Churches*, p. 89 and fig. 111.
- ³⁷ Already the Gibbsian tall order had appeared in the United States, possibly as early as 1727, when Dr. John Kearsley's design for Christ Church, Philadelphia was begun; see SUMMERSON, *Architecture in Britain*, p. 340.
- ³⁸ GOWANS, "New England Architecture," p. 17, fig. 8 speculates that "probably window frames, glass and steeple were ... prefabricated."
- ³⁹ According to Beckles WILSON, *Nova Scotia: The Province That Has Been Passed By* (London: Constable & Company Ltd., rev. ed., 1912), p. 46, who states, without citing any authority, that Lord Halifax "sought out the architect of St. Peter's, got the plans, and sent them out to Nova Scotia." The entire passage is quoted by HARRIS, p. 15, who calls it a "new story about the plan of St. Paul's," although he does not deny it.
- ⁴⁰ Gowans' surmise that the design of Halifax's St. Paul's probably came from Boston turns out to be true, but perhaps not quite in the way he might have anticipated.

RÉSUMÉ

St.Paul's, Halifax, Nouvelle-Écosse

et

St.Peter's, rue Vere, Londres, Angleterre

Des historiens contemporains ont clairement établi que lors de la fondation de la ville d'Halifax en 1749, une église anglicane avait été prévue dans les plans. Des documents attestent en effet que la charpente de cette église était en voie de construction à Boston au cours de l'hiver 1749-1750. L'église dont il est question ici est l'église St.Paul's, aujourd'hui le plus vieux bâtiment d'Halifax. La structure originale n'est toutefois pas intacte: une rallonge a été construite en 1812, l'église a fait l'objet de travaux d'agrandissement en 1868-1869 et un chœur a été ajouté en 1872. Le nom de Christopher Wren est souvent associé à la conception des plans originaux, laquelle est aussi attribuée à James Gibbs. La présente analyse vise justement à faire le point sur cette question.

Il semble en effet que la petite église St.Peter's, rue Vere, à Londres, conçue par Gibbs entre 1721 et 1724, ait servi de modèle pour l'extérieur de l'église St.Paul's. Il est à noter que les détails architecturaux des oeuvres de Gibbs étaient entièrement expliqués dans son ouvrage *A Book of Architecture*, publié en 1728. Construite en bois plutôt qu'en brique, St.Paul's n'était pas une copie exacte de St.Peter's; les différences entre l'extérieur des deux bâtiments demeurent toutefois plutôt minimes et sans importance.

L'intérieur de St.Peter's, par contre, n'a pas servi de source d'inspiration. C'est ainsi que les colonnes monumentales s'élevant d'un seul jet en face des tribunes ont été remplacées, dans l'église St.Paul's, par un système de colonnes à deux étages, caractéristique de Wren et non de Gibbs et déjà relativement démodé au milieu de XVIII^e siècle. Il est intéressant de noter que l'intérieur de la Christ Church (Old North Church) de Boston, qui date de 1723, est très semblable à celui de l'église St.Paul's; son extérieur et sa tour inspirée de Wren s'en distinguent toutefois nettement. L'église St.Paul's présente donc un extérieur gibbsien avec un intérieur dans le style de Wren. Pourquoi? On pourrait avancer comme hypothèse que les grandes colonnes corinthiennes de St.Peter's étaient beaucoup trop compliquées à imiter en Amérique du nord, bien que la construction d'une église faisant appel à ce genre de colonnes ait débuté à Boston en 1749. Si une telle entreprise était possible pour Boston, peut-être ne l'était-elle pas pour Halifax. Il se peut que seule la charpente ait été préfabriquée à Boston et que les détails aient été réalisés à Halifax par des menuisiers qualifiés de la colonie. Ceux-ci se voyaient sans doute confier surtout des tâches de nature plutôt utilitaire et ont pu, par conséquent, trouver plus facile de réaliser les petites colonnes carrées de style toscan, qui ornent encore aujourd'hui l'église St.Paul's.

Philip McAleer

William H. Eagar:

Drawing Master of Argyle Street, Halifax



fig. 1 Possibly J.S. CLOW (act. c. 1830-1850). William Eagar.
Photograph of unlocated miniature. (Photo: Nova Scotia Museum.)

There were few communities in British North America during the early decades of the nineteenth century that could claim a professional resident artist and teacher, and fewer still a landscape specialist. Transient painters continued to fill the demand for family memorabilia of the living and dead, while the majority of North American scenes were produced for foreign military personnel. William H. Eagar (1796-1839) (fig.1) resided in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, practising art professionally for only one decade, from 1829 to 1839. His influence can be judged factually by the

success of his Academy and students, and speculatively by the vicarious appreciation pupils, associates and countrymen gained for the “new” art of landscape.

Eagar’s versatile career parallels the experience of other colonial artists involved with cultural pursuits in British North America.¹ Born in Ireland in 1796 to a family with landed ancestry, Eagar would have learned how to draw as part of the classical education appropriate for boys of his station. He may have immigrated to Newfoundland to work as a fishery agent rather than an artist. His marriage in St. John’s in 1819 to Maria Saunders, daughter of an establishment family, was reported in the local press.

The economic depression of the 1820’s terminated many Newfoundland businesses and possibly obliged Eagar to labour as a painter and glazier, a common occupation for pioneers with artistic aptitude during times of economic distress. He experienced a short-term bankruptcy in 1821 while engaged in these endeavours, but rapid settlement of his debts indicates he had access to considerable financial reserves, either from his own or his wife’s family.

When Eagar opened a studio in St. John’s at the Old London Theatre in 1829, offering profile silhouettes and landscape lessons, he was the owner of a sizeable plantation, Spring Field. Located at Riverhead, the fashionable area on the outskirts of town, this farm with a cottage and half of its twenty acres under cultivation was a sizeable estate. Governor Thomas Cochrane commissioned Eagar to draw an up-to-date view of St. John’s in 1831 to strengthen an island petition for colonial status. Eagar travelled to England that winter to oversee the engraving process of this strategic print.

Impressed by the work of leading watercolour painters he found in London, “Seat of the Arts,” he intended teaching landscape exclusively upon his return. Apparently he found little interest in St. John’s for the “new” branch of art. When the prestigious, high-salaried position of Surveyor General for the island became vacant, Eagar applied but was refused because others were better qualified. Thereafter he vacated his schoolroom and advertised his specialty as “portrait painting in oil and water colour.”

Eagar established a Drawing Academy in Halifax in 1834, where he served as drawing master to daughters of leading families who believed art was a necessary accomplishment of a first-class education. Few patrons purchased watercolour scenery, so to supplement his teaching income Eagar managed a commission warehouse, the Halifax Bazaar. An editorial by Joseph Howe acknowledged him as the town’s foremost landscape artist and

complimented his teaching as being “efficient.” The artist was actively involved in his community: he lectured at the popular Mechanic’s Institute, constructed a spectacular illuminated design for Queen Victoria’s coronation celebration, organized a major art exhibition and expanded his classes to include “young men and others who might obtain facilities not now possessed.”

Eagar’s most ambitious plan, announced in 1836, was to publish at least two volumes of engraved views of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. He had also hoped to include scenery of Upper Canada, the entire compilation to be known as *The British North American Tourist*. If Eagar had succeeded with his task as he had originally planned it, he would have anticipated by some half dozen years William Bartlett’s *Canadian Scenery Illustrated*. Competition from a similar work, *Sketches of Nova Scotia* by Robert Petley, lithographed and less expensive, discouraged sales of Eagar’s first number, issued in 1837 as *Landscape Illustrations of Nova Scotia*. Without recourse to government assistance to subsidize subsequent engravings, Eagar learned lithography and drew his twelve remaining Nova Scotian scenes on stone. The last two numbers of *Nova Scotia Scenery* appeared after his death at Halifax in November 1839.

Eagar first opened his “rooms” as an artist in St. John’s, October 1829, believing there was more demand for likenesses than for art lessons.² His offer to teach landscape was merely a postscript at the bottom of his notice. His position as sole artist in St. John’s was shortly challenged when William Valentine of Halifax arrived in town to paint portraits and silhouettes.³ The cultural market by then was large enough to support both artists for a time. Competition forced the two to share artistic production, Eagar making silhouettes and giving art lessons, Valentine painting miniatures and portraits. Valentine remained until June, 1830.⁴

Eagar’s penchant for teaching was fortified by his London visit in 1831.⁵ He was intrigued by the growing popularity and prevalent taste for scenic watercolours; in England, landscape painting was very much in vogue. He must have been disappointed with his attempt to stimulate a similar interest for landscape lessons in St. John’s. Within six months he gave up his schoolroom and reverted to painting portraits.⁶

In order to teach art full-time, Eagar realized it was necessary to settle in a larger, more sophisticated centre. Could the fact that he met Valentine in St. John’s and a second time in 1834 shortly before the Eagar family left the island⁷ have influenced Eagar’s decision? In Halifax, he recommenced his teaching career as proprietor of Mr. Eagar’s Drawing Academy.⁸

He wasted no time obtaining suitable premises for his Drawing Academy in a prime location from which to advertise his services to his new community. Situated on Barrington Street, one of the busiest Halifax thoroughfares, Eagar's rooms were next door to the Eastern Stage Coach depot and the adjoining lodging house operated by Alex Paul, the company agent.⁹ Mr. Eagar's establishment was a welcome diversion for travellers with idle time to fill, as leisure moments might be occupied examining samples of the artist's work.

Eagar's enthusiasm for his new venture had a rude shock. The town was in the midst of a province-wide economic depression. Joseph Howe, editor of the *Novascotian*, reported that the capital's trade during the previous nine months "had been in a state of great languor and disarrangement, and at times of almost total stagnation."¹⁰ In spite of hard times, Eagar continued to teach his lessons and was able to move his Academy and family to a more dignified location in the most fashionable residential area of town, near the Methodist Chapel on Argyle Street and overlooking the Grand Parade. The address of the Academy was well-known: Eagar's neighbours, the Misses Morris, proprietors of a ladies' seminary, identified their location as "nearly opposite the Old Methodist Chapel and one door north from Mr. Eagar's Drawing Academy."¹¹

Eagar initially advertised his skill as a landscape artist, teacher and portrait painter. There is no evidence his instruction excluded portraiture, although one of his students, Ellen Nutting, did delightful watercolour studies of Halifax acquaintances. Competition from Valentine at this time probably discouraged Eagar from seeking portrait commissions, for there is no mention of this service in any of his subsequent notices.¹² In his first Halifax advertisement, he described the specific method of painting he would endeavour to teach:

... rudiments of LANDSCAPE PAINTING and effect ... the present style of Water Colour painting, so generally admired by all lovers of the fine arts, and so much practised by Prout, Stanfield, Robson, DeWint, Hunt, Cristal, and many other eminent Artists of the English School.¹³

Obviously Eagar was patterning his teaching on the paintings of these individuals. His London journey had opened his eyes to current aesthetic theories and stylistic interpretations fashionable in England; in Halifax he believed there was a receptive audience anxious to share his discoveries.

When Eagar returned to England in 1831, he must have been startled by the advance of watercolour painting which had taken place since his

departure for Newfoundland the previous decade. A changing attitude towards art and nature had resulted from the introduction, during the interval, of picturesque principles then applied to landscape gardening. This philosophy had been outlined by a number of writers in the 1790's: Archibald Alison, Richard Payne Knight, Uvedale Price. But the most influential had been the Reverend William Gilpin, a vicar and amateur artist at Boldre, New Forest, in Hampshire. Between 1782 and 1809, eight books by Gilpin had spread his theories of picturesque landscape and had provided guidelines for their application. William Eagar and his pupils were familiar with Gilpin. Two sketches after Gilpin by an Academy student were entered in the 1838 Halifax exhibition.¹⁴ Gilpin's ideas were adaptable to Eagar's teaching in the colony. Gilpin is said to have directed British eyes to see the scenery of their own country;¹⁵ William Eagar wished to do the same for Nova Scotia. in his advertisement Eagar evokes the names of Joshua Cristall (c. 1767-1847), Samuel Prout (1783-1852) and William Clarkson Stanfield (1794-1867).¹⁶

A possible explanation for Eagar's choice is revealed by examining the themes favoured by the six artists. Each specialized in different subject matter. Eagar wanted his clients to know his qualifications for giving instruction were as broad as the various whims of his students. If mountain scenery stirred the fancy, he would guide a student to the practice of Robson; rustic figures in a landscape background, the work of Cristall; or still life with fruit and flowers, the manner of Hunt. DeWint had popularized a wide, panoramic format of landscape composition, while Prout took delight in architectural renderings. Stanfield was essentially a marine painter. The only indication of Eagar's personal preference rests on slim evidence: he made a copy of *Stangate Creek*, from the original by Stanfield.¹⁷

It is possible to speculate about the kind of instruction Eagar gave his students by examining the principles governing the nineteenth-century practices of landscape painting in general, and the works produced by both the teacher and his pupils. Eagar's teaching task was probably two-fold: he would have guided some students to copy engraved examples of artists' work along with some of his own specimens, and have helped them to "see" features of the landscape in terms of the picturesque. Imitating the work of famous painters had always been a traditional method of apprenticeship, but in the nineteenth century this procedure assumed additional importance. Spectators' eyes had to be trained in what to observe, only artists (and poets) having the necessary inborn qualifications.

By offering to teach techniques used by Prout and the others, Eagar was

no different from provincial artists instructing in British centres overseas. Style was considered a particular procedure one could learn to reproduce in a given number of lessons.¹⁸ Each session, students watched the master complete one stage of a drawing, then proceeded to emulate his progress and technique. If a novice had difficulty executing a particular passage, the teacher was expected to remedy the problem with his own hand. Theoretically, when the student's transcription was completed, the apprentice had acquired a "style." Few artists felt sufficiently confident to promote their own style exclusively, if at all.

Artists, if they had time, made their own student "patterns." Otherwise, the pupil relied on prints and drawings assembled by the teacher, formed his own collection, or resorted to illustrated publications. Eagar had some examples of his own work, and may have owned some originals purchased in London. The latest travel books and a selection of individual engravings were available to Academy students. An 1838 catalogue from the Halifax art exhibition organized by Eagar provides information about the students and their choice of subject.¹⁹ Mrs. Ritchie copied a scene from the *Waverley Novels*, illustrated by Cattermole, which had been sold in the capital within months of publication in 1835. Another popular edition, *Fisher's Drawing-room Scrapbook*, inspired a drawing by Mrs. Carroll. *Sentiment of Flowers* and *Woodland Gleanings*, both by the same author, and *The Romance of Nature: or the Flower Seasons Illustrated* by Louisa Anne Twamley were helpful for practice drawings of flora and fauna. The taste for keepsake annuals was evident in Halifax as elsewhere in the 1830's. These gift items, forerunners of today's date-books and almanacs, were small volumes with prints and verses appropriate to the changing calendar and were illustrated by notable artists.

Annuals encouraged enthusiasm for landscape as well as for other genres. Although issued late in the year for the Christmas market, they did not arrive in Halifax until several months later. Belcher's bookstore announced the arrival of "Splendid English Annuals for 1837 — just received from Liverpool." Included in the selection were *Heath's*, *Jennings'*, *The Picturesque* and *Oriental Annual*. Individual engravings of sporting, racing and caricature themes, as well as art supplies, might also be purchased from the same firm.

Eagar prepared his own views of local scenery to demonstrate picturesque possibilities of the immediate surroundings to his class. To what extent he encouraged original compositions by his students is not clear. Most of their exhibited paintings are either copies of European prints or unidentified copies

of their teacher's scenes. Possibly some, whose names are unknown, did attempt their own interpretations (*Belmont, North West Arm, View of Three Mile House, A View near the Dockyard*) although these, too, may have been inspired by Eagar sketches. Eagar may have taken his class on field trips, to discuss picturesque aspects of a particular spot before putting them down on paper. David Cox (1783-1859), an English artist and drawing master, believed this method was most productive:

The best and surest method of obtaining instruction from the work of others is not so much by copying them, as by drawing the same subjects from Nature immediately after a critical examination of them, while they are still fresh in the memory.²⁰

Sketches were taken home or back to the Academy to be worked into finished paintings. There was no scarcity of art supplies in Halifax; several shops carried the basic requirements: canvas, paper and paint, but C.H. Belcher specialized in "Materials of every description for Drawing, Painting, etc., in water and oil colours."²¹ A list of these products regularly occupied a full column in the *Novascotian*. Plain "tickens" or canvas prepared with oil ground could be purchased in widths from twenty-seven to forty-five inches. There was a choice of round and flat brushes of sable, camel or badger hair for applying "Bladder pigments" or Newman's watercolour cakes. Special effects in oil painting might be obtained by mixing pigment with various media: varnishes, oils, shellacs, asphaltum, McGuelp and Gumption. A large assortment of pencils, crayons, stumps of charcoal and ink were sold for use with drawing papers of the finest quality.

Notations on Eagar's engravings state, "drawn from nature," a practice he must have stressed in his Academy. This was a misleading term in that it did not involve making an exact representation of a specific scene as it appeared to the eye. An exact copy, Gilpin felt, could scarcely ever be beautiful, "but the artist who worked from his imagination, culling a distance here, and there a foreground, will probably make [a] much better landscape."²² The procedure described by Gilpin was to compose a fictitious, ideal view with selected objects, trees, rocks, etc., sketched previously on location and compiled into an album for later reference.²³ Specific detailing was not necessary so long as the "essence" was captured.

Eagar's engraving of *Halifax, N.S. from Fort Needham* 1837 follows Gilpin's compositional advice, and is based on the formula established by Claude Lorrain (1600-1682) (fig.2). Utilizing Claudian devices, seen in Eagar's *Italian Landscape* c. 1830, he gave his views of Halifax a European sensibility (fig.3).



fig.2 William H. EAGAR (1796-1839). *Halifax, N.S. from Fort Needham 1837*. Coloured engraving. Engraved in colour by J. Gellatly, Edinburgh, published by C.H. Belcher, Halifax 1837. Plate 3 of *Landscape Illustrations of Nova Scotia*. (Photo: Metropolitan Toronto Library Board.)

The regulations for tinting watercolour sketches were aligned to the colour found in works by Claude; these aimed to duplicate the "golden glow" of his seventeenth-century Italianate landscape. Eagar presumably instructed his students to follow Gilpin's guidelines, which left little margin for error. The first step was to sketch in the outline and shade with India ink, then add an overall wash of blue or orange. While the sky was still moist, the upper portion was treated with the other of these hues. If only a small area of sky was visible, it might be all blue or orange, although Gilpin preferred the latter. Boxed watercolours generally included a cake of blue, "neutral tint," to dust into the distance and over any water surface when the paper was dry. Finishing touches were spelled out explicitly:

Then introduce browns of various kinds, into the foreground; but slightly, and when all is dry, one can touch some of the brightest parts with dead green or a little gall-stone. Burnt Terra-de-Sienna mixed with a little gall-stone, makes a good foliage tint.²⁴

These same rules applied for the most part to landscapes in oil, with the result that scenery of any country appeared overshadowed by the same



fig.3 William H. EAGAR (1796-1839), *Italian Landscape* c. 1830. Oil.
Coll.: J.H.M. Eagar, Dartmouth, N.S. (Photo: the author.)

brown-toned, atmospheric haze. Two unfinished oil panels Eagar worked up from drawings for *Nova Scotia Scenery* document preparatory stages of underpainting along with vibrant skies, predominantly in blues, yellow and orange. The effect of loose brushwork and brilliant colour in "*Blomidan, Basin of Minas*" c. 1836 and *Cornwallis, Grand Pré and Basin of Minas. From the North Mountain* c. 1836 is especially appealing (figs.4,5). Eagar had begun applying a finer degree of finish to a foreground grouping, bottom right, in the latter panel. His use of drab earth pigments to refine details of leaves and branches predicts his final overpainting. It would be nearly monochromatic to conform with Gilpin-inspired Regency landscape standards.

Eagar could also alter Gilpin's rules to produce distinctly personal interpretations of his Nova Scotian environment. *View of Bedford Basin* 1839, records with increased fidelity the natural setting of the town, "founded upon a rock," with poor soil cover and meager vegetation²⁵ (fig.6). Less picturesque than *Fort Needham*, without the ominous, sublime quality of dense forest, *Bedford Basin* is composed of similar elements, with



fig. 4 William H. EAGAR (1796-1839). "Blomidon, Basin of Minas" c. 1836. Oil. Coll.: Public Archives of Nova Scotia. Published as lithograph in Eagar's series, *Landscape Illustrations of Nova Scotia*, 1837 (title later changed to *Nova Scotia Scenery*, 1840). (Photo: the author.)

alternate pathways for the eye to meander over the expansive Basin perimeters. Eagar's delicate, feather-stroked foliage identify a young maple on the left, and an elm to the right, but with its tree mass reduced this view is not so congested and is more panoramic. Miss Hoffman's *View of Bedford Basin*, executed under Eagar's guidance, was exhibited in 1838; she also reproduced a third Eagar drawing of the area, *Halifax from Reeve's Hill*.

The high percentage of scenic views by Eagar attest to his preference for landscape, but he seemingly did not impose his bias on his students. He encouraged Ellen Nutting to exercise her penchant for portraiture and figure drawing while attending classes, and hung her *Sketch (of) a Young Lady* in company with five paintings borrowed from the Nutting family for his display in 1832. Although she was familiar with Dutch landscape by Cuyp and others, Nutting was more attuned to the Northern interpretation of individuality; she preferred to study Ostade's *A Fish Woman* and Vanderworff's *Burgomaster's Wife*. In later years, while visiting friends and taking part in social gatherings, she sketched a number of prominent



fig.5 **William H. EAGAR (1796-1839).** *Cornwallis, Grand Pré and Basin of Minas. From the North Mountain* c. 1836. Oil. Coll.: Public Archives of Nova Scotia. Published as engraving in Eagar's series, *Landscape Illustrations of Nova Scotia*, 1837 (title later changed to *Nova Scotia Scenery*, 1840). (Photo: the author.)

Haligonians. Nutting was extremely fashion-conscious; she concentrated her attention on delineation of the face, in the tradition of miniature portraiture, but her preliminary costume description, seldom completed, anticipates the fashion-plate journals of the 1860's.

Eagar's pupils represented many of the town's fashionable families. A catalogue prepared by Eagar of the exhibition he organized in Halifax in 1838 contains the names of approximately fifteen "ladies who have been, or are at present, pupils" of the Academy. W.H. Jones (fl. 1829-1831), a former drawing master with rooms at Dalhousie College, Halifax, was reported teaching forty or more students in 1830; there is no reason to think Eagar would not have had as many, or more.²⁶

Two of the exhibitors were women: Mrs. T. (Thomas) Pyke and Mrs. (John William) Ritchie, wives of a city merchant and lawyer respectively; the remainder were young ladies who had completed their formal education.²⁷ The majority, wealthy, cultured and socially privileged, had been exposed to art works at home. Private Halifax collections contained a number of works



fig. 6 William H. EAGAR (1796-1839). *View of Bedford Basin* 1839. Lithograph. Coll.: Public Archives of Nova Scotia. Drawn on stone by William Eagar, lithographed by T. Moore, Boston, published by C.H. Belcher, Halifax, July 1839, Part I, *Nova Scotia Scenery*. (Photo: Metropolitan Toronto Library Board.)

by distinguished American and European artists.²⁸ At least eight pupils belonged to families who lent paintings attributed to such masters as Van Dyke, Sir Joshua Reynolds and Eustache Lesueur. Dr. Matthias Francis Hoffman, whose daughter took lessons from Eagar, contributed his own portrait painted by Lascellis H. Hoppner (1788-1875), former student and gold medalist at the London Royal Academy. Academy students inherited from their parents the prevalent nineteenth-century philosophy that the arts have a moral and civilizing influence on national character; academician Ellen Nutting's father, prothonotary James Walton Nutting, lectured on this topic at the Mechanic's Institute.²⁹ Eagar's pupils were also directed by the belief that art was one of those "elegant and mental acquisitions (along with music, dancing and speaking French), which adorn Society, make the domestic circle graceful and attractive, and ought ever to form a part of the character of a Lady."³⁰ These women applied to Mr. Eagar's school with the expectation of increasing their artistic appreciation and of refining drawing skills they had acquired at one of the local seminaries, or, in the case of the extremely affluent, at a finishing school abroad. Their object was to polish their proficiency, not to perfect it. Social pressure inhibited women from

considering art as a professional career; excellence in any one field of endeavour was discouraged. Mrs. Ellis, author of an influential child guidance manual, advised parents of young girls:

To be able to do a great many things tolerably well, is of infinitely more value to a woman, than to be able to excel in any one. By the former, she may render herself generally useful; by the latter, she may dazzle for an hour. By being apt, and tolerably well skilled in everything, she may fall into any situation in life with dignity and ease — by devoting her time to excellence in one, she may remain incapable of every other.³¹

The exceptions to this rule were women dependent on art for a living. Both Maria Morris and Mrs. (Jane) Carroll, who attended the Academy, belonged in this category, for they were themselves art teachers in Halifax establishments of a similar type.³² They managed private schools for daughters of the Halifax elite.

Maria Morris Miller (1810-1875) was Eagar's most successful pupil and Nova Scotia's foremost female artist in the nineteenth century.³³ Born in Guysborough County, Nova Scotia, she was descended from a distinguished provincial family. When her father, Guy Morris, died at an early age, his widow Sybella (Legett) Morris moved the family to Halifax, where she opened a ladies' seminary in 1831. Miss Morris had studied under W.H. Jones and Monsieur L'Estrange, drawing masters who had preceded Eagar in the community. Reference to a student work included in Jones' 1831 exhibition indicates she had developed an aptitude for landscape painting before attending Mr. Eagar's school. An encouraging Halifax critic reported her success with a difficult subject, *The Cascatelles of Tivoli* 1831; he felt it was admirably executed, writing that "the trees, sheet of water and ruins exhibit much neatness and command of pencil, with a very pleasing appropriate regard to delicate delineation."³⁴ L'Estrange, who claimed his "style of copying nature in her richest attire has been acknowledged by the best informed artists in Great Britain," taught her portraiture.³⁵ An exceptional degree of expertise is evident in her recently discovered portrait, *The Convalescent* c. 1845, thought to be her young red-haired daughter, Rosa. She later published three sets of botanical engravings, *Wild Flowers of Nova Scotia*, which were greatly admired for their scientific accuracy, technical competence and delicate beauty.³⁶ Joseph Howe wrote an editorial praising her work as a teacher and artist, calling public attention to the "taste and talent exhibited by another person — a female and a native." With remarks clearly pointed towards Halifax fashionables who cared more for

personal adornment than intellectual stimulation, Howe suggested others might well follow the example of the Governor's wife, Lady Campbell, in patronizing the Morris project.

It seems Eagar believed Mrs. Carroll's art to be of superior quality.³⁷ Two of her paintings were included in the catalogue with the selection of European masters Eagar borrowed for his display; the majority of other student entries are listed together on succeeding pages. Eagar assembled this exhibition "to revive a taste and encourage native talent."³⁸ Artists and amateurs alike were invited to submit samples of their work. As only two participating female artists were not enrolled at his Academy, one assumes that Eagar instructed the most talented Haligonians as well as the wealthiest. Two months before the exhibition opened, Eagar had begun classes for "Lads, Young Men, and others," but apparently these gentlemen were not prepared to display their attempts to public scrutiny.³⁹

The background of young ladies entering Mr. Eagar's school can be assessed by examining the educational system of the 1830's. The School Act, passed in 1811, had begun the move towards public education in Nova Scotia, but, in general, upper-class parents still sent their children to private institutions. There were separate schools for girls and boys but the latter had more choice of curricula. Joseph Howe campaigned vociferously against the widely-held opinion that classical studies were a waste of time and money for women; in the 1830's, however, female education invariably included subjects considered to be suitable preparation for a domestic career as a "valuable mother and useful wife."⁴⁰ A number of schools offered courses for wealthy daughters in Halifax whose parents were assured of scrupulous attention to the minds and manners of their offspring. The "Drawing and Day School" managed by the Misses Morris next door to the Eagers was one of the city's best and most progressive. Mrs. Sybella Morris, assisted by her daughter, offered a full program for girls from the age of four to "completion of an English education."⁴¹ These women stressed the importance of early guidance to gain proficient pronunciation, and promised "to draw their minds to reflect upon their lessons as a pastime." Emphasis was placed on the Four Grand Pillars (English grammar, writing, arithmetic and geography), "on which only an enduring superstructure can be raised." The "modest" fee, twenty-five pounds for girls under ten, thirty-five pounds for those above that age, also included instruction in history, the use of globes, elements of astronomy, French, and plain and ornamental needlework. Drawing and music were taught for an additional fee; these classes were held in the afternoon so that outside students attending other schools, which did

not provide these types of instruction, might also attend. Maria Morris devoted her time exclusively to art and was prepared to teach “figures in water colour; landscape in pencil, chalk or water colour; flowers, fruits, birds and shells on velvet, satin or paper.” She offered private and class instruction three days weekly from ten until three o’clock. Exposure to these “genteel arts” was intended to help occupy leisure time as a wife and mother, produce decorative household articles, and prepare designs for embroidery and needlework. Young ladies who excelled in this training and wished for further instruction applied to Mr. Eagar’s Academy.

Within a short time Eagar had established his reputation as a teacher and his position as one of the foremost landscape artists in Halifax. A lengthy account of the artist and his work in the *Telegraph* was reprinted by Howe’s *Novascotian*, the last of a three-part series on local artists.⁴² Maria Morris and William Valentine joined Eagar as the leading art specialists in the community. Although his Academy had a promising start, evidently it did not produce sufficient income for a family of eleven. In all likelihood he was beginning to suffer from initial symptoms signalling the onset of tubercular consumption.

Perhaps following the advice of friends (Valentine?) Eagar expanded his Academy classes to include “young men and others who might obtain facilities not now possessed.”⁴³ The only school in town at that time where boys could learn basic drawing was operated by John S. Thompson.⁴⁴ Youths interested in a military career applied elsewhere in the province, to the Annapolis Academy or the school at Mabou, where courses included “Military and Landscape Drawing, Use of the Camera Obscura, and Instructions in Fortifications.”⁴⁵ To satisfy the Halifax demand, which was more than Thompson’s school could meet, Eagar offered two hours of elementary drawing and colouring on specified days; in the evening, equal time was allotted to “Rudiments of Perspective, Mechanical and Architectural Drawing.” For some reason, however, he was reluctant to commence this venture. His notice reveals none of his usual professional self-esteem. Expressing skepticism, he agreed to adopt the system for a trial period only. With his other Academy classes continuing as usual, a large portion of Eagar’s day was devoted to teaching. He may have resented this increased responsibility because it would limit other activities, or did he dislike the idea of taking students with no previous art training? Being a drawing master to upper-class women, which was considered a professional undertaking, was socially acceptable in nineteenth-century Halifax; instructing novices in need of drawing skills to earn a living relegated one to

dealing “in trade.” With a sigh of resignation, Eagar defended his decision to proceed:

Anxious to employ his time to the best advantage for the community in which he resides, he proposes to adopt the suggestion and give the system a trial.

Nova Scotia Scenery, Eagar’s publication of engraved watercolours, was a logical step for a talented landscape artist with a stockpile of local views, useful as teaching examples but producing little income. Haligonians, conservative by nature, were not inclined to pay for Nova Scotian scenes they might readily view for themselves, especially once they had learned how to view the scenery through Eagar’s eyes. Eagar publicized a prospectus during spring, 1836, announcing his intention to make available “views of all the most important parts of the Province.”⁴⁶ When the first three scenes met with favourable reception, he announced a second volume featuring landscapes of New Brunswick.⁴⁷ His publishing venture frequently interfered with his teaching duties. During the autumn of 1839 he was travelling in New Brunswick (making sketches?), when he was “exposed to wet.”⁴⁸ This accident resulted in pneumonia. Eagar’s death in November 1839 terminated a promising career and closed the doors of a respected Halifax cultural institution.⁴⁹

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Notes

¹ For biographical information see Alexandra E. CARTER, *William H. Eagar: Sensibilities of no common order*, (M.F.A. thesis, Montréal: Concordia University, 1979); Harry PIERS, “Artists in Nova Scotia,” *Collections*, vol. 18, (Halifax: Nova Scotia Historical Society, 1914), pp. 141-145; *Newfoundland Mercantile Journal* 1818-1819; *Newfoundland Ledger and General Advertiser* 1818-1834; *Novascotian* 1834-1840.

² “Profile Miniature Likenesses Neatly Painted,” *Newfoundland Ledger and General Advertiser*, 6 Oct. 1829.

³ “For a Few Weeks Only,” *Newfoundland Ledger and General Advertiser*, 11 Dec. 1829.

⁴ “Portrait Painting,” *Newfoundland Ledger and General Advertiser*, 18 May 1830.

⁵ “Mr. Eagar has taken School Room,” *Newfoundland Ledger and General Advertiser*, 3 Jan. 1832.

⁶ “Portrait Painting ...,” *Newfoundland Ledger and General Advertiser*, 29 June 1832.

⁷ “For a Few Weeks Only,” *Newfoundland Ledger and General Advertiser*, 14 Jan.-25 Mar. 1834.

⁸ “Landscape and Portrait Painting in Oil and Water Colours,” *Novascotian*, 3 Sept. 1834.

⁹ “Removal, Board-Lodging Establishment,” *Novascotian*, 8 Jan. 1834.

¹⁰ The depressed economic conditions in Halifax in the mid-1830’s are summarized from reports in the *Novascotian*.

¹¹ “Seminary,” *Novascotian*, 4 Feb. 1836.

¹² Eagar is said to have given up portraiture in deference to Valentine’s superior ability in this branch of art. This fact may have proven true when both men were practising in Halifax, but it had not been an outcome of their first meeting in St. John’s five years earlier. After Eagar relinquished his idea of landscape lessons and returned to portraiture, his prices for portraits in Newfoundland exceeded those charged by Valentine in Halifax in 1837 for portraits of an identical size. See Harry PIERS, “Artists in Nova Scotia,” *Collections*, vol. 18 (Halifax: Nova Scotia Historical Society, 1914), p. 141; “Portrait Painting” (Eagar’s advertisement), *Newfoundland Ledger and General Advertiser*, 29 June 1832; “Portrait Painting” (Valentine’s advertisement), *Novascotian*, 23 Mar. 1837.

- ¹³ "Landscape and Portrait Painting in Oil and Water Colours," *Novascotian*, 4 Sept. 1934.
- ¹⁴ (William EAGAR), *Catalogue of Mr. Eagar's Exhibition of Paintings* (Halifax: J. Cunnabell, 1838). Copy material available in Halifax is found in advertisements in the *Novascotian*, 15 June 1836, 9 Feb. 1837, 27 Nov. 1838.
- ¹⁵ Carl Paul BARBIER, *William Gilpin: His Drawings, Teaching, and Theory of the Picturesque* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), intro., p. iii.
- ¹⁶ Samuel REDGRAVE, *Dictionary of Artists of the English School* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1874). Crisall: p. 103; DeWint: p. 103; Hunt: p. 221; Prout: p. 326; Robson: p. 346; Stanfield: pp. 389-390.
- ¹⁷ (William EAGAR), *Catalogue of Mr. Eagar's Exhibition of Paintings* (Halifax: J. Cunnabell, 1838), [p. 6]. Stanfield enjoyed wide popularity in the nineteenth century. Sir George Back, Arctic explorer, and Cornelius Krieghoff refer to Stanfield in unpublished correspondence. Reference supplied by Dr. J. Russell Harper.
- ¹⁸ Mr. and Mrs. Berkeley, drawing masters, stopped briefly in Saint John, N.B., in 1831, offering to teach any person, "even children of ordinary talents," to draw correctly from nature in six lessons. At an earlier date, Dr. Hunt had wrapped up his lecture series in the same town with a proposal to teach a new, familiar and comprehensive "Theory of Perspective" in one lesson. See respective advertisements, *Courier* (St. John, N.B.), 3 Sept. 1831; 31 Oct. 1829.
- ¹⁹ See note 14.
- ²⁰ David COX, *A Treatise on Landscape Painting in Water Colours* (London: The Studio, 1813, reprint ed., 1922), p. 14.
- ²¹ C.H. Belcher's advertisement, *Novascotian*, 25 Dec. 1833.
- ²² William GILPIN, quoted in Christopher HUSSEY, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1967), p. 115.
- ²³ William GILPIN, *The Author's Account of the Principles on which the drawings are executed; now brought to sale, for the Endowment of a Parish-School at Boldre, Near Lymington* (London: T. Cadell, Jun. & W. Davies, 1802), p. 4. As natural scenery was less than perfect, it should be treated in the same way.
- ²⁴ William GILPIN, *Ibid.*, p. 34.
- ²⁵ Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia, *Founded Upon a Rock* (Heritage Trust, Halifax, N.S., 1967).
- ²⁶ Mr. Jones organized the first two Halifax exhibitions, 1830-1831, at Dalhousie College. See "Exhibition of Pictures," *Novascotian*, 11 Feb., 7 Apr., 14 May 1830; *Halifax Monthly* 2 (June 1831): 30.
- ²⁷ St. Paul's Church Records: 1832, daughter born to Thomas and Francis Pyke, merchant; 19 Apr. 1839, daughter born to John William and Amelia Rebecca Ritchie, barrister.
- ²⁸ These works had been captured in transit during the 1812 War and auctioned in Halifax. Jones borrowed a number for his exhibitions. See Harry PIERS, "Artists in Nova Scotia," *Collections* (Halifax: Nova Scotia Historical Society, 1914), p. 157.
- ²⁹ "Mechaic's [sic] Institute," *Novascotian*, 30 Mar. 1836; J.W. Nutting agrees to speak on "The Influence of Literature, and the Fine Arts, on National Character."
- ³⁰ Advertisement for Miss Whitwell's Seminary, *Novascotian*, 2 July 1835.
- ³¹ Mrs. ELLIS, *The Family Monitor and Domestic Guide*, quoted by Linda NOCHLIN, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" *Art News* 69 (1970-71): 36.
- ³² The Morris school is discussed below. The "English and French Boarding and Day School" directed by Mrs. Carroll was at her residence on Hollis Street. See advertisement, *Novascotian*, 2 Oct. 1833.
- ³³ Mary SPARLING believes botanical painter Maria Morris Miller is not the same person as Mary Morris, who exhibited in Halifax, 1838. *Great Expectations: The European Vision in Nova Scotia 1749-1848*, ex. cat. (Halifax, N.S.: Mount Saint Vincent Art Gallery, 1980), p. 67, fn. 17.
- ³⁴ "Exhibition of Pictures," *Halifax Monthly* 2 (June 1831): 30.
- ³⁵ Harry PIERS, "Artists in Nova Scotia," *Collections* (Halifax: Nova Scotia Historical Society, 1914), p. 124.
- ³⁶ Belcher's received Parts 1 and 2 of the first series, November 1840. Each unit comprised three hand-coloured, lithographed plates, costing five shillings. See Belcher advertisement, *Novascotian*, 19 Nov. 1840. The second edition was issued in 1853; the third, incomplete, in 1867. See PIERS, *op. cit.* A three-volume set of original drawings, never published, in mint condition, is now in the collection, N.S.M.
- ³⁷ Mrs. Carroll continued expanding her artistic knowledge and opened one of the earliest photography studios in Halifax, at the corner of Prince and Barrington Streets. See Jim BURANT, "Pre-Confederation Photography in Halifax, N.S.," *Journal of Canadian Art History* 4, 1 (1977), pp. 31-32.
- ³⁸ "Exhibition of Paintings," *Novascotian*, 21 Dec. 1837.
- ³⁹ "Drawing Academy," *Times* (Halifax), 9 Jan. 1838.
- ⁴⁰ (Joseph Howe), "Female Education," *Novascotian*, 17 Sept. 1835.
- ⁴¹ Morris advertisements, *Novascotian*, 21 May 1834; 4 Feb., 30 Jul., 13, Aug. 1836; 7 Feb. 1839.
- ⁴² "The Fine Arts," *Novascotian*, (Morris) 14 Aug., (Eagar) 28 Sept. 1836; "Mr. Valentine, and Portrait Painting," 31 Aug. 1836.
- ⁴³ "Drawing Academy," *Times* (Halifax), 9 Jan. 1838.
- ⁴⁴ "John S. Thompson, Day School," *Novascotian*, 29 Oct. 1835.
- ⁴⁵ Advertisements for "Annapolis Academy," and "Mabou and Hillsborough Common and Grammar School," *Novascotian*, 6 Apr. 1836.

⁴⁶ "Prospectus," *Novascotian*, 12 May 1836.

⁴⁷ "Mr. Eagar ...," *Courier*, 9 Dec. 1837.

⁴⁸ He allegedly fell through the ice, but the Saint John River remained ice-free until after December 1839. See J. Russell HARPER, *Painting in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), p. 108; "The Weather Continues ... the Character of the Fall Months," *Novascotian*, 25 Dec. 1839 (reprint from) *Gleaner* (Miramichi, N.B.).

⁴⁹ Obituary: *Colonial Pearl* (Halifax), 29 Nov.; *Times* (Halifax) 26 Nov.; *Royal Gazette* (Halifax) 27 Nov. 1839.

RÉSUMÉ

William H. Eagar:

professeur de dessin, rue Argyle, Halifax.

William H. Eagar (1796-1839) a exercé ses activités de professeur et d'artiste dans les deux villes portuaires de St-John's, Terre-Neuve et Halifax, Nouvelle-Écosse au cours des années 1830. Né en Irlande, Eagar a émigré à Terre-Neuve alors qu'il était encore un tout jeune homme, probablement pour travailler comme agent des pêches et non comme artiste. Il épousa en 1819, Maria Saunders, fille d'une famille respectable de l'île et dix ans plus tard il possédait une propriété importante dans les environs de St-John's.

Eagar ouvrit un studio au Old London Theatre de St-John's en 1829, offrant ses talents comme silhouettiste et paysagiste. Sir Thomas Cochrane, gouverneur de Terre-Neuve, commanda à Eagar, en 1831, une vue panoramique de St-John's depuis Signal Hill. Eagar se rendit à Londres où la vue fut gravée. Stimulé par les oeuvres de aquarellistes anglais, il se proposa de n'enseigner que l'art du paysage à son retour à St-John's; devant l'échec de cette expérience, il s'occupa de nouveau à faire des portraits.

À Halifax, en 1834, Eagar installa une Académie de dessins sur la rue Barrington afin d'initier les filles et les femmes venant des bonnes familles à ce fini de culture nécessaire à toute éducation digne de ce nom. Dans l'annonce qu'il fit paraître il signala qu'il pouvait enseigner les méthodes actuelles de pratiquer l'aquarelle comme le faisaient Prout, Stanfield, Robson, DeWint, Hunt, Cristal et plusieurs autres aquarellistes anglais de renommée. Son enseignement consistait d'une part à faire copier par les étudiants des vues, déjà gravées par d'autres artistes, ou ses propres oeuvres, il les initia également à interpréter le paysage selon la manière "picturesque", en vogue alors dans l'école anglaise.

Apprécié par ses contemporains, Eagar fut également très impliqué dans la communauté. Sa carrière de professeur prit fin prématurément alors qu'il n'avait que 43 ans.

Alexandra E. Carter

Claude Tousignant:

Sculpter pour peindre

Tous les commentaires sur l'oeuvre de Claude Tousignant signalent que ce peintre s'est intéressé, avant toute chose, au sort de la peinture et qu'il a recherché pour celle-ci un état très avancé d'abstraction et de pureté. Le commerce d'une telle idée n'est pas aisé et c'est sans doute pour cette raison qu'elle n'apparaît le plus souvent qu'au travers de détours et d'esquives. L'absolu que représente l'objectif de Claude Tousignant n'arrive pas à se matérialiser facilement et il se situe de manière tout aussi problématique dans une histoire de l'art qui ne s'alimente pas d'objectifs et d'idées, mais bien plutôt de mouvements, de courants et d'étiquettes. Si on désirait intégrer Tousignant à une quelconque histoire de l'art il fallait le raccrocher à un courant et lui trouver une rubrique. Il était hors de question de le classer sous celle des peintres philosophes puisque les classifications sont telles en histoire de l'art qu'elles reposent sur le contenu dénoté ou manifeste d'une oeuvre, et il n'a jamais été évident, si l'on s'en tient à ce point de vue, que Claude Tousignant ait un propos autre que simplement plastique. C'est ainsi qu'on a identifié Claude Tousignant, par exemple, aux "espaces dynamiques", à l'"abstraction perceptuelle", à la peinture optique, à la couleur: on l'a donc identifié aux moyens qu'il prenait pour arriver à ses fins.

“Sculptures”: une finalité mise en scène

Une exposition des oeuvres de l'artiste, conçue par celui-ci, allait bousculer la perception quelque peu inversée qu'on a habituellement de son oeuvre. En janvier-février 1982 un ensemble d'oeuvres réalisées à divers moments tout au long de sa carrière ou exécutées spécialement pour cette occasion avaient été réunies au Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal. Certaines oeuvres étaient connues, d'autres inédites. L'ensemble s'ouvrait sur un tableau de 1956 et présentait ensuite trois groupes principaux qui pourraient être décrits techniquement de la façon suivante: de petites constructions en

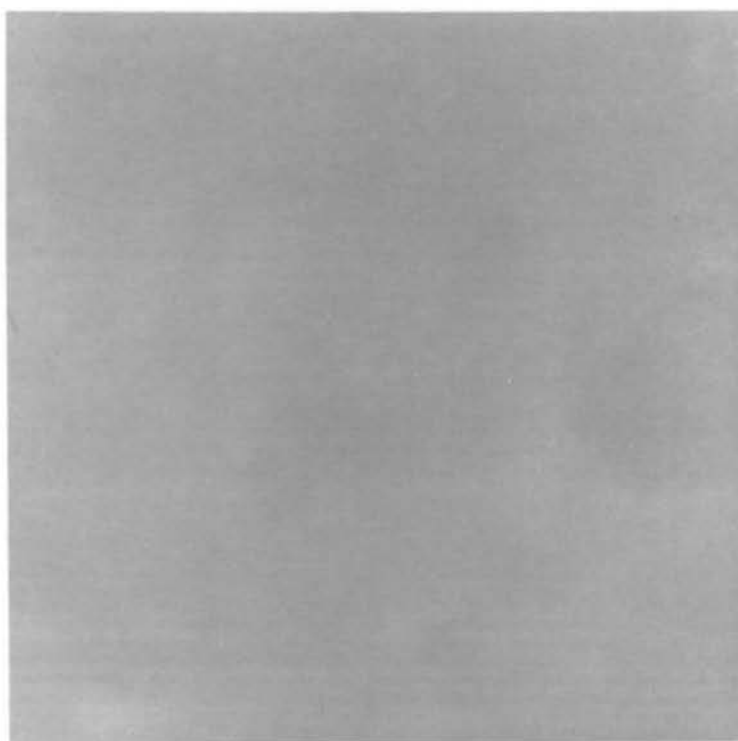


fig.1 **Claude TOUSIGNANT**, *Monochrome orangé*, 1956. Émail sur toile, 129,5 cm x 129,5 cm. Collection de l'artiste. (Photo: Marilyn Aitken, MBAM.)

bois peint (1959-1961 et 1968), des acryliques sur toile monochromes, certaines agencées en forme de polyptyques (1973-1981), et, finalement, des constructions de très grandes dimensions, en bois peint noir (1981-1982). L'exposition était intitulée: *Sculptures*.

Devant le nouvel ensemble d'œuvres que nous proposait Claude Tousignant il était, cette fois, difficile de contourner les intentions du peintre. Celui-ci avait mis divers moyens en œuvre pour que nous n'y échappions pas, à commencer par celui qui consistait à court-circuiter ses commentateurs et à leur imposer un mot comme celui de "sculpture", mot qui fait image et joue à merveille son rôle d'étiquette d'identification. Cette opération primordiale de repérage étant réalisée — l'artiste l'ayant effectuée pour nous — il ne restait plus qu'à associer ce contenu de "sculpture" au contenu que l'art de Claude Tousignant avait toujours privilégié: celui de la peinture. Tout dans cette exposition *Sculptures*, tant les œuvres que leur mise en scène, nous ramenait à la peinture — à commencer par le *Monochrome orangé* de 1956 (fig. 1). Après tout pourquoi celui-ci portait-il en 1956 le

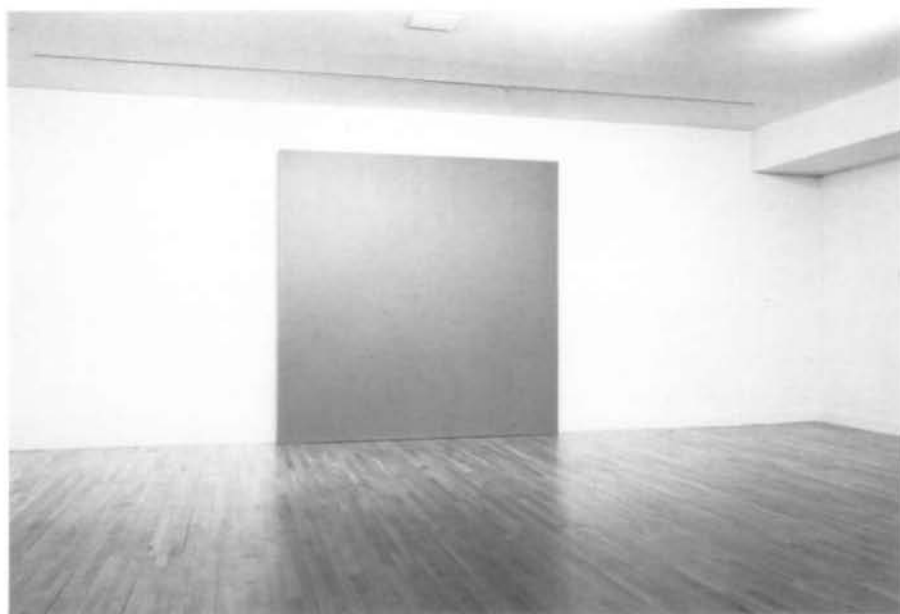


fig.2 Claude TOUSIGNANT, *Monochrome crimson*, 1981. Acrylique sur toile, 266,7 x 369,6 x 13,3 cm. Collection de l'artiste. (Photo: Marilyn Aitken, MBAM.)

nom de "peinture" alors que les monochromes de 1981 (fig. 2) se méritaient celui de "sculpture"? Avait-on voulu par là attirer notre attention sur leurs différences manifestes, trop manifestes? Tousignant posait les questions parce qu'il avait placé dans les salles certaines réponses. Le peintre s'était lui-même chargé de situer le débat et de lancer le terme "sculpture" en espérant peut-être qu'on lui réponde "peinture", pour qu'on en arrive à travers ce jeu de va-et-vient à distinguer la fin des moyens et peut-être, au-delà, à pouvoir mesurer l'ampleur de son propos et à reconnaître à quel point celui-ci est général et ne se limite pas à l'inventaire et à la promotion des valeurs plastiques. Car ce n'est pas l'intérieur de l'image — ce qu'elle représente — ce à quoi elle fait référence — ou ce comment elle est faite qui intéresse Claude Tousignant mais le fait même de l'image.

L'allusion à la sculpture, qui nous renvoie à la peinture, et ainsi aux intentions ultimes du peintre, n'est qu'un indice parmi d'autres du fait que Claude Tousignant serait revenu, dans ses sculptures récentes monochromes sur toile, à certaines propositions fondamentales qui ont marqué son oeuvre. Il les ravivait cette fois-ci en nous les présentant sans fard et sans détour, sans que notre attention ne soit détournée en aucune manière. Que l'on considère le contenu stylistique (on retrouve, par exemple, dans ses oeuvres récentes ce goût des formes parfaites qui l'a toujours caractérisé), que l'on considère le

contenu explicite (le fait qu'il s'agisse de sculptures) ou que l'on considère l'expérience qu'on en a (aussi déroutante soit-elle), l'on se rend compte que Claude Tousignant a conçu ses oeuvres de telle sorte qu'aucun de ces contenus, qu'aucun de ces niveaux de l'oeuvre ne puisse agir comme un écran qui rejetterait dans l'ombre les intentions qui guidaient le peintre dans l'élaboration de son travail. Il n'y a pas dans ses sculptures récentes de stratégie autre que celle qu'il annonçait lorsqu'il écrivait en 1959 dans le catalogue de l'exposition *Art Abstrait*:

Ce que je veux, c'est objectiver la peinture, l'amener à sa source, là où il ne reste que la peinture vidée de toute chose qui lui est étrangère, là où la peinture n'est que sensation¹.

Tous les niveaux de l'oeuvre culminent vers cet objectif, aucun n'y fait obstacle: ils se relaient les uns les autres pour arriver à celui-là. Bien sûr, cette finalité de l'oeuvre que nous décrivons ici par l'intermédiaire d'une déclaration de l'artiste demeure encore très instrumentale. Claude Tousignant n'y dit pas, entre autres, les conséquences qu'entraînent une telle prise de position, conséquences que nous tenterons de dégager au terme de cette réflexion sur son oeuvre sculptée. En revanche, une telle déclaration d'intention de sa part a le mérite d'indiquer avec beaucoup de justesse la relation qu'entretient l'artiste avec l'instrument que constitue pour lui la peinture et elle ouvre déjà la voie à une finalité plus élevée, qui dépasserait la peinture. À ce propos, il faut souligner combien il est rare qu'on puisse faire coïncider en art contemporain la finalité déclarée par l'artiste et celle que la critique, à distance et subjectivement, recompose de l'oeuvre. On cite beaucoup les artistes mais rarement à propos de leurs intentions globales et de leurs aspirations profondes et il est rare que celles-ci s'identifient de si près à un objet. Loin d'y être plaquées, elles semblent plutôt émaner de cette oeuvre qui, comme nous le notions plus haut, ordonne les niveaux stylistique, explicite et vécu de l'oeuvre pour les enchaîner les uns aux autres, et faire aboutir le plus directement possible à la réalité avec laquelle Tousignant voudrait nous mettre en contact. Devant une telle oeuvre la critique n'a plus qu'à enchaîner les niveaux et tourner les pages que l'artiste a préparées. La structure se révèle d'elle-même à la seule lecture des éléments.

Avant de reconstituer cet enchaînement des niveaux nous dirons de chacun de ceux-ci pour les situer globalement que, en premier lieu, la mise en évidence d'un premier niveau stylistique voudrait peut-être contrer l'idée, répandue, que l'oeuvre de Tousignant soit a-stylistique, c'est-à-dire, que l'image du peintre en serait en quelque sorte absente. Ce serait à notre avis

pure manoeuvre du peintre que de se cacher derrière son objet et cela ne suffirait pas à éliminer les faits de style. Dans un deuxième temps, le niveau explicite considérera le fait que Tousignant ait modifié la forme de ses tableaux pour les faire apparaître comme des “sculptures”. L’étude de ce second niveau permettra de voir que, à la fois le style et les objectifs du peintre se sont resserrés et que la cohérence impitoyable qui guidait l’évolution de son oeuvre s’est doublée d’un souci de clarté lui permettant de neutraliser et de dominer certaines ambiguïtés qui s’étaient auparavant attachées à son oeuvre, les mêmes ambiguïtés que nous évoquions au début du texte. Enfin, à travers les troisième et quatrième niveaux, soit l’expérience vécue et l’intentionnalité de l’oeuvre, qui sont tous les deux très liés, nous verrons que l’expérience de l’oeuvre en détermine la portée véritable — ce qui nous permettra de vérifier une constatation que nous avons déjà faite à propos de Tousignant² à savoir que son oeuvre n’est pas une oeuvre théorique ou conceptuelle parce que, précisément, l’acte de perception en est toujours le noyau et ce même lorsque le peintre tend à abréger cet acte de perception, comme c’est le cas ici.

Une logique formelle qui est un style

Le premier niveau sur lequel nous nous attarderons à propos des sculptures récentes de Claude Tousignant est donc ce que nous avons désigné comme le niveau stylistique. Celui-ci se dessine à partir de certains choix du peintre qui dans leur récurrence laissent transparaître une cohérence qui tient à une personnalité et à une volonté de traiter le monde et de le percevoir selon certains schèmes. Ce niveau échappe probablement à ceux qui ne sont pas familiers avec l’oeuvre de Claude Tousignant. Pourtant, il semble d’autre part que ce point de vue s’impose inévitablement avec le temps. Face aux oeuvres nouvelles de peintres dont la carrière s’échelonne sur plusieurs années nous sommes tentés de reconnaître des traits qui étaient déjà présents dans leurs oeuvres, lesquels persistent malgré les changements apparents qui sont décelés. Ce phénomène de persistance presque rétinienne entraîne d’ailleurs que les choix plastiques et esthétiques d’un peintre ayant atteint une certaine notoriété finissent par devenir sa marque et par permettre même de l’identifier. La frontière entre la figure du peintre et ses choix devient alors confuse. Par exemple, même si Tousignant dit considérer la forme de la cible comme telle, purement et simplement, lorsqu’on le voit depuis près de vingt ans s’associer à cette forme (fig.3) il devient impossible de ne pas faire la relation et de ne pas noter devant une nouvelle cible de Tousignant que cette forme appartient au langage du peintre et fonctionne donc aussi en référence

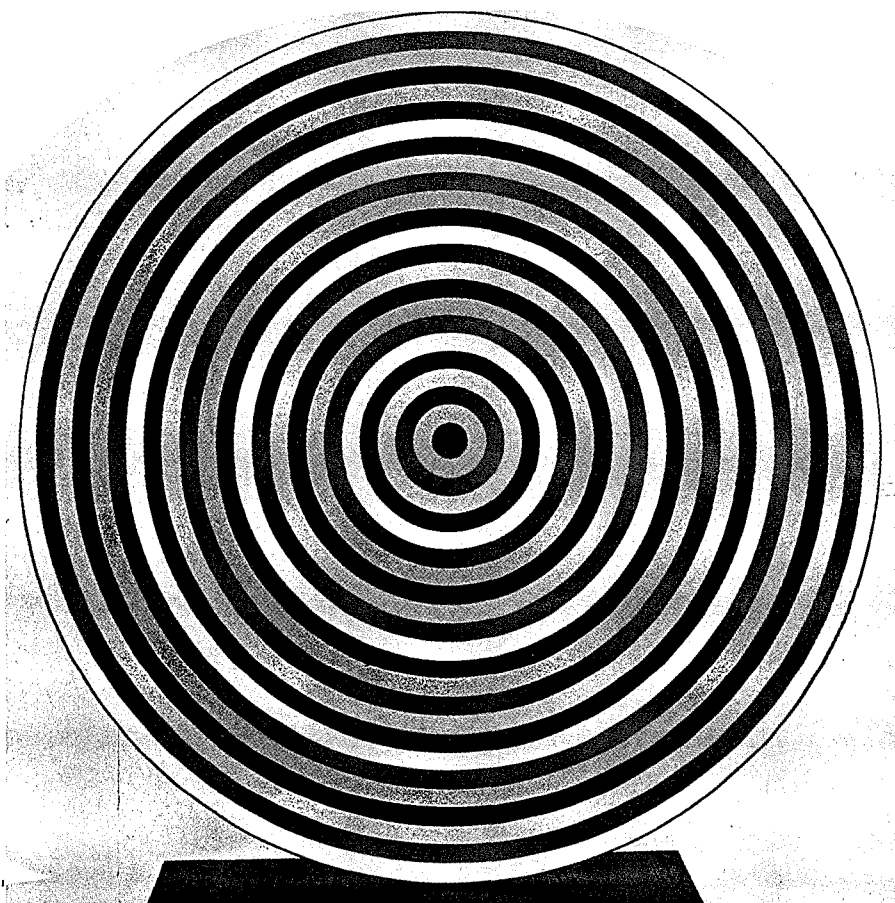


fig.3 **Claude TOSIGNANT**, *Accélérateur chromatique 48*, 1967. Huile sur toile, 122,2 cm de diamètre. Collection Musée d'art contemporain, Montréal. (Photo: Yvan Boulerice.)

à celui-ci, le réitérant par sa seule présence. Nous sommes devant le cas d'un peintre qui a réussi à s'appropriier les formes symboliques les plus communes, des formes qui en principe appartiendraient à tout le monde et, par conséquent, à personne en particulier. En principe seulement. Car la figure du peintre qui veut se dissimuler derrière des formes neutres finit par la force même de sa démarche par passer devant l'image pour coïncider avec elle.

Toutes ces lectures de l'oeuvre sont un effet combiné de l'oeuvre elle-même, du temps et du recul qu'il produit. Parmi tous ces points de vue, nous nous attarderons surtout au fait que l'accumulation des oeuvres permet de faire apparaître et de confirmer certains traits singuliers au peintre, lesquels

ne se démentent pas d'un oeuvre à l'autre. La neutralité et le caractère apparemment arbitraire des choix de Tousignant ne doit pas nous tromper: la question de style y demeure entière et, dans son cas, il faut la traquer là où elle se trouve, derrière ce qui apparemment la nie, soit derrière l'uniformité et la régularité sans faille.

À travers tout l'oeuvre de Claude Tousignant on peut retracer une prédilection pour les formes "parfaites", c'est-à-dire des formes pleines, aux tracés nets et qui sont, selon la définition que la *Gestalttheorie* en donne "simples, régulières et symétriques". À l'intérieur de ces formes, rien ne distingue un détail d'un autre. Même le geste du peintre rejoint cette

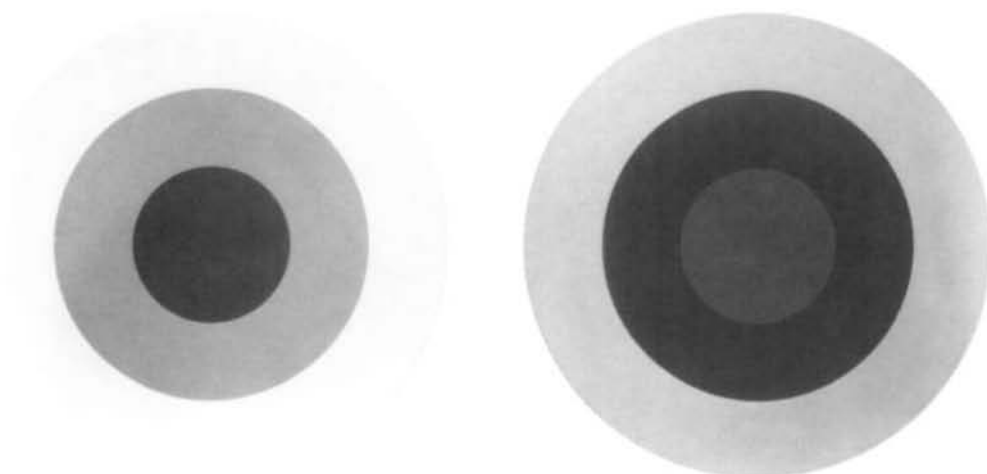


fig.4 Claude TOUSIGNANT, 3-78-102, 1978. Acrylique sur toile, deux éléments, 259 cm de diamètre chacun. Collection de l'artiste. (Photo: Yvan Boulerice.)

perfection parce qu'il occulte totalement l'aspect manuel et artisanal du travail. Les surfaces sont uniformes, les contours réguliers et les répétitions continues. Dans une de ses dernières séries, soit celle des douze diptyques de cibles présentés au Musée d'art contemporain à l'automne 1980 (fig.4), la prégnance de la forme parfaite s'y retrouvait à de multiples niveaux et ce jusque dans la constitution de la série: simplicité, régularité et symétrie marquaient autant la cible, la paire de cible que la série elle-même, laquelle était répartie en deux séquences qui, en plus de comprendre un nombre égal d'éléments (six chacune), se répondaient l'une l'autre comme dans un miroir.

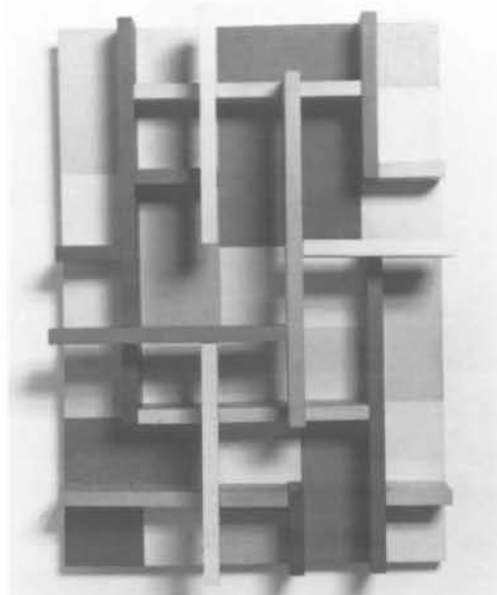


fig.5 Claude TOUSIGNANT, *Petit relief*, 1959. Acrylique sur bois, 30,5 x 50,8 x 15,2 cm. Collection Mme Denise Pelletier, Longueuil. (Photo: Marilyn Aitken, MBAM.)

La perfection et la plénitude de la forme se remarquaient déjà dans les petites sculptures sur bois des années 1959, 1960 et 1961 (fig.5). La composition qui semble très morcelée y crée en fait un ensemble compact qui ne fuit par aucun côté et qui épouse encore parfaitement la forme rectangulaire du cadre sur laquelle repose l'oeuvre.

Non seulement Claude Tousignant préfère-t-il les formes simples mais il tend ostensiblement vers une plus grande simplicité et vers un dépouillement de plus en plus achevé. Par exemple le début d'une série verra se développer des formes plus complexes que celles qui apparaissent en fin de série. Claude Tousignant semble vouloir terminer l'exploration d'une idée en offrant la version la plus abrégée, celle qui mettra de côté tout ce qui n'en constitue pas la quintessence. Ce mouvement vers le dépouillement le plus complet s'observe sur de courtes durées, par exemple lors de la production, de 1978 à 1980, d'une série comme celle des douze diptyques de cibles (fig.4). Au début de la série, les cibles contenaient trois zones et étaient colorées: au milieu de la série elles n'en contenaient plus que deux mais elles étaient encore colorées. Le numéro douze, soit le dernier de la série, n'était plus qu'un cercle à peine bordé qui faisait abstraction de la couleur, n'étant traité qu'en valeurs de noirs plus ou moins gris. Ce mouvement de simplification

s'observe également sur de plus longues durées, comme la période de vingt-deux ans qui sépare ses premières sculptures sur bois de ses toutes récentes. De 1959 à 1973, ou des sculptures sur bois aux premières sculptures monochromes sur toile, Tousignant montre qu'il renonce aux jeux d'équilibre inscrits sur la surface pour les remplacer par un équilibre parfaitement réalisé dans une forme dont la surface est pleine et en tout point uniforme.

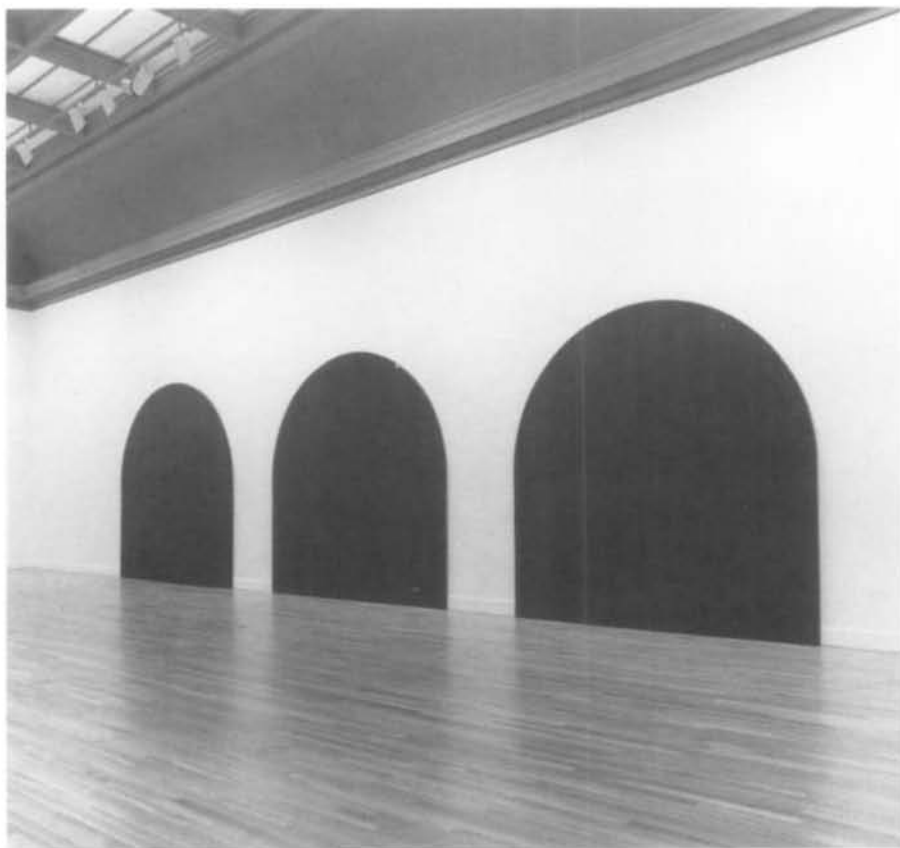


fig.6 **Claude TOUSIGNANT**, *Sculpture*, 1973-1974. Émail sur toile, trois éléments, 289 x 289 x 4,4 cm chacun. Collection Galerie nationale du Canada, Ottawa. (Photo: Marilyn Aitken, MBAM.)

À l'intérieur même de l'ensemble des sculptures monochromes sur toile, on peut retracer la même progression vers le plus simple. La première sculpture sur toile, le triptyque d'arches noirs de 1973-1974 (fig.6), présente une forme complexe combinant le carré et le cercle, alors que les plus récentes sculptures sur toile, soient celles de 1981, sont des carrés parfaits dont chaque côté mesure cent cinq pouces.

Tout au long de l'oeuvre de Tousignant, à chaque fois que la présence de la forme simple et parfaite se fait plus marquée, la réduction de la forme entraîne avec elle celle de la couleur. Celle-ci fait de plus en plus corps avec la forme. La couleur ne trace aucun motif qui viendrait faire diversion; elle réitère plutôt la perfection, la simplicité et l'unité de la forme. Au lieu de faire apparaître des motifs, la couleur fait apparaître ses propres qualités physiques: sa texture, son opacité, sa luminance et ses dimensions, bref tout ce qui révèle l'ici et le maintenant de la couleur. Car chez Tousignant, il n'y a pas d'idée de la couleur; il n'y a que des matières concrètes colorées — spatialisées et temporalisées.

Sculpture ou peinture

Claude Tousignant traite la forme de façon à ce qu'elle détermine, en plus du programme chromatique de l'oeuvre, son format. Qu'il préfère découper la forme plutôt que de la dessiner n'est pas un fait nouveau dans son oeuvre. L'exemple le plus éloquent demeure sans doute le passage qu'on observe en 1965 de la cible dessinée à la cible ayant un format de cible laquelle devenait un véritable tableau circulaire. La plus parfaite coïncidence entre le format et la forme demeure cependant le concept du "tableau monochrome". En confondant format et forme, Tousignant empruntait à la manière d'un sculpteur. En effet, le sculpteur ne se contente pas de dessiner sur une surface; il détermine aussi la forme de ses surfaces ainsi que les coordonnées qu'elles occuperont dans l'espace. Cette description générale de la sculpture — qui ne rend pas compte de toutes les sculptures mais sûrement du plus grand nombre d'entre elles — pourrait fort bien s'appliquer au processus d'élaboration qui l'a conduit aux sculptures monochromes sur toile quoiqu'elle convienne également bien à des oeuvres plus anciennes. Les préoccupations du sculpteur sont présentes chez ce peintre depuis plus longtemps qu'on ne le croirait à prime abord. Le statut d'objets dans l'espace qu'acquerraient les cibles, totalement affranchies du cadre rectangulaire du tableau, en témoignaient déjà dans les années soixante.

Pour bien mesurer l'ambivalence peinture/sculpture, il faut cependant s'empresse de noter, à propos des formes que l'artiste choisit, qu'elles sont proches de la peinture. Dans les salles de l'exposition — pourtant dite de "sculptures" — toutes les surfaces planes qui faisaient face au spectateur, qu'elles soient appuyées au mur ou non, n'étaient pas sans rappeler la peinture: son hiératisme, sa perpendicularité et sa frontalité — toutes caractéristiques prolongeant celle de la planéité du support.

D'autre part, lorsque le peintre se rapproche d'une notion plus orthodoxe de la sculpture et qu'il intègre plus ouvertement des procédés de



fig.7 Claude TOUSIGNANT, 419, 1981-1982. Construction. (Vue partielle.)
(Photo: Marilyn Aitken, MBAM.)

construction, comme c'était le cas dans les petites sculptures sur bois réalisées entre 1959 et 1961, il se rattache alors à une forme mitoyenne entre la sculpture et la peinture soit celle de relief. Le relief maintient la présence d'un plan et il exclut les débordements trop exubérants dans la troisième dimension. Le cadre de ces petites sculptures en bois y joue un rôle déterminant, très proche de celui du cadre en peinture, qui agit traditionnellement comme une limite à l'intérieur de laquelle on pénètre mais dont on ne sort pas.

Il apparaît donc que le rapport qui subsiste avec la peinture va plus loin qu'un simple rapport formel. Les œuvres environnementales de l'exposition *Sculptures*, 419 et 420 (fig.7 et 8), nous le confirment. Dans ces œuvres, Claude Tousignant a sacrifié le cadre mais il en a conservé la *fonction*,

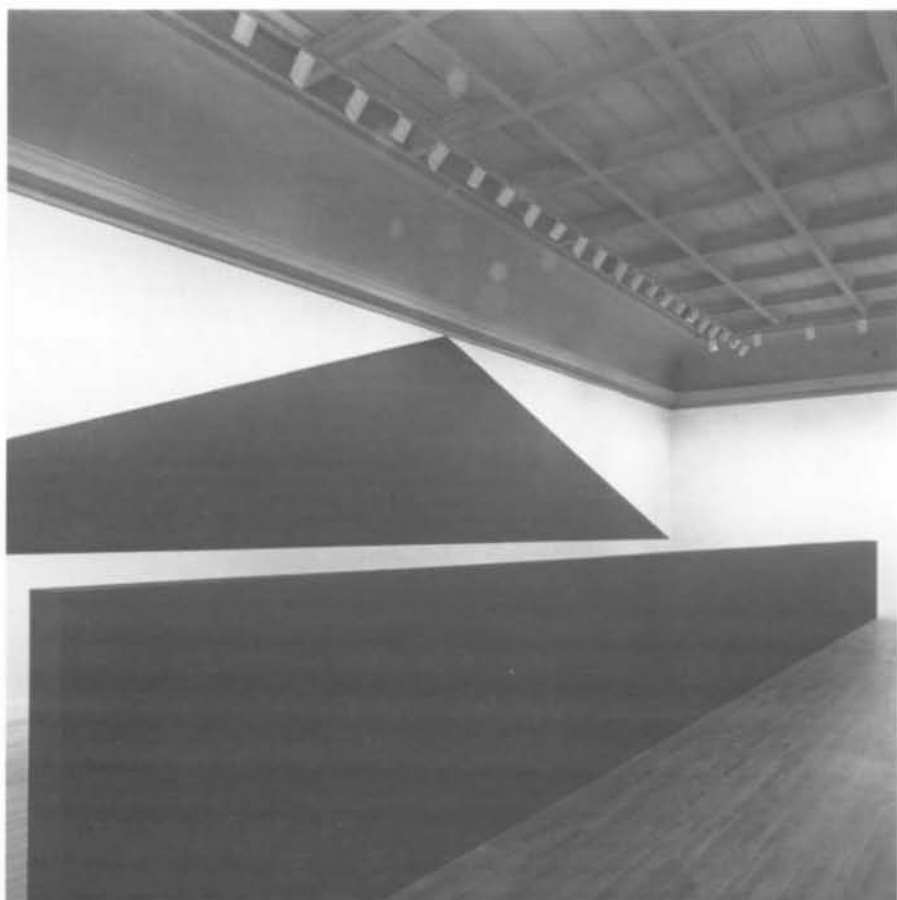


fig.8 **Claude TOUSIGNANT, 420, 1981-1982. Construction.** (Vue partielle.)
(Photo: Marilyn Aitken, MBAM.)

remplie ici par les murs, le plafond et le plancher de la pièce. Chez lui, la fonction du cadre a toujours été primordiale: le cadre est ce qui limite la composition et en même temps ce qui la génère, il en est le modèle. Le cadre fixe les bornes de l'oeuvre et fait se renvoyer l'intérieur de l'oeuvre à la configuration même de ses limites. Les oeuvres 419 et 420 avaient été conçues selon cette optique et elles répondaient, selon les vœux même de Tousignant, à la configuration de la pièce. Elles formaient chacune un tout global comparable à ses sculptures ou à ses peintures plus anciennes. Tousignant faisait jouer à une pièce à un lieu architectural clos, les rôles, physique et conceptuel, de limite et de support de l'oeuvre qu'il avait autrefois dévolus au cadre. Il en résultait une peinture tridimensionnelle, à l'échelle d'une pièce.

L'obsession de la symétrie qui marque l'élaboration de toutes les sculptures de l'artiste, y compris les oeuvres environnementales, nous ramène elle aussi dans le champ de la peinture, avec autant sinon plus de force. La symétrie des oeuvres impose à notre regard et à notre conscience l'axe médian autour duquel elles s'ordonnent et, de cette façon, nous impose un point de vue imaginaire fixe situé devant l'oeuvre et passant par son centre. La symétrie et le point de vue mental fixe qui lui est tributaire recréent des conditions semblables à la frontalité du tableau qui, elle aussi, privilégie un point de vue parmi tous les autres. Et le fait que le spectateur puisse se promener à l'intérieur de l'oeuvre et la voir sous toutes ses facettes ne réussit pas par ailleurs à enlever la primauté de ce point de vue.

Nos observations stylistiques ont fait ressortir la permanence de la vision du peintre même lors des incursions de l'artiste hors de la peinture. On aura peut-être ici l'impression d'avoir déjà glissé de l'analyse stylistique à l'analyse du propos explicite des oeuvres. Or nous n'avons fait que refléter la façon dont la démarche de Tousignant lie intimement les différents niveaux, au point qu'il est presque impossible de les distinguer. Au moment où nous parlons de forme parfaite et de *Gestalttheorie* il est déjà question de peinture ou de sculpture et déjà il ne faut plus faire référence à celles-ci que pour le point de vue qu'elles imposent et c'est alors vers le spectateur, vers son expérience de l'oeuvre, qu'est dirigée notre attention.

Une qualité d'objet

Figeons pour un instant cet enchaînement accéléré pour que nous puissions maintenant examiner ce que nous avons désigné comme le contenu explicite de la proposition "Sculptures", soit l'emphase mise par le peintre sur l'aspect sculptural de son oeuvre.

Nous sommes déjà, à ce stade, averti du caractère ambivalent des peintures et des sculptures de l'artiste. Nous avons fait valoir que les peintures de Tousignant avaient tendance à se présenter comme des sculptures parce que, autant la forme que la couleur y détenaient un caractère d'objet. De leurs côtés, ses sculptures conservaient quelques-uns des traits caractéristiques structurels de la peinture, soit la frontalité, la présence d'un cadre-limite et également celle d'un point de vue privilégié imposé au spectateur par la symétrie qui ordonne les oeuvres.

L'ambiguïté peinture/sculpture a une fonction très importante par rapport à la proposition *Sculpture*: c'est elle qui en donne la véritable résonance. Sans cette ambiguïté, elle serait une proposition conceptuelle vide de toutes significations alors qu'ici elle couronne un passage qui s'est effectivement

produit dans l'oeuvre du peintre. Si, d'autre part, Claude Tousignant n'avait pas fait le geste de poser par terre le tableau et de nommer "sculpture" l'oeuvre ainsi conçue, l'ambiguïté serait restée enfermée sur elle-même et serait peut-être restée lettre morte comme ce *Monochrome orangé* de 1956 dont Tousignant dit qu'il n'a pas provoqué, à l'époque, la réaction qu'il attendait³. Vingt ans plus tard, il reprend l'idée. Mais sans presque rien y changer, il décide de faire parler son oeuvre et de la faire déborder de son discours sur elle-même. Le *Monochrome orangé* de 1956 et les monochromes de 1981 sont à peine différents et pourtant ils appartiennent à deux mondes. Ils mettent tous deux de l'avant un même degré d'abstraction et presque le même qualité d'objet. Cependant, il est beaucoup plus clair devant celui de 1981 qu'il s'agit d'un objet. Dans le *Monochrome orangé* de 1956, tout devait se passer à l'intérieur de l'oeuvre, comme c'est d'ailleurs toujours le cas dans la peinture. Il nous est permis de croire rétrospectivement que cela n'était pas suffisant pour bien situer l'oeuvre dans son propos. En prenant possession du plancher et en s'épaississant — les monochromes de 1981 ont jusqu'à cinq pouces d'épaisseur — les monochromes récents démontrent qu'ils ne sont pas simplement à regarder ou à contempler à l'instar d'un image quelconque, qu'elle soit figurative ou abstraite. En l'appuyant au sol, Claude Tousignant détache la peinture d'elle-même et la montre comme ayant les caractères essentiels d'un objet usuel qui se tient au sol de façon autonome. Il faut faire remarquer ici que Claude Tousignant n'intervient pas *dans* l'objet (sauf pour l'épaisseur) mais dans la *situation* de l'objet, dans le point de vue qu'on a sur lui: il montre bien ainsi que le peintre n'a fait que mettre en perspective l'objet de sa recherche.

En opérant un déplacement dans l'espace, Claude Tousignant nous pointe du doigt le lieu dans lequel l'oeuvre agit dorénavant, soit l'espace réel de la pièce où l'oeuvre est présentée (fig.9). L'oeuvre a définitivement quitté l'espace des images et a conquis l'espace des objets. Un tel dénouement était prévisible dans le cas d'une oeuvre qui a toujours voulu briser ses liens avec la représentation et avec l'espace spéculaire dans lequel on peut se projeter: si elle poursuivait sa logique, elle devait inévitablement passer dans une autre catégorie, celle de la sculpture, qui exclut le dessin et la représentation fondée sur celui-ci — et ce juste avant d'accéder à une dernière catégorie, soit celle des objets, excluant définitivement toute représentation.

Soulignons en dernier lieu que la volonté de clarification du propos que nous avons vue à l'oeuvre va jusqu'à faire appel au terme de "sculpture" pour constituer le titre de l'exposition. La chose était d'autant plus adroite et

efficace que le musée, qui se charge d'habitude d'octroyer ce genre d'étiquette, avait acquiescé à la volonté du peintre avec beaucoup de collaboration, en omettant les guillemets à "sculptures" — ce qui a confondu, pour le plus grand bien de la proposition de Tousignant, le discours du savoir et de l'autorité et le discours esthétique.

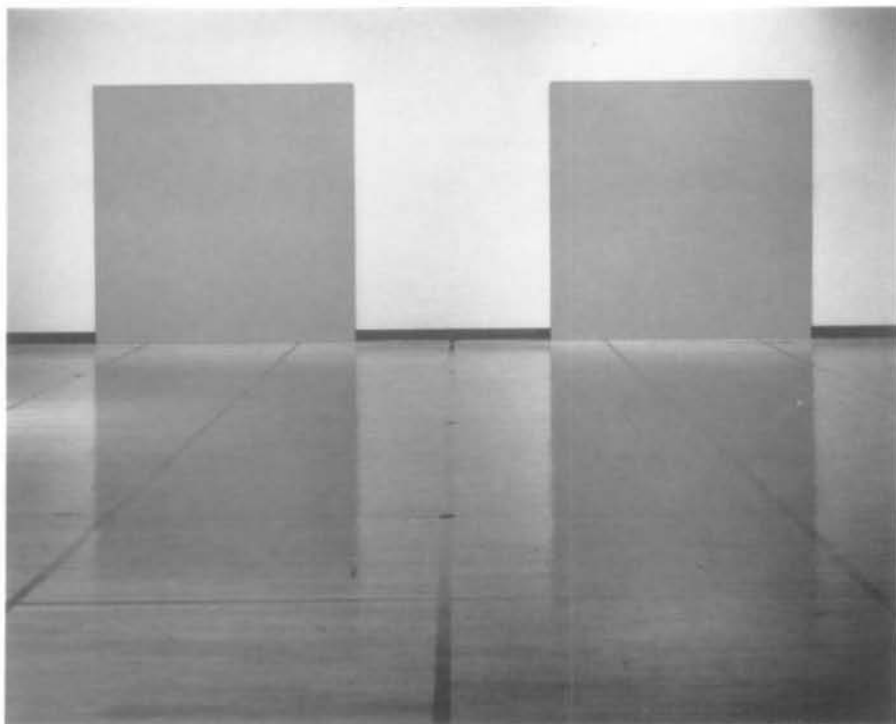


fig.9 Claude TOUSIGNANT, *Rouge*, 1977-1978. Liquitex sur toile, deux éléments, 259 x 259 x 3,5 cm chacun. Collection de l'artiste. (Photo: Musée d'art contemporain, Montréal.)

L'expérience de la déroute

La valse-hésitation que nous avons fait jouer entre la peinture et la sculpture ne se stabilise, au bilan, ni sur l'une ni sur l'autre. Au contraire, elle nous a fait glisser dans de nouveaux territoires qui intègrent des notions non-artistiques tel que l'espace réel et l'objet. L'aspect hybride de ces peintures/sculptures tend à les repousser dans la zone non-déterminée où l'on retrouve les objets et peut-être aussi l'architecture. Si nous pouvons, à distance de ces objets et avec le recul, en parler comme des peintures ou des sculptures, le premier contact que nous avons avec ces objets nous ramène à une expérience commune, plus proche de celle de l'architecture que de celle de l'oeuvre d'art. Il est inévitable que nous réfléchissions à ces objets comme

à des peintures ou à des sculptures, mais il est peu probable que nous les regardions comme tel au premier abord. Devant l'uniformité des surfaces des monochromes, devant l'instantanéité de perception que permet l'extrême simplicité de l'image et devant le caractère d'évidence que Tousignant donne à ses oeuvres, la réaction du spectateur semble être de marcher, de parcourir la salle qui contient ces oeuvres, sans s'arrêter spécifiquement devant aucune d'elles. La perfection de la forme incite à passer outre car ce qui est parfait — toujours dans le sens de la *Gestalttheorie* — n'attire pas l'attention. Que percevoir lorsqu'il n'y a rien à percevoir, aucun défaut, aucune irrégularité, aucun écart. La réaction du spectateur semble être la même que dans une oeuvre environnementale, qu'il découvre et expérimente en la parcourant. Devant les oeuvres récentes de Tousignant, le spectateur, de regardeur, devient marcheur. C'est en marchant que celui-ci expérimente le mieux et le plus rapidement la force de la couleur, la présence des matières, leur réaction à la lumière et tout ce qui fonde la présence troublante de ces objets colorés. C'est aussi par l'expérience de la marche que se constate et se vérifie le mieux la démesure qui caractérise des oeuvres comme 419 et 420 (fig.7 et 8) lesquelles avaient été construites spécifiquement pour l'exposition du Musée des beaux-arts: elles étaient assujetties à la mesure des salles qui les contenaient, à la mesure d'une architecture plutôt que d'une dimension humaine.

La marche exprime notre déroute. Où fixer notre attention et où se fixer lorsque la structure des oeuvres saute aux yeux et que la forme a atteint l'état le plus avancé de simplicité? Au Musée des beaux-arts, les petites sculptures sur bois étaient placées comme dans des écrans lumineux et elles attiraient de cette façon le regard scrutateur (fig.10) mais, dès la salle suivante (fig.11) qui contenait les premières sculptures monochromes sur toile, les oeuvres s'imposaient violemment, d'un seul regard. Devant ces dernières, notre attention était littéralement "déroutée" et elle glissait sur celles-ci comme si rien ne la retenait — provoquant ainsi notre fuite en avant. L'idée de déroute décrit ce comportement et elle rend compte aussi de ce sentiment d'être dominé par des objets impossibles à s'approprier parce qu'ils affichent trop ouvertement leur présence et évacuent trop radicalement les significations manifestes qui nous permettraient de nous y raccrocher.

L'expérience de la déroute qualifie le premier contact que nous avons avec ces oeuvres mais il y a peu de chance qu'elle se poursuive au delà. Le contexte muséographique dans lequel les oeuvres furent présentées contribuait le premier à apaiser cette déroute: il infusait petit à petit un autre sens à l'expérience des oeuvres. D'abord, comme premier effet, il donnait à



fig.10 Vue d'une salle de l'exposition *Sculptures*. Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, 1982.
(Photo: Marilyn Aitken, MBAM.)

l'expérience un sens chronologique, une direction dans le temps. Le fait qu'il s'agisse d'une présentation muséographique permettait aussi de faire rejouer le film de la déroute, de faire revoir le passé et le présent et de pouvoir ainsi distinguer progressivement des enchaînements. A cet égard, il demeure particulièrement intéressant pour un ensemble d'oeuvres aussi déconcertant, faisant nécessairement choc avant de faire sens, que la sens, que la succession des salles de l'exposition fasse un boucle de sorte qu'au terme de sa visite le spectateur revienne au tout début du parcours et soit de cette façon invité à refaire le trajet. La multiplicité des objets et leur diversité avaient sûrement contribué, au premier contact, à accentuer l'effet d'étrangeté vécu par le spectateur. Mais, dans ce contexte muséographique qui permettait et même favorisait des retours en arrière et des va-et-vient incessants, la diversité des objets incitait à les mettre en perspective et les faisait s'éclairer mutuellement. L'exposition — surtout de par son titre "*sculptures*" — posait aussi des choses différentes comme étant équivalentes. La proposition, d'abord énigmatique, finissait par faire image et par nous renseigner sur les intentions de peintre. La métaphore que constitue le titre contribuait à unifier un ensemble qui a première vue semblait disparate. Par comparaison les



fig. 11 Vue d'une salle de l'exposition *Sculptures*. Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, 1982.
(Photo: Marilyn Aitken, MBAM.)

oeuvres se dévoilaient petit à petit et les rapports que l'on pouvait faire entre les oeuvres de l'exposition devenaient multiples. Nous en avons déjà fait ici quelques-uns et tout visiteur un tant soit peu attentif en aura sûrement fait plusieurs. Dans le texte du catalogue, Normand Thériault établissait lui aussi plusieurs liens entre les éléments de l'exposition dont nous citerons un exemple ici qui ramène cette notion de "boucle": il rapprochait les oeuvres les plus anciennes et une des oeuvres les plus récentes, *420*, pour indiquer le retour du thème de la profondeur de l'espace, abordé dans les petites sculptures sur bois et abordé aussi dans *420* mais, cette fois-ci, à une échelle monumentale et réelle, à une échelle architecturale⁴.

On pourrait être tenté de faire se résorber entièrement l'aspect déroutant de cet ensemble d'oeuvres dans un ordre soit stylistique, muséographique ou simplement discursif. Mais il ne faudrait pas oublier pour autant le malaise que nous ressentons devant les oeuvres et que celui-ci demeure réel, malgré toutes les remarques, stylistiques ou autres, que nous faisons à leur propos. Il faut se méfier du recul que nous fournit le musée. Le musée tend très souvent à faire passer l'ensemble de l'oeuvre pour l'oeuvre. La muséologie fonctionne presque toujours dans la transitivité et ne se fixe sur un objet que

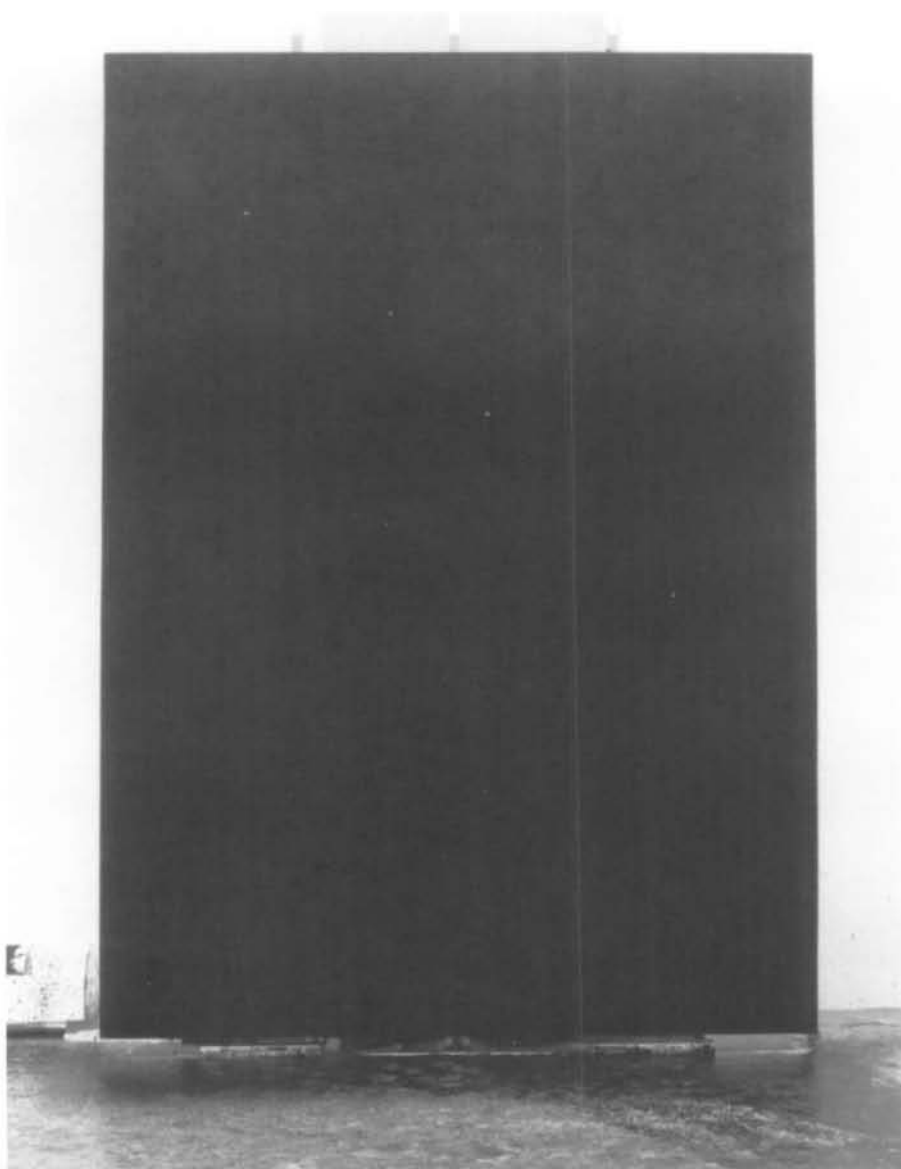


fig. 12 **Claude TOUSIGNANT**, *Monochrome noir (Thanatos)*, 1981. Acrylique sur toile, 266,7 x 369,6 x 13,3 cm. Collection de l'artiste. (Photo: Marilyn Aitken, MBAM.)

pour parler du suivant ou du plus grand ensemble dont il fait partie. A cet égard la mise en place de la salle où se trouvaient les premières sculptures sur toile (fig. 12) était exemplaire car, en créant un monde, enfermé sur lui-même, d'objets colorés qui s'entrechoquaient, elle maintenait l'effet de déroute. La disposition des oeuvres réussissait à échapper à l'effet du temps

qui coule et elle transmettait sans l'édulcorer l'impact réel des oeuvres de Tousignant: leur irréductibilité ressortait comme jamais auparavant à travers l'hétérogénéité un peu exacerbée de cette salle.

Au-delà de l'abstraction, l'opacité du signe

L'expérience de ces oeuvres est déroutante parce que Tousignant nous met en face de ce que nous sentons comme quelque chose d'irréductible, qui ne peut pas être saisi par la pensée puisqu'il a atteint un degré ultime d'abstraction. L'abstrait a basculé dans le concret le plus irréductible; l'objet n'a plus que ses caractéristiques physiques à nous livrer.

La présence, dans le musée, d'objets d'art qui indiquent une volonté très nette d'être perçus comme de simples objets, perturbe l'ordre normal. Le musée, producteur par excellence de signes et pur produit symbolique, nous met, dans le cas des sculptures récentes de Tousignant, en face de quelque chose qui est trop concret pour qu'il puisse être projeté au niveau symbolique. Les oeuvres jouent le jeu de nous priver du sens qu'un lieu comme le musée diffuse d'habitude si généreusement. Un peu comme si le peintre, plutôt que de produire du sens, le retenait et faisait tout en son pouvoir pour extraire l'objet-peinture ou l'objet-sculpture du monde de l'art et de la signification. Tousignant, en effet, a déployé tous ses efforts afin de ramener l'objet d'art à un simple statut d'objet, c'est-à-dire à une expérience des éléments concrets de la peinture. L'intervention de Claude Tousignant serait donc à l'exact opposé de celle de Marcel Duchamp. Ce dernier faisait accéder l'objet usuel au statut d'objet par le seul pouvoir de l'artiste d'instituer l'objet en objet d'art alors que Tousignant s'approprie une forme d'art et la rend la plus abstraite possible, jusqu'à ce qu'elle ne soit plus qu'un objet. Duchamp parasitait le musée en y intégrant un objet usuel qui devenait par contiguïté, par le simple fait de sa présence dans le musée, un objet d'art. Tousignant, à l'inverse, se place dans le musée pour nous faire constater que sa peinture n'est plus comme les autres peintures du musée, qu'elle est devenue un objet et qu'à ce titre elle contraste maintenant avec le musée.

À aucun moment cependant le geste de Tousignant ne peut être saisi comme une dérision. L'image qu'il donne de la peinture met en valeur les moyens intrinsèques de la peinture: la surface, le format et la couleur, c'est-à-dire, remarquons-le, les mêmes moyens qu'exploitent et que valorisent les peintres de la couleur. Parce qu'il a conservé les moyens de la peinture, Tousignant montre bien que son oeuvre, loin d'en être une critique, en serait plutôt un hommage. Cet hommage s'adresse autant à la peinture qu'à un

certain idéal qu'elle s'était posée au début du siècle: celui de l'abstraction. La recherche de cet idéal est à la source des plus grandes découvertes de l'art moderne; c'est elle qui a permis de mettre à jour les ressources de la peinture en tant que langage et elle en a permis le renouvellement constant auquel nous assistons depuis le début de vingtième siècle. L'abstraction a connu un sort semblable à celui qu'on notait à propos de l'oeuvre de Claude Tousignant: on a eu tendance à ne retenir d'elle que ses effets. Pour un peintre, l'abstraction s'est rarement constituée en tant qu'objectif: le plus souvent, des recherches sur la couleur, la forme et même la représentation ont pris le relais d'une recherche qui avait pour point de départ l'abstraction comme prétexte. Par sa quête d'un tableau sans image, parfaitement vide et monochrome dans lequel il est impossible de se projeter, Tousignant renoue avec cet idéal de l'abstraction, dont il nous montre aujourd'hui qu'il n'avait pas été entièrement exploré.

Claude Tousignant pousse l'expérience de l'abstraction à ses limites. Plutôt que de s'arrêter aux retombées que provoque une abstraction de plus en plus grande, il la mène jusqu'à où elle ne produit plus rien, sinon une pure matérialité, banalisée, qu'il serait impossible de reporter à un niveau symbolique. Tousignant réussit à placer la peinture dans un contexte où elle n'est plus que matière, dégagée de toute signification surajoutée.

En agissant de la sorte Claude Tousignant intervient dans un domaine qui n'est plus limité à l'esthétique et qui soulève plus généralement le problème du signe, tel qu'il se pose dans tous les langages et, nous irons même plus loin, dans tous les échanges symboliques. En refusant de faire signifier ce qui semble avoir pour fonction de signifier, en refusant d'associer matière et signe et en faisant voir les résultats d'une telle opération, Tousignant gèle un système d'échange et il fige l'économie du signe. Il refuse de la faire fonctionner dans son sens habituel et la fait régresser jusqu'au moment où elle ne produit plus rien, sinon une *présence* de matière. Et, on le sait, les significations s'échangent mais la présence, elle, ne s'échange pas: elle *ne peut pas* faire l'objet d'un échange.

Les oeuvres abstraites de Tousignant ne se proposent pourtant pas comme des simulacres de signes, mais bien comme de véritables signes, qui se refusent cependant à participer à cette interaction généralisée et obligée qu'est l'échange des signes, échange perpétuel qui maintient en vie le système d'échange d'abord, les institutions, les pratiques et tout le corps social.

Il n'y a ni cynisme, ni nihilisme dans une telle attitude car la mise en scène de l'absence de sens n'est que provisoire et n'est, précisément, qu'une

mise en scène. Ainsi il n'y a pas de paradoxe à débusquer une intentionnalité dans un geste qui se refuse à signifier car ce n'est que le tableau qui se refuse à signifier: le peintre, lui, agit et signifie, par son geste, dans un domaine plus vaste. L'artiste fait apparaître que le signe n'est pas réductible à sa simple signification, et encore moins à sa fonction, qu'il n'est pas que valeur d'échange, que tout ne s'épuise par sur le mode de la consommation et que toute matière ne se transforme pas en valeur échangeable. Claude Tousignant réclame, et en ce sens sa démarche est très actuelle, l'*opacité* du signe, ce signe-matière trop vite traduit, coté, codé et volatilisé dans un circuit d'échange.

En ébranlant, le temps d'une oeuvre, l'équilibre tout-puissant de l'économie du signe, Claude Tousignant, risque de se retrouver au ban d'un système qui admet mal les contradicteurs: il est difficile d'apprécier ce système et d'admettre en même temps que l'oeuvre de Tousignant l'enraye.

En faisant naître le sens par une présentation en coupe du signe, Claude Tousignant se place dans le débat fondamental de la production du sens. Non pas du point de vue de l'émetteur et du récepteur, entre qui le problème du sens se réduit à un simple problème de compréhension — à un simple problème de circulation du sens — , mais à un niveau plus critique et plus inconfortable, celui où se questionne la probabilité même d'un lien entre la matière et le sens — dont Claude Tousignant nous fait dire qu'ils ne sont peut-être pas aussi bien ajustés que la théorie du signe voudrait nous le faire croire.

France Gascon
Conservatrice
Musée d'art contemporain
Montréal.

Notes

Texte préparé à partir d'une conférence présentée au Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal lors de l'exposition *Claude Tousignant: Sculptures* (15 janvier-21 février 1982).

Claude Tousignant, né à Montréal en 1932, a commencé à exposer au milieu des années cinquante et il était alors associé à un groupe de peintres, connu comme "les Plasticiens" qui, en se réclamant des enseignements de Mondrian, pratiquaient une peinture abstraite et géométrique aux formes épurées. Par la suite, le dynamisme de l'espace coloré s'est imposé comme le thème central de la production de l'artiste. Claude Tousignant a exposé au Canada, aux États-Unis et en Europe. La Galerie nationale du Canada lui a consacré une rétrospective en 1973. Son oeuvre compte des peintures, des sculptures et des estampes et il a aussi réalisé, plus récemment, des installations *in situ*.

¹ Claude TOUSIGNANT, "Pour une peinture évidentielle", dans le catalogue de l'exposition *Art Abstrait*, École des Beaux-Arts de Montréal, 1959, (n.p.).

² Voir l'analyse que nous avons élaborée dans le catalogue *Claude Tousignant: Diptyques 1978-1980*, Musée d'art contemporain, Montréal, 1980, p. 5.

³ Cité par Normand THÉRIAULT, dans le catalogue de l'exposition *Claude Tousignant: sculptures*, Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, 1982, p. 36.

⁴ Normand THÉRIAULT, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

Claude Tousignant: To Sculpt in Order to Paint

Claude Tousignant is best known as a painter. His name has been associated with the Montréal *Plasticiens* and he has always advocated abstract and geometric painting. His work spans a good twenty-five years and comprises a number of pieces which he himself calls "sculptures." He uses the term to refer as much to reliefs and wood constructions he did in the fifties and sixties as to more recent works that are in fact free-standing paintings. Tousignant made this ambiguity between painting and sculpture the centre of an exhibition which brought together his sculpted work since 1956 at the Montréal Museum of Fine Arts in January-February 1982 under the title *Sculptures*.

This change of direction by the painter towards sculpture was clearly in keeping with some of the objectives which had determined the course of his painting since the mid-fifties. The exhibition showed the main characteristics of the artist's work: his preference for simple forms, his appropriation of the most common forms and a perfect correspondence between colour and form. The objects exhibited at the Montréal Museum of Fine Arts retained, from painting and sculpture, more than their intrinsic methods; they also involved the attitude of the spectator who normally relates differently to painting and sculpture but who, confronted with these hybrid objects, was forced to abandon such distinctions.

The monochrome sculptures created by Claude Tousignant since 1974 have the quality of objects. Standing on the ground rather than hanging on a wall, these "paintings" enter into the space of objects. In this way they sever, even more radically, any possible anecdotal link as they attain another type of imaginary space, a space where the real triumphs: an architectural space.

The keynote to the way the spectator experiences these works is disconcertment. Deliberately voided of any predetermined meaning, these works are left to reveal their "presence," that is to say, their physical characteristics. It is possible to see that, in this way, Claude Tousignant has reached a goal he had set for himself a long time ago: a painting "void of anything alien to it, a painting which is pure sensation." But he goes further in that his work addresses the larger problem of symbolism: he shows that the sign cannot be reduced to its meaning and he insists on its "opacity" as an obstacle against too quick a substitution of its meaning. Tousignant reminds us that the sign is first of all a "presence" and, as such, it cannot be the object of a substitution.

France Gascon

BOOK REVIEWS / COMPTES RENDUS

Maurice Cullen 1866-1934

Sylvia ANTONIOU

Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1982

Édition bilingue, 115 pp., 70 ills., \$10.00

Parlant de la nature, on reconnaît d'emblée dans l'impressionnisme une attitude plus simple, plus directe et un champ plus restreint.

L'impressionnisme s'ouvre à la nature passivement, il l'aborde dans un état d'entière disponibilité visuelle et cherche à la connaître dans ses effets optiques. Il est assez évident qu'une telle attitude pouvait fournir à l'art matière à d'importantes conquêtes, mais c'était matière à penser ...

Paul KLEE,

*Approches de l'art moderne*¹.

Le catalogue est celui qui accompagne l'exposition ouverte à l'automne 1982 à Kingston, puis, mise en tournée² et pour laquelle ont été réunies 72 oeuvres de Maurice Cullen ainsi que le buste en bronze de l'artiste par Alfred Laliberté. En l'année consacrée à Claude Lorrain, voilà que l'on nous donnait rendez-vous avec une autre célébrité de la peinture paysagiste, celle-ci plus "locale". Sans qu'il en soit du prétexte chronologique — Maurice Cullen aurait aujourd'hui 116 ans, et 48 années sont passées depuis sa mort — cette exposition rétrospective s'inscrit dans un série de manifestations que l'AEAC a, depuis quelques années et selon la disponibilité des chercheurs, consacré à des artistes canadiens de la fin de XIXe siècle³.

Cullen, l'homme, sa peinture, voici un sujet qui se prêtait tout à fait à l'exercice d'une rigoureuse mise au point. Voilà un peintre exclusivement paysagiste, constant

avec sa formation ("If I had to abandon nature for abstract pattern, I would give nature up and become a rugmaker"⁴), et dont les étapes de la carrière sont depuis longtemps connues: "Paris, la Normandie, la Bretagne, Venise, l'Algérie, Québec, Montréal, les Laurentides⁵." Rapin à l'École des Beaux-Arts de Paris au temps où la révolution impressionniste commençait à se faire apprécier (nous sommes en 1888), Cullen noue des liens profonds et durables avec ses compagnons de première heure: Blair Bruce, Brymner et surtout James Wilson Morrice qui lui feront voir du paysage. On avait, il y a peu de temps, suggéré une relation directe avec le norvégien Frits Thaulow alors actif à Paris. Faute de preuves, le contact est maintenant contesté⁶. Il en demeure pas moins que Cullen aura subi l'ascendant de cette sorte de naturalisme élargi et que le rapprochement est intéressant. Il aurait fallu prendre le risque d'en proposer d'autres ...

"Back in Canada", c'est sous l'étiquette impressionniste que Cullen traverse tranquillement quarante-quatre années de vie de peintre indépendant. Ancré à Montréal qu'il quitte régulièrement pour des excursions sur les bords du Saint-Laurent, Cullen est reçu à l'Académie Royale, membre fondateur du *Pen and Pencil Club* et professeur à temps partiel des cours en plein air de l'*Art Association of Montreal*. Assurément, ce peintre-là peint, expose et vend beaucoup. Cependant, on n'a pas cherché à évaluer le volume de sa production que l'on doit présumer dépasser aisément le millier de tableaux. En 1918, Cullen reçoit son unique véritable commande: il est enrégimenté sous le *Memorial War Records*. En 1922, on le sait occupé à compléter cinq grands tableaux; est-ce là l'ensemble de sa production du temps de guerre? À compter de 1923 s'instaure avec

le marchand d'art William Watson une franche association: "He painted very slowly, and I would have to put paintings aside, collecting them for a year, to have enough to make an exhibition⁷." Il en tiendra douze, annuelles, dont les ventes au dire de Romain Gour, auraient réunies \$175,000⁸. Plusieurs de ces achats auraient été réglé par des Américains. Est-ce qu'un chercheur va bientôt se mettre à retracer tout ce patrimoine?

Après le décès du peintre, va se constituer une abondante hagiographie, ce qui est assez normal vu la hauteur de la renommée, mais, qui continue de peser de tout son poids sur notre bibliographie critique. Trois auteurs ont depuis préparé des Cullens importants: dès 1934, celui apologétique de W. Watson; en 1952, celui plus discret mais tellement mieux senti de Romain Gour; enfin le plus fastueux, celui de Jouvancourt paru en 1978. Pour terminer ce rappel Cullen, il faut compter avec une exposition majeure (88 oeuvres, plus un catalogue) organisée en 1956 par le fils adoptif et disciple, Robert Pilot pour la *Art Gallery of Hamilton* qui la fit circuler à Toronto, Ottawa et Montréal.

Alors quoi de neuf après 26 années et *quid* de cette reprise? D'abord, l'essentiel de l'oeuvre peint est fort probablement déjà entré dans les collections publiques (40 oeuvres en proviennent, plusieurs autres y figureraient avantageusement), les fonds les plus importants sont conservés à Ottawa (GNC) et à Hamilton (AGH). Pour illustrer la participation de guerre, seuls deux tableaux provenant du Musée national de la Guerre, mais pour lesquels Hamilton et Ottawa disposaient des études préparatoires. Du *corpus* que l'on aurait souhaité voir resurgir, seules retrouvées deux pochades dans l'héritage norvégien de Blair Bruce. Encore de nos jours la production de Cullen alimente le marché d'art. Monsieur Eric Klinkhoff a établi à plus de 800 numéros le catalogue de cette circulation et a ainsi permis de localiser plusieurs tableaux. De ceux possédés par des

particuliers et des galeries commerciales prêtés à l'exposition, il est significatif d'en retrouver 11 sur les 12 qui illustrent la dernière période d'activité du peintre! Par ailleurs il est beaucoup plus singulier de constater que la sélection globale des oeuvres ait tenu à l'arrangement biographique divisé en cinq tranches de vie et pour lesquelles on retrouve respectivement 8, 11, 30 (17 années), 12 et 12 oeuvres par section!

Quant au nouveau récit de la biographie — qui constitue le seul texte d'analyse — le moins que l'on puisse dire est qu'il relève de l'ordre de l'agenda. Le rassemblement de la documentation (voir en annexes au catalogue la liste des expositions et la bibliographie) et l'examen de certains documents (il faut en faire la liste à partir des notes) auront certes permis de rétablir les dates exactes de déplacements, des rencontres, des ouvertures d'expositions, des installations d'atelier, etc., etc., mais on aura eu le tort de suivre trop près le classement du document, comme celui, par ailleurs, de multiplier à chaque apparition d'un nouveau tableau les citations de la critique de l'époque. Du reste, une chronologie comme telle apparaît en appendice, avec le malheur qu'étant comparative et publiée en calendrier, sa lecture ne facilite pas le repérage de ce qui appartient en propre à Cullen. Aussi s'il faut effectuer des sauts dans les premières années (pour retrouver Maurice) il est plus fortuit d'établir l'exacte concordance entre les différents faits inscrits, pour exemples: 1888 Van Gogh à Arles alors que Cullen s'embarque pour l'Europe; 1895, Morrice à Dieppe, alors que Cullen est de retour à Montréal; 1900, rétrospective Seurat; 1907, naissance du Cubisme, données fournies, faut-il le croire, comme repères historiques.

Autres remarques sur l'édition qui concernent les illustrations. Les oeuvres au catalogue 6, 12, 23, 58 et 60 devraient être accompagnées d'un astérisque, étant reproduites. Il aurait fallu noter les numéros du

catalogue sous les planches. On n'a pas indiqué la provenance des 6 photographies qui représentent l'artiste, ni si celles-ci sont rendues entières ou fragmentées. Enfin, une observation globale, l'illustration est entièrement "cullenienne" et du fait des doubles, ne témoigne que de 51 oeuvres.

Cette publication soulève toutefois des problèmes d'ordre plus grave. Il est entendu que toute exposition nécessite un certain nombre de tâches indispensables qui ne sauraient être que plus exigeantes lorsque l'on ambitionne une rétrospective historique. On ne pouvait proprement parler de redécouverte Cullen. Non plus on ne devait compter sur des révélations bouleversantes. La réouverture de ce dossier passablement étoffé, dans le cadre d'une manifestation importante et prestigieuse (voir l'itinéraire) aurait dû se prêter à une analyse plus sérieuse et faire oeuvre d'une synthèse moins confuse. Ces derniers efforts ne sont pas exactement visibles dans les deux parties de l'ouvrage où ils auraient normalement pu être exercés, soit le catalogue d'un choix d'oeuvres représentatif et la biographie commentée.

Une exposition signifie avant tout par son rassemblement. Il y a avec certains artistes canadiens le risque pour le moins prévisible de créer un tort esthétique en exposant, au seul nom de la vertu historique, un trop grand nombre d'oeuvres mineures. Ce risque, il va sans dire, a été encouru pour Cullen. Une partie du tort aurait pu être rétablie dans l'explication au catalogue (mais il est orienté essentiellement sur la biographie) ou alors par l'inclusion d'un matériel photographique plus diversifié. Les notices du catalogue ne comportent aucun commentaire d'analyse et les rares renvois aux oeuvres en rapport sont trop sommaires pour venir élargir vraiment notre connaissance du catalogue raisonné. Cette critique est valable pour les oeuvres mieux réussies de Cullen, on aurait aimé savoir en quoi le jugement actuel diffère de ceux posés il y a une cinquantaine

d'années.

"Il fut toujours partisan du travail préparatoire. Des centaines d'esquisses en font foi". De la quantité d'oeuvres produites et sur laquelle, répétons-le, on n'a pas du tout spéculé, trop peu mentionnées les innombrables esquisses aux crayons et les pastels (d'exposés un seul pastel (1912) et 5 crayons — tous datés de la période 1918-1919). Bien entendu on trouve des huiles sur bois (8), mais, on n'a oublié d'en relever l'intérêt technique évident dans le cas du plein air. Il est en tous cas un aspect qu'il est dommage de ne pas avoir relancé, c'est le côté "artisan" de Cullen. Il préparait lui-même ses toiles, ses panneaux, ses couleurs aux pastels. Il ciselait et dorait parfois ses cadres. Bien plus il a consigné sous forme de conseils aux étudiants l'essentiel de ses procédés et de sa manière d'approcher le paysage et que Romain Gour a reproduit. Un texte précieux qui est à la base de l'art de Cullen et auquel il aurait été essentiel de se référer au tout au moins d'en donner la référence¹⁰.

Que des paysages dans cette rétrospective! Le texte ne va guère avant de réflexions sur les problèmes de formation du peintre, ses motivations et sa relation avec l'art canadien, européen et américain. Pour un jeune homme qui passe deux années dans l'atelier de Louis-Philippe Hébert (devrait-on songer à des oeuvres sculptées?), qui reçoit par la suite une formation presque entièrement orientée vers la figure (École des Beaux-Arts de Paris) et qui, au Louvre, copie notamment Vélasquez, Ribot et Greuze (localisations inconnues), il y a un décrochage sérieux que l'on n'a toujours pas relevé. On serait tenté d'y voir pour notre part un problème que Cullen ne dût probablement jamais surmonter.

N'a-t-on pas publié d'abondance sur le naturalisme, l'École de Barbizon, l'impressionnisme, le post et le néo pour qualifier la peinture du Cullen, encore et toujours du seul épithète d'impressionniste? On aurait

également pu s'étendre sur le décalage entre les impressionnistes français et les difficultés de la transmission esthétique¹¹. Il aurait été nécessaire de tenter une définition de son style de représentation pour réévaluer "quelle place occupe Cullen dans nos arts, quelle influence (il a) exercé sur ses contemporains et ses successeurs¹²?" À cette question formulée en 1956 par Robert Pilot, celui-ci évoquait les noms de Morrice, Jackson, Gagnon, mais, aussi ceux de Lismer (celui de 1912) et d'Albert Robinson. Comment peut-on éviter la comparaison avec Suzor-Coté? Dans sa conclusion, Mlle Antoniou rappelle que Cullen encouragea quelques-uns de ses élèves sans qu'aucun de leurs noms (à l'exception de Robert Pilot) ne soit mentionné (Cullen eut pourtant une quinzaine d'élèves tous les étés, durant douze ans, à ses cours de l'AAM); et elle ne retient plus que l'amitié opportuniste avec Brymner et l'apport technique qui permit à Morrice de peindre, à son tour, "impressionniste"! Aussi doit-on regretter qu'aucun effort d'interprétation ne vienne engager notre sensibilité et notre conscience actuelles face à une période qui ne devait pas être, après tout, autant sclérosée.

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Notes

¹ Paul KLEE, *Approches de l'art moderne* dans *Théorie de l'art moderne*. Bibliothèque Médiations Denôel/Gonthier, p. 9.

² Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston; Musée des beaux-arts de l'Ontario, Toronto; Art Gallery of Hamilton, Hamilton; Galerie nationale du Canada, Ottawa; Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton; Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, Montréal.

³ Parmi les réalisations passées, citons: G.F.K. White (1975); C.W. Jeffreys (1976); H. Walker (1977); W.S. Sawyer (1978); D. Fowler (1979); W. Brymner (1979).

⁴ Romain GOUR, *Maurice Cullen — Un Maître de l'art au Canada*. Les Éditions Eoliennes, 1952, p. 20.

⁵ Robert PILOT, *Catalogue de l'exposition Maurice Cullen*, Art Gallery of Hamilton, 1956, n.p.

⁶ Voir la note 53 qui en appelle à la seule faculté de mémoire de la fille de Thaulow.

⁷ W. WATSON, *Retrospective Recollection of a Montreal Art Dealer*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1974, pp. 33-34.

⁸ GOUR, *opus cit.*, p. 18.

⁹ PILOT, *opus cit.*, n.p.

¹⁰ GOUR, *opus cit.*, pp. 24-25.

¹¹ Sur ce thème s'est déroulé au printemps 1982 au musée du Petit Palais, à Paris, une exposition consacrée aux Impressionnistes américains.

¹² PILOT, *opus cit.*

Stanley Brunst: Radical Painter

Terrence HEATH

Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon, 1982

24 pp., 4 colour, 55 b&w ills., \$3.00

This landmark exhibition catalogue accompanied a show of fifty-two works by Stanley Brunst at the Mendel Art Gallery (30 September — 14 November, 1982). The artist worked for eighteen years in Saskatoon, from 1923-1941, but has almost been forgotten since his move to Vancouver in 1941. Recently a nephew of the late artist came forward with some three hundred previously unknown works, several of which were donated to the Mendel Art Gallery. This exhibition, then, marked the first time these paintings had been exhibited publicly and the catalogue presents an opportunity to set Brunst in an artistic context.

Terrence Heath, author of the catalogue, is to be commended on establishing the basic "tombstone" data on Brunst. To ascertain even rudimentary facts took a great deal of research on his part. None of this material has appeared in published form before; so at the very least, the catalogue is a valuable research tool for students in Canadian art history working on twentieth-century art in western Canada. Unfortunately, there is a large gap in the catalogue due to a regrettable decision by Heath to concentrate on Brunst the man rather than Brunst the painter. It is Brunst's work which is intriguing, not his life, and one is piqued to know more about his artistic sources and his ideas.

Generally, Brunst worked in watercolour on cheap paper; he used bright, pure colours. His paintings are small in scale and the artist appears to have been fond of patterning and organic forms. As is evident in his paintings, he seems to have been familiar with the Cubist breaking up of form and shallow space and with Futurist dynamic movement. His works are not even in quality. Some are cluttered and, at times, flat areas of colour

are too thin and brittle-looking. One of Brunst's best works is an untitled watercolour from c. 1935-40 in which trees form a screen on the picture plane, behind which a brightly coloured fence and houses are rendered in a simplified way. Later, Brunst moved away from such naturalistic subject matter and began to work with more fanciful subjects and compositions. Although Heath does not suggest what any of Brunst's sources may have been, one clue exists in one of the artist's paintings — an untitled still life from 1936. One of the books depicted on a table is Wilenski's *The Modern Movement in Art*.

In his biographical work on the artist, Heath estimates Brunst's birthdate as c. 1894 and surmises that he arrived in Canada from England in c. 1912. There is some possibility that he was a Quaker. He came to Saskatoon from Borden, Saskatchewan in 1923, first working as a construction labourer, then as a drycleaner. He received no art training. Brunst lived in Saskatoon throughout the Depression and associated with other artists working in the city. He was a member of Ernest Lindner's Art Association of Saskatchewan, formed in 1939, for example, and exhibited with them (something Heath does not mention).¹ He also attended Lindner's Saturday Nights which were gatherings of artists for discussion. In 1941 Brunst inexplicably moved to Vancouver. Perhaps he moved for artistic reasons — he had begun abstract paintings in 1936 and was possibly seeking a more receptive audience for his new work. (A parallel exists here with Fritz Brandtner, who moved to Montréal in 1934 after six years in Winnipeg in order to find a more accepting milieu for his work.) Certainly Brunst seems to have found a niche for himself in Vancouver. Heath mentions that once there he knew Lawren Harris, Joe Plaskett, Emily Carr and B.C. Binning. He was given an exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1941. (There

are no details on this supplied by Heath — the research on Brunst's Vancouver years remains to be done.) Brunst attended lectures at the Vancouver Art Gallery including one delivered in 1944 by the English surrealist painter, Grace Pailthorpe, who had such an influence on Jock Macdonald. One fact not touched on by Heath is that Lawren Harris bought one of Brunst's works from the 1941 exhibition for his own collection² and so it would appear that his work was greeted with some approval on the West Coast. Brunst died in Vancouver in 1962 at the approximate age of sixty-eight.

Charles Hill first revealed what a fascinating and richly varied period the 1930's was for Canadian painting in his 1975 *Canadian Painting in the Thirties*. But, Saskatchewan and Alberta were virtually excluded from that work, and now, almost ten years later, much of the necessary research for a broad overview of this period of art in the prairie provinces remains to be done. In this respect, Heath's catalogue is a welcome contribution to published research in this area. It is fairly well-written and is handsome in design. But while it forms an adequate introduction to the artist, it is by no means the last word on his work. Brunst left an intriguing body of modernist abstract paintings which have only recently come to public knowledge. At this point, what is needed is intensive research into Brunst as an *artist* in order that a full and proper interpretation of his work be made. Then he can take a well-deserved place in the written history of Canadian art.

Liz Wylie

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Notes

¹ Lindner papers, file on the Art Association of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Archives, Saskatoon office.

² Letter from Ernest Lindner to Illingworth Kerr, April 29, 1941 discusses this sale. Lindner papers, Saskatchewan Archives, Saskatoon office.

Alberta Rhythm: The Later Work of A. Y. Jackson

Dennis REID

Art Gallery of Ontario, 1982

104 pp., 9 colour, 95 b/w illus., \$9.95

Alberta Rhythm: The Later Work of A. Y. Jackson is the first of a series of three exhibitions that Dennis Reid, Curator of Historical Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, is organizing in order to bring to light the post-Group of Seven paintings of Jackson, Arthur Lismer, and Lawren Harris. It opened at the Art Gallery of Ontario in May 1982 and was later seen at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary. Everything in the exhibition was reproduced and documented in the accompanying catalogue and an excellent chronology of Jackson's activities from 1933 until his death in 1974 was provided by Jackson's niece, Naomi Jackson Groves. Carol Lowrey also prepared a bibliography of titles omitted from Reid's 1971 *Bibliography of the Group of Seven*. Both these inclusions are very useful but I would have liked to have seen the chronology expanded to cover Jackson's entire life. It is unfortunate that the bibliography, which goes back to 1917, was primarily designed to be used in conjunction with Reid's now difficult to find *Bibliography*.

The catalogue is very attractive, although I feel that Jackson's "romping rhythms" would have benefitted from a more spacious or relaxed format. The layout is beautifully balanced but is just a little too tight for the works at hand. As for the exhibition, it is clear that Reid chose the work with care, hoping to show Jackson in the most favourable light and prove his own case for the post-Group work. The catalogue's colour reproductions are certainly marvelous. *Alberta Rhythm* and *South from Great Bear Lake* come across well, as dense, sonorous and majestic paintings. But *Early Snow, Alberta*, which I know well, is a slippery Disneyes-

que fantasy that does little to strengthen Reid's argument. Although the few drawings illustrated are punchy and vigorous, they are hardly "exceptional works of art" as Reid contends. Varley, Lismer and FitzGerald were the finer, more *feeling*, draughtsmen within the Group; and compared to Picasso, Matisse or Bonnard, Jackson's scrawls look pretty witless. Like most of his paintings, the drawings are overly general. They tell us little about the particulars of his particular surroundings.

Reid is well aware of this often heard charge and made a valiant, but ultimately unsuccessful, attempt to refute it in his catalogue essay. The first paragraph ends with the remark that "This 'later' work has been dismissed wrongly as dull, repetitive, or formulaary." Yet in the pages that follow, he as much as admits that there is truth to the charges. Writing of Jackson's 1938 Alberta sketches, he quite correctly points out that "they are the same work as Jackson did at St. Tite des Caps the previous spring, and essentially the same work he had been producing since 1914." Jackson's "conservative vision," as Reid politely calls it, made every part of the country look the same. Canada looks like a great jello of jiggling forms when seen through Jackson's art. Nothing has much flavour of its own. The paintings run into each other and eventually put many of us to sleep.

If Reid really believes that Jackson identified with each "subject place," and that his identification adds to the character and to our understanding or the resulting work why did he include so few Quebec paintings in the exhibition? According to Groves' chronology, Jackson painted there almost every year during the thirties and forties. But where is this activity reflected in the exhibition? Given the fact that many Arctic and Ontario, as well as Alberta, subjects were included, I cannot understand Reid's decision.

Nor do I understand why Reid dwelt so

much on Jackson's private life, rehashing the news of his friendship with Anne Savage and telling us when his tonsils came out. I would have liked to have heard much more about his relationship with the Canadian Group of Painters and something about the enormous, and sometimes repressive, influence that he exercised in English Canada during the thirties and forties. And it would have been interesting to have heard more about what others thought of Jackson, for despite the care with which Reid documented his activities, I still have no sense of his presence, which seems to have been the whole point of the essay.

I have great respect for Reid's scholarship, but I do not understand many of the decisions that he made with this exhibition and catalogue. I hope that the Lismer and Harris exhibitions that follow are better tuned and focused.

Christopher Varley

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Edmonton, Alta.

PUBLICATION NOTICE / NOTE DE LECTURE

Arthur Lismer: Nova Scotia, 1916-1919

Gemey KELLY

Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax, 1982

68 pp., 2 colour, 87 b/w illus., \$7.95

There has recently been a strong revival of interest in Arthur Lismer, particularly in his post-Group of Seven period paintings which tended to be neglected during the artist's lifetime. The lurid, intestinal and claustrophobic qualities of many of them were not to contemporary taste and have only gained attention as our view of Canadian art has relaxed and expanded. Lismer was more of a *painter* than most of the Group. As if in reaction to the polished niceties of aesthetes, he laid pigment down with deliberate coarseness. However heavy and unsatisfactory the results sometimes were, they were always frank and, in the post-Group works in particular, seemed to develop from a form of deep, personal expressionism.

Arthur Lismer: Nova Scotia, 1916-1919 deals with the prints and paintings that Lismer produced in the years immediately preceding the formation of the Group, when he was working in isolation from his Toronto contemporaries as Principal of the Victoria School of Art and Design in Halifax (now the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design). But the emphasis of the catalogue accompanying the exhibition is on Lismer's teaching and energetic promotion of the visual arts in Nova Scotia. The catalogue is well-produced and Gemey Kelly's essay is carefully researched and beautifully written. Although she benefitted from selecting an artist whose life has already been fairly well documented, I never had the feeling that she was simply repeating second-hand information. Her text is fresh and thoughtful through-

out. My only regret is that she did not say more about Lismer's art of the period, although she did make the important connection with John Constable. This might have helped to establish the paintings of the period in the broader context of Lismer's total *oeuvre*.

Christopher Varley

Head Curator/Curator of Canadian Art

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*List of articles, short notes,
sources and documents,
book reviews and publication
notices published since volume i/1
(arranged chronologically)*

*Liste des articles,
notes et commentaires,
sources et documents,
comptes rendus et notes de lecture
déjà parus (ordre chronologique).*

Articles

Vol.

Art / Peinture, dessin, gravure, photographie.

Un retour sur l'oeuvre d'Adrien Hébert
Les gouaches de 1942 de Borduas
A Visit to Martiques Summer 1908: Impressions by
William Brymner
Surrealism and Pellan: L'Amour Fou
Who "Discovered" Emily Carr?
Les peintures en damiers de Molinari
The Library of a Canadian Artist. Books from the
Library of Robert Holmes
Les artistes canadiens copistes au Louvre
(1838-1908)
La peinture des années trente au Québec
Quand les français jouaient aux sauvages ... ou le
carrousel de 1662
Surrealist Traits in the Heads of Alfred Pellan
Puvis de Chavannes et le Canada
La société québécoise et l'"encouragement" aux
artistes de 1825 à 1850
Pre-Confederation Photography in Halifax, Nova
Scotia
Peinture et luttes sociales: *Talking Union* de
Frederick B. Taylor
The Evolution of Jack Bush
Images of the Inuit in the Eighteenth Century
Les disciples de Daguerre à Québec 1839-1855
Paul Kane Paintings Rediscovered
La gravure dans l'oeuvre de Rodolphe Duguay
(1891-1973)
The Vocabulary of Freedom in 1948: The Politics of
the Montréal Avant-Garde
Approche sémiologique d'une oeuvre de Borduas:
3 + 3 + 4
Thoughts of Peace and Joy: A Study of the
Iconography of the Croscup Room

Jean-René Ostiguy	i/1
François Laurin	i/1
Janet Braide	i/1
Reesa Greenberg	i/2
Maria Tippet	i/2
François Laurin	i/2
Sybille Pantazzi	ii/1
Laurier Lacroix	ii/1
François-Marc Gagnon	iii/1&2
Laurier Lacroix	iii/1&2
Reesa Greenberg	iii/1&2
Laurier Lacroix	iv/1
John R. Porter	iv/1
Jim Burant	iv/1
Luis de Moura Sobral	iv/2
Ken Carpenter	iv/2
Rosalind Pepall	v/1
Nicole Cloutier	v/1
Susan J. Stewart	v/2
Jean-René Ostiguy	v/2
Judith Ince	vi/1
Fernande Saint-Martin	vi/1
Gilbert L. Gignac	
Jeanne L. L'Espérance	vi/2

Materials and Techniques of Painters in Québec City, 1760-1850	Rustin Steele Levenson	vii/1
L'Abbé Jean-Antoine Aide-Créquy (1749-1780) et l'essor de la peinture religieuse après la Conquête	John R. Porter	vii/1
La contribution du peintre américain James Bowman (1793-1842) au premier décor intérieur de l'église Notre-Dame de Montréal	Yves Lacasse	vii/1

Architecture and/et sculpture.

L'utilisation des maquettes et modèles dans l'architecture ancienne du Québec	Luc Noppen	i/1
Les statues de la façade de l'église Sainte-Famille, Île d'Orléans	Leopold Désy	i/2
Les projets d'embellissements de la ville de Québec proposés par Lord Dufferin en 1875	Achille Murphy	i/2
La rôle de l'Abbé Jérôme Demers dans l'élaboration d'une architecture néo-classique au Québec	Luc Noppen	ii/1
The Nine-Year Odyssey of a High Victorian Goth: Three Churches by Fred Cumberland	Shirley G. Morriss	ii/1
Les tabernacles de François Baillairgé	Raymonde Landry-Gauthier	ii/1
Building for Transportation in the Nineteenth Century	Harold Kalman	
La Chapelle de la Congrégation Notre-Dame de Québec	Douglas Richardson	iii/1&2
Architectural Image for the Dominion: Scott, Fuller and the Stratford Post Office	Marie Gobeil Trudeau	iii/1&2
Evolution de l'architecture religieuse en Nouvelle-France: Le rôle des modèles architecturaux	Luc Noppen	iii/1&2
Coloured Brick in Yorkville	Christopher Thomas	iii/1&2
Le retable de Saint-Grégoire de Nicolet et le problème de la contrainte architecturale dans les ensembles sculptés Québécois	Luc Noppen	iv/1
Housing in Quebec Before Confederation	Anita C. Makler	iv/2
L'ancien baldaquin de la chapelle du premier palais épiscopal de Québec, à Neuville	Jean Belisle	v/1
Thomas Seaton Scott: The Architect versus the Administrator	Christina Cameron	vi/1
	John R. Porter	vi/2
	Janet Wright	vi/2

Decorative Arts / Arts décoratifs.

<i>Instruction pour établir les manufactures: A Key Document in the Art History of New France</i>	Doreen E. Walker	ii/1
---	------------------	------

Short Notes / Notes et commentaires

Art / Peinture, dessin.

Pierre-Noel Levasseur: A Letter	Doreen E. Walker	i/1
<i>Wreath of Flowers</i> [William Brymner]	Janet Braide	ii/1
A Portrait by George Berthon	Sandra Paikowsky	ii/1

Paul-Emile Borduas et l'Art déco	Anne-Marie Blouin	iii/1&2
Paul Peel's <i>After the Bath</i>	J. Edward Martin	iv/1
Joseph Légaré et les indiens	François-Marc Gagnon	v/1
Un curieux problème d'attribution et de datation [ex voto]	Nicole Cloutier	v/1
Le tableau de l'ancien maître-autel de Sainte-Anne de Beupré	Nicole Cloutier	vi/1
The Drawings of Alfred Pellán: Further Thoughts by the Author	Reesa Greenberg	vi/1
Architecture.		
Un dessin inédit de Pierre-Noel Levasseur	Raymonde Landry-Gauthier	ii/1
Un carte de Jean Bourdon de 1640	Raymonde Landry-Gauthier	iii/1&2
Decorative Arts / Arts décoratifs.		
The 1935 Canadian Silver Dollar	Leslie Forsyth	i/1
Fashion-Plates: Sources for Canadian Fashion	Norma Morgan	v/2

Sources and/et documents

Art / Peinture.

John Lyman: A Bibliography of his Writings	Janet Braide	iv/2
Les artistes canadiens copistes au Louvre (1838-1908)	Laurier Lacroix	ii/1
Les Canadiens au salon officiel de Paris entre 1870 et 1910: sections peinture et dessin	Sylvain Allaire	iv/2
An Index of Miniaturists and Silhouettists who Worked in Montréal	Roslyn Rosenfeld	v/2
Canadian Art History Theses and Dissertations Mémoires et Thèses en l'histoire de l'art au Canada	Loren Singer	v/2 & vi/2
Biography and Bibliography of the Writings of Donald William Buchanan (1908-1966)	Gloria Lesser	v/2
Élèves canadiens dans les archives de l'École des Beaux-Arts et de l'École des Arts Décoratifs de Paris	Sylvain Allaire	vi/1

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SAMUEL, Cheryl, <i>The Chilkat Dancing Blanket</i> , Pacific Search Press, Seattle, 1982	François-Marc Gagnon	vii/1

Authors' Queries

The London Regional Art Gallery is presently conducting research leading to the presentation of a major **Paul Peel (1860-1892)** Retrospective in September 1986. Peel worked in the United States (Philadelphia) and Europe (Paris, London, Copenhagen) as well as in Canada, and we are anxious to locate a number of works that disappeared into private collections during the 1880's and after, and which have since changed hands.

Kindly address all responses to:
Mrs. Paddy O'Brien
Assistant Director and Curator of Modern Art
London Regional Art Gallery
421 Ridout Street North
London, Ontario
N6A 5H4

John Arthur Fraser (1838-1898): information on the whereabouts of paintings, watercolours, documentary material sought by biographer.

Please write to:
Kathryn Kollar, Curatorial Assistant
Concordia Art Gallery
Concordia University
1455 de Maisonneuve Boulevard West
Montréal, Québec
H3G 1M8

For a study of the work of **Goodridge Roberts (1904-1974)**, I would appreciate hearing from anyone concerning the whereabouts of his paintings and drawings as well as his correspondence.

Please contact:
Sandra Paikowsky, Curator
Concordia Art Gallery
Concordia University
1455 de Maisonneuve Boulevard West
Montréal, Québec
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