

**Vanguard Magazine** review by Andrea Kunard  
Fall issue, September 1982



Cover image; detail of installation by  
**Al McWilliams**, *Axaxaxas, (Mlo)* 1982  
Vancouver Art Gallery

# VANGUARD

Volume 11, Number 7

September 1982

## Director

Luke Rombout

## Editor

Russell Keziere

## Editorial Assistant

Janice Whitehead

## Photographer

Jim Gorman

## Designer

David Clifford

## Gallery Listings

Carol Hunter

## Toronto Editor

Jennifer Oille  
P.O. Box 489  
Postal Station J  
Toronto, Ontario M4J 1L0  
(416) 463-7822

## VANGUARD

### Published by the Vancouver Art Gallery

© 1981 by the Vancouver Art Gallery Association. Vanguard is printed at Alpine Press in Vancouver, Canada. Contents may not be reprinted without permission. Published monthly, January, February, March, April, May, June, September, October, November, December, at Vancouver, B.C. Vanguard is supported in part by the British Columbia Cultural Fund. The Vanguard Regional Editors are supported by a grant from the Canada Council. Indexed in Artbibliographies Modern and RILA. Microfilm and microfiche copies are available, positive and negative, January 1972 to January 1978 from the Library, Vancouver Art Gallery, 1145 West Georgia Street, Vancouver, Canada V6E 3H2. Tel: (604) 682-5621

## CORRESPONDENCE

Letters and unsolicited manuscripts should be directed to the editors, Vanguard, Vancouver Art Gallery, 1145 West Georgia Street, Vancouver, Canada V6E 3H2.

Unsolicited manuscripts or photographs must be accompanied by sufficient return postage.

## CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Send both old and new addresses and allow five weeks for change.

## DISTRIBUTION

U.S.A. newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 111 Eighth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011. Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y. Canadian distribution by the Canadian Periodicals Publishers Association, 54 Wolseley Street, Toronto, Ontario, M5T 1A5. Montreal distribution by Benjamin-Montreal News, 425 rue Guy, Montreal, Quebec H3J 1T1.

## SUBSCRIPTION RATES (Canada & U.S.)

one year: 10 issues, \$15.00; two years: 20 issues, \$26.00; three years: 30 issues, \$38.00.

## (All other countries)

one year: 10 issues, \$26; two years: 20 issues, \$38; three years: 30 issues, \$52.

Single copies \$1.75.  
Second Class Mail Registration No. 4650

ISSN 0315-5226

## 8 SIX PERSPECTIVES MISE EN SCENE

## 14 THE AESTHETICS OF ACCOMMODATION ROBERT ADAMS

*Peter Wollheim*

## 18 HERE BETWEEN TOWERS PHOTOGRAPHIC ENVIRONMENTS OF ELDON GARNET AND ISAAC APPLEBAUM

*Gary Michael Dault*

## 22 THE DYNAMICS OF REVELATION GERMAN AVANT-GARDE PHOTOGRAPHY (1919-1939)

*Donald B. Kuspit*

## REVIEWS

26 *Ian Wallace/Richard Rhodes*

26 *Jaan Poldas/Oliver Girling and Harold Klunder*

26 *Christopher John Watts/Matthew Kangas*

27 *Svitlana Muchin/Jennifer Oille*

28 *Terry Larkin and Rosa Lee/Scott Watson*

28 *Shelagh Alexander/Jeanne Randolph*

29 *Ten People Who Take Photographs Too/Jane Young*

29 *Bernie Miller/John Bentley Mays*

30 *Sheila Butler/Kip Park*

31 *Murray Favro/Goldie Rans*

31 *Randy and Berencci/Don Stanley*

32 *Graham Smith/Michael Ethan Brodzky*

33 *John Brown, Marc Deguerre, Neil Grieve/Richard Rhodes*

33 *Sam Carter/Andrew Kunard*

34 *Judith Allsopp/Andy Fabo*

34 *Georgianna Chappell/Andrea Kunard*

35 *Andrew Rodomar/Andrew Brooks*

36 *James Gillespie/Jennifer Oille*

36 *Colin Campbell and Margaret Dragu/Irene Szylinger*

37 *Celebrations/Alexander Wilson*

37 *Lyse Lemieux/Andrew Kunard*

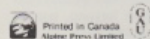
38 *Bill Burns and Mark Adair/Ellen Thompson*

38 *Marian Penner Bancroft/Helga Pakasaar*

39 *Stan Douglas/Barbara Daniel*

40 **GALLERIES**

cover: Al McWilliams, *Axaxaxas M10* (detail, installation) (1982), expanded steel fencing, 2.49 x 2.18 x 7.31 x 8.53 m, a copper zigurat, 2.06 x 2.44 m square, sound, coll: the artist. Cover photo: Jim Gorman





Margaret Dragu and Colin Campbell, scene from performance, *I am Already Changing My Mind* (1982), part of the Dancemakers series at Harbourfront Studio Theatre, courtesy: Harbourfront Studio Theatre, Toronto

underwater motion or swaying, somewhat akin to swimming, was suggested in the movements of the performers. In some instances these movements resembled voluntary gestures and in others involuntary, sinking postures. These fluid motions informed the entire piece with a water level quality. This was strengthened by the lack of fluidity in their timing, of agency in their movements and unnecessary speed in their speech.

Irene Szylinger

**Lynne Fernie  
Phyllis Johnson  
Phyllis Waugh  
Andy Fabo  
Ian McKinnon  
Tony Wilson  
Stephen Andrews  
A.R.C.**

June 26 to July 3

This thoughtfully curated group show, held in conjunction with a large gay conference in Toronto, an attempt has been made to be plural enough to include some garden-variety homo art — the familiar academic cock-and-dick paintings — as well as to be representative of the best contemporary work being done in the lesbian and gay communities.

Much of this newer work — most of it by younger artists — is concerned, in general, with sexuality, power and language: with the problems of representation of women and men, and with how visual languages that oppress — or conversely, hypostatize social and sexual behaviours — can be reclaimed or subverted.

Lynne Fernie has done a series of the straightforward paintings, black paint on plain white paper. "Decolonizing language" is spelled out across the first two sheets, and tightly framed by heavy black lines. There follows a kind of story board, only the syntax is disjointed: women are trying to speak and make sense of their familiar narra-

tive frames of home, street and bed, but they're stymied, literally expressionless, with no language of their own. The last frame is of two figures dangling from nooses.

Working with the same materials, Nancy Johnson goes on to address specifically sexual relations between men and women. Again these are delightfully simple drawings. One has an elevated woman in a tight dress — a model, a stripper — being watched by men, one of whom, off to the side, has a hard-on. The other three drawings contain elements of the first, as well as other odds and ends: bits of women's bodies; audiences of rabbit ears, beaks, commas and spiders; and broken sentences ("Hi," "dumb," "wow") of ice-breakers and asides. These drawings function as a dictionary of sexual terms operative in women's work situations.

Two very large pastels by Phyllis Waugh are witty, almost abstract ruminations that manage to subvert cliché representations of women's bodies. In a drawing that immediately recalls the symmetrical circles and triangles of washroom graffiti, arching Fallopian tubes occupy most of the frame, and centred in a wonderfully incongruous way at the top of the vagina are a pair of breasts. The other drawing is of a vagina with a cat jumping out. Like in

the washroom drawings, these women are cropped pretty severely: no head, no arms and only enough legs to show that they're spread. By playfully evoking these images, Waugh allows us to reaffirm women's bodies (without, say, the earnest homilies of Judy Chicago's plates) at the same time that we confront and reinvent their most common representations.

Andy Fabo's paintings introduce other elements into the discussion of sexuality and the body. In a group of four panels, randomly arranged as if newspaper photographs, he intelligently treats the relation between sex and power, and the tensions and paradoxes of masculine imagery. In one panel, three men fuck in the woods. A second is of two boxers. Another has a man machine-gunned to death beneath a white stucco wall (in El Salvador or Lebanon) surrounded by three soldiers and a journalist taking pictures. The last panel is of a bare-assed man in a bare room, arms chained to the ceiling, turning round expectantly. The two panels that most obviously address sex are symmetrically framed: the two violent ones — which are probably no less sexual — are framed more photographically, underscoring their familiarity as media images. Fabo's juxtapositions not only wrench (homo)sexual practices out of the private sphere; they ask us to think about sex and power as central components in all relations among men.

Ian McKinnon's ten drawings of men's bodies are more modest, in both senses of the word. His artless application of pastels to scraps of sketching paper depict men showering, hugging, and lying around alone. Unlike Fabo's idylls, these bodies are situated in spare surroundings that exude an erotic; surroundings demarcated by crude masking tape borders or an onion skin overlay. The body itself — that is to say the organs and orifices authoritatively outlined by General Idea elsewhere in this show — are here subsumed by the sensual aesthetic of rooms vaguely seen, as if through a window.

Similar concerns are the subject of Tony Wilson's painting, *Close Shave*, a catalogue of the signifiers of the bachelor's boudoir: the mirror, basin, razor and towel, the man in underwear and hat, and along the border an upside-

down figure of a woman. A large tiger holding his crotch and waving overshadows the man, a kind of comic figuration of the virility and sexual prowess that the toilet ritual anticipates.

Stephen Andrews' large pastel drawing on sheets of pink vinyl is an idiosyncratic and satirical investigation of some of the moral structures Fabo's paintings bring into question. The composition is organized by a large white snake and a yellow ladder, referring to the childhood game that teaches obedience and success. In the upper panel are three deferential see-, hear-, and speak-no-evil monkeys, one of whom is doing a painting. Below, however, things are thrown awry: a fourth monkey with a clothespin head sits in a wheelchair jerking off and kissing the snake. To one side is a more oblique reference to moral language: an assemblage of colonial Catholic fetishes (formally, at least) is pasted on the plastic: photographs of sick children, locks of hair, silver casts of ailing arms and legs, a painter's palette, bloody hearts and crosses, swatches of clothing. Andrews' work is as much that of the cultural anthropologist as the satirist; by deconstructing the visual codes of popular mythologies, he bares the tawdry and contradictory moralizings of our society.

Alexander Wilson

### **Lyse Lemieux**

**open studio**

Vancouver

June 13 to 17

The motif of the schoolroom is curiously absent in the history of the fine arts. If it has been used it is usually aligned with a political statement, such as in Victorian photographs. Lyse Lemieux's installation, entitled *Chez les Soeurs Blanches*, is based on the schoolroom but makes direct reference to her own childhood experiences and is thus a personal exploration rather than a political one.

The installation takes up the entire space of Lemieux's studio. In the middle section of the room hang twelve glass cutouts of school tunics, attached to the ceiling by fishline. Over the right breast of each of these cutouts is hung a plumbline, which is painted gold. Underneath the cutouts is spread, (in an area covering approx. 10 x 9') a green dust cleaning compound. At the end of the studio are placed three upright gyproc panels, framed with aluminum edging, and covered with graphite strokes. The floor of this section of the piece is painted a slightly different colour than the rest of the studio floor. Between the glass cutouts and the panels is placed a stool.

Lemieux has maintained a dialogue between the precise and measured and the impetus of her work (her childhood experiences). This precision withholds any sense of nostalgia, or an escape into an idealized, "child-like" vision of the past. Rather, one senses a process of self examination



Installation view of *Celebration* exhibition of A.R.C.

discovery. There is also an absence of any written language in the piece. Lemieux has, however, made an allusion to intellectual measurement through her inclusion of the plumbline.

It is through allusion that Lemieux has avoided pure conceptualism. The work operates more on the level of contraries. Some of these contraries are precariously placed. For example, the metal plumbline is hung directly beside the fragile glass cutouts. To walk between these cutouts one would feel like the proverbial bull in a china-shop. Lemieux solved this problem by defining the cutouts' "territory" through the cleaning compound which is spread beneath it.

Another contrary found in the show is the graphite drawings on the gyproc panels. Each of these three panels has been worked and reworked with innumerable graphite sticks. The result appears very much like a blackboard, but one layered with expressionist strokes. This more loose method of expression is then opposed to the precision needed to handle the cutouts. One could also say that the layering of marks is an idealized version of the history of the blackboard, i.e. if neither the students', or the teachers' marks were erased.

Although Lemieux has chosen the subject of the schoolroom she has not overemphasized its more formal aspects. The grid system on which the ordinary schoolroom is based is subtly indicated by Lemieux through the arrangement of the cutouts. Further, these cutouts are made of glass and are transparent, another factor which negates strict formality. The only connection between the conformity of the classroom, i.e. the identical desks set in rows, and her piece, are the stenciled cutouts of tunics. However, this element appears to be more autobiographical; her experiences of Catholic schools includes the wearing of uniforms. With this idea in mind one can see why Lemieux has not chosen to develop the use of language in the piece. Words arranged on a page are again based on a grid system, a formality which was explored by Irene Whitton in her installation *La Salle de Classe*, (*Vanguard* Feb., 1981).

Through this predominance of the

autobiographical, Lemieux has also avoided any direct political statement regarding the classroom. The classroom could be considered very much as a factory, which for the most part, places restrictions on the imagination. However, above the blacker aspects of the education system Lemieux has maintained a sense of humour. The best example of this is the invitations to the show which are printed on replica copies of her first grade report card.

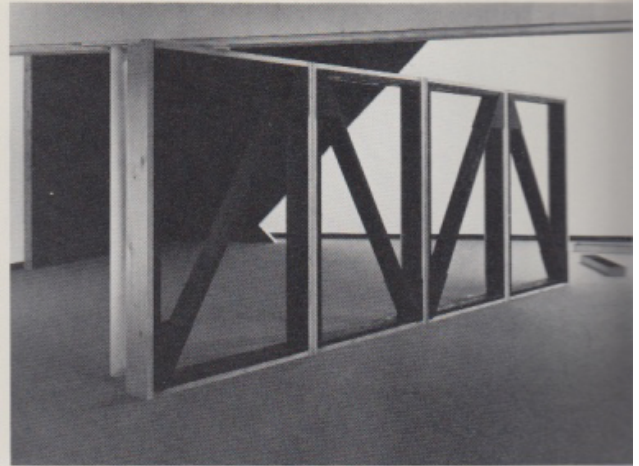
Lemieux considers this installation as only one in a series describing her school years. The dedication and craftsmanship that were evident in this work can only make one anxious to see what Lemieux will present next.

Andrea Kunard

**Bill Burns  
Mark Adair**  
Surrey Art Gallery  
Vancouver  
May 14 to June 6

The sculpture of Bill Burns and Mark Adair cohabit the space of the Surrey Art Gallery. Each artist responds to the cultural and physical presence of the gallery. But their responses differ considerably. Burns' *Axioscope* thinks of the gallery as a framing device; it is re-partitioned to reveal exchanges in the substructures of painting, sculpture or architecture. Adair's *Contextualizations* treats the gallery as a museum housing esteemed, cultural artifacts.

Because the gallery itself exerts a nudging influence in each work, the implication of the viewer to the gallery is reflected significantly in each response. *Axioscope* points to details for examination to viewers traversing the space. This work entices viewers into a process of discernment of the compositional parts. Adair assumes a less speculative viewer. He relies more so on the preconceived cultural assumptions of the gallery visitors to



Bill Burns, installation view of *Axioscope* (1982), Surrey Art Gallery

preface *Contextualizations*. Here the viewer is not asked to discern site specific details; *Contextualizations* assumes only the general context of the gallery space.

Burns and Adair both appropriate historical references. Burns draws on the investigations of the Constructivists — El Lissitzky's *Proun Room* (1923), specifically. But Burns extends Lissitzky's premises. He begins with El Lissitzky's result — the illusion of painting or sculpture as innate distinctions. In *Axioscope* Burns layers this premise by composing a dialogue discussing the details of the illusion. Adair also borrows, but he appropriates more specifically. He uses West Coast Indian carving techniques and kayak constructions. The part of *Contextualizations* called *Adam and Eve Cookie Cutters and Presses* copies the form of figures cut on medieval church doors. These appropriations attempt to mirror the contrived historicism museums promote in digging up a common native past.

Both these artists craft with commonplace materials. Their compositions are not commonplace though, and both of their works shape the gallery as a high-art vindicator. *Axioscope* calculates this factor seductively. The four module paintings, aligned underneath the half-wall partition in the gallery, situate frames within frames. Each are constructed in the house building manner. The outside frames are of standard lumber; the inside frames are painted with black, asphalt emulsion, and supported by diagonal struts, also painted in black, asphalt emulsion; they criss-cross each inner frame. The inside frames float in their utilitarian exterior as would framed paintings float in a gallery. The composition of these "paintings" are the supporting struts. Thus the paintings purport the traditional painting concerns of edge, proportion, and perspective, yet they insist that they are also linear, sculptural constructions. The textures of these materials are rich; the black emulsion is thick. Colours are stark and elegant: black paint, white dry-wall, natural wood, or pink fiberglass insulation. Here, as in the other components in *Axioscope* — the reshaped back black wall, the tanks

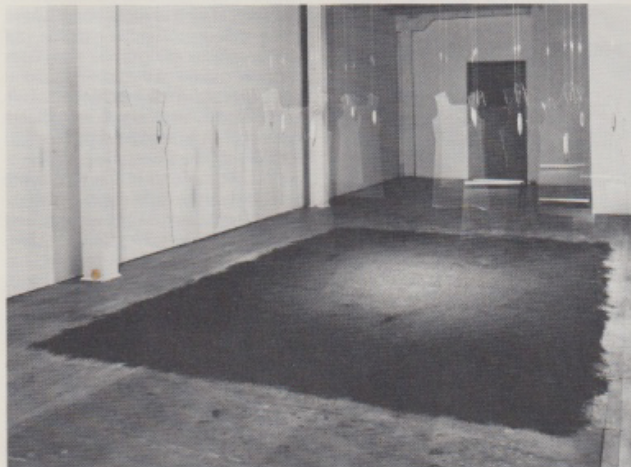
filled with asphalt emulsion, or the corner framing — building materials extend as gallery art compositions that are used to develop the viewers' perception.

Adair judges the legitimizing role of the gallery sarcastically. In a part of *Contextualizations*, *The Canadian Reading Lamp*, although crafted with boat-building materials, eschews utilitarian qualities. The techniques employed are those of the Yuit that are no longer utilized. This demonstrator rests only in museum encasements (Adair shows the boat ribbing covered in clear plastic and lit by naked suspended bulbs hung by generous amounts of black cording.)

The cynicism is straightforward, but what is problematic is the relationship of the gallery to Adair's remarks. Museums and galleries are always contrived distillations of our culture; when we edit items from other contexts to look at specific aspects. Since Adair's sculpture is placed within these institutions, it is seen under these same circumstances. Is, then, *Contextualizations* critical of museums and their relation to artifacts, or is it another variation of this similar arrangement? Being cynical of national institutions is a great Canadian occupation. Adair makes good use of craft traditions, but is caught by discrepancies in his statement.

Burns depends on a process of observation that is developed in the space. Adair, instead, relies on the creating of juxtapositions within the frame. In *Axioscope* Burns cognises the value of individual formulations in the site. In *Contextualizations*, Adair makes value judgement and social comment in the gallery.

Ellen Thompson



Lysle Lemieux, installation view of *Chez les Soeurs Blanches* (1982), open studio

**Marian Penner Bancroft**  
*Presentation House*  
Vancouver  
June 13 to July 18

Walking into Marian Penner Bancroft