

Texts in English

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TEXTS IN ENGLISH

THE NEW MUSEUM OF MODERN ART OF NEW YORK

by Myra Nan ROSENFELD

On May 7, 1984, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which possesses the greatest collection of twentieth century art in the world, dedicated a new wing, as well as the complete renovation of its original building. The new west wing is surmounted by an apartment tower, while the Garden Hall, overlooking the sculpture garden, contains escalators and entry vestibules to the galleries. Thus, one hundred and seventy thousand square feet of floor space was added to the total floor surface of the museum, creating twice as much space as before for the permanent collection and temporary exhibitions. The new west wing and renovation of the original building are the work of the American architect Cesar Pelli, the dean of the Yale School of Architecture. Pelli has succeeded in a major way in creating an architectural environment which is both beautiful in itself and in harmony with the works of art. The architect and the curators of the Museum of Modern Art are to be applauded for the success of their efforts.

KENNETH LOCHHEAD:

"BELLA FIGURA" IN OTTAWA

By Anne McDOUGALL

Kenneth Lochhead is a Matisse man, a De Chirico man, a "bella figura" man. It doesn't sound much like Ottawa! Yet this interesting productive artist lives and paints and lectures in the capital, in a quiet family life of great tranquillity and happiness, without much publicity, in spite of a career that includes major innovative work of his own (still underway), and a lasting landmark in the Canadian art world: the founding in 1961 of the famous "Regina Five" painters in Saskatchewan.

Lochhead was born in Ottawa, May, 1926, only a few streets from where he is living today. His father was a microbiologist; his mother he remembers "smiling in a sunlit kitchen". A couple of major moves turned him into an important Canadian artist. In 1948 he went to Pennsylvania Academy in Philadelphia, close to the Barnes Foundation of Merion, Pennsylvania. There he saw and was forever captivated by the Post-Impressionists, in particular Matisse. The colour - the flatness - the sheer magic of Matisse's work struck deep into the soul of this Scottish Canadian and has stayed with him ever since. His own work has proceeded through



1. MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Front Entrance.

several deliberate style changes. Consistent with them all is the seeking after the two-dimensional beauty and tapestry achieved by Henri Matisse.

"Painting is dealing with what you are", Lochhead says. For him this is an explosion of colour and space. Colour dictates the form and fills the space with authority, instead of following after drawing. Colour is beauty and for Lochhead it becomes a siren call, a constant search for the "bella figura" of real aesthetics and high style.

In 1950, the tall, angular graduate in Art returned to his hometown and proposed the first art courses at the newly-founded Carleton University. In 1949 he won the O'Keefe Competition for Canadian artists under 30, and his own career was on its way. He won the 1955 Regina Branan of the Canadian Legion award for a mural decoration called *Lest we forget*, done in an austere, old-school style.

By 1950 Lochhead had been appointed Director of the School of Art at Regina College, as well as Acting Director of the Mackenzie Art Gallery in the same city, fairly responsible jobs for a 24-year old. He would maintain this administrative-teaching-painting balance throughout his career combined with a public-spirited interest in community art needs.

Lochhead became obsessed by the Prairie flatness, saying he turned into a "Western Romantic", in love with the huge sky, the empty spaces, the floating or invisible horizon. He did a series of surreal paintings with puppet-like figures that completely filled the space of his canvases and gazed off into space with haunting loneliness, rather like De Chirico. Moon-faced robots, in "The Kite" 1952, "The Dignitary" and "The Bonspiel" 1954 stand like statues in shallow depth, funny and whimsical. Was this a transplanted Eastern poking gentle fun at the flat Prairie folk? Whatever it was, it gradually changed to a style that left human beings out altogether. Lochhead went abstract. "Blue Extension" and "Dark Green Centre" are considered genre masterpieces of rectangle art.

Lochhead is frank in admitting the influence of the New York school. The critic Clement Greenberg admired the "big attack" and colour painting. Lochhead began turning out very large works, often using a stain technique with thinned paint to get a luminous effect and a spray gun for control. Limpid, air-brushed forms appear in "Soar Colour", "Price Colour", "Tinge Colour", "Winter Note" and "Blue Reach". They are evanescent, pastel and lovely, like a bank of sweet peas blowing in the wind. The fresh colour and joyous palette are distinctively Loch-

head. Black, brown, burnt umber, deep purple would not appear in his work until much later when he used them on enamel to get a jewel effect. The occasional critic like David Watmough found Lochhead's 1960's exuberant response to colour repetitive, "like listening to all-Bach for hours on end". It seems a cranky remark. What better composer, if you had to choose one only. Furthermore Lochhead has dipped and swooped in style changes that make him anything but repetitive.

He has held to one early commitment, however. Ever since the Barnes Foundation, he has tended to favour a two-dimensional surface. Ucello did this first. Masaccio had flirted with it; Giotto did not. Matisse leapt past drawing into form, in an overall, large sense. Lochhead loves the Italians, as opposed to the German school of reference. When he visited Rome in 1959 he felt at home with the entire ambience of insistence on beauty. He experienced "bella figura" at first hand.

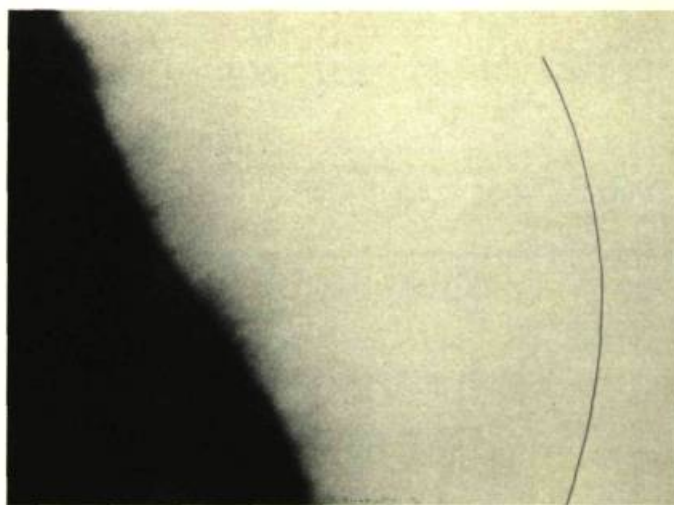
On the Prairies he was free to pursue his own tack, like the earlier Western painter L.L. Fitzgerald who went his way, far from the pressure from Eastern (Ontario) painters to join and paint like the Group of Seven. With this freedom comes a sense of isolation and Lochhead found he was eager to continue the Emma Lake workshops, begun by Jack and Doris Shadbolt in 1955. Each summer New York artists such as Barnett Newman, Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, Clement Greenberg were invited to artists' workshop at Emma Lake. What resulted was an enthusiastic experimentation with techniques like "colour field" that brought a flowering of cultural activity to the arid Prairie cultural scene.

Lochhead continued his particular emphasis on painting with other Regina painters such as Arthur McKay, Ronald Bloore, Douglas Morton and Ted Goodwin who were later to be named *The Regina Five*. Lochhead says Roy Kiyooka should also be included. They have all made their mark.

Lochhead likes Jackson Pollock's decentralization of points of view, which gives many flat surfaces. He admires Kline and De Kooning, also Zen Buddhism. He has been described as working in a direct line from the Symbolists (such as Miró) whose influence crossed the Atlantic at the start of World War II with Surrealist emigrés. James Purdie, writing in the *Globe and Mail*, 1977, notes Kenneth Lochhead's freshness. He worked through the geometric 60's, not very radically, but turned to acrylics for a fresh, new approach in a painting like "Dyke Blue" of 1965.

Not surprisingly, Lochhead's approach continues into his teaching. He starts students with charcoal to feel "light and dark". He tells them to "pick a colour and give it a shape". Then of course to cover the paper. He felt Matisse opens the instincts to form through colour. He speaks of the great Chardin. He tries to avoid an avalanche of slides which push away the beauty of real painting. He says thinking about art is only useful if it employs one's intuition.

Still another dimension entered this artist's life when he began to paint for and take an interest in the environment we share. In 1958 he won a Department of Transport commission (\$20,000) for the Gander airport. No airplanes were allowed and so two trumpeter swans, a man juggling apples, a woman in an apron swirl across the mural. With his first wife, Pat, who made beautiful cotton-backed banners, 33' high, he helped decorate the Manitoba Centennial Concert Hall in Winnipeg. For External Affairs he did five panels in mauve and yellow pastels that hang close together in a group of five, outside the Passport Office, and give a lush tropical atmosphere for travellers.



2. Kenneth LOCHHEAD
Outer Reach, 1971.
Colour lithograph on
wove paper;
57,6cm x 76,5

Lochhead likes working with architects on early stages of a building. In Regina, he was connected with the appointment of Yamasaki, the first architect for the Wascana Centre. In Winnipeg he had good results working with the Winnipeg architect Guy de Roza. He has a genius at avoiding confrontation and seeking instead a consensus, even among temperamental artists! In Ottawa he has become involved with the National Capital Commission, where the Art Advisory Committee is suggesting new concepts in the development of parks through close artist/architect collaboration. It is consistent with Lochhead's own ability to change a medium, or direction, as circumstances change. And also with his public-spirited involvement. He was involved with the first meeting of CAR (Canadian Artists' Representation) at the National Convention in Winnipeg, with the founder of this organization, the late Jack Chambers. He is satisfied it helped pull artists together, but got out when it became too political.

By the time Lochhead left Regina in 1964 he was well-known in art circles and had been shown by the National Gallery all over Canada as well as at Warsaw in 1961-2 and Tunis, 1962. Institutions like the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Sam Zacks Collection, F.S. Mendel Gallery in Saskatoon, CIL Collection and many private collectors had bought his work.

After a period teaching at the Manitoba School of Art and in Toronto, he moved to Ottawa where he became a professor at Ottawa University, changed his painting style, remarried Joanne Bryers, museum consultant, and now has two young daughters. He lives in a house filled with paintings of his own and also of his son, Colin, opposite a water-lily-filled inlet à la Monet, in one of Ottawa's surprisingly beautiful corners.

An exhibition in 1980 at Ottawa's Robertson Galleries revealed the new Lochhead. Instead of the big attack colour field, viewers were greeted with Constable-like trees, light and dark among branch and sky, pools of shadow at the bases. Had Lochhead succumbed to his hated perspective? Certainly he gives more place to distance, in his new style, but the actual trees are shallow and up-front, in the flat planes so beloved in Matisse. Lochhead is enjoying the spontaneity of pastels. He is still seeking colour and light. The result is a romantic mood, free of sentimentality. One of his current assignments is a set of three Rivers for the new Rideau Club: the Gatineau, Ottawa and Rideau rivers, painted in 3' x 4' dimensions. These are now installed and add history and adventure to the new club.

In the spring of 1984 Lochhead gave an exhibition of enamel paintings called "Ornithologi-

calaesthetics" or Bird Talk. A Chagall-like playfulness pervades the work. Some of these carefree light-hearted designs have been woven into carpets by a firm in Hong Kong. They have a carved effect, with light dominating. One of them lies in Lochhead's living-room and the peach, green, cream motifs make the room sing with colour and joy.

He admits to a "return to nature". After the starkness of the Prairie experience perhaps the gentle rural beauty of much of Ottawa has had an effect. He finds the effect of "place" important. Lochhead has made a number of choices in life: in media, in the place he lives, his style of painting. For a Celtic Scot, he seems to harbour no dark neuroses. To visit his studio is to be dazzled by all kinds and sizes of experiments. Canada, and Ottawa in particular, are fortunate to have an artist like Kenneth Lochhead whose own passionate love of beauty drives him into sharing it with the people and the city around him. He is a gentle Renaissance man whose students perhaps best know that the real meaning of "bella figura" is courage.

MICHAEL SNOW'S WALKING WOMAN

By Joan MURRAY

In 1979, the National Gallery of Canada organized a show of Michael Snow's work in photography, film and slides for the Centre Georges-Pompidou in Paris. It was not a retrospective, although three sculptures were included in the selection. Now a retrospective of an earlier section of Snow's work, his image of the walking woman which he used from 1961 to 1967, has been organized by the Agnes Etherington Art Centre in Kingston. (In January 1985 the exhibition closes at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto).

Snow's Walking Woman (W.W. he called her), is a weathervane to a certain period of his art. The generalized side view of the plump, striding figure in a tight skirt was the way Snow discovered to spell the weathers of his heart. In essence the image was serial, like Bush's curtains of colour which he developed into his classic theme in the same period. But the Walking Woman was figurative. She therefore conveyed the sexual reference of the younger generation of painters like Dennis Burton with his *Garter-beltmania* or Joyce Wieland, who was then Snow's wife. Painters of the 1960s used serial images like scorecards: we are able to recognize instantly the team/artist who was playing.



3. Michael SNOW
Spring Sign, 1961.
 Weathered oil on plywood;
 154,9cm x 49.8

Like many artists from the time of Mallarmé, Snow has always felt that art was a game. "I make up the rules of a game," he has said, "and then I attempt to play it." In choosing the Walking Woman he reacted against abstract expressionism and the works he had painted in his immediate past, which, no matter how austere and plain, were painterly. In *Theory of Love* (1961), for instance, Snow showed the rudiments of sex, a red bar and a red circle sans the space for the bar. In *Narcissus Theme* of the same year, he used similar simple geometric shapes. The Walking Woman was a way of clarifying his material and a way of developing variety, though he used the same subject. Discovering her in many different media he discovered himself. There was something hokey about her image, something raffish and casual. She wasn't intended to be more than a wry comment, especially at the beginning. But over the years, she developed. By the time he was finished with her, Snow had become a sculptor, and knew which way to go.

Snow wrote that "my subject is not women or a woman but the first cardboard cutout I made." At first she wasn't a stereotype. In drawings of 1961 he shows her raising a leg, or in pants. Early on, he painted her more loosely. We discover, for instance, that Snow was a pretty colourist. In *Blue Leaving* (1961), for instance, he applied green, brown and blueish red. There's something charming to the walking woman, even wispy: she leaves the room in *Exit* (1961), or appears in the subway in 1962 (he planted an image of her there). She can recall works by Paul Klee, Snow's early fascination before he fell in love with Marcel Duchamp. Sometimes he uses her in a more complex way as in *Venus Simultaneous* (1982), where she appears in blue, black, and Indian red. Works like this painting are much the best in the show.

By 1963, she's more sexy as in *Beach-Hcaeb* where Snow plays with the application of paint, *Olympia* where she appears nude along with five

dressed images, or in *Une nuit d'amour* (1963) where he has folded up pictures of her. (This mood would climax in 1970 when Snow shows himself having sex with the image in *Projection*). 1963 is still a year in which he's having fun. The Walking Woman walks into one side of a painting called *Estrus*. At the other end is her cut-out. In *Switch* he plays on drawing first one side, then the other of her outline. Or she may appear on her side in *Half-Slip*.

By 1964 he was back to sex. She appears naked as a print in *Register*. Then she almost disappears. In *The Window*, we see only her face, and in 1965, he used her, seen through plexiglass, in installation pieces, sometimes with twelve different parts. She'd become an art work. He showed her walking in front of a Mark Rothko painting in *Gallery*. Now begin his clowning acts. She becomes a collage, a sort of *merz-bild*, rolled up and weathered. He's begun to have mixed feelings about her, like the painting of the same name. She may appear with different hair, skin, dresses. At last, at Expo, she became a stainless steel sculpture, criss-crossing the room.

The Walking Woman was more than an amusing joke that took off; she became an index to a certain period of Canadian art. Her image invokes a time frame to us, years when art was exciting. "There isn't a single content to the Walking Woman," Snow said recently. "Every work was of a different kind, generated a different content." In a way, using her in his art was like his attempt as a jazz musician to enlarge the scope of his improvisation (he still plays weekly stints at Toronto's Music Gallery). "'Swing' is generated by the relationships between the shifting accents of 'foreground' instruments and the relatively steady beat of the 'background' rhythm section," Snow once wrote about his music. From 1961 to 1967, the Walking Woman provided the background section to his improvisations as a painter. "Swing" is what her graceful image gave his work.

WHISTLER'S ETCHINGS

Dr. Katharine A. LOCHNAN, *The Etchings of James McNeill Whistler*. Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario, in association with Yale University Press, (New Haven and London), 1984. 308 pages; 297 illustrations in black on white.

In a year that marks the 150th anniversary of James McNeill Whistler's birth, this important book commands special attention. Written by Dr. Katharine A. Lochnan, Curator of Prints and Drawings at the Art Gallery of Ontario, it is the first major monograph on this subject and culminates nine years of intensive research.

Dr. Lochnan organized an exhibition of the same title in collaboration with the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, where it opened in September 1984. It was shown at the Art Gallery of Ontario from November 24th to January 13th, 1985. Among the 230 works were 182 etchings and drypoints by Whistler himself, juxtaposed with key works by artists who

had exerted a strong influence at a given time, among them Rembrandt, Guardi, Turner and Hiroshige.

Whistler was born in Lowell, Massachusetts, in 1834, and spent most of his childhood in St. Petersburg, Russia, where he began to study drawing at the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts. This was followed by three years in the cadet corps of the United States Military Academy at West Point, and a brief training period at the U.S. Coast Survey's map-drawing and etching departments in Washington. At 21, he left for Europe and never returned to his native country again. He died at his Chelsea studio in London in 1903.

Whistler was the proverbial American expatriate at the leading edge of European art of his time and achieved serious recognition as a painter and etcher, and as a raconteur equally at ease in the Paris salons and in London's fashionable art circles. His experimentation with old handmade European and lustrous Japanese mulberry-bark papers bears close ex-

amination. Although the fine etchings lend themselves to accurate reproduction, the quality, texture and tonality of the selected paper is inevitably lost in the process. However, the technical information included in the book adds details of great significance. Dr. Lochnan writes with an intensity and affection that animates her subject and brings to light historical references that will be new to all but a handful of scholars. She guides the reader through the complex record of the artist's career and private life with many fine insights and an abundance of direct quotes. Most importantly, she captures the essence of Europe's artistic climate in the second half of last century when the burning question of "art-for-art's sake" preoccupied artists and critics and led to bitter disputes.

Whistler was an extraordinary man, and the book lets us look at his work in an entirely new light.

Helen DUFFY



Watteau

suite de la page 23

Chaque génération, chaque expert, en fait, chacun de nous s'est fait une certaine image de Watteau. La grandeur de l'artiste réside sans doute dans la multiplicité des interprétations que suscite son œuvre et qui ne l'épuise jamais. L'Enseigne de Gersaint, son testament et peut-être son œuvre la plus achevée, n'est pas que la simple description de la boutique d'un marchand de tableaux du Pont-Notre-Dame. Dans cette toile où le regard du peintre, absent de la scène, se pose sur des personnages qui examinent attentivement de la peinture, l'artiste nous donne l'emblème du bonheur de peindre, constitutif pour lui du bonheur de vivre. Ce bonheur malgré les avatars qu'ont subis ses toiles, Watteau peut encore nous le faire partager pour peu qu'à son exemple il nous soit possible de faire coexister en nous le recueillement face au réel et l'ouverture à une mystérieuse absence.

LE MARBRE ET LE BOIS

suite de la page 29

africaines présents et passés puisque *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* doivent probablement plus aux fresques catalanes romanes, donc à l'Euphrate, qu'aux masques nègres. A la suite de ce grand artiste, une très petite minorité du monde occidental a bien voulu tourner les yeux, au prix de combien d'équivoques, vers ces bois et ces fougères arborescentes taillés à grands coups. Porteurs de mythes, débordants de forces, chargés de rumeurs, de fluides et d'ondes, mystérieux pour nous, ils ont eu le grand mérite d'exalter l'ambiguïté, alors que nous la tenions en sus-

picion, et de ramener la communication et les formes qu'elle utilise, donc l'art tel que le définissent nos sociétés, au seul domaine où elles existent, hors de la maison et des raisons, des formules, des usages, des règles, des codes, des prescriptions: l'intensité.

C'était ramener l'attention sur l'acte créateur. C'était en quelque sorte mettre en parallèle et à égalité l'acte fondateur, le créé, la pensée fondatrice, le mythe. Manière bien cruelle de mettre en doute tout notre système. L'esprit occidental est si réfractaire à une perception globalisante qu'au lieu de libérer l'intensité et de la prendre comme un moyen de communication, il a suivi son penchant et a préféré passer au crible critique l'acte créateur pour le diviser par chacun de ses constituants. Ainsi va notre monde!

Selon certains, les idoles et les masques nègres sont responsables de la désagrégation de la représentation des mythes. Il serait plus juste d'accepter que l'esprit occidental, dans son ensemble, a mal répondu à la question essentielle posée par ces yeux exorbités. Pourtant, c'est en intégrant un matériau nouveau qu'une société prouve, encore une fois, non seulement ses facultés créatrices, mais encore sa vitalité. Bien qu'à un haut niveau on s'interroge: la seule parade d'une simple consommation accélérée et accrue est une proposition dérisoire que l'on espère être seulement les prémisses d'une future et meilleure compréhension.

A-t-on assez entendu prôner les qualités admirables des dieux grecs, du marbre, de leurs formes. Au nom de l'équilibre, de l'harmonie, de l'esprit et du corps sains, des plus hautes vertus viriles, des délicieuses délicatesses féminines, sans oublier les vertus impérissables des mères dévouées, depuis les Romains qui leur étaient redevables, les pires idéologies ont essayé de nous entretenir dans la nostalgie factice des temps où les débris et

les éclats d'aujourd'hui étaient frontons, colonnes et escaliers.

Qu'il soit marbre ou bois, l'art est une énigme. La trop simpliste formule de Nietzsche appelant de ses vœux un art «tel une flamme claire, jaillie dans un ciel sans nuage» a été périmée à l'instant même où elle a été écrite. Comme si l'art pouvait être jamais une lueur dansante sur un fond de sérénité. Vouloir nous faire croire à ce rêve moustachu est un mensonge paternel qui se paie tôt ou tard.

KENNETH LOCHHEAD

suite de la page 39

Kenneth Lochhead avoue son retour à la nature. Après l'austérité de l'aventure de la Plaine, il n'est pas impossible que la douce beauté rurale qui imprègne une bonne partie de la ville d'Ottawa ait produit son effet. Lochhead reconnaît que l'influence de l'endroit est importante. De fait, cet artiste a plus d'une fois dans sa vie fait un choix, que ce soit en regard du moyen d'expression, du lieu où il a décidé de s'installer ou de son style de peinture. Et pour un Écossais celte, il ne semble pas nourrir une névrose cachée. La visite de son atelier s'avère fascinante par ce qu'elle procure d'expériences de toute espèce et de tout niveau. Le Canada, et Ottawa plus particulièrement, ont l'avantage de posséder un artiste comme Lochhead, qui fait profiter sa ville et les gens de son entourage de l'amour passionné qu'il voue à la beauté. Kenneth Lochhead a tout du gentilhomme de la Renaissance, et ses étudiants savent peut-être mieux que personne que «bella figura» signifie en vérité «courage».

(Traduction de Laure Muszynski)

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Maheu Noiseux

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Claude-A. SIMARD *Nature-morte*, 1984.

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