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The Imagined Cities of Three Canadian Painters

Jon Caulfield

Abstract

The paper argues that cityscapes of Toronto painted by John Gillespie in 1844/5, Robert Gagen in 1914 and Christiane Pflug in 1968-71 each illuminate and are illuminated by the urban historical periods in which they were created. The paper's conclusion suggests that three frameworks for looking at painters' images of cityscape are those of political economy, "sentiment and symbolism", and "discursive" relationship of observer and object.

Résumé

Selon l'auteur de cet article, les peintures que John Gillespie, Robert Gagen et Christiane Pflug firent de Toronto, respectivement en 1844 et 1845, en 1914, et entre 1968 et 1971, éclairent les périodes de développement urbain au cours desquelles elles furent créés et, par contrecoup, s'en trouvent éclairées. La conclusion ouvre trois perspectives permettant d'apprécier ces paysages urbains : l'économie politique, le «sentiment et le symbolisme» et la relation «discursive» entre l'observateur et l'objet.

The curator of the recent exhibition *Urban Images: Canadian Painting* observed that art historians and urban scholars may have different interests in cityscape pictures. Her own goal was an historical overview of various artists' styles and perspectives in depicting the city; an urbanist, on the other hand, might want "to illustrate ... specific urban principles" in the context of the paintings.[1] This paper is an effort in the latter direction. It focuses on images of Toronto in painting at different moments of its urban development: the mercantile, commercial and industrial phases described in Gilbert Stelter's model of Canadian urbanization,[2] and the contemporary corporate/de-industrializing period.

Among the strengths of Stelter's typology is an implicit stress on ways that transitions between these kinds of urban historical eras are not only abstract matters of political economy but, in their effects on social milieu and built landscapes, also concrete experiences felt by city-dwellers in the course of their everyday lives. This experience is reflected in respect to the shift from the mercantile to the commercial city in the contrast remarked by the painter Paul Kane between the village of his boyhood and the town he found in 1845 on his return from studies in Europe—"Little York, muddy and dirty, just struggling into existence, now the City of Toronto bursting forth in all its energy and commercial strength," [3] and is illustrated in respect to the shift to the industrial city in the observation of Barker Fairley (in a 1921 review of Lawren Harris's urban paintings) of "a vast gulf between the city's present and its immediate but somehow almost mysterious past."[4] The transition to the corporate city, meanwhile, has been part of the lived experience of many Toronto-dwellers today, a process whose effects on, for example, built form are strikingly illustrated in an early-1970s collection of aerial photographs published by a local real estate executive that documents the replacement of downtown neighbourhoods by warrens of highrises, rural pastures by massive subdivisions and malls, and sleepy ravines by expressway cloverleafs.[5]

This paper's concern is the way that urban transition has become visible in the work of cityscape artists who painted at these cusps of urban change—moments at which emerging urban realities have become visual images. In this context, the term "image" denotes a depiction that is both a cognitive perception and holistic conception of urban socio-spatial form, serving not only to organize and interpret this form but literally to create it in the minds' eyes of city-dwellers.[6] Further, the term denotes a social construction contingent on the triangle of its creator's biography and relationships to "topic" and imagined audience, three poles that compose the social context of "discourse."[7] Painting, in this framework, is approached as an institution whose central components (besides materials of production) include norms of creativity and horizons of expectation arising in specific interactional settings.

In respect to each of the three transitions in Toronto's urban history, the paper seeks to identify a painted image that seems somehow to capture or typify crucial aspects of the city's new meaning. One guideline for choosing pictures was that they be relatively familiar; hence, each is represented in the two most relevant recent compilations in the field, Dorothy Farr's catalogue for *Urban Images: Canadian Painting* and Edith Firth's *Toronto in Art*,[8] as well as other art-historical or documentary collections. In pursuing this theme, the paper's perspective is that, on the one hand, urban history may help illuminate pictures

produced on specific occasions in cities while, on the other, these pictures may help amplify an historical understanding of cities.

The Utopian Vision of John Gillespie – View of King Street

John Gillespie is not among Canada's well-known painters, mentioned only briefly in one of the two principal historical surveys of Canadian painting,[9] not at all in the other,[10] and unrepresented in both the *Dictionary of Canadian Artists* and two major catalogues of early Canadian pictorial art.[11] The picture with which this paper will deal, meanwhile, has often been credited to another artist, his contemporary Thomas Young, a mischance that has occasionally persisted despite the fact its correct authorship was established nearly two decades ago.[12] The picture has, on the other hand, often been used as an informative case of early Canadian cityscape—besides Farr and Firth, for example, it is reproduced in the recent *Illustrated History of Canada*[13]—and it has acquired some status as a familiar visual image of early Toronto.

Gillespie, who lived and worked in Toronto at least during the 1840s, was, like a preponderance of the town's residents at the time, probably an immigrant. (Toronto's population grew from fewer than 2,000 to more than 30,000 during the second quarter of the 1800s, mainly as a function of immigration from the Britain.[14]) Based on knowledge of his pictures and professional activities—portrait and landscape painter in oils and watercolour, commercial illustrator and lithographer, and apparently also a teacher of art[15]—it may be surmised that he was among the city's burgeoning entrepreneurial middle class and also that his patronage was mainly among this class.

The early and mid-1840s were heady days in Toronto, a time of sanguine prosperity wedged between troughs of depression in the late 1830s and 1840s, that followed hard on the remarkable boom of the previous decade. It had been in the years 1825 to 1835 that the "small and undistinguished village" of Kane's memory, "whose main distinction was that it was the seat of government,"[16] had been transformed to the germ of a metropolis, a process rooted in dominance of a rural-agricultural hinterland experiencing rapid colonial settlement. By the time the provincial

John Gillespie,* View of King Street, Toronto, *1844/45, oil on canvas 27.9 x 55.9 cm., Royal Ontario Museum.

government departed (temporarily) in 1841, removing the imperial gentry who had formerly constituted the town's elite, a new commercial class had already entrenched its hegemony in the local hierarchy, a shift of economic role and power-structure that are the essence of the transition to the commercial urban period.

But the new city did not yet have an image—or not, at any rate, in the eyes of its painters. Toronto's principal cityscape artists of the 1830s, Young and John Howard, generally remained faithful to the picturesque impressions of village-like settings and social life that had characterized urban imagery of the colonial/mercantile period. Howard's *Toronto Bay* (1835), for example, is an idyll of winter leisure on the harbour ice,[17] while a bucolic 1836 view of the waterfront by Young features workingmen gone fishing and a windmill.[18] In each picture, the town is just a row of distant buildings. When they approached for a closer look at the city, their themes again echoed the imagery of Colonial Canada. Howard's *Parliament Buildings* (1834)—seat and symbol of the imperial presence—stood alone at the town's edge, suggesting nothing very urban, while the picture's human anecdote recalls not city life but small-town diversion.[19]

Young, meanwhile, did come downtown, but the dominant features of his serene *King Street East* (1835), where the local gentry promenade, are the town's Anglican cathedral and courthouse (with a farmer's oxcart in the foreground).[20]

Gillespie created similar pictures. His drawings of the parliament buildings (1844) and Fort York (1845)[21]—impressions made for the commercial market (the first was lithographed for popular subscription, the second appears to have been a book illustration)—typify the content and style of picturesque colonial townscape. But he had another vision too, evident in an 1842 sketch of the view from a King Street rooftop; although the landscape to the north is properly picturesque, the street itself is clearly a commercial thoroughfare of shops and shoppers.[22] The picture augured his 1844/5 *View of King Street*.

View of King Street attends painstakingly to physical detail, recalling a second common school of colonial painting (besides the picturesque), the topographic style, derived from the work of military personnel trained to create accurate renderings of landscape in the era before the camera. One art historian, on the other hand, has described the picture as an early precursor of a popular contemporary style, high realism.[23] Either way, it is probably a fairly faithful record of urban form; an 1850 newspaper item observed of a picture by Gillespie that "not a building nor a chimney will be found out of place."[24]

The small oil is twice as wide as it is high, opening up the vista of a broad, almost metropolitan streetscape. (Gillespie's sense of accuracy may have faltered here; the street's breadth is inconsistent with other views of the same period—the dimensions of Young's King Street, for example, are measurably more modest.) Homage is paid the town's former imperial function by the presence of two soldiers in dress uniform in the foreground. But like the two natives and two workingmen nearby, they are incidental ornament to the main motif of commercial and civic prosperity spelled out by merchants' shop-signs along well-ordered architectural facades; and despite the presence of these figures, this is not a picture of urban demographic diversity (in contrast to, say, of some of James Cockburn's work in Quebec or James Duncan's in Montreal.)[25] Gillespie's people are mostly middle class members of the town's new entrepreneurial order.

The picture was no doubt viewed with pride by the artist's social peers (who might have seen it at his Richmond Street studio or the local exhibits where he showed his work). The renovation of King Street—the town's commercial hub—had been a key focus of civic boosterism in the 1830s and 1840s, to which the painting bears witness. Besides portraying two important public edifices constructed the previous decade—St Lawrence Market and St James Cathedral (both replacements of earlier, cruder versions of the same buildings)—it also depicted more recent improvements: the "Market Block," an early-1840s municipal project to redevelop older, shabbier structures beside the market with a row of more imposing brick buildings (some of which remain today), and the lately-installed gas streetlamps along King Street.[26] But, more than any particular feature of streetscape, it is the picture's modern mood that must have stirred Gillespie's immediate audience—the town is clearly a city here—and it is not contentious to describe the painting as an emphatic ideological document. In this vein, the dean of Canadian art historians has observed that *View of King Street* "exulted in *progress*;"[27] nothing disturbs the impression of prosperous urbanity.

Gillespie's Toronto shatters earlier images of the town as a frontier village, and we may speculate that the viewers he intended for the picture were not only the burghers of his own era, given a reflection of their ambitions and dreams, but

King Street East, Yonge to Church Streets, ***1835. Thomas Young, lithograph, 30.2 x 45.5 cm., Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library, Baldwin Room, JRR 2612.***

also ourselves—that, as a work of topography, *View of King Street* was partly meant as an historical record. In this respect, it shares the mythological character of many historical records, refracting reality through the eyes of interest, revealing as much by what is unsaid as is said. In a very real sense, Gillespie's vision is an imagined city, early commercial Canada's urban utopia made tangible.

The Uncertain Vision of Robert Gagen – Temples of Commerce

The industrial era was visible in the work of Toronto artists well before Robert Gagen painted *Temples of Commerce* in 1914. William Armstrong created a compelling image of factory labour in the mid-1860s[28] (the first picture of its type); and little is reminiscent of commercial Toronto in Frederick Bell-Smith's 1894 impression of Victorian urbanity on King Street,[29] a scene J. R. Harper observes "might readily be mistaken for ... London"[30] (and an image it is interesting to compare with Young's and Gillespie's earlier views of the street.) Toronto's industrial era was long underway by the close of the century.[31] Thus, Gagen's picture must be located in what Stelter terms "the second phase of industrialism,"[32] an era of centripetal corporate force when

Robert E. Gagen,* Temples of Commerce, *1914. oil on canvas, 68.3 x 101.4 cm.
MTL T 30583

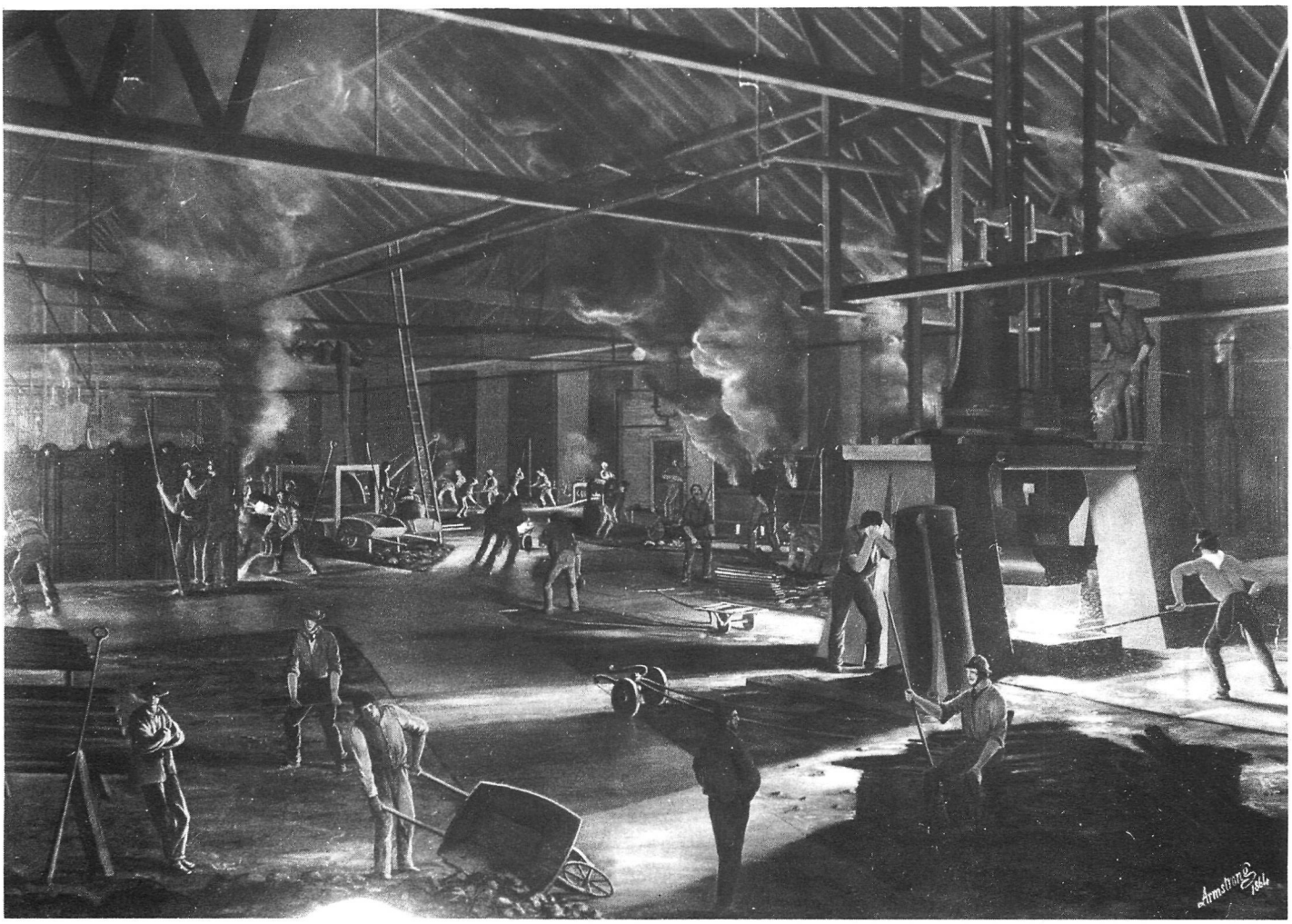
economic power was coalescing. In respect to Toronto's internal economy, some numbers help illustrate this process: in 1891, the city had 26,000 factory workers employed in 2,400 firms; by 1991, 65,000 workers were employed by only 1,100 firms.[33] The Ontario economy, meanwhile, was increasingly rationalized in the yoke of metropolitan corporations and institutions.[34]

Nor is Gagen's picture an image of industrial landscape in the manner Harris's *Eaton Manufacturing Building* (1911)[35] or J. E. H. MacDonald's highly regarded *Tracks and Traffic* (1912).[36] And arguably it may be better read as an augur of corporate urbanism than an icon of the industrial era; Firth describes its cityscape as a "harbinger."[37] Still, it has become an established image of Toronto in the early years of the century—used, for example, as the cover-plate of Firth's book, and one of two Toronto pictures of its period selected for *Urban Images: Canadian Painting* (the other was a Harris house-portrait).[38]

In contrast to the anecdotal character of the pictures by Armstrong, Bell-Smith, Harris and MacDonald—each a view of a specific aspect of the city—Gagen (like Gillespie) grasped at the core of the mat-

ter. What is critical here is not the secularization of the city, a theme implied by the picture's title but a long-settled historical fact by the early 1900s, but the concentration of financial power it connotes. (As a matter of record, on the other hand, office buildings did supplant steeples as the punctuation of the Toronto's skyline by the early 1900s.) Born in Chicago, embraced by New York, the skyscraper was a highly pragmatic use of city real estate; but, by the turn of the century, it had also become the architectural symbol of the new economic era, the most explicit urban embodiment of what Guy Debord later named *spectacle*: "capital to such a degree of accumulation that it becomes as image."[39]

Three of Gagen's temples were banks and the fourth, the Toronto headquarters of the most (in)famous Canadian company, Canadian Pacific. Patricia McHugh describes the nearest of them, the Trader's Bank (built in 1905), as "Toronto's first real skyscraper."[40] Behind it, the recently-completed CP Building (1912) and Royal Bank (1914) each rose to new heights and was billed for a time as the British Empire's tallest building. The fourth was the Dominion Bank (1913). (All remain today, dwarfed by



William Armstrong,* Toronto Rolling Mills, *1864. pastel 73.2 x 103.2 cm.
MTL JRR T10914

megastructures of the corporate era.) Thus, three of Gagen's towers were less than two years old when he painted them; they were a very new landscape.

In making their picture, Gagen took license with nature and perspective. Toronto's sky is never this colour (lima-bean green), nor its lakeside buildings ever cast in so much shadow (particularly not if the sun is where it seems to be). And the rotunda in the right foreground, atop the Board of Trade Building (now demolished), is too low and should seem taller—or the skyscrapers short; something is badly out of scale (in part, because Gagen has elongated the attic capitals of the towers to the rear.)[41] There is a lot of smoke in the picture, grey, white, red, yellow (some from chimneys, some from a tug, some just ambient with no apparent source), whose main function seems decorative; it is reminiscent of Monet's smoke at Argenteuil about which T. J. Clark wrote, "(T)here was nothing that could not be made part of a picture—of a picture's fragile unity—if the painter confined himself to appearances and put aside questions of meaning or use."[42] Still, smoke was a key part of the new cityscape of the industrial city, and Gagen inserts plenty of it.

The picture was a departure from Gagen's usual wilderness themes of Rocky Mountains and Maritime seascapes.[43] Like MacDonald, whose *Tracks and Traffic* was his sole serious venture into the city, Gagen left no body of urban work, only one anomalous canvas. He was 67 when he painted it, near the close of a career in which he had been a central figure in Toronto's established arts community—a founder of the Ontario Society of Artists (1872), charter member of the Royal Canadian Academy (1880), Commissioner of Fine Arts for the Canadian National Exhibition (1912-26), president of the Arts and Letters Club (1919-20). (His connection to the city's arts world was partly a matter of birth; his father had been a member of John Howard's architectural firm.)

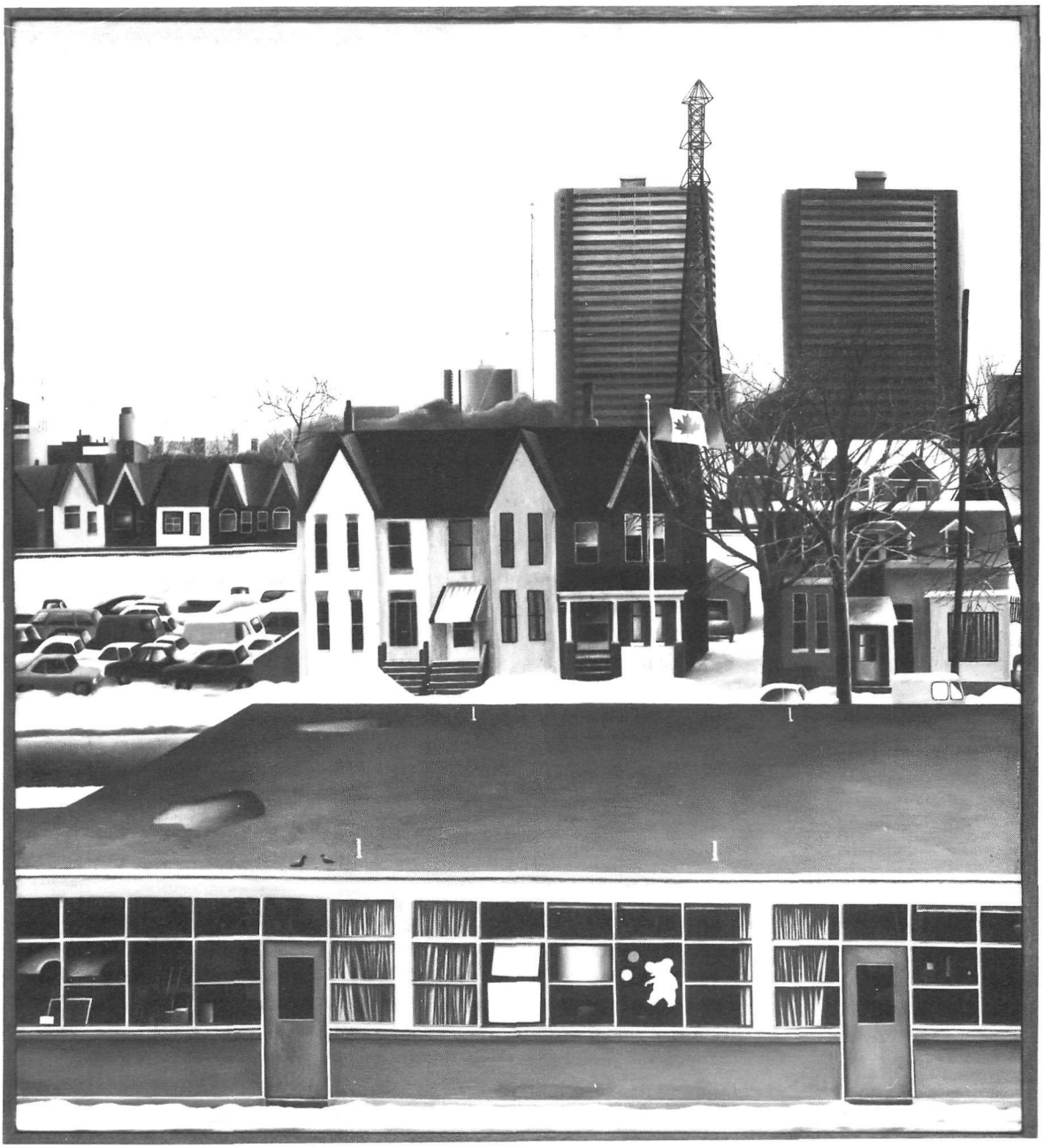
When it was shown at a 1914 Royal Academy exhibition, one critic seems to have been unsure what to make of the picture: "(Gagen) strikes a new note in *Temples of Commerce*, being an up-to-date study of part of Toronto's waterfront, with the skyscrapers piling up into a crescendo, the whole scene bathed in a beautiful, if somewhat exaggerated, rosy sunset glow."[44]

Another was less at sea: "Quite the most interesting work that one has seen from the brush of (Gagen) is his *Temples of Commerce*, in which he shows that he can bring the same felicity of handling to the treatment of our monstrous skyscrapers that he has also shown in subjects nearer to nature. In fact, he almost makes the skyscrapers beautiful."[45]

The public, meanwhile, appears not to have embraced the picture. Following the R.C.A. exhibit, where it was unsold, it came into possession of the C.N.E. (of which, it will be recalled, Gagen was Commissioner of Fine Arts) who lent it indefinitely to the Art Gallery of Toronto. Here, it was among pictures shown at a 1926 memorial exhibit after the artist's death; a newspaper story at the time entirely missed the point, describing it as the portrayal of "a cluster of manufacturing buildings." The following year, it was sold at a show at Eaton's department store under the less troublesome title *In Toronto Harbour* and fetched $45, "almost the cheapest painting in sale."[46]

One hypothesis about the picture's tepid reception is that, in the era of the Group of Seven, Toronto's art market was by and large uninterested in cityscape. But while this is generally true, other city pictures—house portraits, impressions of wintry neighbourhoods, anecdotal street scenes—did occasionally find markedly more commercial success than Gagen's. A second hypothesis is that the picture displayed the city as its art customers preferred not to see it, a difficulty not alleviated by simply altering the title. Early 1900s Toronto was unenthusiastic about skyscrapers (a mood reflected by the second critic); the Trader's Bank, for example, was designed to "hide the uppermost floors behind a deep cornice, diminishing any visual sense of height."[47] A cityscape in which Brobdingnagian buildings were the organizing theme may have been foredoomed to obscurity. But there is also a third possibility; the picture may be altogether too unclear in the treatment of its theme. One writer describes it as "full of pride,"[48] but this seems to ignore the ambiguities of a title that—at least for Eaton's—was found uncomfortable. The new middle class who composed the art market of Toronto's industrial period may have been uncertain whether the picture was to be taken seriously or might not be a kind of burlesque made at their expense by an artist who usually applied his skills to triumphal mountainscapes. It is not evident that Gagen was sure either, nor whom he had in mind as the picture's audience; if it was the city's mainstream art market, he miscalculated.

"Full of pride" does describe Gillespie's picture with its too-wide King Street. But *Temples of Commerce* with its too-tall towers is harder to read. It is also a vision of an imagined city, but the artist—a sexagenarian who had lived through Fairley's "vast gulf between the city's present and its immediate but somehow mysterious past"[49]—seems to have been



Christiane Pflug, Cottingham School in Winter *(1968) . oil on canvas, 110.5 x 100.5 cm., National Gallery of Canada. Gift of Dr. Michael Pflug, Toronto, 1982.*

unsettled about the nature of his vision and has left us an image of industrial Canada that is a riddle, not readily transparent.

The Kaleidoscopic Vision of Christiane Pflug – Cottingham School

Toronto's corporate/industrial period is not encompassed in Stelter's model but, according to his criteria, is a distinct urban historical moment. Its features include the diminishing importance of the nation-state and increasing linkage of cities in a global economic grid, a pronounced shift in employment patterns toward office and service work (and a disappearance of industrial landscape), a growing dominance of transnational institutions in shaping urban form, and a decentring and polynucleation of metropolitan space (among whose key components are the replacement of suburbs by "technoburbs"[50] and a re-gentrifying of the inner city.)[51] Amid these processes of complex change, the once-naturalized and stable meanings of many elements of urban place have become confused and problematic.

We cannot forecast what image an observer several decades hence will deploy as emblematic of this era or even whether this quest will be found meaningful; the search for a "transcendent image"[52] is, afterall, a modernist preoccupation. Such an image may, on the other hand, not become readily available insofar as the social and spatial nature of contemporary urbanism may defy holistic legibility.[53] An attenuation of meaning may be a quality of the object perceived (the decomposing city), not just a foible of "postmodern" apprehension. Although Gillespie's King Street and Gagen's skyscrapers are mythologies, they were at least derived from a fixed and consensually perceived locus—the *city*, embodied in downtown. But in an era of "non-place urban realm,"[54] "city" has become a moot concept, perhaps mainly of historical interest. Certainly, the job of adequately depicting the shift to the corporate metropolis is not satisfied by the stratagem of some artists of simply painting bigger downtown office towers (even if they do at times threaten to blot out the sky.)[55] Like Howard's *Parliament Buildings*, these are icons of a former era—simulations of stable place in the milieu of a highly mobile economy that does not need a stable place.

Many other recent painters' visions of Toronto, as well, seem to have an anachronistic feel—a quality that in part derives from artists' general habit of remaining downtown, where the city used to be. Some of the images they have created have the character of epitaph—treatments of older built forms in which the break-up of traditional urban fabric is often implicit (such as Albert Franck's portraits of old houses that "barked like a dog at ... urban renewal")[56] or juxtapositions of old and new forms that make the transience of the historical city apparent (like Hugh MacKenzie's *Survivor* (1966), in which a solitary old downtown building is partly obscured by an expressway ramp).[57] Other styles are less critical of the city's refashioning—for example, a kind of painterly analogue of gentrification that fetishizes traditional urban forms (Victorian houses, old streetcars, ethnic villages) and an approach to corporate downtown landscape that uses happy colours, diminishes its scale and softens its angles, and often populates its public places with cheerful folk.[58]

To be sure, pictures like Franck's are not simply quixotic; traditional urban fabric remains bitterly contested ground in Toronto and artists frequently among the vanguard of its partisans. Nor are pictures of the latter type merely beguiling ruses. Although they may mask the Disneyfying of the city[59] (and inflexible commodity logic that often seems to underlie contemporary urban form), they reflect a strong popular affection for traditional urbanism that is not simply reducible to clever marketing[60] as well as the quiet truth that the city centre still does hold some of its seminal role as a locale of carnival.[61] But, for the most part, these dominant recent modes of cityscape do not confront the emergent urban environment on its own terms. An artist like John Ward, one of the few who has ventured to the suburbs (or, rather, to the zone that used to be the suburbs before the word lost much of its meaning), is highly conspicuous; his pictures include a new subdivision, the view from a car on a suburban expressway, and a suburban high-rise.[62]

Another painter whose vision of the contemporary city is distinct from the mainstream of much recent work produced is Christiane Pflug—in particular, a series of pictures done between 1968 and 1971 that each look toward downtown across the roof of a midtown school. Pflug was a contemporary artist in the prototypical sense, an idiosyncratic and somewhat bohemian figure who talked of her work in highly personal terms (and contrasts with, say, an entrepreneur/businessman like Gillespie). Her imagined audience in Toronto included her husband, who sought to help shape her painting, and the local gallery market that exhibited and purchased her pictures.[63] Her variations on the view across the school roof are familiar images of the current-day city, represented in Firth, Farr and a number of other anthologies and exhibitions.[64]

The eight pictures are similar in many

ways. The school is always in the foreground; behind it are some old houses on one or two nearby streets and, beyond the houses, one or two massive hydro pylons and highrise buildings. But each picture is also unique. This is partly a matter of compositional elements. In some versions, for example, the whole facade of the school is visible, in others only part of the roof. In pictures done in summer, the trees have leaves; others, painted in winter, have bare trees; one has no trees at all. The school's flagpole and a Canadian flag are in most of the pictures, but the flag changes colour, sometimes its usual red, now yellow, now black. But the more striking difference among the pictures arises from their shifting moods (for which some writers have sought to find words, one described as "benign" or "happy", others as "menacing" or "eerie"[65]). In this respect, no two are alike.

A notable feature of the pictures is their declarative attitude toward cityscape. Pflug was an artist who "painted what she saw," "the objects directly in front of her"[66]—in this case, the view immediately visible from a window of her home. As well, she was an immigrant, in Canada less than a decade when she started the series; while she appears to have recognized the challenge of the new urban landscape—"all these things, as they now are , have never been painted before"[67]—her vision of the city was unaffected by any strong sense of what Toronto might have looked like or felt like before the upheaval of its landscape in the 1950s and 1960s.[68] The fragmentation of the old city is evident in the pictures but undramatized; it is just there. And, try as one may, one simply cannot find in the pictures the statements they are sometimes said to make: "High rise(s) ... mingle uneasily with older Toronto houses;" "apartment buildings ... were seen looming ... but not as a menace, rather as part of a harmoniously growing city;" "Christiane was conscious of a(n) ... almost engulfing city."[69] These are the voices of her commentators, not Pflug.

Her vision was not of cityscape itself but of the individual's unstable relationship with cityscape ... with the visible—in which "(r)eality is construed differently by different people and perhaps differently at different times by the same person."[70] The paintings remind us of a key tenet of modern thought, that observer and observed are inseparable, and it is the clear echo of this axiom that entitles us to locate the pictures collectively (in the singular) as a distinctly contemporary view of the city. No transcendent image is sought—feature of the pictures that, to be sure, reflects "postmodern" urbanism in which "apprehension (is said) to emphasize (an) inherent instability of meaning, our ability to invert signs and symbols, to recycle them ... and transform their reference."[71] But, as well, the pictures offer one route of approach to an urban field that has altered from focused place ("city") to abstract metropolitan space, an unstable grid of simulated places in which landscape in any traditional sense—locale endowed with enduring social meaning—may perhaps only be fabricated.

At the time of her death in 1972, Pflug was at work on still a ninth version, with purple flag, of the view over the school roof.

Conclusion

Among the main concerns of urban history are the built forms (or settings) and functions (or activities) that have characterized cities. The work of painters is sometimes useful visual evidence toward these objectives (so long, as Jim Burant has pointed out, as we are careful to consider pictorial records in their specific social contexts).[72] As well—and the concern of this paper—artists' pictures can be helpful to the urban historical objective of seeking to understand urban meanings: the significance of city places for people.[73]

Urban meanings, and painters' visions of the city, are clearly social constructions. One context in which they may be viewed is that of political economy and class analysis suggested by Mark Gottdiener: "Each social group possesses its own conception of urban space just as different interests in the city compete with each other over control of the social surplus,"[74] a framework that seems relevant to Gillespie's vision; an artist with another social interest, more sceptical of the commercial city, might have painted a quite different view of King Street. A second context—perhaps germane to Gagen's Toronto—is that of "sentiment and symbolism" suggested by Walter Fiery in which landscape is viewed in the framework of "cultural values that ... become associated with a certain spatial area;"[75] a painter with a less uncertain attitude toward the downtown's new skyscrapers might have seen different towers than Gagen. Finally, Pflug's pictures of a polysemantic cityscape suggest a third context, the discursive relationship of view and "topic" in specified social settings, with attention to characteristic modes of perception (and conception) and the perceived ontological nature of objects.

Notes

1. Dorothy Part, *Urban Images/Canadian Painting* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1990), xvi.

2. "The city-building process in Canada" in Gilbert

Stelter and Alan Artibise (eds.), *Shaping the Urban Landscape: Aspects of the Canadian City-Building Process* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1981), 1-29.

3. J. Russell Harper, *Paul Kane's Frontier* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), 51.

4. "Some Canadian painters: Lawren Harris," *Canadian Forum*, June 1921, 276.

5. Donald Kirkup, *Boomtown Metropolitan Toronto: A Photographic Record of Two Decades of Growth* (Toronto: D. Kirkup/Lockwood Survey Corporation Limited, n.d. (c. 1972).

6. Mark Gottdiener and Alexandros Lagopoulos, "Introduction", and Gottdiener, "Culture, ideology and the sign of the city" in Gottdiener and Lagopoulos (eds., *The City and the Sign: An Introduction to Urban Semiotics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 1-22, 202-18.

7. Mikhail Bakhtin (V. N. Volosinov), "Discourse in life and discourse in art" in *Freudianism: A Marxist Critique* (New York: Academic Press, 1973), 93-116 (cf. Caulfield, "A note on three art historical monographs (Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogical triangle)," *Social Science Journal*, Division of Social Science, Faculty of Arts, York University (copy available from author).

8. Edith Firth, *Toronto in Art: 150 Years through Artists' Eyes* (Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1983).

9. J. Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada: A History (Second Edition)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 110.

10. Dennis Reid, *A Concise History of Canadian Painting* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1973).

11. Colin MacDonald, *Dictionary of Canadian Artists* (Ottawa: Canadian Paperbacks, 1967-74); Mary Allodi, *Canadian Watercolours and Drawings in the Royal Ontario Museum* (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1974); W. Martha Cooke, *W. H. Coverdale Collection of Canadiana: Paintings, Watercolours and Drawings* (Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada, 1983).

12. E.G., Farr, 48-9; Craig Brown (ed.), *The Illustrated History of Canada* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1987), plate opp. 321. Gillespie was identified as the picture's painter during its cleaning at the Royal Ontario Museum in the early 1970s (telephone interview w. Barbara Chisholm, Sigmund Samuel Collection, Royal Ontario Museum, Dec. 12, 1990).

13. Farr, op. cit.; Firth, 19; Brown, op. cit.; also Harper (1977), plate 55.

14. Frederick Armstrong, *A City in the Making: Progress, People and Perils in Victorian Toronto* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1988), 16.

15. Mary Allodi, *Printmaking in Canada: The Earliest Views and Portraits* (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1980), 201, 205; Harper, *Early Painters and Engravers in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 128-9; Harper, (1977) 413.

16. Edith Firth, *The Town of York, 1815-1834: A Further Collection of Documents of Early Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), xviii, xxxiv.

17. Repro. in Firth (1983), 18.

18. *General View of the City of Toronto* repro. in Firth (1983), 12-13.

19. Repro. in Firth (1983), 15.

20. Repro. in Brown, 263.

21. *Parliament Buildings from Queens Wharf and The Garrison, Toronto* repro. in Allodi (1980), 200, 206.

22. *West View of the City of Toronto* repro. in Firth (1983), 17.

23. Paul Duval, *High Realism in Canada* (Toronto: Clarke Irwin, 1974), 12.

24. Firth (1983), 16.

25. Cf. Caulfield, "Three confederation painters of the Canadian city, 1: James Cockburn" and "2: James Duncan," *Urban History Review* XVI:1 (1987), 69-74 and XVI:2 (1987), 190-5.

26. Armstrong 25, 42; Patricia McHugh, *Toronto Architecture: A City Guide* (Toronto: Mercury Books, 1985), 31.

27. Harper (1977), 110 (italic in original).

28. *Toronto Rolling Mills* (1864) repro. in Henry Campbell, *Early Days on the Great Lakes: The Art of William Armstrong* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), 46-7; Firth (1983), 49 (cf. Gregory Kealey, "Toronto Rolling Mills," *Canadian Labour History [Newsletter of the Committee on Canadian Labour History]* 7 (1975), 2.

29. *Lights of a City Street* repro. in Roger Boulet, *Frederic Marlett Bell-Smith (1846-1923)* (Victoria: Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 1977), 24; Harper (1977), plate 77; Firth (1983), 66; Peter Mellen, *Landmarks of Canadian Art* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), 137. (The dating used here for the picture is Boulet's, author of the primary monograph on Bell-Smith.)

30. (1977), 191.

31. Kealey, "Toronto Industrial Revolution" in Michael Cross and Kealey (eds.), *Canada's Age of Industry* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 20-61.

32. Stelter, 19.

33. J.M.S. Careless, *Toronto to 1918: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1984), 200.

34. Cf. Leo Johnson, "Ideology and political economy in urban growth: Guelph, 1827-1927" in Stelter and Artibise, 30-64.

35. Repro. in Rosemary Donegan, *Industrial Images* (Hamilton: Art Gallery of Hamilton, 1987), 46; Jeremy Adamson, *Lawren S. Harris: Urban Scenes and Wilderness Landscapes, 1906-1930* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1978); Firth (1983), 114 (cf. Glen Norcliffe), "In a hard land: the geographical context of Canadian industrial landscape painting" in Paul Simpson-Housley and Norcliffe (eds.), *No Vacant Eden: Literary and Artistic Impressions of Canadian Landscapes* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, forthcoming).

36. Repro. in Duval, *The Tangled Garden: The Art of J.E.H. MacDonald* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1978), plate 31; Donegan, 47; Firth (1983), 107.

37. (1983), dust jacket.

38. Firth (1983), also 94-5; Farr, 69.

39. *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black and Red, 1983), 34 (cf. Gunter Gad and Deryck Holdsworth, "Building for city, region and nation: office development in Toronto, 1834-1984" in Victor Russell (ed.), *Forging a Consensus: Historical Essays on Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 300.

40. McHugh, 87.

41. A 1917 photograph of Toronto's downtown in Careless, 199, indicated the relative size of Board of Trade Building compared with Gagen's towers.

42. *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 180-1.

43. Re Gagen's biography cf. MacDonald (Vol. 2), 242-3; Harper (1970), 123-4, and (1977), 413; Dennis Reid, *Our Own Country Canada: An Account of the National Aspirations of Principal Landscape Artists in Montreal and Toronto, 1860-1890* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1979), passim.

44. *Globe* (Toronto), Nov. 20, 1914.

45. H. Charlesworth, *Saturday Night*, Nov. 28, 1914, 4.

46. Files of the Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library.

47. McHugh, 87.

48. Farr, 68.

49. Cf. note 5.

50. Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 17, 182-207.

51. The prefix "re" is meant to denote the recurrence of an historical pattern (cf. David Ley, "Inner-city revitalization: A Vancouver case study" in John Palen and Bruce London (eds.), *Gentrification, Displacement and Neighbourhood Revitalization* (Albany: University of New York Press, 1984), 201).

52. Ian Jeffrey, "Concerning images of the metropolis" in Jeffrey and David Mellor (eds.), *Cityscape, 1910-1930: Urban Themes in American, German and British Art* (Sheffield: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978), 9.

53. William Sharpe and Leonard Wallock, "From 'great town' to 'nonplace urban realm': reading the modern city" in Sharpe and Wallock (eds.), *Visions of the Modern City: Essays in History, Art and Literature* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987), 1-50.

54. Melvin Webber, "The urban place and the nonplace urban realm" in Webber et al. (eds.), *Explorations in Urban Structure* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964), cited in Sharpe and Wallock.

55. For example, George Boyer, *Downtown* (1983) repro. in Firth (1983), 2, and several pictures by Chris Temple shown at the exhibition "Urbanus, Urbs, Urbis," Bau-Xi Gallery, Toronto, Nov., 1986.

56. Harold Town, *Albert Franck: Keeper of the Lanes* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), 28 (cf. Caulfield, "Augurs of 'gentrification': city houses of four Canadian painters" in Simpson-Housley and Norcliffe).

57. Repro. in Firth (1983), 178,

58. For example, Arto Yuzbasiyan's *Houses, Kensington Market*, Rod Prouse's *Santa Clause Parade*, Carlos Marchiori's *Bloor Street West* and Rayka Kupesic's *Winter in Nathan Phillips Square* repro. in Firth (1983), 180, 190, 191, 194.

59. Edward Relph, *The Modern Urban Landscape* (John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 1987), 129-30; Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), 23-6.

60. Jon Caulfield, "Gentrification and desire", *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 26:4 (1989), 617-32.

61. Louis Mumford, *The City in History* (New York: Brace and World, 1961), 8.

62. *New Houses* (1980), *Passing Through* (1980), *High Rise* (19789) repro. in John Ward, *A Painter's City* (Toronto: Blue Sky Press, 1980).

63. Re Pflug's biography cf. Ann Davis, *Christiane Pflug, 1936-1972* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1974); Allodi, "Christiane Plfug", *ArtsCanada* 174-5 (Dec. 1972/Jan. 1973), 42-7; Duval 1974, 132-41; Farr and Natalie Luckyj, *From Women's Eyes: Women Painters in Canada* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1976), 69-70.

64. Repro. in Firth (1983), 170; Farr, 119; Duval (1974), 138, 139; Farr and Luckyj, 70 (also repro. in David, plates 65, 68, 70; Allodi (1973/3), 46, 47).

65. Farr, 118; Davis, 11.

66. Allodi (1972/3), 42; Davis, 13.

67. Allodi (1972/3), 42.

68. A similar argument might be made about Gillespie.

69. Firth (1983), 170; Michael Pflug in Farr, 118; Davis 11.

70. Douglas Pocock and Ray Hudson, *Images of the Urban Environment* (London: MacMillan, 1978), 1.

71. Stephen Daniels and Denis Cosgrove, "Introduction: iconography and landscape" in Cosgrove and Daniels (eds.), *The Iconography of Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Pres, 1988), 7.

72. "Visual records and urban development", *Urban History Review* XII: 3 (1984), 57-62 (cf. Sylvia Antoniou et al., *The Painted Past: Selected Paintings from the Picture Division of the Public Archives of Canada* (Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada, 1984).

73. Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, 1976), 47 (cf. Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 303).

74. Gottdiener, 206.

75. "Sentiment and symbolism as ecological variables," *American Sociological Review* 10 (1945), 141.