

## **Universities Art Association of Canada** **Report on the 1979 Annual Meeting, Halifax, Nova Scotia,** **21-24 February 1979**

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## Universities Art Association of Canada

### Report on the 1979 Annual Meeting Halifax, Nova Scotia, 21-24 February 1979

The annual meeting of the Universities Art Association of Canada featured papers and panels on issues in historic and current art. Four sessions concerned with contemporary art were co-sponsored by the Canadian chapter of the International Association of Art Critics. The programme was chaired by Garry Neill Kennedy, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

*Ancient and Mediaeval Art History* ROSEMARIE BERGMANN, McGill University, Chairperson

Barbara Dodge, York University, began the session by discussing *Technical Aspects of the Fresco Cycle Attributed to Francesco Traini in the Camposanto in Pisa*. She argued for the use of *sinopie* as a preparatory stage in the ideation of the work. She suggested a range of uses for *sinopie*, including sketchier ones employed when the artist was working with an untried concept. Dodge concluded by hypothesizing the use of small-scaled preparatory drawings, or *modelli*, at an early stage in the design process.

In *La façade nord de la cathédrale de Limoges et l'architecture flamboyante du val de Loire*, Roland Sanfaçon, Université Laval, connected the architectural style of the northern façade of the Cathedral of Limoges, begun at the beginning of the sixteenth century, with architectural traditions of the Loire Valley. A royal architectural taste of late Gothic style was assimilated at Tours, and then became dispersed in both secular and ecclesiastical architecture in the Loire Valley. Influences from Italy were also incorporated into this style, of which Limoges would be one of the last examples.

The architectural fabric of the Romanesque choir and transept at Tewkesbury was submitted to a detailed analysis by Malcolm Thurlby, Queen's University, in *Tewkesbury et Pershore: Deux élévations à quatre étages de la fin du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle: A Reconsideration*. He suggested that a stone barrel vault was part of the Romanesque structure, a substantial revision of the wooden-roofed hypothesis presented by Jean Bony in 1937.

*An Agate Roman Tazza from the J.P. Morgan Collection in the National Gallery of Canada* was discussed (in absentia) by Philippe Verdier, Université de Montréal. The paper examined successive transformations of the cup (Fig. 1). It was given a Christian overlay of

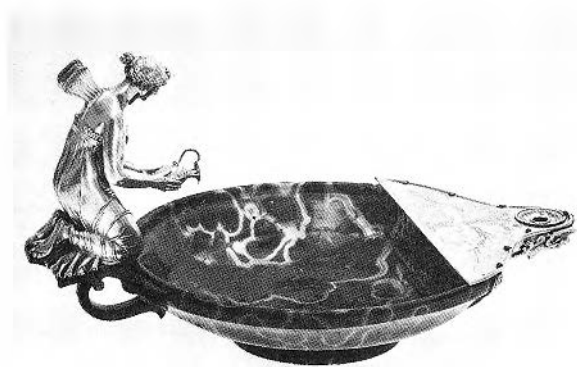


FIGURE 1. Late Roman agate bowl with Early Christian incised vine and French Empire mounts. Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada (Photo: National Gallery of Canada).

meaning with the cutting of a vineleaf decoration, perhaps under Constantine, and subsequently was adapted as an oil lamp during the Neoclassical period, under Napoleon I.

*Renaissance and Baroque Art History* LUIS DE MOURA SOBRAL, Université de Montréal, Chairperson

The French collector Florimond Robertet obtained a *Saint Veronica* by Lorenzo Costa in 1508. In *Italian Art in France – Florimond Robertet's Collection in the Château de Bury*, Clifford M. Brown, Carleton University, introduced correspondence on this lost painting. Costa's manner is praised as being 'more lyrical and suave' than that of Mantegna, documenting a contemporaneous perception of change in artistic style.

Alan D. McNairn, National Gallery of Canada, discussed *The Young van Dyck and Italian Painting*. He

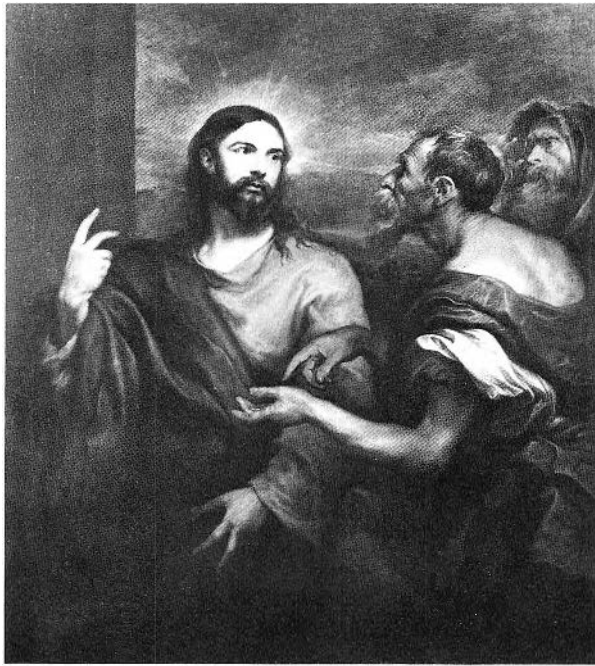


FIGURE 2. Anthony van Dyck, *The Tribute Money* (after Titian). Genoa, Palazzo Bianco (Photo: A. Villani, Bologna).

showed that van Dyck (Fig. 2) had studied closely the works of Titian, Veronese, and other Italians before he left Antwerp for Italy in 1621. His change of style in Genoa was simply one of re-evaluating existing qualities in his work.

Van Dyck's painting also formed the subject of *Secular or Religious? 'Hidden Persuaders' in van Dyck's Portraiture*, by J. Douglas Stewart, Queen's University. Stewart analysed a number of the artist's portraits to show the wealth of 'hidden' allusion and symbolism, much of which has distinctly religious sources.

George Knox, University of British Columbia, introduced four large paintings which remain in 'The Elms' in Newport, Rhode Island. In *Pagani, Pellegrini and Piazzetta at Newport*, Knox showed that the four represent scenes from the story of Scipio Africanus. Two were painted by Paolo Pagani, while the others were by Pellegrini and the young Piazzetta. The latter allows the discernment for the first time of the earliest phase of Piazzetta's career.

*Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Art History*  
ROBERT P. WELSH, University of Toronto, Chairperson.

Gerald Finley, Queen's University, suggested in *Turner, The Apocalypse and History: 'The Angel' and 'Undine'* that *The Angel Standing in the Sun* and *Undine Giving the Ring to Masaniello, Fisherman of Naples* (both exhibited in 1846) portray the theme of deceit. He suggested that the latter may be related to a contemporaneous event regarding the fate of Louis Philippe.

The origins, transformations, and significance of *Caiaphas and the Hypocrites* within Romantic iconography were discussed by Victor Chan, University of Alberta. His paper was titled *Blake, Goya, Flaxman, Romney and Fuseli – Transcriptions and Transformations of a Dantesque Image*.

Adele M. Holcomb, Bishop's University, followed with *Classical Solitudes and the Greta Woods of J.S. Cotman*. She spoke on the iconography of solitude and the fusion of direct observations and an imagined Arcadia in some of the landscape paintings of Cotman.

Japanese influence and a new modern pictorial structure formed the theme of *Henri Rivière's Thirty-six Views of the Eiffel Tower*, by Gerald Needham, York University. In this series of coloured prints, the artist brings together the artistic tradition of Japan with ideas of modern technology.

In *Redon, Schure and Orpheus, the Great Initiate*, Roger J. Mesley, University of Toronto, focused on the meanings of Orphic symbolism in Redon's lithographs.

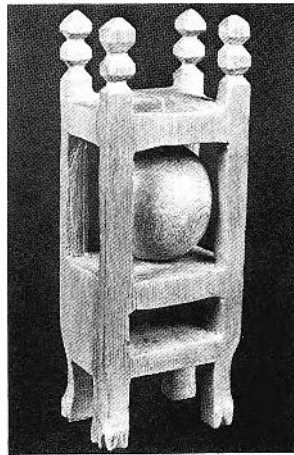
*Bilan des arts anciens du Québec* PIERRE MAYRAND, Université du Québec à Montréal, Chairperson

This session was the first meeting of l'Association des historiens d'art du Québec, formed a few months earlier. In the only formal presentation, Raymond Vézina, Archives publiques du Canada, Ottawa, spoke on *L'œuvre d'art au service des sciences humaines grâce à l'ordinateur*. He emphasized the need to develop norms for describing works of art, and introduced the National Information Programme/Programme du répertoire national, a computer-based inventory system that is used by the Public Archives of Canada.

*Canadian Folk Art* WESLEY MATTIE, National Museum of Man, Ottawa, Chairperson

The session explored some of the dimensions and parameters of folk art in Canada, without attempting a final definition. Thomas Lackey, Canadian Folk Art Forms, Halifax, presented slides from *The Canadian Folk Art Survey*, a collection of two thousand slides made over a two-year period that shows the range of forms and styles called 'folk art.' Jean Simard, Université Laval, discussed his methodology in making *The Folk Art Survey of Québec* (Fig. 3). He chose 75 per cent of the works from field research and the balance from collections, because the former come from within the definition of the community and the latter from the 'personal taste' of the collector. Nancy-Lou Patterson, University of Waterloo, described her research conducted for the National Museum of Man among Swiss-German Mennonites in Southern Ontario in *Symbolism in Mennonite Folk Art*. Gerald Ferguson, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, and co-ordinator of the session, spoke on *The Artist's Role as Collector*. He discussed the relationship of folk art to modern art, and the role of the artist as collector in assigning aesthetic value to non-academic works. Robert Klymasz, Memorial University, showed vivid decora-

FIGURE 3. Victor Dufresne. Captive ball carved from a single piece of pine, Québec, 1976. h: 26 cm. Collection Jacques Dufresne (Photo: Service de l'Audio-visuel, Université Laval).



tions of yards, houses, and the living rock in St. John's in *The New Folk Art from a Folkloric Perspective*. Michael Rowan, Craighurst Inn Antiques, Ontario, described *The Antique Dealer's Role*. He defined his role as an agent and as one who documents folk art for collectors, museums, and historians.

*New Trends in Methodology of Art History* SERGE GUILBAULT, University of British Columbia, Chairperson

Thomas Crow, University of Chicago, began with *The First Public Art Critics: Uses of Criticism in Eighteenth-Century Paris*. He showed that art criticism was invented to articulate the feelings and demands of the new audience of the Salons, and discussed the relationship between politics and critical judgment.

In *La matrice narrative chez les peintres russes Kandinsky et Malevitch*, Nicole Dubreuil-Blondin, Université de Montréal, discussed the iconographic and formalist approaches to criticism of these painters. She proposed a combination of the two approaches which consists of discerning a 'matrix of narration' in the very structure of the work.

The central ideas of Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg were examined in *Deux critiques américains*, by Vance Mendenhall, Université d'Ottawa. He suggested that formalist criticism considers art as a mode of social communication.

In *Kinshape: The Hawaiian Feather Cloak*, Thomas Cummins, University of California at Los Angeles, explained the meaning of the feather cloak by referring to the culture in which it occurred and examining its explicit and implicit symbolic functions. He concluded that the cloak stood for the bond that united Hawaiian royalty.

New perspectives have been opened in art history by the borrowing of semiology from the human and social sciences. In *Pollock's Drip: Sign, Icon, Index?* René Payant, Université d'Ottawa, analyzed Pollock's *Number One* (1948) to show the critical relationship between semiology and iconology.

*Women Artists in Canada* AVIS LANG ROSENBERG, Vancouver, Chairperson

Avis Lang Rosenberg began with *Women Artists and the Canadian Artworld: A Survey*. She discussed the results of her recent survey of the inclusion of women artists in exhibitions and collections across the country, and concluded that women are inadequately represented.

Nicholas Craig Tuele, University of British Columbia, spoke on *Sophia Pemberton – a British Columbia Artist*. Despite her substantial achievements, Pemberton (1869-1959) is little known outside her native British Columbia.

*Mattie Gunterman 1872-1945* was a woman who photographed pioneer life in the mining communities of British Columbia's Lardeau country. Henri Robideau, Vancouver, discussed the life and work of this interesting artist.

Turning to contemporary issues, Linda Covit, Montreal, discussed the programmes of *Powerhouse Gallery – a Centre for Women Artists*. The gallery opened in 1973 to provide a space where women artists could freely exhibit.

Mary Sparling, Mount St. Vincent University, introduced *The Slide Registry of Nova Scotia Women Artists*. Begun in 1975, the registry is a lending service that has become an important resource of biographical and visual data on artists.

*Patronage of Contemporary Art in Canada* DENNIS YOUNG, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Chairperson

The panel addressed the effects that may be expected upon art, artists, and prices that may be anticipated as a result of recent substantial increases in arts funding and purchases by the federal and provincial governments and by large corporations. Jeanne Parkin, Jeanne Parkin Arts Management, Toronto, began by pointing out that corporate patronage has increased from five to fifteen million dollars annually in the past few years, and that about half of total art sales go to corporations. The 72-member Council for Business in the Arts promotes the policy of art purchases by businesses.

Nancy Petry, Véhicule, Montréal, discussed the enormous growth of the parallel gallery movement, a phenomenon unique to Canada. Funded largely by the Canada Council, parallel galleries promote avant-garde art and emphasize 'non-object' and conceptual art.

David Bolduc, Toronto, spoke for many younger artists when he said that fewer galleries and granting agencies are willing to support untried artists. He maintained that established artists, on the other hand, are patronized by both government agencies and the corporate sector.

Geoffrey James, Canada Council, Ottawa, reviewed the history of private patronage and discussed the funding of the Canada Council. The chief support of artists, he claimed, is the post-secondary educational

system, because it employs so many artists as teachers.

The discussion which followed was concerned largely with the Canada Council's Art Bank, which owns more than 8,000 works by contemporary Canadian artists and is the principal agency of federal patronage. In response to other questions, members of the panel agreed that art prices are rising, partly in response to the purchases of government agencies such as the Art Bank.

*Political Content in Contemporary Art* BENJAMIN H.D. BUCHLOH, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Chairperson

Five artists and critics discussed various aspects of political subject matter and external factors of a more general political nature. In *A Wee Piece of Polemic Masquerading as an Attack on Dumb Art*, Bruce Barber, Simon Fraser University, discussed Harold Rosenberg's adoption of folk art as a model for the development of a 'post-modernist art as anthropology.' He noted that 'low' culture art is being developed by artists at a distance from the conditions to which 'high' culture is subject.

Karl Beveridge, Toronto, proposed (in absentia) that artists should choose to organize themselves at a 'class' level. He said that art, produced collectively by artists with an awareness of its political impact, has the potential of aestheticizing corporate life.

Addressing the problem of teaching in state institutions, Jody Berland, Simon Fraser University, stated that the nature of art as potential sales must be understood. She suggested that the artist produces 'alienated labour,' and therefore neither the artist nor the audience can properly enjoy the human significance of the work.

Kenneth Coutts-Smith, Toronto, spoke on *The Political Content in Mainstream Contemporary Art*. He denied that only one particular kind of art embodies political content.

Greg Curnoe, London, discussed the artist's relationship to society, especially to dealers, curators, and critics. He drew an analogy between the 'working' artist and a small business.

*Contemporary Art and the Plight of its Newspaper Critics* PETER WHITE, Glenbow Museum, Chairperson

Peter White began by stating that the plight of the critic of contemporary art in the popular press is his or her inability to satisfy the artist, the enlightened audience, and the general public at the same time. Laurent Lamy, Radio Canada, Montréal, suggested that the critic's work is intolerable, and showed how he tries to endure it. George Bogardi, *Montreal Star*, prefers that a critic have distinct opinions. Nancy Tousley, *Calgary Herald*, sees herself more as an essayist than a reviewer, more an interpreter than a critic. Andrée Paradis, *Vie des Arts*, Montréal, suggested that the role of the critic is less to seek new things than to reach new eyes.



FIGURE 4. William Thomas and Sons and others, Buildings on north side of Granville Street, Halifax, 1859 ff (Photo: Harold Kalman).

*Historic Preservation on the Halifax Waterfront* HAROLD KALMAN, Ottawa, Chairperson

The session was devoted to two adjacent groups of buildings, the former commercial buildings on Granville Street which the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design now occupies (Fig. 4), and the former warehouses along the waterfront which have been adapted for commercial use. Susan Buggey, Parks Canada, Ottawa, discussed the history of their construction in *Building the Halifax Waterfront*. Louis W. Collins, Honourary Historian, City of Halifax, talked about some of their past inhabitants in *Life on the Halifax Waterfront*. In *Conserving the Halifax Waterfront*, Harold Kalman explained the recent developments by Historic Properties Limited and others that have resulted in the buildings' preservation. Garry Neill Kennedy, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, spoke on *The College as Conservationist*. A similar development on which work had just begun was described by Beaton Sheppard, St. John's, in *The Conservation of the A.H. Murray Premises in St. John's*.

A number of ancillary meetings were also held; two may be described. The Canadian Art History Chapter, chaired by Brenden Langford, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, discussed its proposed book, tentatively titled *Readings in Canadian Art History*, to be edited by Langford, Alan Gowans, and François-Marc Gagnon. The Committee on the Status of Women, chaired by Shirley Ann Brown, York University, presented the results of a questionnaire circulated to post-secondary institutions in 1977-78. The committee determined to encourage a larger participation by women in next year's meeting.