Compte rendu de [English Reports]. Vie des arts, 42(174), 81–90.
Nikola Nikola
LAPAROSCOPIC TRAVELS THROUGH GENETIC MEMORY
Belgo Art Contemporain, Espace 324
April 8-April 30, 1999

In his Montreal exhibition, Nikola Nikola presents large format expressionist paintings with sculptural attachments.

A mural created for the exhibition space, on six panels, is intended to immerse the viewer in the process of the work. Figures of Last Kind, 1999, oil and mixed media on plywood, 244 x 722 cm, is the largest work the artist has produced to date. Should one choose to acquire and work the artist hits produced to date.

Poetic condition of the soul, wherein an offense against human dignity occurs, destiny is denied, and a quest for freedom is justified. The work proclaims faith in transcendence, witnessing harrowing secrets flushed from memory, through a tension between geometric and prismatic forms in richly layered oils pulsating over a deep field with tangled lines crossing over distances. A wood vertebrae, organ like honeycomb, carved and stained, permits an inside view while travelling in descent across the surface from the top of the painting. Nikola's contemporary artifacts, with their textural transparent colours, are strengthened by the inner iconography at their epicentre. Vortical images over magnetic colour fields merge with appendages in a symbolic code between humanity and the universe. The lightning bolts fused with a collective nervous system. Artifacts of Burning Pathos refers to pathological malady, pain and pleasure, setting the stage for an empowerment ignited by transformations in form, idea, and ideology. The painting recalls a moment when the artist's earlier work was destroyed in a never-forgotten studio fire. Nikola's codification is woven into a memory tunnel underlying a continued struggle of inherent emotional power and self invisibility.

Nikola rejects transparent socio-economic manipulations in the art market in favour of creating a unique visual language. In Burning Fingers visual information replaces language, enabling the crystallization of a message to occur. Wrapped in timeless mythology, implied by a mix of painted, found, and sculpted imagery, Nikola penetrates the memory of shadows, seeking to fix disconnected cartographies, attempting to reach a state where nothing is excluded and no one dominates. Laparoscopic travels through genetic memory is a mitigation between risk and acceptance in touch with a higher source.

Michael J. Moiter

CRITIC AND CURATOR DONALD BRACKETT, reviewing Nikola's 1992 Toronto exhibition Clocks are Ringing, cites Gerald Marzorati's observations with regard to Leon Golub: 'Art cannot shape the future; it can, at best, bequeath to it a picture of its own time.' And if Golub is a 'painter of darkness', perhaps Nikola is a painter of light, or at least the light at the end of a dark tunnel. Learning to see the light around the shapes of darkness our civilization has created may be what Nikola's imagery is all about. A prose narrative painting. Artifacts of Burning Pathos, evokes the poetic condition of the soul, wherein an offense against human dignity occurs, destiny is denied, and a quest for freedom is justified. The work proclaims faith in transcendence, witnessing harrowing secrets flushed from memory, through a tension between geometric and prismatic forms in richly layered oils pulsating over a blue field with tangled lines crossing over distances. A wood vertebrae, organ like honeycomb, carved and stained, permits an inside view while travelling in descent across the surface from the top of the painting.

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In the work entitled Adrian Walker ... 1992, an artist sits in concentrated observation, sketchbook in hand, pencil resting, specimen inches away. The inert forms of the specimen of the artist's hand poised in the act, and the image of the hand blurry on the page extend the story further. Suddenly we care about the history of the specimen, once moving as the artist's hand today. We consider why this artist is here, what his finished work will be, where this sketch will take him. We are gripped with a Platonic sensibility for the artist's rendering while the 'true' hand here - that of the photographer himself - absent from the image - preoccupies by its absence.

In Passerby, 1996, two male figures have passed each other at the foot of a nondescript building wall, background bathed in darkness, foreground in light. The camera captures the backward glance of one of the men, movement frozen. Again while the situation appears mundane, the viewer must construct the context, extending the setting beyond. In Citizen, 1996, a man lies alone in a field. We sense the weight of his body, lying inert, eyelashes on his chest, in a space framed by distant trees and the windowless back of buildings. Our questions remain unanswered. Who is he? What has brought him here? Why is he lying alone on the earth? Is this the privilege of a moment of solitude or peace and relaxation, or are we witness to a gesture of despair?

In Cyclist, 1996, one of the most powerful works in the exhibition, the context is less dubious. Here a limer-strewn corner, bathed in darkness, shelters an immobile cyclist, head dropped to the handlebars. Although static, the image is far from inert. The angle of the photograph is such that the cement wall that supports the cyclist appears to slant, inclined in the direction of the bicycle. The blocks of the wall, lined horizontally with joints and vertically weathered through the effects of time, counter the tilting planes. The framing of the image in this way provides a visual support for the cyclist, while at the same time straining to...
propel her/him forward. We are conscious of the tremendous energy necessary to have stopped the trajectory, enhancing not only our curiosity, but our concern. What is absent here, or unknown, preoccupies more than what is given.

Such stark absence is perhaps nowhere less evident than in other Road, 1997. A landscape, this work is intriguing in its ordinariness. Set at the edge of a highway, it consists of a small bungalow in a rural environment, out buildings, various vehicles, edged by fields and framed by telephone poles and wires. In the foreground a truck with camper faces the road, ready to depart or recently parked. There are no figures, no movement. The place is specific, a generic home to an invisible someone, resembling that of millions. We are mindful of the fact that, somehow, this came to be as it is, and it is that becoming that appalls us. The sprinkling of snow on the lawn may be freshly fallen, or perhaps melting into Spring. We are aware of the fact that, although the specifics of this particular scene remain anonymous, there exists an ongoing time-line encompassing events, natural phenomena, and lives—the effect of which is visible, but through a presence only implied.

The sophisticated technology which the artist employs permits him to present with uncanny precision scenes from everyday life. The frequent reference to Wall's photographic work as "the painter of modern life", to use Baudelaire's expression, is most apt in the sense that his images testify to the complexity of human life in an era characterized by change, tinged with despair. Wall's work is perhaps most powerful in the questions it unearths and honours than in the answers it provides.

Elizabeth Wood

Exhibition catalogue:

LUNNER. Real. GINGRAS.

STE. CATHERINE WEST

At La Centrale (formerly Powerhouse) the 25th spring season continues with part two of Amour-bonneur, April 17-May 30, curated by Gail Bourgeois (Montreal), profiling work by Helene Dyck (sculpture, Manitoba), Stefan Fridberg (wall works, Alberta), Penelope Kolokinos (sculpture, Ottawa), Fabienne Lasserre (photographs, Montreal), Kathy Sellaris (sculpture, Montreal), Cyndy Stelmackowich (wall works, New York), Karen Thornton (sculpture, Chicago). In the media room videos by: Louise Barak and Tery Billings (Saskatchewan), Christine Lebel (Montreal), and Jillian McDonald (New York). Thematic, works in the exhibition reclaim the material female body through the creation of objects, in a gesture of artmaking about survival with a mixture of attachment and loss addressing internal states and transformations.

Comment: Lasserre's work presents with uncanny precision scenes from everyday life. The frequency reference to Wall's photographic work as "the painter of modern life", to use Baudelaire's expression, is most apt in the sense that his images testify to the complexity of human life in an era characterized by change, tinged with despair. Wall's work is perhaps most powerful in the questions it unearths and honours than in the answers it provides.

The recent CIRCA solo Variations-inversions by David Moore presented a fanciful series of mirage and mirrored installations reminiscent of the installation Pemont que le monde dort presented last season at the Musée de Lachine. Moore's loyal following has learned to expect about survival, the sentiment which united the deicide in cold blood and in front of Chinese students lives were taken by soldiers in cold blood and in front of the watchful eyes of the world media. Among artists represented are: Dominique Blain, Janci Sterbak, Betty Goodwin, Peter Krausz, Michael Wong (MtL), Bruce Parsons (Montreal), Ken Lum and Xiao Gu (Vancouver) and Nancy Spero, Leon Golub, Jenny Holzer, Mike Glier and Krzystof Wadzicko (NYC), ERO (Iceland), Jacques Monory (France), Antonio Muntadas, (Spain), Peter Sorge (Germany), and YIZ (China). Since installation of the site in June 1998, usage statistics show that in February 1999 over 2,552 visited the site, for a monthly average of over 3,000 visitors. http://www.goatobeijing.org/
LILIAN BROCA

Mixed media & lithographs
May 24 – June 12, 1999
Vernissage, May 25, at 6PM

Ottawa Art Gallery
May 13-November 30

IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES

Art and visitors to the Capitol region idly stroll the streets in a sun-soaked trance, thev will run smack into the middle of living art; art that has escaped the confines of its traditional home, defying the constraints and definitions imposed by art gallery spaces. This art is not for passive absorption. In All the Wrong Places radically shifts what is a tenuous balance between art as object and the viewer.

Curated by the Ottawa Art Gallery's Curator of Contemporary Art, Sylvie Fortin, In All the Wrong Places features new and commissioned work by a group of 12 local, national, and international artists: Martin Bourillé, Gemaillie Koh, and Chantall Gervais (Ottawa), Mohamed El bar (France), Charles Goldman (New York), Diane Gougeon (Montreal), Aernout Mik (Amsterdam), Marylène Negro (Paris), Nadine Norman (Montreal), Mitch Roberton (Toronto), Susan Schuppli (Albera), and Michael Shaowananai (Bangkok).

Fortin explains that In All the Wrong Places seeks to present and mediate the breadth of contemporary visual and media arts productions, so as to foreground significant artistic attitudes and practices which cannot operate within the physical confines of the gallery, exploring contemporary notions and approaches to site-specificity. The project explores, in the evolving context and demands of speeding technologies, the communication role imparted, played and/or claimed by art institutions, revisiting the need for a re-articulation of the attitudes and actions of the contemporary art institution.

While the works will all take place outside the Ottawa Art Gallery, one of the gallery spaces will be used as a “communication bureau” to which the public is invited to come physically, or virtually through the internet, to meet attendants, and find out what's happening. The project's web-site will be updated daily to include up-to-the-minute video and audio clips, interviews and feedback from the public, transcripts of artist's talks, a guest book, and discussion forums. From the newspaper, the telephone and the internet, to actions, performances and presentations at various sites, contemporary art will infiltrate and permeate Ottawa’s downtown core.

IQAMAPA: CELEBRATING INUIT ART, 1948-1970

Canadian Museum of Civilization
April 1, 1999-January 30, 2000

April 1, 1999, is a historic day for Canada, but more importantly for the Inuit. It not only marks the establishment of the new territory of Nunavut, but it is the beginning of self-government for a people that have undergone radical changes, while maintaining a visceral connection to their ancestry through their art. April 1st is also the day that the Canadian Museum of Civilization opens IQAMAPA: Celebrating Inuit Art, 1948-1970. Showing until January 30, 2000, the exhibit integrates more than 150 works from among other sites: Baker Lake, Cape Dorset, Povungnituk, and Holman Island. The exhibition is designed not only to pay tribute to Inuit art, but also to explore its origins, simultaneously telling the fascinating story of a culture in turmoil and transition, out of which a distinctive and important artistic movement was born. Culture will illuminate art in several instances where ethnographic artifacts will be displayed alongside works of art that refer to them. The exhibit is curated by Maria von Fonckstein, Curator of Contemporary Inuit Art, and special advisor to the project, James Houston, seminal in the development and dissemination of contemporary Inuit art.

ROBERT MURRAY: THE FACTORY AS STUDIO

National Gallery of Canada
February 19-May 2

Murray's brilliantly coloured sculptures, fabricated in steel and aluminium, have been transported to Ottawa from numerous public and private collections from as far as across North America as Berkley, Washington, Victoria, New York and Saint John, N.B. Robert Murray: The Factory as Studio is the first major exhibition of Murray's work in Canada since 1985 presenting 38 masterful sculptures, maquettes, prints and drawings crossing three decades of artistic production. A strong identification with Aboriginal culture is evident in titles such as Sosex, Saginaw, and Athabasca, all featured in the exhibition.

Murray, originally from Saskatchewan and based in New York, is one of the most prominent sculptors to have arrived on the Canadian scene in the 1960's. Curated by Denise LeClerc, the catalogue Robert Murray: The Factory as Studio, 1999, 196 pp. ISBN 0-88884-695-2, with introductions by Barbara Rose and Pierre Théberge and text by Denise LeClerc accompanies the exhibition. Pierre Théberge, Director of the National Gallery of Canada, says of Murray: 'Whether making reductive sculpture in the 1960's, sumptuous, lavish, and expressive sculpture in the 1970's or by introducing a new modulation of meaning into his abstract works in the 1980's, Robert Murray can truly be regarded as one of the most significant and innovative sculptors of our time.'

Francesca Giarowski
Wadie El Mahdy
MARCH 27 TO APRIL 16, 1999
THE TWO WORLDS OF WADIE EL MAHDY

Bob Boyer
MAY 3 TO JUNE 4, 1999
BOB BOYER: LIFE IS FOR THE LIVING
AND SUMMER IS FOR THE DANGERS

Gerald Lazare
APRIL 17 TO MAY 7, 1999
THE FLOATING WORLD

Alan Wylie
JUNE 5 TO JULY 2, 1999
ALAN WYLIE: NEW WORKS
Curated by Carol Pickering and John Marriott with catalogue essay by Steve Reinke, Blind Man's Bluff at Toronto Photographer's Workshop, 80 Spadina, uses video and photography to focus on the ambivalence towards mastery, found in much of contemporary artistic practice. To April 24, it features work by Michael Buckland and Oamian Moppett. For Buckland, a Canadian artist and curator based in Brooklyn, New York, photography functions both as document and finished work. Moppett's Office Photos resemble glossy colour product shots of half-heartedly constructed amorphous blobs. By recording gestures implying failure of consciousness, bodily functions and business ventures, both artists appear reluctant to endorse any one model of artistry or masculinity.

The brave little BUS Gallery (1237 Queen St. W.) continues to produce some of the best exhibitions in downtown Toronto. Fully utilizing a unique space, curator Katharine Mulherin presents works by Michelle Johnson and Elizabeth Fearon in April. Instamatic - part of May '99 - explores alternative processes in photo-based art.

At Gallery 44,1000 WORDS: musings on the medium, part of Contact '99, is followed with photographic-based works by Rose Kalla and Normand Rajotte, to July 10. Rajotte's recent Montreal exhibition at Galerie Mistral February 17-March 27 gave Montrealers a preview to this exhibition that reveals nature in a suspended state bringing us to the essence of the photographic image.

Nils Udo at DeLeon White, April 17 to June 12, is followed by the kinetic sculptor Doug Buis, with Peter von Tiesenhausen, June 19 to September 4. The new gallery space in Yorkville at 33 Prince Arthur Street, will open with von Tiesenhausen and produce rotating shows and permanent installations.

The DeLeon White Gallery representing:

Carlos Aquirre
Doug Buis
Aganetha Dyck
Akira Komoto
Ian Lazarus
Lyndal Osborne
Alan Sonfist
Lorne Wagman
Peter von Tiesenhausen
Carl Beam
Daniel Corbell
Lorraine Gilbert
Jiri Ladocha
Peter McFarlane
Stephen Scott Patterson
Nils-Udo
Paul Walde

Exhibitions:

Yorkville - Opening April 1999 - Carl Beam

Downtown - April 17th - June 12th, 1999 - Nils-Udo
June 19 - September 4, 1999
Peter von Tiesenhausen & Doug Buis

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Membre de l'Association Professionnelle des Galeries d'Art du Canada
April 3-April 24, 1999
GIORGIO CELIBERTI — „Celiberti’s Room”
installation

May 1 to May 26, 1999
LILIANA PORTER — „For You”
new photography CONTACT ’99

May 29 to June 25, 1999
DOUGAL GRAHAM AND SAWAN YAWNHWE — „From the Studio”
collaborative paintings

June 26-July 24, 1999
EVE LEADER, PIPPA CHERNIAVSKY AND LEEMOUR PELLI — new drawing

33 Hazelton avenue, Toronto. 416.920.3820
gallery hours: tuesday to saturday 11-5
e.mail: artcore@the-wire.com
http://www.the-wire.com/artcore

UPTOWN

In Yorkville, March came in like a lion this year with Impostures by Montreal artist Kamila Wozniakowska at Artcore where the schedule this season includes an installation by Giorgio Celiberti to April 24 and for Contact ’99 new photography “For You” by Liliana Porter in May. Collaborative paintings “From the Studio” by Dougal Graham and Sawan Yawnghwe through June.

A fun and fanciful exhibition runs at the George R. Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art (ROM) at 111 Queen’s Park until May 16. Titled Tankards, Tureens and Cruets the exhibit showcases traditional ceramics that were used at tables and in taverns of Renaissance Europe. The new Discovery Gallery at the Royal Ontario Museum explores the ROM’s collections and research with an eclectic range of exhibits. Gallery sections include a field camp, a collector’s corner, presentation area, a virtual archeological site, a laboratory, and a section on the art of living.

Sundance at Night, Bob Boyer, 1996, mixed media on paper, 61.7 x 72.5 cm.

A Hunting Hound with Two Travelling Salesmen in a Meadow, Kamila Wozniakowska, 1996, acrylic on plywood, 122 x 142.5 cm.

The Lonsdale Gallery (333 Lonsdale Road, Forrest Hill) Contact ’99, Pinhole International II exhibition Magicae Naturalis, curated by Dianna Bos, April 29 to May 29, with an opening May 13, precedes June’s new work by Peter Byrne.

Jane Ash Poitras presents new paintings at the Mirac Godard Gallery from April 24 to May 8, Peter Krausz’s landscapes, referencing the Mediterranean, drawn from the artist’s imagination, are on view May 15 to June 5, with work by J.C. Heywood’s.

Edward Day Gallery presents an exhibition of works by Dan Hughes and David Simon in April. Their art is complementary, despite the difference in mediums, establishing a dialogue between sculpture and painting. The Edward Day Gallery participates in Contact ’99, with a group show and in June profiles evocative drawings by Frank Null.

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At Morrow Avenue complex, Olga Korper’s upcoming schedule includes Greg Murdoch (April), Barbara Steinman (May) and Bobbie Oliver (June). Richard Sipil and Gordon Anderson open Christopher Cutts spring season March 27, followed April 24 by Janieta Eyre, Mark Karasic, May 20, June 17 to July 10, Jean-Marie Delaville and Michael Amar set the stage into summer.

WINDSOR

Art Gallery of Windsor, $100 Howard Avenue, spring menu consists of: The Detroit Publishing Company: Looking Across the River, images and ephemera relevant to Windsor and Canada, and Don’t Kiss Me: Disruptions in the Works of Claude Cahun, organized by Presentation House Gallery, North Vancouver. To June 27, the AGW presents Shake a Leg: performance sites of Colette Urban.

Virginia MacDonell Eichhorn and Michael J. Moiter

Senos in Illecillewaert Glaucis, Selkirk Mountains, B.C. c. 1902. Cyanotype, 64x61 cm.

The Detroit Publishing Company, courtesy Art Gallery of Windsor.
FUTURA BOLD

GRAHAM GILLMORE • ANGELA GROSSMANN
ATTILA RICHARD LUKACS •DEREK ROOT

MAY 5 TO 29 1999

Diane Farris Gallery

1565 W 7th Avenue
Vancouver, B.C.
Canada V6J 1S1
Tel: (604) 737-2629
Fax: (604) 737-2675
http://www.dianefarrisgallery.com
e-mail:art@dianefarrisgallery.com
Three years ago, Mexican artist and social activist Edgar Clément participated in a residency at the Banff Centre. Among the things he produced there was an ironic comic book chronicling his experience. In the first panels, a beaming Edgar, who has been trying to cross the Mexican-American border for years, approaches border guards with a letter, his passport to Banff. The puzzled officials ask, "What's Banff? Is it like a credit card? Is it Prozac?" Our hero replies, "No! It's like a spa, but for artists."

The Banff Centre has an international reputation as an artists’ retreat. While the Rocky Mountain setting is a recreation mecca, the Centre itself is an intense art lab, a meeting place for multi-disciplinary artists from around the world. And at the heart of the visual arts side of the Centre is the Walter Phillips Gallery.

Since 1975, the 3500 square foot gallery, currently headed by Jon Tupper, has been devoted to contemporary art. It is an experimental space where artists can show work that might not be suitable for other spaces, or simply develop work for informed critical feedback. To support this research and experimentation mission, the gallery holds numerous symposia, conferences, lectures, and produces many publications on issues in current art and culture. The gallery is especially known for exhibiting art that engages wider social and cultural realities, and that employs the latest technology.

The Walter Phillips' curators acknowledge that just as art often exceeds the gallery, a gallery is more than a room. So, many works have taken place off-site on the internet, in their adjunct space in Calgary, in the surrounding wilderness, and in the Banff town site. Banff is a tourist town and many recent projects have played on this fact. A personal favorite was Shyama Denpsey and Lori Milkman's (Winnipeg) performance, "Lesbian National Parks and Services," which had them dressing as park wardens, handing out official looking guides and holding recruiting drives among the tourists.

Though not part of the residency program, the curators do make an effort to complement that program's theme. For example, to coincide with the past spring's landscape residency, assistant curator Melanie Townsend assembled "Lain Baxter: Landscape Works" (April 9-June 6). This important exhibition, the first to bring together Baxter's explorations of landscape, included paintings, photographs, mixed-media works, light boxes, video, and book works from one of Canada's premier conceptual artists.

Not only have numerous artists been able to debut their experiments in the Walter Phillips Gallery, so have many curators. Aside from dozens of guest curators, recent curatorial alumni include: Manon Blanchette, who is currently Head of Communication for the Museum of Contemporary Art, Montreal, Daina Augaitis, senior curator at The Vancouver Art Gallery, and Catherine Crowston, senior curator at The Edmonton Art Gallery.

The Walter Phillips Gallery has had a strong influence on artistic and curatorial directions in Canada, but, like other laboratories, that impact is most felt down the line. Because of its nearly hidden location, the gallery is not as well known to the general public as it could be.

A few reasons to check out the WPG this summer: "Streaming: A Laboratory," Bruce Barber and Park Bench (Anna Sobell, Emily Harrell and Jesse Gilbert) are interdisciplinary artists who will produce a web viewing and creating space in the gallery.

"Beck and Al Hansen: Playing With Matches," curated by Wayne Baerwaldt and Plug In Gallery (Winnipeg), features work by pop star Beck and his Fluxus inspired grandfathers, Al (August 13-October 5). If you can't travel, check out their informative site: \www-nmr.banffcentre.ab.ca/WPG/\ David Garneau
VESSNA PERUNOVICH
RED-ESCAPES
Third Avenue Gallery, Vancouver

Vessna Perunovich's work focuses on the multiple dimensions inherent in human relations which include desire and fear, pain and pleasure, mind and emotion. The title, "RED-ESCAPES," understood as "red escapes" refers to human emotions which can escape our control. Read as "read escapes" it is intended to encourage the viewer to read the images as bodyscapes and what the artist terms "maps of our humanity."

The three-piece installation "My Body, My Box of Pleasure" is an example of what Perunovich refers to as body containers. Three boxes are wrapped in red material, like gifts, with a bow at the back. We see a female torso suspended from wires, a pregnant box placed on a chair, and, set on the floor, a detonator. It is the same box transformed whose descent we can visually follow from the external to the material. The idealized untouched body undergoes metamorphoses, becoming damaged and endangered. Though there is process here, the lining up of the objects in this way emphasizes that embodied knowledge is simultaneously ubiquitous and traumatic. The gift-wrapped box indicates the tension between exterior and internal. Our skins being that thing we can manipulate most easily, playing with appearances. Yet the interior is contained and not separate. As the detonator demonstrates, danger comes not only from without, but is potentially rooted within.

The masks used in "Long Last Kiss" reiterate this concept. Masks referencing a variety of things including protection, masquerade, concealment, and liberation. They are both playful and deadly. They can be read as kicking the faces of either warriors or lovers. The two masks are mounted on adjacent walls and connected by thin strands of red. These long hair-like threads are like sensual and fragile blood lines. The dark masks and their dense metal meshing contrast with the delicacy of this binding element. The play is on hard shells and vulnerabilities that these conceal. The masks effectively block our gaze. The threads function as a precarious life line which originates in the interior that we have no access to.

This juxtaposition of the impermeable and the vulnerable is how Perunovich demonstrates pleasure and fulfillment even while pointing to the always accompanying danger. In "So Many Lures, So Little Time" red threads rain onto a wrought iron bed. These are decorated by glittering fishing lures and weighed down by large red drops resting on bed springs. Beds are the places of the most complex human relationships (birth, death, intimacy, dreams) and Perunovich's place to present the duality that exists in sexuality and the desire for connection. The beautiful lures represent temptation. But where there is a promise of fulfillment there is also threat. The piece points to the inevitable double edged consequence of being and interaction.

Perunovich's installations are careful and precise. Her focus is on creating a balance between polarities. She juxtaposes dichotomies such as to indicate that it is the sum of these that make up experience and human relations. By maintaining this tension the artist excels in engaging the viewer physically and emotionally.

Corina Ghazavi

VICTORIA ART GALLERY

As winter grey gives way to colour and first signs of spring on the West Coast, it seems dismembered themes of conception and perception stand aside in the art being exhibited. The engine driving this simple theme is important within our northern culture, especially when art is the focus.

A case in point, in this regenerative time, are the recent photographic works by Laura Jane Petelko, focusing on women in their relationships to the self image, featured this March at Third Avenue Gallery, enhancing perception of a different vision, one of spiritual awareness and clarity.

Diane Farris presents Angela Grossmann's new series entitled My Vacation, through April. While remaining figurative, Grossmann's paintings stir a sense of the celestial as this artist, so adept at surface treatment, introduces elements of pithalic ephemera to create contemplative, sexual and political implications. The found materials employed: letters, envelopes, stamps and franking marks. A formal and considered aspect to this artist's oeuvre, influenced by Journalism. These anonymous anonymous, are produced on mylar and canvas, speak more of the beyond than the earthly connections of prior works that evoked human identity. Here the specificity of facial recognition floats into the background, as the overall figures connect tensely to the collaged surfaces layers, marks and shapes, created by this talented painter. May 5 to 29, FUTURA BOLD features: Graham Gilmore, Angela Grossman, Atilla Richard Lukacs and Derek Root.

Todd A Davis

VIE DES ARTS N°174
Victoria Pacific Currents

To the Totem Forests: Emily Carr and Her Contemporaries Interpret Coastal Villages (1900-1950)

Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, March 12-August 1, 1999

Emily Carr is, perhaps, best known for painting remote Native settlements, monuments and villages along coastal areas of British Columbia. For over 40 years she drew and painted villagescapes, chronicling her personal and aesthetic musings in her journals. Totem poles, canoes, housefronts and, occasionally, people were represented by her brush and pen, creating an archivable memoir of the artist’s journey into B.C.’s natural and cultural heritage.

To the Totem Forests: Emily Carr and Her Contemporaries Interpret Coastal Villages (1900-1950) reveals what is not commonly known or acknowledged is that many of her sites were in use as residences, or sacred sites, at the time that she portrayed them as deserted and abandoned. This lent a false sense of both distance and anonymity to the icons and buildings. What we see in Carr's images are ghost towns and cemeteries falling into disrepair, though it seems many of these sites were well populated and actively engaged by the living. Far from the romantic deconstruction implied by Carr, the sites would have been care-taken by their First Nations custodians and were (and are still) maintained as a living heritage. The sense of a dying tradition we obtain from both Carr's images and writings seems to represent a subjective nostalgia she imposed upon her subjects.

Curator Peter McNair learned in 1965 that Carr’s earliest villagescapes were based upon photographs. A 1901 photograph, Blunden Harbour, by Charles F. Newcombe, provided the source for the now famous painting by Emily Carr in the National Gallery of Canada collection. For McNair, this discovery began a long term fascination with Carr’s visionary foundations. Investigations into the matter yielded some interesting historical data: about twenty or thirty of Carr’s early studies of B.C. coastal scenes and First Nations structures were photo-based works. These are the precursors of the on-site portrayals she later produced and became renowned for.

Artists who were her contemporaries, including Walter J. Phillips, A.Y. Jackson, Langdon Kinlin, Edwin Holgate and George Pepper, sketched or painted many of the same scenes. Their works provide intriguing comparisons to Carr’s interpretations.

The voices of First Nations community members are included in the exhibit’s presentation at the A.G.G.V. Native representatives share with viewers the family traditions depicted on the totem poles, house fronts and canoes. It is hoped that this will partially counteract the anonymity imposed upon the sites and monuments by their portrayal as vestiges of a lost culture. Particularly fascinating is the privileged glimpse into how the icons are viewed from inside the cultural frame of reference as living relevant sites.

Duncan Regehr

In the Company of Children

Winchester Galleries

May 9-27

Duncan Regehr is a professional actor, as well as a published author and poet. This may explain the magically theatrical quality of his paintings. Regehr’s figurative and representational works bend perspectives and stretch space in ways that underscore their psychological, shamanic significance. His distortions of both the picture plane and human anatomical proportions invoke penetrating depths of meaning. What appears in the frame is never solely what’s going on in the image. The action takes place in a subconscious level, in the eye, mind and emotions of the beholder.

The apparent scenarios, dramas and tableaux presented in a Regehr painting are never simple or self-evident. Hidden meanings and mysteries simmer below the painterly surfaces. Jewel-like pigments are worked into alluring textures and finishes, but one’s gaze is drawn beyond. Transcended by the question, “What’s really going on here,” the viewer is pulled into the narrative image. Hints of parricide or allegory abound, with mythical Muse figures (Unknown Mistress, 1998), or occult symbolism. This visual teasing works even though one’s first reaction may be to dismiss, or even feel fear. In the relationships portrayed, the power dynamics on view, there are hints of abuse, enthrallment, obsession or oppression. It’s the same feeling the addicte of fairytale might feel upon encountering an intimate and familiar dreamscape in a story. This reaction might be described as part wonder, part fascination, and part nightmare. An encounter with some mysterious, transformative undertone of magic is at hand. Like any threshold, it’s rather scary.

In Isaac With a Nice Claret (1995) a small boy stands on a table, perched amid a tidy place setting. A half-filled bottle stands next to a glass of claret and a white rose, as if to accompany the boy (who, presumably, is “Isaac”) as the sacrificial lunch. On the other side of Isaac, a skeletal black goat’s head complements the table setting.

These beautiful, yet sinister paintings focus on a persistent theme in Regehr’s work. Children show up often, adding a poignant, or even tragic, aspect. Issues of trust, creativity, vulnerability and innocence seem to lie at the heart of these parables. Jesus says, “Give me the child for seven years and I will show you the man.” The child in the art of Duncan Regehr is a source of beguilement and beauty, with an edge.

A recent exhibition of late work by John Smith at Winchester’s Broad Street location and Jack Beder at the Fort Street Gallery attest to Winchester’s ongoing affinity for Montreal artists.

Yvonne Owens