CHRISTO AND JEANNE-CLAUDE: WORLD WRAP

Running Fence, Sonoma and Marin Counties, California 1973-76
3.5 miles (6 km) long

The Umbrellas, Japan-USA
Photo Wolfgang Volz
Copyright: Christo 1995

The Pont Neuf Wrapped, Paris 1975-78
40,000 sq. metres (440,000 sq. ft) of woven polyamide fabric
15,000 cm (49,200 ft) of rope
Copyright: Christo 1995
Photo: Jeanne-Claude

Christo and Jeanne-Claude were both born on June 13, 1935. They have worked together since their first outdoor temporary work Dockside Packages, Cologne Harbor, 1961. The outdoor art projects they have generated are some of the most recognizable ever seen in the world. Whether urban or rural, their works are entire environments. In 1994 they decided to officially change the artist name Christo into the artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude for outdoor environmental projects exclusively. The artists intervene in a selected environment, and so doing, cause us to perceive that environment in a new way. Among their most notable projects are The Running Fence, Sonoma and Marin Counties, California (1972-76), Surrounded Islands, Biscayne Bay, Greater Miami, Florida, 1980-83, The Pont Neuf Wrapped, Paris, 1975-78, The Umbrellas-Japan (1984-91), Wrapped Reichstag Berlin 1971-79.

On January 22nd 2003, Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor of New York City gave permission to Christo and Jeanne-Claude to realize their temporary work of art The Gates, Central Park, New York (1979-2005). Scheduled for February 2005 and with 7,500 gates, 4,875 metres high, with widths varying from 1,62 to 5,48 metres, the gates will have the appearance of a golden river, appearing and disappearing through the bare branches of the trees. It will also highlight the walkways and footpaths one finds in Central Park, New York.

J.G.: I believe you originally met in Paris?

J.G.: Christo was actually painting at the time.
C.: Christo was not painting at the time. He was creating his early works - 1958 - which he couldn't sell. As a result he couldn't pay his rent. So he found three ways to survive. He was washing cars in garages. He was washing dishes in restaurants. And he was painting some portraits - oil on canvas. He signed his early work with his first name Christo. When he was washing cars in garages and dishes in restaurants or painting portraits that was Mr. Javacheff - his last name. Portraits were signed Javacheff.


J.G.: Early on, you were involved in doing some work in Abu Dhabi...
C.: The Mastaba of Abu Dhabi is a project for the United Arab Emirates which we started in the late 1970s. I was already working with oil barrels in my studio in 1958, sometimes wrapped, and sometimes not wrapped.

J.G.: And this work was less involved with the object and more in the event?
C.: No - an oil barrel is an object!

J.G.: I make reference to that because both of you do not consider your work conceptual.
C.: Absolutely not. We spent $26 million building a work of art called The Umbrellas Japan - 1984, completed in 1991. You would never find anybody on Wall St. who would call $26 million a conception.

J.G.: A project like the Umbrellas involves an enormous scale. Do you consider scale a way of communicating emphatically, directly, in an evident way?
C.: Scale as a way of communicating applies to any work of art whether it is a sculpture by Calder or apples by Cezanne. The scale is always a way of communicating. It is most obvious, for instance, in a sculpture called David, by Michelangelo.

J.G.: You did receive some criticism about the effect on the land with The Umbrellas (1984-1991) project or The Surrounded Islands (1980-1983) at Biscayne Bay in Florida...
C.: ...There was no effect on the land.

J.G.: I have read that these umbrellas were actually recycled. Everything involved in the project was recycled.
C.: The materials were recycled, not the umbrellas. The umbrellas were taken apart and the materials were recycled. The aluminium was melted down and went back to being aluminium, tin cans or parts of airplanes. We always recycle our materials. There was no effect on the land.

J.G.: And all you works are up for two weeks.
C.: Usually 2 weeks, but sometimes 3 weeks. It depends. It has happened that it would be longer, as in the 5,600 Cubicmeter Air Package (1968) in Kassel Germany. It remained two months. The Wrapped Coast in Australia in 1969 also remained almost two months, so it depends...

J.G.: Yes... and the after image, the works that people will collect and so on are less important than the integration in a landscape where people have lived and maintained an activity. This is not necessarily pristine landscape in which you work.
C.: We have never worked in pristine landscapes. You are absolutely right. All of our sites, whether they are urban sites or rural sites, because we use both, are always places or sites which have been previously managed by human beings for human beings.

J.G.: Community and social involvement is an extremely important part of your work. In a sense you are educating city councils, governments, and the public about the importance of art as a communicator.

C.: That is an after effect. Our aim is not that at all. Our aim is to create a work of art of joy and beauty which we create for ourselves and our friends exactly as all true artists do. They always create a work of art for themselves first. If it so happens that other people enjoy it, that is a bonus. But that is not the aim. Our aim is to create a work of art of joy and beauty and to create it in total freedom and that is why we pay ourselves for all our projects. We accept no sponsors, no donations.

J.G.: I was going to get to that. Why do you feel that sponsorship in a sense compromises the artist's message or even intention?
C.: We do not feel that. Any artist who wishes to have sponsors, its fine with us. But it is not fine for us to accept sponsorship. This is total freedom. We are not against sponsors in general for other people. It is only for us.

J.G.: I believe that the images last while the artworks don't remain. In this sense, do you feel that the imagery is a more powerful communicator than the object.
C.: No. We do not. Our work has to be experienced, lived, touched. People have to feel the air, see the work breathing, living, moving in the wind, changing colours every time of the day. Images, whether they are books, postcards, posters or films do not substitute. They are a souvenir, a record but they do not substitute the real experience, no more than you probably never have made love to a photograph of your girlfriend.

J.G.: Regarding the wrapping of the Reichstag. When you did this work in Berlin did you select it because of its historical context or simply because it was a site in which to work that you found appropriate or beautiful?
J.-C: That one was chosen more by Christo than by me because Christo was born in Bulgaria and was brought up under a very Communist regime, and the east – west relationship was extremely important for Christo. The only building in the world that was under the jurisdiction of the four Allies after the war: the British, French, American and USSR plus East Germany and West Germany, and the only building that represented the east-west relationship was the Reichstag.

J.G.: Willy Brandt help to get this project moving didn’t he?

C.: He tried to help, not to initiate. We met him much later. He came to see us in New York in the early 1980s, to tell us not to abandon the project which we had started in 1971 and which we completed in 1995.

J.G.: And you received some criticism from ecological groups about the materials used, and finally that was ironed out, I believe.

J.-C: I am not aware of that, not that I know of.

J.G.: The Central Park project in which you are involved... Are you planning other projects in New York, after this tragic event on September 11th.

J.-C: We are presently working on two works in progress. One is called The Gates, Project for Central Paris in New York City, which we started in 1979. And we are working very actively at a project called Over the River, Project for the Arkansas River in the State of Colorado. We started this in 1992 and do not have the permit yet.

J.G.: I wanted to ask whether you believe an artist must stay away from politics.

J.-C: I believe that artists should do whatever they please.

J.G: And you make reference to the fact that the works you create are aesthetic decisions. I would like to ask what is an aesthetic to you.

C.: There is no definition of aesthetic. When we say we want to create works of art of joy and beauty. Joy and beauty have many many different facets. For instance part of our aesthetic, an important point, is the way we finance our projects in total freedom. That is also part of what we call our aesthetic.

J.G.: And the financing is that from preparatory drawings and prints?

C.: ...and early works also, early works from the 1950s and 1960s.

J.G.: I believe that Christo contributed to a publication called KWF in Paris, involving a lot of young artists in Paris?

C.: Mostly Portuguese artists who were living in Paris, with the exception of Jan Voss who was German and myself, who then was stateless – no passport.

J.G.: Are the materials for your projects often donated?

C.: No. Never, when we purchase materials from industry they have to sign a contract that they must have been paid. Four of them have since become artists instead of architects and one of them, Imants Tillers, is now today one of the best known Australian artists.

John K. Grande

SEEKING THE IDEAL: THE ATHLETIC SCULPTURES OF R. TAIT MCKENZIE

The Owens Art Gallery at Mount Allison University
24 January - 23 March 2003

R. Tait McKenzie was an athlete, doctor and sculptor. He was born in Ontario in 1867, the same year that Canada became an independent nation. It is his sculpture that is featured in this very unusual exhibition. It is unusual because it is not very often that sculpture of this type is shown in a contemporary gallery like the Owens Art Gallery. Tait McKenzie's sculpture has more in common with ancient Greek sculpture than it does with contemporary work. His work is very traditional and in tune with what was popular in late 19th and early 20th century in North America. This is what makes this exhibition extremely interesting to modern viewers, who have seen very little sculpture of this type or, more likely, have an understanding that representational sculpture such as McKenzie's was somehow bad because it was just about skill and not ideas.

All art is about ideas although some ideas are better than others. McKenzie's ideas were about athleticism, health, and the beauty of the human form. McKenzie was not a trained artist, and never went to art school, but he had a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Doctor of Medicine from McGill University. He did, however, work with and learn from two Montreal sculptor friends, George W. Hill and Louis-Philippe Hébert. His early interest in anatomy led him to make sculptural models for classes in the subject that he taught in Montreal at the end of the 19th century. He had also become an excellent athlete while a student at McGill. He believed that students needed a strong body as well as a strong mind. McKenzie went on, in 1904, to become Professor of Physical Education at the University of Pennsylvania while still teaching anatomy in Canada and the United States.

Very successful in everything including his sculpture, McKenzie had his work shown, bought and collected in Canada, the United States and Europe. Work in this exhibition were borrowed from among other places, the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, although I would bet that the work from these two institutions had not seen the light of day for many years until this exhibition came along because of the changing taste in art over the last forty or fifty years. That is a shame as much of the work in the exhibition is very good by any standard. I particularly like the small, maquette-like works such as Tumbrier: somersault (1936) and Tumblier: split (1935). These sculptures were done near the end of his career and recall the small scale Degas and Rodin bronzes. A sculptor friend of mine said the work in the exhibition was like that done by Nazi or other Fascist sculptors and, indeed, McKenzie was chairman of the Fine Arts sculpture committee for the 1936 Berlin Olympics, but the charge is really unfair as my friend had not seen the exhibition and was going by what he thought the work was like. This certainly points out the problem of work by sculptor such as Tait McKenzie. First, you have to get people into the gallery and, second, you have to get them to look at the work.

I would agree that a work such as his frieze, Brothers of the Wind (1925), which portrays a group of naked men speed skating strikes one as odd, but it is neither Fascist nor homosexual. Homosexual could be another way of interpreting McKenzie's art. There are no nude women, only nude men, and all of the men are heroic, but this direction too misses the point. Who am I to ponder the artist's sexuality? McKenzie's heroic athletic sculpture and designed medals for athletic events merely followed the artistic conventions of the time. It is so easy to slip into retroism, layering today's thinking on yesterday's art. Jointly organized by the London Regional Art and Historic Museums and the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame Seeking the Ideal: The Athletic Sculptures of R. Tait McKenzie demonstrates how artistic taste and fashion changes over time for, just as McKenzie's art was popular during his lifetime, it was largely ignored for decades after his death in 1938. He was a skilled craftsman who believed that his art encouraged positive values of physical work and athletics, even if he limited his vision to men. R. Tait McKenzie's art deserves this second chance of an audience and is well worth seeing.

Virgil Hammock
1930S

VIE DES

An Ear for Earthly Matters,
instalments that seduce the viewer,
fragmented tale in a series of visual
proportions. Incorporating the tech­
intellectual curiosity and profound
talent and his mastery of those rudi­
nological reality that is part of his
narratives of human and mythical
magnificent body of work. His latest
ancient of tools

Using the simplest and most
ancient of tools – paper and a
single stick of charcoal – Frank
Mulvey has managed to create a
magnificent body of work. His latest
drawings attest to both his unusual
talent and his mastery of those rudimentary materials. Fuelled by an
intellectual curiosity and profound
literary knowledge, Mulvey dives
into archetypes of our common
cultural baggage, weaving visual
narratives of human and mythical
proportions. Incorporating the tech­
nological reality that is part of his
environment, he has produced a
fragmented tale in a series of visual
insinuations that seduce the viewer,
stirring the imagination of each and
every one who enters the gallery
space.

Harking back to antiquity, to
Pompeii and Rome, to biblical tales
and mythology, Mulvey’s images
remind us of the beauty in art, recon­
constructing, reconfiguring archi­
tectural and organic motifs, incor­
porated into enigmatic slivers of
the past that may or may not have
existed, but one that seems to
breath again, as if released from
the confines of our own mnemonic
slumber. Accompanied by poetry,
these drawings are like pages from
a forgotten journal of a traveller
emerging from a mysterious realm of
our own ancestry.

Mulvey’s talent is breathtaking
from the very instant one stands
before his drawings, which framed
in his handmade trademark metal
frames, resemble objects d’art taken
off the walls of some ancient struc­
ture. Composed of light and shadow,
of velvety blackness and gossamer
mists, they are like murky obsidian
mirrors in which forgotten images
have been trapped forever.

Thus immortalized, the figures
in his drawings seem caught in a
moment in time, frozen like the petrified bodies, stopped in their tracks
by the weight of Vesuvian lava. In
Embrace Without End, a nude
couple lies tangled on a tiled floor,
their entwined bodies locked into a
multi-edged frame, like a discarded
cut-out.

Ancient Sister has two female
faces smile with a Mona Lisa gen­
tleness, one ancient, composed of
tiny mosaic tiles, the other all flesh,
contemporary, separate yet one,
united by their mysterious smile.

From Another Garden draws
biblical imagery, a close up of a
modern Adam and Eve, in which, in
a reversal of the primordial tale, he
is the one handing her an apple. The
exquisite detail with which the pair
is rendered imbues this scene with
the very obvious, to somewhat more
erotic, judging by the facial expres­
sions and the accompanying verse.
This is art to be looked at for a
long time, like opening a book at
random and trying to decipher the
preceding and following events.

The game becomes even more
intriguing when faced with smaller,
fragmented images, which are a
wonderful departure from Mulvey’s
more dense and narrative compos­
tions. Focusing on but a portion of
an imaginary larger tableau, he has
given free rein to his manual dex­
terity, the charcoal stick like a magic
wand bringing to life a world of de­
lite like no other contemporary artist.

A drawing titled Fact and Fic­
tion echoes the composition
Ancient Sister, juxtaposing a skull
with its tilted image. Lying among
scattered flowers, the skull grins in
its macabre silliness, the Inca-like
reflection behind it repeating the
grimace. At once foreboding and
seductive, it speaks of life and death,
and the beauty in both.

In Fleeting Pompeii, all we see
is a foot on a tiled mosaic floor, yet
all the drama and pathos is locked
tight into this slice of a larger
image, one too great to fit within a
frame. And there is no need for it.
The foot is in motion, leaning hea­
vely on tip toe, just lifting off the
cold tiles. Shards of light rain down
upon the running figure, and an invisible
but clearly tangible tremor imbues the
work.

A similar atmosphere of danger
permutes another work, Danger­
eous Days, which focuses on two
linked arms, holding tight while a
vortex rages on a distant horizon.
Narrative and symbolic, Mulvey’s art
reminds us of what art has always
done, enhancing our vision of our
world and, while looking at the
artist’s soul, we rediscover our own.

Dorota Kozinska

A NATIONAL SOUL:
CANADIAN MURAL
PAINTINGS, 1860-1930

BY MARYLIN J. MCKAY
McGill-Queen’s University Press,
2003, 304 pages with index
website: www.mcup.ca

With the resurgence of interest
in the Mexican Mural Movement,
and the release of the film Frida
about Frida Kahlo’s long arduous
relationship with Mexican Muralist
Diego Rivera, public interest in
mural painting has recently grown.
The popularity is likewise attribut­
able to the fact mural painting is
public art, often created for public
places and spaces. Mural painting is
an art, rather like public and war
monuments, that has a political and
social aspect to it. It exists in pub­
lc space and often treats social, his­
torical and public themes.

Marylin J. McKay’s A National
Soul looks at mural painting in both
French Catholic and English Protes­
tant Canada. As an area of public art,
mural painting’s recognition as an
artform in Canadian art has long
overdue. Marylin Mckay, Chair
of Art History at NASCAD in Halif­
ax, has finally laid down the foun­
dations for further study of the
subject. Not only does this highly
detailed study bring to light a lot of
mural art most of us would never
have heard of, but in so doing it
rekindles an interest in contempo­
rary mural art as well. An appendix
provides in depth details about
the murals discussed in the book.
Many, like the Christian scenes E.J.
Hughes, Orville Fisher and Paul
Goranson painted for First United
Church in Vancouver in 1934 have
been destroyed and exist only in
photo docs, while others such as
Charles Comfort’s Captain Van­
couver (1939), Alex Colville’s The
Circuits Rider (1951) or Adam Scott’s
thirteen panel depiction of local
Quebec history at Chateau Montebello, are still in situ. Interestingly,
we learn from this book that the
renowned painter Frank Brangwyn
was hired to produce a painted wall
work for a Canadian patron. In this
scene, was the case of TheIntro­
duction of European Civilization
into the country of the red Indian
originally in the Offices of the
Grand Trunk Railway in London, England
and now located at the Canadian
Government Confederation Centre
in Ottawa. Likewise, George Agnew
Reid painted murals for the living
room of Charles Russell and the
Onteroa Church in New York State.
More renowned artists such as C.W.
Jeffreys, Frederick Challener, Hal
Ross Perrigard, William Brymmer,
Ozias Leduc, Maurice Cullen and
Joseph-Charles Franchère are all
featured in this scholarly investiga­
tion of Canada’s less known mural
art history. This book belongs in all
university fine art and art school
libraries in Canada. It will provide
readers with a better understanding
of the process and principle behind
mural painting. It has a long tradition
in Quebec and in Canada.

John K. Grande

Frank Mulvey
A SIMPLE BEAUTY
Galerie de Bellefeuille
February 13 - 25th
1367 Greene
website: www.debellefeuille.com
THE MYSSTERIOUS BOG PEOPLE

Canadian Museum of Civilization
Dec. 6, 2002 - Sept. 1st, 2003
www.civilization.ca
Tel.: 1-800-555-5621

European peat bogs, a source of fuel for homes across northeastern Europe, have, during peat cutting activities (in Ireland, Great Britain, the Netherlands, northern Germany, and Denmark in particular) offered up a wealth of artifacts, hundreds of bodies, and clothing. These bog bodies date from 8000 B.C. to the early medieval period and provide much needed information on early life in northern Europe. This unusual and surprising exhibition includes the ancient and actual remains of men, women, and children preserved by the unique conditions of the bogs. There is also an incredible range of material artifacts that evidence the level of sophistication in craft, weaving, metal work and shoe design in so-called “primitive” and pre-modern Europe. The levels of metal and cloth technology achieved then surpasses, in many ways, what mass produced technology can. Ancient guild and craft knowledge, previously passed down from generation to generation, was largely lost due to industrialism, and exists only in pockets of culture these days in the Western world.

This international exhibition will be seen at four major museums in Europe and North America (the Drents Museum in Assen, Holland; the Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum in Hannover, Germany; the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull, Quebec and the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Alberta, Canada) and tells the story of life in Northern Europe from the Stone Age to the end of the 16th century. We see videos of bog cutting from earlier this century, incredibly finely crafted artifacts like bractheas pits, necklaces, chains and even finely woven mediaeval textiles. Though how many of these people ended up in bogs is not certain, tradition tells us that Roman Iron Age people offered human sacrifices to celebrate military victories, and to recover from illness, and even executed people as punishment for crimes in Northern Europe. Many of the bodies ended up in the bogs. Studying The Bog People, immortalized in V. Gloh’s ever popular classic book on the subject, has enabled a better understanding of dress style, eating habits, and many aspects of earlier Iron Age and mediaeval life in Europe. Well worth the visit!
John K. Grande

Nederodernekeise Body (discovered 3400-2850 B.C.) style found 1973 in a bog near Drents village, Weerdinge, Holland. Courtesy Drants Museum

TORONTO

KATHE KOLLWITZ:
The Art of Compassion
March 1st - May 25, 2003
Art Gallery of Ontario
317 Dundas St. W.
Tel.: 416-979-6660
www.ago.net

A mask of Goethe hung over Kathe Kollwitz’s bed before she died and the last words of this great artist/pacifist were, “My greetings to all.” Kathe Kollwitz, renowned for her brooding, expressionistic graphic works, and tight compacted propagandistic tributes to the common person, is being celebrated at the Art Gallery of Ontario in a show comprising 77 works in a variety of media. Of course, there are the famous etchings such as The Peasant’s War series (1906), The Prisoners (1908) Pregnant Woman (1910) and penetrating Self Portrait (1912), all works that bear witness to the painful First World War era in Germany.

A series of exceptionally sensitive and humane tributes to the human form, on loan from the Graphische Sammlung in the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart, Germany offer a rare opportunity to see Kollwitz’s incredibly refined drawings and charcoal firsthand. Not only are these portraits of austerity and famine and the ongoing struggle to survive, but they incorporate an exceptional capacity to find the mystery inherent to the human portrait subject. Kollwitz, who was born in Königsburg in East Prussia in 1867, had much of her artistic production destroyed in a Second World War bombing of her Berlin home, but some letters and art were saved from the wreckage. When the Nazis took power in 1933, she was forced to resign from the Berlin Academy of Arts, thus losing her teaching position, directorship and studio there.

These quintessentially humanistic works by Kollwitz include a bronze sculpture from the AGO collection titled Lamentation: In Memory of Ernst Barlach, who died in 1938. This was an atypical life, and her art mirrors that experience. It is testament to an anti-war, proto-humanist German vision that was hidden from history, and these voices were smothered by the 20th century’s two world wars. As the artwork evidences, Kollwitz had an incredible sense of light and texture, of the human form, and composition that influenced expressionist art of the West, and Soviet and East European art. Her main motif was the human form, and her hand wrought sculptures of the mother and father made for the military cemetery of Eessen in Flanders where her son Peter was buried, carry that same strong graphic, linear sensibility as her drawings and graphics. This show is an experienced study of the process of life itself by someone who studied the world and learned from that experience.
John K. Grande

REGINA,
SASKATCHEWAN

LORI BLONDEAU

ShuBox Theatre
University of Regina
Lori Blondeau, a performance artist from Saskatchewan, presented something old and something new at the ShuBox Theatre at the University of Regina on January 23rd. The old piece, Sisters, is a simple but eloquent series of actions that Blondeau has been honing in locations such as Milan, Italy, in recent years. Her latest and second performance A Moment in the Life of Belle Savage, which premieres a new character of Blondeau’s cast was, however, as heavy-handed and awkward as the former work, Sisters, was subtle and confident.

Sisters consists of four sequential scenes that lead to a double-twist...
The sketch features Blondeau in a 1950s style cowboy outfit wandering the stage shooting cap guns and taking swings from a bottle of tequila. In the few minutes it takes Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers to walk Swingin' over the P.A. system, Belle chugs back the rest of the bottle. Real booze or not, its hard to watch. Belle continues as before, briefly, then bids us adieu. The audience claps but, uncertain, stays seated. Belle returns and taunts the audience as the performance fades.

In theatrical performance we know we are watching artifice and suspend our disbelief. In performance art, we are not so assured and must be ready for anything. A Moment in the Life of Belle Savage teeters uneasily on a rickety fence like a struggle of emotions and experiences that are barely tasted in the present production. As it is, Belle is a jittery blues singer only threatening to explode.

David Garneau

VANCOUVER


ISABELLE PAUWELS. UNFURNISHED APARTMENT FOR RENT

IAN SKEED. WOODEN SLAT SCREEN

Contemporary Art Gallery
555 Nelson St
website: www.contemporaryartgallery.ca
until March 2nd, 2003

These three solo exhibitions on display at the Contemporary Art Gallery weren't, so far as I know, a curated group show, but it was easy to pretend that they are, so seamlessly did they play off of each other.

Martín Boyce is a Scottish artist whose sculptures and installations alter classical modernist design in surprising and odd ways. Transforming, for instance, an Eames chair into a hanging sculpture with graceful weight and abstract forms look for all the world like Alexander Calder's mobiles. Boyce's large installation, in the CAG's darkened main gallery, turned the big white box into a city park at night. Young "trees" made of fluorescent fixtures that sprouted from the floor and branched, glowing in the dark - were scattered between metal benches - half park bench, half daybed - and garbage bins canted off at odd angles. Wandering through Boyce's installation felt like stumbling onto an Expressionist film set, a place whose otherworldly angles and lighting induce a swooning sense of vertigo, a dream-state between sleeping and waking.

Isabel Pauwels and Ian Skeed are recent Emily Carr Institute graduates whose installations and sculptures, while conceptually related, couldn't have looked more different from each other. Pauwels works by altering preexisting architectural spaces, by cutting into gallery ceilings or walls. Here is an art of absence and voids, a deliberately poor imitation. It understates the work of American artists like Gordon Matta-Clark, Dan Graham, and, perhaps, the early Richard Serra. Pauwels' work doesn't have that much in common with any regional sculptural practice, and is all the stronger for it. Pauwels' latest work, Unfurnished Apartment for Rent, was a probably unfilmable script about a group of youngish actors who, for lack of money, are forced to camouflage the walls of their apartments in order to build tables, chairs, and beds, furnishing their rooms at the expense of any privacy. For her CAG exhibition, Pauwels chopped huge gaping holes in the gallery's walls, and used the liberated sheetrock and drywall to build plinths, on top of which were displayed small cardstock maquettes of each apartment referred to in the script. The script itself - published by the CAG as a bookwork that had to be cut apart to be read - tells short of Pauwels' accomplish as an artist, but her installation's impact is, overall, profoundly successful. Pauwels' originality and intelligence make her, for me, one of the city's most interesting emerging artists.

Ian Skeed, like Pauwels, also alters preexisting architecture, but by adding features so well-designed that they seem to merge with the things they're attached to. His work, like Boyce's, liberally name-checks a century of modernist design. Skeed's Wooden Slat Screen was composed of strips of wood cladding that surround the gallery's front windows, filtering the light from the fluorescent fixtures concealed in the window vitrines, thereby altering the gallery's street front appearance. Skeed's work was far subtler than Boyce's and Pauwels', but no less interesting.

Christopher Brayshaw

E. J. HUGHES

Vancouver Art Gallery
January 30th to June 8th, 2003
website: www.vanartgallery.bc.ca

Steamer Arriving

Indian Church

E. J. Hughes is one of Canada's little known secrets, an artist who has achieved renown, in part due to the efforts of Dominion Gallery's founder Dr. Max Stern, who represented Hughes for 35 years, and likewise encouraged another British Columbia painter, Emily Carr, in her painting. Hughes grew up in North Vancouver and Nanaimo in the 1920s, studying at the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts in the 1930s studying under Frederick Varley, Charles H. Scott, and Jock Macdonald. He actually worked on murals during the 1930s before serving as an official war artist with the Canadian military. He found a place of peace and quiet in the Cowichan Valley of southeastern Vancouver Island in 1951, where he could devote himself to painting with less of the commercial pressures. Much of E. J. Hughes art on view at the Vancouver Art Gallery is a celebration of the Coastal landscape of British Columbia.

These realistic paintings are heightened by bright colouring and painstaking detail. Major works included in the show: Steam Arrival at Nanaimo (1950), Indian Church, North Vancouver (1947), Coastal Boats near Sydney, B.C. (1948). Early print etchings and linecuts, pencil drawings and watercolour works from the 1930s offer viewers an insight into the artist's process and particular vision. There are likewise several seldom seen wartime works, and scenes of
logging, coastal boats, the car ferry at Sidney, and the British Columbia Arbutus trees. A quintessential west coast painter, E. J. Hughes continues to work and paint the land and sea he loves. Ian Thorn's well researched book on E. J. Hughes is the most definitive and well illustrated tribute to this Vancouver Island painter ever. Future E.J. Hughes venues include the McMichael Canadian Art Collection (November 2003) and the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria (Feb. 2004).

John K. Grande

LIZ MAGOR
Vancouver Art Gallery
Nov. 16, 2002 to Feb. 23, 2003
website:
www.vanartgallery.bc.ca

The Vancouver Art Gallery pays tribute to Liz Magor with a major exhibition of her sculpture, photography and installation work. The show includes 18 works created over the past 13 years that deal with such themes as nature, history and domesticity. Some of the most controversial works Magor has made use ordinary everyday objects, but present them in a non-traditional gallery setting. The result is that we come to question what seems to be standard.

In re-evaluating the function of Magor's objects of engagement, we participate in her anthropology of the present. Sometimes the effect is exhilarating, others times dull. It depends on the individual work. This act of cultural recreation is best exemplified by Magor's One Bedroom Apartment (1996) which includes rented household items, furniture, packing boxes. Works such as Chee-to (2000) which have plaster, resin and food as components or Burrow (1999) which has a natural look, yet is entirely synthetic, cause us to question the nature and function of materials in a highly developed production era.

The gelatin silver photos from the Civil War Portfolio (1991) and the Camping Portfolio (2002) are likewise re-enactments that, like theatre, make us aware of role playing and the distance between present and past in historical interpretation. Many of Magor's works, like the log cabin she erected in the Toronto Sculpture Garden, harken back to the colonial backwoods experience but her art does more than simply investigate our relation to nature.

Armoured with a wry wit and sense of our place in a contemporary world, Liz Magor uses nature, history and the like as a foil which enables us to better examine the present-day state of contemporary culture. Magor, who has represented Canada at the Venice Bien- nale in 1984 and Documenta VIII in Kassel, Germany in 1987, continues to produce her highly individualistic, ironic iconic objectified brand of art process. As this interesting exhibition evidences, Liz Magor is an acute observer of the habits and textures of contemporary life, at her best when she uses allegory, history and nature as a vehicle to communicate her contemporary cultural vision.

John K. Grande