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THE EDGE OF PAINTING:
The Emma Lake Artists' Workshops and the Politics of Location

By

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> Each person makes his world which he shares with those who are interested, and people share only those things in which they have common awareness.
> - Arthur McKay

The artists of Emma Lake have shared close bonds with their peers for over fifty years, and this thesis is the result of the many relationships I have formed with artists, teachers, friends, and family over the years.

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Introduction – The Edge of Painting

When artist Robert Christie pours multiple layers of paint onto his canvases, the edges are different than if the paint is applied with a brush. In his recent painting, *New Furrow* (2003/04), the manipulation of paint is just as important as colour and composition (Fig. 1). The upside-down rainbows of rich colour fray at the ends, and smudges of pigment blur the edges of each colour, like shadows beneath the thick swatches of paint. In 1982, artist Stanley Boxer was a guest leader at a workshop held in Emma Lake, Saskatchewan.[1] He spoke to Christie about "the edge of paint," and to consider the effects that can be created through diverse methods of paint application.[2] Because of this encounter, Christie realized that a painting could look different depending on whether the colours have a thick, scalloped edge or a straight, stained line. It was a simple tip, but Boxer introduced him to an entirely new set of tools to work from. In an earlier workshop, leader Darryl Hughto told Christie that he mixed gouache with his watercolours when he wanted a more opaque paint. Following this, Christie began to mix gesso with his acrylics, giving them a more opaque and matte appearance. Christie expanded his range of paint beyond colour values and relationships; he was experimenting with the medium and qualities of paint itself. These seemingly trivial comments had a tremendous impact on his work, making it more complex and layered, and created a ripple effect as the experience opened up his perceptions of painting.

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[1] Emma Lake is a small lakeside community located 180 kilometers north of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. (Fig. 2)
[2] Robert Christie, interview by author, 17 May 2005, Saskatoon, tape recording.

Many artists that have attended an Emma Lake workshop over the years can relate similar stories of personal growth, and some have had significant breakthrough moments. This thesis is an examination of the history of the Emma Lake Artists' Workshops as the dominant catalyst in Saskatchewan art, and the political borders that it has transcended. It considers constructions of a regional artistic identity in Saskatchewan within the larger context of an international art movement. The workshops partially grew out of feelings of isolation from central Canada,[3] and in the artists' desire to communicate with and learn from artists beyond their national borders. Within the discourse of Canadian art history, works produced in central Canada are frequently said to exemplify the search for a national style of art. Saskatchewan is an artistic, cultural, and political periphery, which challenged the supremacy of the Canadian centre paradoxically by aligning with New York as an international artistic centre. The Emma Lake Artists' Workshops established Modernism as the province's resident style, prompting other local artistic movements to consider their place in relation to this awareness.

The first Emma Lake workshop was held in 1955, and workshop coordinators approached major internationally recognized artists to lead the early workshops. To their surprise and delight, newly established New York artists such as Will Barnet and Barnett Newman, as well as the formalist art critic Clement Greenberg, accepted invitations. This New York infusion became a critical point of political tension between Canada and the United States, as the American presence in Saskatchewan

[3] All references to "central Canada" allude to Ontario and to a certain extent, Quebec, as the economic, political, and cultural cores of Canada.

opposed the nationalist goals of the Canadian government's cultural policies.[4] As a result, financial support for the workshop became unstable, and the artistic community divided among those who resented the American invasion, and those who saw the power of the New York influence as a crucial aspect of their development and growing social network. Previous writing on the New York School focuses on the political situation of American art in the mid-twentieth century, and this thesis similarly contextualizes artistic activity within the social conditions of the Saskatchewan art community, and within the spectrum of Canadian politics.

My argument largely considers the role that noted art critic Clement Greenberg played in the development of Saskatchewan art and its community through his involvement with the workshops. Greenberg led the workshop at Emma Lake in the summer of 1962, and he worked with established and emerging Canadian artists, including Kenneth Lochhead, Arthur McKay, William Perehudoff, Dorothy Knowles, and Guido Molinari. Greenberg shaped the direction of Post-Painterly Abstraction in Saskatchewan during his time at Emma Lake, as well as through his subsequent curatorial efforts and writings on Saskatchewan art. In his personal correspondence from the 1960s, Greenberg made several statements in support of Saskatchewan artists, going so far as to claim that Saskatchewan was "New York's only competitor."[5] Other workshop leaders have articulated kind words about

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[4] The *Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences*, also known as the Massey Report, published in 1951, advocated the creation of the Canada Council as a government funding institution for the arts. Its purpose was to promote Canadian culture, which the committee feared was susceptible to American domination.

[5] Letter from Clement Greenberg to Kenneth Lochhead, 19 March 1963, *Clement Greenberg Papers, 1937-1984,* Smithsonian Institution Libraries. Reprinted in David Howard, "From Emma Lake to Los Angeles: Modernism on the Margins," in *The Flat Side of the Landscape: the Emma Lake Artists' Workshops*, ed. John O'Brian (Saskatoon: The Mendel Art Gallery, 1989), 41.

Saskatchewan, but it was Greenberg's reputation and praise that gave artists the confidence that they were producing high quality work.

Modernism, and particularly abstraction, became the main aesthetic and theoretical tradition in Saskatchewan throughout the late twentieth century, and Greenberg played a major role in that transformation. His influence was far-reaching and further reinforced by subsequent workshop coordinators, leaders, and participants. While Modernist abstraction is no longer at the forefront of the avant-garde, the workshops continue to be very important to the working processes of several professional artists in the region, and they have sparked other similar models for professional development, both locally and internationally. Ultimately, the New York influence forced Saskatchewan artists to examine their unique regional identity, and to question whether they consider themselves limited by their location.

While the workshop environment has created a close-knit community of like-minded artists, the prevalence and power of abstract painting has subsequently slowed the development of other artistic traditions in the region. The workshops have been associated with a particular group of Saskatchewan artists, with the most successful artists being white heterosexual males, working primarily in Modernist painting or sculpture. Video, performance, installation, and public intervention pieces focusing on issues of gender and globalization emerged elsewhere by the early 1970s, while Greenbergian Modernism continued to dominate both public and commercial markets in Saskatchewan. This began to change in the late 1970s and 80s with new fine arts

faculty in the universities, and tensions grew as a new generation lost interest in the predominance of Modernism at the Emma Lake Workshops.

Despite the high profile of artists who have attended the workshops and the significance of the workshops in the direction of Saskatchewan art, it was not until the 1970s that any in-depth research was undertaken on the subject. A body of research on the Emma Lake workshops is building, but remains incomplete in many areas. In 1972, John D.H. King wrote a B.F.A. thesis on the workshops from 1955 to 1970, which included numerous unedited interviews with workshop leaders and participants, but offered very little critical analysis of the workshops and the art produced there.[6] In 1989, the Mendel Art Gallery organized the pivotal exhibition, *The Flat Side of the Landscape: the Emma Lake Artists' Workshops*, curated by art historian John O'Brian. This exhibition and its corresponding curatorial essays examined the early history of the workshops, a description of the early American leaders and their involvement in the community, and the political condition of Saskatchewan, which led to the founding of the summer art campus.[7] This text remains the most thorough examination of the workshops to date, and yet very little attention was paid to the significance of the workshops in the last four decades.

Clement Greenberg's relationship to the Emma Lake artists has been examined in recent writing. Greenberg is acknowledged as one of the most influential workshop leaders to date, and his strong support for Saskatchewan artists, especially the Regina

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[6] John D. H. King, *A documented study of the artists' workshop at Emma Lake, Saskatchewan, of the School of Art, University of Saskatchewan, Regina, from 1955 to 1970*, BFA thesis (University of Manitoba, 1972).
[7] *The Flat Side of the Landscape: The Emma Lake Artists' Workshops*, ed. John O'Brian (Saskatoon: Mendel Art Gallery, 1989).

Five[8], helped in securing a compelling argument for the importance of the workshops. John Currell's M.A. thesis compared Greenberg's relationship to Canadian and American artists in the 1950s and 60s, but the long-term impact of Modernism in Canada, and Saskatchewan in particular, was not considered, nor was the lasting impression of the subsequent backlash against Greenberg.[9] David Howard's Ph.D. dissertation considers Canada's relations with the United States during the Cold War, including an examination of cultural policy in both countries, and compares Greenberg's involvement in Saskatchewan as an example of the reflection of those policies.[10] However, his macroscopic study of Canadian cultural relations does not consider the major internal cultural differences within Canada, nor the microscopic impact of Modernism in relation to Saskatchewan art.

Most of the literature on the workshops places emphasis on the first decade of its existence, and particularly the involvement of the Regina Five in its early development. Some argue that the workshops were at their peak during this time, and many of its founding contributors believed that they should have been abandoned with the disbanding of the Regina Five in the mid-1960s because the workshop was no longer as ambitious.[11] However, several significant changes have taken place in the last forty years, which have altered perceptions of the workshops. As the sponsoring

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[8] The Regina Five was a group of five abstract painters based in Regina, Saskatchewan who drew attention to prairie Modernism in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Their name derives from the *"Five Painters from Regina"* exhibition, held at the National Gallery of Canada in 1961.
[9] Daniel Currell, *Modernism in Canada: A Comparison of Clement Greenberg's Approach to Art and Artists in the United States Versus Canada*, M.A. thesis (Concordia University, 1995).
[10] David Brian Howard, *Bordering on the New Frontier: Modernism and the Military Industrial Complex in the United States and Canada, 1957 – 1965*, Ph.D. thesis (The University of British Columbia, 1993).
[11] Ted Godwin, interview with John D.H.King, *A documented study of the artists' workshop at Emma Lake.*

institution, the University of Saskatchewan experimented with the format of the workshops by adding extra guest leaders, artist residencies, student workshops, and in opening up the workshop to Post-Modern approaches to the studio. Workshop coordinators have invited artists from eastern Canada and abroad, asking such figures as Anthony Caro, Greg Curnoe, and most recently, Ron Shuebrook to lead the workshops. Additionally, key artists and arbiters of art such as Terry Fenton, William Perehudoff, and Robert Christie have led workshops, as recognition of their contribution to the Saskatchewan arts community, and an acknowledgement of the prominence and importance of senior artists in the province. This acknowledgement is long overdue, as the community now recognizes the value of the experience that local artists bring, rather than relying on artists from outside centres to validate their work.

The first chapter contextualizes Emma Lake as a marginal development and the first significant art movement in Saskatchewan history. Prior to the workshops, artistic identity was undefined, and this was the beginning of a new identity and alliance for the province's artists. In its early settlement years, Saskatchewan artists were limited by the edges of their marginal location. The workshop was part of a growing culture of resistance that altered their peripheral identity. The birth of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) socialist government and the early history of Saskatchewan as an agricultural colonial settlement had a significant impact on the encouragement of artistic growth in the prairies. Artists were ambitious and the condition of internationalism allowed them to reach beyond their boundaries. Faculty members who were interested in New York abstract painting initiated the Emma Lake

Artists' Workshops. The landscape of the Great Canadian North intrigued the American leaders, as did the unique socialist political climate in Saskatchewan, and these interests led them to accept offers to lead workshops.[12] Saskatchewan artists were looking for support and validation from both local and international art communities because many lived in relatively small urban centres or rural areas, with few opportunities for frequent interaction with other professional artists. They hoped to expand their professional and personal social networks and to increase their profile and exhibition possibilities.

The second chapter considers the location of Emma Lake within a national and international discourse, and the definition of Emma Lake as a Modernist community. Geographically, Saskatchewan was still a marginal province, but artistically it was extremely powerful due to the international interest of influential figures such as Clement Greenberg. Saskatchewan art was finally "discovered" by the rest of Canada because powerful Americans expressed their interest. Tension was imminent as the New York influence in Saskatchewan created a conflict between Americanized prairie Modernism and nationalistic Ontario-based Post-Modernism. In 1964, Greenberg curated Post-Painterly Abstraction, an exhibition held in Los Angeles, which included work by Kenneth Lochhead and Arthur McKay of Saskatchewan. The inclusion of these artists in the show demonstrates Greenberg's conviction that Saskatchewan was part of an international Modernist movement, even as his power over the American art discourse began to deteriorate and "Clembashing" became fashionable. Support for

[12] John O'Brian, "Where the Hell is Saskatchewan and Who is Emma Lake?" in *The Flat Side of the Landscape*, 31.

the American workshop leaders similarly began to wane as it deviated from the interests of Canadian national protectionism.

The third chapter deals with the initiation and recognition of Saskatchewan as its own artistic centre, with internal peripheries that questioned the authority of Greenbergian Modernism. The two centres of New York and Emma Lake joined forces as Modernist advocates, and crumbled together under the criticism of multiple peripheries, which in turn divided a community. There were growing tensions within the province's artistic community. Many artists were frustrated with the New York influence, and were inspired to create work about their own local experiences. Nevertheless, Modernism continued as the dominant style in Saskatchewan university art departments for many years, and most of the established artists in the region remain abstract artists. This has been a source of criticism of the workshops and its authority in the province, as abstract Modernism was a movement that lasted little more than a decade and faded by the end of the 1950s. Comparatively, it continued to resonate in Saskatchewan for over fifty years. Workshop coordinators and participants have attempted to be more inclusive in a number of ways, but the consensus of the 'old guard' is that it is best left untouched.

Although the Emma Lake Artists' Workshops are not as prominent as they once were, the sharing of dialogue and artistic process remains strong in Saskatchewan. In order to understand the significance of the workshops, and their new place in Saskatchewan art, one must consider the regional, national, and international factors that have shaped its existence. These interests are not separate

nor do they always have opposing philosophies, and if the workshops are to remain relevant, the edges of Saskatchewan painting must be fluid and flexible.

Chapter 1 – Painting in the Margin: From Pioneer Outpost to Cultural Colony

This chapter provides a social and historical context for the emergence of the Emma Lake Artists' Workshops by revealing the history of art in Saskatchewan from the early settler era to the early Modernist period of the 1950s. Until the mid-twentieth century, the province was perceived as a cruel and isolating living environment, because it was underdeveloped and isolated from metropolitan conveniences. However, the image of the prairies as an artistic wasteland located on the margins of sophisticated society began to shift, as the establishment of the Emma Lake Artists' Workshops created significant professional development opportunities. The Regina Five artists explored new possibilities of non-representational expression through experimentation with new materials and painting techniques. In a very short period, they created a modern image of the province as an innovative and vibrant artists' community. Their ambition put them on the map: not just a local or even a national map, but an international one. They affirmed that strength can come from the margins if you view your position, "...both from the outside in and from the inside out,"[25] by attracting international interest to their local community and creating a dialogue with major New York artists and critics. It was here that Saskatchewan artists became associated with the Post-Painterly Abstract style of American Modernism as a form of resistance against the interests of central Canada, thus changing the identity of Saskatchewan painting forever.

[25] bell hooks, "Preface," in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Boston: South End Press, 1984), i.

Western Canada began as a "colony of central Canada,"[26] and therefore it has always struggled to assert a strong, autonomous identity.[27] The prairies did not develop as early as central Canada, but due to land shortages there, Ontarians eventually settled many areas of western Canada.[28] Thus, this established a metropolitan-hinterland binary model early on that resulted in the temporary creation of Saskatchewan in the image of Ontario, even though many left central Canada because they rejected that identity. As such, early western protest "was forged out of disillusionment with the expansionist rhetoric."[29] Many prairie newcomers were looking for a new life, and resented the transplantation of central Canadian culture to their new home.[30] Despite their resentment, the land was settled and cities were built. After the Indian Act revoked Aboriginal claims to the land in 1876, the prairies became an easy target for economic development, offering prosperous opportunities for farmers and laborers in the region. Powerful industrial expansionists profited from the availability of natural resources in the region. Between 1900 and 1913, the population of Saskatoon had grown nine times its size from 3,000 to 28,000, and was becoming one of the fastest growing cities in the world.[31] However, following the economic bust of the 1930s, urban expansion in the prairies decelerated as larger,

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[26] R. Douglas Francis, "In Search of a Prairie Myth: A Survey of the Intellectual and Cultural Historiography of Prairie Canada," in *Riel to Reform: A History of Protest in Western Canada*, ed. George Melnyk (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1992), 23.
[27] There is a long tradition of Aboriginal art in Saskatchewan which precedes European contact. However, I have focused on the history of Euro-Canadian settlement, beginning in the late nineteenth century, for the purposes of this study of Modernism in Saskatchewan.
[28] The exploitation of natural resources such as wheat, uranium, and potash, as well as the expansion of the rail to the west coast were also reasons for interest in the settlement of the Canadian North West.
[29] Francis, 26.
[30] For example, the Temperance Colonization Society of Toronto originally settled the city of Saskatoon in the late nineteenth century. Their goal was to start over in a new territory that would be free of alcohol and tobacco. Therefore, Saskatoon was created by a group of people who already had power and morality issues with central Canada.
[31] Don Kerr and Stan Hanson, *Saskatoon: the First Half Century* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1982), 69.

well-established metropolitan centres drew people to other parts of Canada with greater employment opportunities.

Early artistic practices of First Nations people were stifled during the Canadian colonial expansion of the prairies, which resulted in a reduction of indigenous cultural and artistic development. By 1884, the Indian Advancement Act implemented the forcible removal of children from their family homes for the purposes of assimilation. As per the earlier 1876 version of the Indian Act, children were placed in residential schools where they could assimilate into Anglo-Canadian culture, and they were displaced from their own traditional cultural and artistic traditions.[32] It was believed that if children were punished for practicing traditional beliefs, they would assimilate into Anglo-Canadian culture much more quickly. The banning of Aboriginal cultural activities was just as severe in Saskatchewan as it was elsewhere in Canada, and according to historians Douglas Cole and Ira Chaikin, "there were many more arrests and imprisonments on the prairies for dancing and giving-away than in British Columbia."[33] Therefore, this piece of legislation obscured the continuance of a long artistic tradition for many generations, effectively and brutally wiping the slate clean for a new Western Canadian aesthetic to take its place.

The early assertion of a defiant regional identity in western Canada traces back to the Métis Rebellion. Louis Riel was one of the first western separatists and his defeat at the hands of the federal government crushed the Métis and First Nations people both politically and culturally. By the nineteenth century, the early artistic

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[32] Gerald McMaster, "Colonial Alchemy: Reading the Boarding School Experience," in *Partial Recall,* ed. Lucy Lippard (New York: New Press, 1992), 80.
[33] Douglas Cole and Ira Chaikin, *An Iron Hand upon the People: The Law Against Potlatch on the Northwest Coas*t (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1990), 175-76.

traditions of Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan had diminished dramatically, and publicly re-emerged in the latter part of the twentieth century. The Métis and early prairie settlers each held a subordinate role in relation to central Canada, and both parties deeply resented this position. Although their opposition should have unified them, the federal government was able to use their cultural differences to prevent alliances. The prairies continued to fill with a large population of eastern European immigrants with a strong desire to be Canadian, and this further defeated the First Nations' political power. These fierce national feelings came from immigrant families who felt grateful for a new life in Canada, and they worked together to build a strong sense of community.

The development of Saskatchewan's artistic community was informed by populist politics and agricultural developments in the province. Immigrants from European socialist and communist nations were enticed by the offer of free farmland and they established an agrarian community in the province. As an assertion of power, they turned to cooperative economic development and socialist governance models such as the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool (1924), the Co-operators (1945), and the CCF (1932). The mechanization of farming changed the prairie landscape, and the urban population grew. Agriculturalists achieved long-lasting professional and political independence because they did not directly challenge the existence of the nation-state; instead, they supported provincial power under the umbrella of national leadership.[34] This development was of interest to artists elsewhere in Canada as well as in America, where socialism was defeated in the McCarthy era. It was

[34] George Melnyk, *Beyond Alienation: Political Essays on the West* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1993), 21.

advantageous for the arts community that Saskatchewan's CCF party became the first socialist government in North America in 1944, which sponsored the Saskatchewan Arts Board in 1949 as the first arts granting institution of its kind in Canada.[35]

The CCF was supportive of artistic development in Saskatchewan and recognized it as a crucial part of their strategy to maintain power. They believed that a socially democratic government could achieve freedom of expression and an improved socio-economic condition for artists. This ideology continues in Saskatchewan with the New Democratic Party (NDP) government, as funding for the arts has steadily increased.[36] In 2002, the provincial government became the first in Canada to support the Status of the Artist Act, which officially recognizes the rights of artists in the workforce.[37] The NDP's socialist mandate has always been of interest to the province's artists, and a source of admiration for many artists elsewhere in Canada.

In the late nineteenth century, many early prairie artists painted landscapes for the purposes of attracting settlers to the region. When Edward Roper arrived in the Canadian prairies in the 1880s, he explored a newly developing settlement, and his travel books and paintings encouraged the colonization and urbanization of the mid-west.[38] His paintings of happy homesteaders working the land are in the romantic tradition of the nineteenth century English pastoral landscape. The modest family farmstead depicted in Roper's *A Settler's Home near Carberry, Assiniboia* (c. 1890),

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[35] W.A. Riddell, *Cornerstone for Culture: A History of the Saskatchewan Arts Board from 1948 to 1978* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1979), 6.
[36] At the federal level, the CCF became the NDP in 1961 under the leadership of Tommy Douglas, and the provincial party also accepted the new name in 1967.
[37] Quebec is also certified under the Act, but falls under federal jurisdiction. Therefore, Saskatchewan remains the only province to achieve recognition as a provincial power.
[38] Ronald Rees, *Land of Earth and Sky: Landscape Paintings of Western Canada* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1984), 26.

(Fig. 3) was no doubt inspired by the naturalism of John Constable's idyllic paintings of the cultivated English countryside. However, the prairie landscape was challenging to paint because it was so different from European and Ontarian topography. There was little scenery to invite visual interest and the horizon line was relatively unbroken. Indigenous plant-life was unlike English foliage, and artists had to conceive of new techniques to paint them in interesting ways.[39] Military officers, topographers and surveyors, engineers, and amateur artists created these first images of the landscape. They usually made drawings or painted with watercolours, as photography was still rare in Canada and limited by its potential for high quality images.[40] Later, the CPR hired personnel to write articles and paint pictures of a civilized society, in the hopes that they could woo settlers with images of a developing industrial region and an advanced agricultural community, rather than a harsh and empty landscape (Fig. 4).

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, women played a major role in the development of Saskatchewan art through the promotion of ethnic craft. In 1922, the Saskatoon Women's Council formed the Arts and Crafts Society in order to exhibit and sell ethnic folk art, mainly inspired by Doukhobor and Ukrainian traditions. The artists represented in the society were primarily of Ukrainian, Hungarian, First Nations, Russian, and Scandinavian origins. These women produced regional ethnic crafts, which were used as symbolic icons of an 'ethnic mosaic', in order "to define the special place of the West within the nation."[41] The CPR played an important role in the acknowledgement of multiculturalism by arranging large festivals across the country, which included folk art, in order to promote travel and tourism throughout

[39] Rees, 1.
[40] Ibid, 4.
[41] Kerr and Hanson, 268.

Canada.[42] It is not surprising that there is a link between Saskatchewan's artistic roots and European folk tradition: the Society provided opportunities for isolated immigrants from different backgrounds and nationalities to become acquainted with one another. It was crucial to recognize their cultural differences because the province was so spread-out and assimilation was slow.[43]

The early Saskatchewan arts community developed slowly, and at a grassroots level. Larger cities such as Toronto and Montreal have longer traditions of cultural and academic growth, and Canadian artists preferred these localities because of the employment opportunities available there. In its early development, Saskatchewan communities were spread throughout the province and there were few opportunities for social networking. As a result, artists worked in isolation with few opportunities for continuing education and professional artistic careers. Eventually this changed when the University of Saskatchewan opened in Saskatoon in 1907, effectively increasing the urban population with opportunities for employment and higher education, and a community interest in the arts followed. The Saskatoon Art Club formed in 1925. Its primary goal was to sponsor lectures for artists and art enthusiasts, and to exhibit art at the Nutana Collegiate Art Gallery. Nutana Collegiate also initiated an art collection to commemorate former students who had fallen during the Great War. The collection originated in the community's grassroots approach to the arts, as high school students fundraised 40% of the collection with their own

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[42] Riddell, 1.

[43] While cultural difference was recognized and celebrated, it was not always harmonious or balanced. As the Arts and Crafts Society grew, the work became more homogenous as sales dictated style, and communities identified themselves with particular ethnicities for promotional purposes. For example, the city of Saskatoon has two museums dedicated to Ukrainian history, culture, and craft. As a result, certain ethnic aesthetics were privileged and were marketed more prominently.

efforts.[44] In 1961 Fred Mendel donated funds to the city of Saskatoon to build an art gallery that would replace the Saskatoon Arts Centre, which was started as a "community project" with very little funding.[45] Mendel was an entrepreneur as well as an avid art collector who encouraged the growth of the artistic community by throwing parties where he would invite local artists, actors, and musicians.[46]

Educational opportunities for Saskatchewan artists developed in the early twentieth century, which also accommodated the unique needs of students. The Regina Campus of the University of Saskatchewan opened its doors in 1921, becoming the fourth art department in Canada. Augustus Kenderdine became the first art history instructor in 1923 and began teaching studio courses in 1927. The university's art department was established in 1936 under the direction of Gordon Snelgrove, and in 1936 Kenderdine officially opened the School of Fine Art at Regina College, as well as the Murray Point Summer School at Emma Lake.[47] At this time, there was only one other similar workshop program in Canada, at the Banff School of Fine Arts, which opened in 1933. Many aspiring artists lived in rural Saskatchewan and were only able to take courses in the summer. Artists typically gained employment as teachers rather than receiving professional full-time work as artists or studio professors, so most students enrolled in order to improve their teaching skills.[48] The Murray Point campus is unique because it was a short and intensive summer

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[44] Kerr and Hanson, 274.
[45] Norah McCullough, "Western Bounty: An Art Gallery for Saskatoon," *Canadian Art* Vol. 19, No.2 (March/April 1962): 111.
[46] Dorothy Knowles, interview by author, 16 May 2005, Saskatoon, tape recording.
[47] Michael Hayden, *Seeking a Balance: The University of Saskatchewan 1907-1982* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983), 135.
[48] John O'Brian, "Introduction," *The Flat Side of the Landscape*, 14.

program, and it accommodated rural students and teachers who were not available to study art in the winter months.

Kenderdine stressed the importance of painting landscapes en plein air rather than in the studio, and encouraged his students with this philosophy. For him, the experience of living with nature was a way of life as well as subject matter for his art. He built a cottage at Murray Point in 1935 as a studio for his northern sketching trips and suggested this as a site for the summer school.[49] Then-university president Walter Murray had begun collecting art for the university and felt this summer program was an important opportunity to promote cultural development in Saskatchewan.[50] The university chose the lakeside location for its scenic beauty in contrast to the Depression era landscape of the prairies. Its northern location also helped integrate the province's widespread population, as the Murray Point and Regina campuses allowed the university to accommodate students from different areas of the province.[51] This extension program was the precursor to the Emma Lake Artists' Workshops.

Like many landscape painters in Canada, Kenderdine was an artist who appreciated the value and beauty of the raw natural environment. However, he also lived in a newly modern society with the goal of urbanization and large scale agribusiness operations. This goal was hastened by the presence of the railway in the prairies, which many westerners have described as "an exploitive instrument of

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[49] Ann K. Morrison, "Beginnings: The Murray Point Summer School of Art 1936-1955," in *The Flat Side of the Landscape,* 22.
[50] President W.C. Murray was an avid supporter of local art, often hosting parties for artists and collectors in his home. Additionally, his wife was particularly interested in collecting local craft.
[51] Extension campuses for the University of Saskatchewan, University of Regina, and Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST) still exist to accommodate students living in smaller centres.

eastern Canadian control."[52] The railway eased the transition of the province into a farming community, along with the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, which organized and empowered the agricultural community, both politically and economically. These developments confirmed Saskatchewan as a place of agricultural production instead of a venue for the arts and recreation. Consequently, images of Wheat Pool grain elevators and wheat sheaves have become symbolic of the prairies.

Painters such as Robert Hurley understood the power of visual icons, and incorporated them into his representations of the Saskatchewan landscape. In his subtle watercolour painting, *Untitled, Tracks in Winter* (c.1950) (Fig. 5), Hurley's stark, flat painting reads like a basic study in perspective. His use of simple orthogonal lines renders the landscape vast and vacant, with few complex elements to distract the eye. In 1963, critic Clement Greenberg wrote an article on western Canadian art, and in it, he states that he was interested in Saskatchewan artists' abilities to capture the prairie landscape. In particular, he believed that Saskatoon artists George Swinton and Dorothy Knowles possessed a rare ability to capture western Canada's "lack of feature,"[53] which is symbolic in itself. The icons represented in Hurley's painting include the grain elevator, railroad tracks, and an immense blue sky, symbolizing the newly recognized natural resources that the prairies offered, and the potential for the continuance of modernization in the area. This type of imagery also has a negative connotation, as most non-Saskatchewanians

[52] John J. Barr, "Beyond Bitterness: The New Western Radicalism," in *Riel to Reform: A History of Protest in Western Canada*, ed. George Melnyk, 246.
[53] Clement Greenberg, "Clement Greenberg's View of Art on the Prairies: Painting and Sculpture in Prairie Canada Today," *Canadian Art* 20, no.2 (March-April 1963): 103.

associate the region with flat, empty land or dying farm villages, and rarely consider the cityscape within the context of the prairie environment.

Early Saskatchewan art was informed by European aesthetics, rather than a Canadian style. The first group of university art professors came from abroad, and most early Saskatchewan professional artists studied in Europe. Until the 1920s and 1930s, Canadian art was rarely seen in western Canada, and works that reached the prairies depicted historical events and landscapes of central Canada, which were unrelated to their own history and locality.[54] Saskatoon residents were first exposed to Canadian painting through a travelling exhibition from the National Gallery of Canada in 1916, which included works by the Group of Seven.[55] This type of first hand exposure was rare, and the Group's style did not immediately strike a chord with Saskatchewan artists.[56] It is often assumed that the Group of Seven influenced all Canadian representational landscape painting by virtue of their iconic status as a national symbol. However, Canada's landscape and topography varies considerably, and as such, regional depictions of the nation's geography also diverge. In Lynda Jessup's critique of the Group of Seven as the quintessential Canadian landscape painters, she argues, "[that their] claim to speak for the country as a whole is characteristic of what can be more precisely defined as Ontario regionalism."[57] Artist Dorothy Knowles claims that although she knew about the Group, it was many years

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[54] John A. M. Emerson, "The Case for Canadian Content," in *Readings in Canadian Art Education*, ed. Ronald MacGregor (Vancouver: Western Educational Development Group, 1984), 167.
[55] Kerr and Hanson, 273.
[56] A notable exception to this is Illingworth Kerr, who studied with members of the Group of Seven at the Ontario College of Art. Kerr was interested in painting the prairie landscape as a nationalist who did not wish to copy European styles and techniques; however, the striking colour palette and expression of form used by the Group was ill suited to capturing the prairie environment.
[57] Lynda Jessup, "Bushwhackers in the Gallery: Anti-modernism and the Group of Seven," in *Anti-Modernism and Artistic Expressionism: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 139.

before she saw their work up close, and her style was closer to the Impressionists in her treatment of colour and light.[58]

Dorothy Knowles's acrylic and oil paintings also follow the tradition of watercolour landscape painting, as they often look like watercolours on canvas. Her *Blue Water* (2000), for example, appears to be stained onto the canvas with highly diluted pigments in muted tones, and charcoal under-drawings bleeding through (Fig. 6). Her pigments are applied faintly, like a stain, and in this way, her work is stylistically similar to Modernist colour field painting. Her work deals with the interplays of light in the prairie landscape, in a subtle and sparkling way and she does not aggressively depict the raw ruggedness of the prairies, and nature itself, as in *Wind In the Reeds* (1998) (Fig. 7). Her work differs from traditional European easel painting because it is large in scale. Critic Clement Greenberg claimed that Knowles is the only landscape painter in prairie Canada to paint large works successfully, and furthermore compares her triumphant abilities in this area to the Group of Seven and his perception of their failure to paint successful large-scale landscapes.[59]

It was not only the landscape painters who were influenced by artists from other nations. William Perehudoff's early work is highly influenced by European, Mexican, and American tendencies in painting from the early twentieth century. In 1948, he studied under French artist Jean Charlot at the Colorado Springs School of Fine Art. Charlot worked with Mexican muralists Diego Rivera and José Orozco in the 1920s, and his work similarly depicts large, simplified figures at work (Fig. 8).

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[58] Knowles, 2005.
[59] Greenberg, "Clement Greenberg's View of Art on the Prairies," 104.

The Mexican influence was spread to Charlot's students, as evidenced in the series of murals that Perehudoff painted for Fred Mendel's Intercontinental Packers meat-packing company in the early 1950s (Fig. 9). The large-scale murals depicted the various jobs and processes of the meatpacking industry, including the hanging and preparation of meat slabs on line conveyors, cooking and curing the meat, and packaging it for sale. Perehudoff's murals shared the Mexican interest in the conditions of factory workers under the idealism of socialist governance.[60] He expresses his figures through the utilization of bright, flat colour and harsh, angular lines. They are stylized in a similar manner that emphasizes the actions of the figures rather than their personal features.

Perehudoff's interest in Cubist painting continued as he attended New York's Ozenfant School in 1949, studying under French Purist, Amédée Ozenfant. His influence is evident in Perehudoff's 1953 Cubist-inspired painting, *Untitled (group of musicians)* (Fig. 10), which is reminiscent of Picasso's *Three Musicians* (Fig. 11). In this painting, Perehudoff concentrates on pure, multi-faceted geometric solids, flat colour, and a shallow depth of field. The Purist influence is manifest in the compact arrangement of these simple, superimposed basic shapes, stressing order and mathematical logic. Although the piece is built upon the basic principles of Picasso's Synthetic Cubism, it marks the beginnings of Perehudoff's transition from representational work to his characteristic stacked colour bar abstractions (Fig. 12).

[60] While the muralist Diego Rivera was concerned with depicting the Communist Worker's Movement in the 1920s, Perehudoff was himself an employee at Intercontinental Packers in the 1950s, and had a positive relationship with Fred Mendel.

Kenneth Lochhead began his post at the Regina College in 1950,[61] and his studio practice in his first few years in Regina drew on Surrealist principles. Previously he had achieved recognition as a muralist and a realist painter, but such pieces as *The Bonspiel* (1954) and *Collective Farming* (1953) adeptly capture the immensity of the prairie landscape. Lochhead reveals the stark contrast between the horizontal and vertical planes through the flat featureless landscape, juxtaposed against the small groupings of strong, contemplative figures. These groupings reveal the close nature of small-town Saskatchewan communities and the Socialist politics that thrived there, particularly in the imagery and title of *Collective Farming* (Fig. 13). His figures, which look more like chess pieces contemplating their next move, protrude up from the ground dramatically in order to prove that they in fact do exist in a populated landscape. In *The Bonspiel*, some of the figures in the background also resemble the grain elevator, which at that time dominated the prairie landscape (Fig. 14). In this painting, the figures participate in a curling match on the limitless, flat prairie. Through these early surrealist pieces, Lochhead found a genre that understood the prairie experience, and did so with humour and complexity.

In the 1950s, abstract art made its academic entrance in Saskatchewan under the leadership of a group of artists known as the Regina Five: Kenneth Lochhead, Arthur McKay, Ronald Bloore, Ted Godwin, and Douglas Morton.[62] Another highly influential abstract artist teaching in the department during this time was Roy

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[61] In the same year, American Structurist sculptor Eli Bornstein became head of the Visual Arts department at the Saskatoon campus.

[62] Although known as the Regina Five, only McKay was initially from Saskatchewan. Lochhead and Bloore were both originally from Ontario, Godwin came from Calgary, and Morton was born in Winnipeg. Most of them studied at various art schools throughout the United States.

Kiyooka.[63] The artists teaching at the Regina campus at that time were very young, energetic, and ambitious. When Lochhead received the directorship of the art department at the Regina College at the age of 24, he had only one year of teaching experience under his belt. Bloore became the director of the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery at the young age of 33, and he promoted the group within the National Gallery of Canada. This resulted in the pivotal exhibition, "Five Painters from Regina," which was the National Gallery's first major exhibition of Saskatchewan Modern art.[64] In a review of the "Five Painters from Regina" exhibition in *Canadian Art*, Naomi Groves describes the show as:

> a strong one, full of contrasts, and quite unlike any other group's work in Canada today...Regina in Saskatchewan should feel proud of her five as their works tour our vast and relatively dull domain.[65]

Concern for the act of painting and the representation of pure geometric forms was common on the international art scene in the 1950s, and the Regina artists were intensely interested in experimentation with technique and form. Both Ron Bloore and Art McKay, like the painterly New York Abstract Expressionists and the Automatistes in Quebec, worked with unconventional materials and alternative ways of representing form. However, Bloore's monochromatic paintings, for example, are not about the instinctive action of painting, nor are they executed randomly. They are carefully and deliberately planned; these paintings are immaculate and expressive at the same time, with an interest in texture and organic forms that are also highly

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[63] Kiyooka left his position in the department before the Regina Five was officially recognized, but he was nonetheless an integral contributor to the early Saskatchewan abstraction movement, as well as the formative years of the Emma Lake workshops.
[64] Richard Simmons, Chief Curator of the National Gallery of Canada, organized the exhibition after viewing "The May Show," curated by Bloore at the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery.
[65] Naomi Jackson Groves, "Review of 'Five Painters from Regina' at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa," *Canadian Art* 19, no.2 (March/April 1962): 101.

geometric (Fig. 15). McKay's early "automatic" work is similar to Bloore's paintings in many ways, but it is also more intuitive and spontaneous in his allover treatment of colour. McKay is known for his innovative use of materials, such as stovepipe enamel, which he layers with latex paint and scrapes away, as in his 1960 painting, *Flat Blue, Flat White, Stove Enamel* (Fig. 16).[66]

By the 1950s, professional artists began to complain about the quality of art criticism in Canada. It was deemed too provincial, and it is with this idea in mind that the Emma Lake workshops were created. Canadian artists wanted to establish themselves both at home and abroad, and consequently, a higher level of professionalism was required. In 1951, *Canadian Art* magazine published a letter to the editor written by Ronald Bloore, outlining his belief that Canadian painting cannot progress without constructive, informed criticism. He writes:

> Beyond our borders any claim or notions concerning the significance of Canadian art are ridiculous. The caliber of the comments must be improved from the present polite social chat regarding the smears on our gallery walls...Criticism is needed now, disinterested and idealistic.[67]

When he wrote this letter, Bloore was studying art and living in New York. However, in 1958 he relocated to Regina, where he became a member of the Regina Five as well as Director of the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery, and professor at Regina College. Bloore, and other artists in Regina, felt that the only way for Canadian art to become vital was to study and learn about what was going on in other parts of the world, and to judge their own efforts against international standards:

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[66] Denise Leclerc, *The Crisis of Abstraction in Canada: the 1950's* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1992), 150.
[67] Ronald Bloore, Letter in "The Art Forum," *Canadian Art* 8, no. 3 (Spring 1951): 143.

> ...prevalent regional policy, sanctimoniously maintained, of never looking beyond our borders or too often city limits, must be abolished - anything will appear good or adequate when seen in no context but its own.[68]

Ronald Bloore was not the only artist looking beyond his immediate community for direction and inspiration, and there was one city in particular that stepped forward as an international trendsetter. Art historian Serge Guilbaut argues that in the 1940s and 50s, New York became the centre of the art world, and this transformation coincides with the introduction of the American Abstract Expressionist style, which was characterized by spontaneous improvisation through the capabilities of paint, and the act of painting itself. France lost its status as artistic centre when Paris fell to Germany in the Second World War. Guilbaut asserts that the success of Abstract Expressionism in New York emerged in the wake of the "slow process of de-Marxization" in post-war America, and feelings of national pride spreading throughout the nation.[69] It is his belief that the political motivation of the Abstract Expressionists, including such artists as Barnett Newman, came from the artists' desire to remove themselves from leftist politics, without becoming too closely associated with the political right. The Modernists formed a group of like-minded individuals who were interested in creating a new kind of art, free from extreme political ties. These artists also found an artistic trend that reflected the birth and acceptance of America as a superpower in the post-war era. America now had a strong identity even though it was still a relatively new nation based on dissimilar

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[68] Ibid.
[69] Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 2.

cultural backgrounds, and it was a country in need of unification under a nationalistic spirit and a national style of art.

By the 1950s, members of the New York School had established its position on the international scene, and its artists were interested in how artists in other parts of the world related to their work. Global travel was more readily accessible for greater numbers of people, and ambitious critics such as Clement Greenberg wrote about American Modernism in art journals that were widely distributed throughout the world. The New York influence spread throughout the world, drawing people to the charisma of personalities like Jackson Pollock. This was all made possible for America in particular because it was an economically stable country, relatively untouched by the physical devastation of war.

The effects of globalization and increased world travel fueled an interest in an international art community, with New York at its centre. Stuart Hall theorizes the relationship between the cultural colonizer and the colonist:

> ... instead of thinking of the global replacing the local, it would be more accurate to think of a new articulation between 'the global' and the 'local'... [by producing] *new* 'global' and *new* 'local' identifications.[70]

Although New York art did not eradicate regional artistic expression in favor of a completely homogenous style, peripheral artists who accepted the new "global" style assumed a subordinate role and considered their respective relationships to the centre. Many followers of the New York scene were from isolated locations such as Saskatchewan, and because of that, they were never perceived to be "real competition" to the centre. When the Emma Lake Workshops began, Saskatchewan

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[70] Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity" in *Modernity and its Futures,* Stuart Hall et al. (Oxford: Polity Press, 1992), 303.

artists were more interested in finding their place in relation to the international market than becoming famous. They wanted to learn from internationally successful artists, and to compete on both a national and international level.

The main goal of the Emma Lake Workshops was to develop an artistic community that was meaningful to the people involved, which allowed for productivity and communal learning. In 1955, the first professional artists' workshop took place at Emma Lake, Saskatchewan, coordinated by Kenneth Lochhead and other members of the Regina faculty. While the Murray Point classes were geared towards secondary school teachers, the Emma Lake workshops were meant for serious professional artists who were not necessarily looking for instruction, but rather a place to concentrate on their work amongst other serious artists. Lochhead describes the desire for an artist's retreat:

> ... the idea of this workshop arose as a partial answer to the problem of isolation. Few serious artists working on the prairies had contact with art centres and the stimulation that could arise during a short, intense, period of work in the studio would be of great benefit to these people... The purpose of the program is to provide an opportunity for painters and sculptors to work and exchange ideas... under the leadership of an artist of contemporary reputation... who had more experience than myself.[71]

This type of environment presumes a paternal relationship with invited guests in the dominant position. Lochhead and his colleagues did not limit themselves in their scope, and invited nationally and internationally renowned artists. British Columbia artists Jack Shadbolt and Joseph Plaskett led the first two workshops, respectively. It was the third workshop, led by Will Barnet, which marked the beginning of the Emma Lake-New York connection that has spanned several decades and generations.

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[71] Kenneth Lochhead, interview with John D. H. King, *A documented study of the artists' workshop at Emma Lake*, 2.

It was extremely important that the New York-led workshops were held in Saskatchewan rather than New York. Saskatchewan artists were working from a much more powerful position at home, rather than abroad. The location of the workshops allowed the guest leaders to spend more time getting to know the artists, and this social connection was a catalyst for professional and personal relationships that formed out of the workshops. Kenneth Lochhead admits that the isolation of Emma Lake gave them a better opportunity to get to know the leaders:

> ...artists in New York would never have a chance to have breakfast, lunch, and supper with Clement Greenberg for two weeks running in the woods – and then in between sessions go and have a drink, talk, and talk off into the night. In New York, you're lucky if you see these people for an hour if you drop by at their place – they're always having something else to do. This way, they're completely captive to that environment.[72]

The Emma Lake venue gave Saskatchewan artists a captive audience, and in this sense, their isolated location was extremely beneficial.

The American leaders of the workshops at Emma Lake were deeply interested in traveling to a remote location in northern Saskatchewan. Barnett Newman reportedly thought that Emma Lake was located in the sub-Arctic tundra region of Canada, and he wanted to explore an isolated region of another country.[73] Before the nineteenth century, most travellers and explorers ignored the prairies, and continued in search of the Arctic and adventure associated with the fur trade. The Canadian north began to open up and develop economically under the leadership of Prime Minister John G. Diefenbaker, who held power from 1957 to 1963. Interests in northern Canadian culture increased and became very commercial through the international

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[72] Ibid., 3.
[73] Matthew Teitelbaum, "Returning Home: Regina, Emma Lake, and the Close of the 60s," *The Flat Side of the Landscape*, 53.

sale of Inuit art and images of arctic life. American leaders were interested in exploring the natural environment of rural Saskatchewan, which was one of the most underdeveloped Canadian provinces.[74] The nineteenth century obsessions with untamed landscapes, the frozen arctic, and the North American Indian were still prevalent. These romantic notions of the Canadian west persist, and certainly intrigued the New York artists.

The location also provided Americans with a place of quiet reflection and contemplation where they could work and live in a supportive community. For many, this was as close to nature as they had ever been. The studio was located in the midst of the northern woods, and their modest accommodations were small rustic cabins by the lake (Fig. 17 & 18). They were able to work without the distractions of the urban environment. The New York leaders were treated with respect and reverence, and they could test out their ideas on a group of people who would not be as influential, critical, or powerful as those at home. If they made an artwork or participated in an exhibition in Saskatchewan and it failed, it would not be as detrimental to their careers in this location as in New York.

There is a long history of political tension between the prairies and central Canada, and the American connection to Emma Lake was an act of defiance at a time when Canada feared American domination. As William Perehudoff points out, "the artists from New York provided a scale against what to paint and they have given Saskatchewan recognition that [they] do not get from other parts of Canada."[75]

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[74] In his 1963 *Canadian Art* article on western Canadian art, Greenberg states that he considers Saskatchewan to be the most remote and isolated province in Canada.
[75] King, 271.

Despite this belief, theorist George Melnyk argues that unlike Quebec, western Canadians do not want to be a separate entity; they stand for a region *within* Canada.[76] Therefore, the goal of the Emma Lake artists was to embrace their difference and build strength from that position. According to writer bell hooks, "to be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body."[77] In this application of her theory, Saskatchewan artists faced and embraced a geographic and political marginal border. Although the Canadian art discourse often overlooked Saskatchewan artists, their exclusion unified them, creating a strong peripheral community.[78] They were aware of what was going on at the New York centre, and could look at it from a distanced position that allowed them to examine it from a different point of view. Even those Saskatchewan artists who resisted the homogeneity of American abstraction believed their marginal position to be a place of power and difference, which should be respected and built upon. This positioning of difference is very important in understanding the transformation of identity in Saskatchewan art.

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[76] Melnyk, 24.
[77] hooks, i.
[78] Dorothy Knowles describes the Emma Lake campus as a family-oriented community. The organizers, leaders, and participants all brought their children, and often spouses or parents who supervised children while their parents worked in the studios. This has been discouraged in recent years, but in the 1950s and 60s it was possible to have a child-friendly, yet serious work environment. The participants who came back yearly also became a family, as did their children who grew up together. This further cemented the closeness of community because artists worked long hours together, they talked about their work, and they talked about art theory and discourse, all within an intense yet family-oriented atmosphere (Fig. 19).
Knowles, 2005.

Chapter 2 – The Edge of Modernism: Crossing National and International Borders

In 1962 Clement Greenberg led sessions at the Emma Lake Artists' Workshop, and his involvement highlights the complex positioning of Saskatchewan art within a number of social contexts. Post-colonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha denies the simplicity of cultural dualism by suggesting that cultures intermingle and transform one another in multiple layers: "cultures are never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic in relation of Self to Other."[133] Saskatchewan artists developed similarly multifaceted relationships with national and international art communities, embodied primarily within central Canada and New York. The Emma Lake workshops became a local phenomenon that drew attention from top New York artists and critics, which prompted recognition from central Canada. The Emma Lake-New York relationship subsequently forged an alliance in support of the continuance of Modernist art in opposition to the new Pop Art movement that was spreading throughout North America. Simultaneously, central Canada made a nationalistic plea for Canadian patriotism, which was under the threat of Quebec separatism and American cultural invasion, which further situated the American presence in Saskatchewan at odds with central Canadian interests.

As an extremely influential guest leader, Clement Greenberg situates Emma Lake within the larger debates of regionalism, nationalism, and internationalism. After successfully codifying American Modernist abstraction, Greenberg was the most celebrated art critic of his generation. He was not solely responsible for the New York influence at Emma Lake, or for the endurance of abstract art in Saskatchewan,

[133] Homi K. Bhabha, "The Commitment to Theory," in *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 35-36.

but he exemplifies this bond. More than any other leader, Greenberg became closely involved with the Saskatchewan art scene, and through his curatorial efforts he created opportunities that exposed Saskatchewan residents to American Modern art, and vice versa, albeit on a much smaller scale. He was intensely interested in tracing the impact of Modernism in other areas of the world and encouraged peripheral artists to challenge the supreme authority of New York as the centre of the art world. However, his motives are questionable: was Greenberg trying to de-centre New York by searching for international examples of Modernism, or was he attempting to validate New York's position by reinforcing its paternal binary relationship with the Other?

The introduction of an international critic as guest leader marked a point of maturity for the Emma Lake workshops and Greenberg's participation was especially prestigious. Previous Emma Lake leaders were artists who offered studio critiques, but it was from an artist's, not a professional critic's, perspective. It is important to receive criticism from a fellow artist because they understand art making in a more practical and tactile way. However, a critic is better equipped to launch or bury an artist's career, and the inclusion of a major critic as a guest situated the workshops within a larger discourse. People listened to Greenberg because he was a well-informed and influential critic, which Canada lacked.[134] As Kenneth Lochhead describes:

[134] Following Greenberg's involvement with Emma Lake, Saskatchewan critics began to emerge and were in the limelight, if only briefly. Artist Andrew Hudson began to write several reviews for *Canadian Art* magazine, with at least one per issue for several years. Greenberg also had a tremendous impact on Canadian curator and critic, Terry Fenton. Fenton was a fervent supporter of Greenberg, and became very supportive of the Emma Lake circle.

> ... it should be noted that it is a very unique situation when a critic is involved with the problems that the artist faces in his studio environment. He is usually connected with art as an appraiser of art when on public display.[135]

Critics routinely visit artists' studios to look at their work, but it is unusual for them to visit on a daily basis for such an extended period, while they are in the process of working:

> ... [Greenberg] would go with the entire group assembled behind him, from easel to easel criticizing each painting in usually very particular and concrete terms, noting what he perceived to be the relative failures or successes.[136] (Fig. 20)

Like previous workshop leaders, Greenberg was attracted to the remoteness of Emma Lake, which was very different from New York City. It is quiet and peaceful, and despite the vigorous working environment of the workshop, it provided a place of relaxation and socialization that would have appealed to a critic in high demand. However, this was not just a holiday spot for Greenberg; it was also an experiment. He was looking for talented artists in lesser-known locations to investigate the relationship between art and geography, and to examine the global reach of Abstract Modernism. He had "discovered" the Abstract Expressionists in New York, and much of their success was associated to their location in New York as an artistic centre.[137] Greenberg was also interested in whether Modernism could thrive in

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[135] Kenneth Lochhead, "Report by Kenneth Lochhead, Director, School of Art, Regina College, University of Saskatchewan, on the 1962 Emma Lake Artists' Workshop [fall 1962]" reprinted in *The Flat Side of the Landscape*, 129.

[136] Neil Marshall. "The Sculpture of Robert Murray," http://www.neilmarshall.com/murray3.shtml. (Accessed 9 June 2005).

[137] In *Towards a Geography of Art*, Thomas DaCosta Kauffman discusses the relationship between an artwork and the place and time in which it was made: "for each object an idea of space or place is linked with a temporal or historical concept." The study of different periods in art history, like literature or theatre, is always linked to a particular time and place and is classified as such. Thomas DaCosta Kauffman, *Toward a Geography of Art* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 9.

smaller communities without becoming derivative, and he felt that it could develop further here because there was less pressure to follow new trends.

Greenberg's first successful test subjects in this experiment included Washington, D.C. artists Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland. These two artists were not from New York, but they became associated with New York abstraction because Greenberg believed that Post-Painterly Abstraction was an important link in the progression of abstract Modernism.[138] He felt that they surpassed the current painterly abstract artists in New York, despite not having the many advantages of living in such a large cosmopolitan city. On the contrary, they were able to expand upon the New York scene from a distance because they were not, "subjected as constantly to its pressures to conform as you would be if you lived and worked in New York."[139] Greenberg would have felt the same about Saskatchewan artists, who worked even further away from the hub of New York.[140]

When *Canadian Art* magazine discovered that Clement Greenberg would be attending the workshops at Emma Lake, he was asked to write an article on western Canadian art. Saskatchewan had attracted attention with the Regina Five exhibition, and this article continued to shed light on their importance for a national audience. Alan Jarvis' introduction to the *Canadian Art* issue, entitled "Mostly about Greenberg" reveals some of these motives. According to the editor, the magazine had

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[138] Clement Greenberg coined the term Post-Painterly Abstraction and curated an exhibition of the same name. The term distinguished colour-field abstract painting from the painterly Abstract Expressionist paintings of the 1950s.
[139] Clement Greenberg, "Louis and Noland" in *Art International* 4 (May 25, 1960): 27.
[140] Greenberg never promoted Saskatchewan artists the way he did Jules Olitski, Morris Louis, and Kenneth Noland, for various reasons. As an American it was more beneficial to promote fellow Americans, especially at a time when anti-Americanism was at its height in Canada. He was also able to make a more compelling case for the Washington, D.C. artists because it was a larger city that offered more possibilities.

been researching prairie art and they believed Greenberg to be "one of the best informed men in the whole world on the subject of painting and sculpture in prairie Canada."[141] This suggests that the magazine was aware of the success of artists in prairie Canada, and that it was important enough to peak the interests of people like Greenberg and Barnett Newman. Greenberg was a strategic choice for the article because he could generate interest in their readers, and he could aptly highlight under-represented western Canadian artists. The timing of this article, written within a year of the successful *Five Painters from Regina* exhibition, marked an important moment in the recognition of Saskatchewan art developments within Canada.

In the 1960s, *Canadian Art* was actively involved in contextualizing Canadian art beyond its own borders. The September 1964 issue contained several articles on American art and its relationship to Canada, and the editorial highlighted the tension between Canada and the United States.[142] The magazine's editor, Paul Arthur, reported that fifteen Canadian artists had work touring in major American institutions that were, "due to attempts in the United States to discover us, and not the other way around."[143] Although Americans supported Canadian art, Canadian galleries were not showing American art in the early 1960s. The only notable exceptions included a recent exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada and an exhibition of colour field painting curated by Greenberg at the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina. The *Three New American Painters* exhibition, which premiered in Regina in 1963,

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[141] Alan Jarvis, "Mostly About Greenberg," *Canadian Art* 20, no.2 (March/April 1963): 71.
[142] The September 1964 issue contained articles with such titles as: "Abstract Expressionism as an American Revolution," "New York's Vitality Tonic for Canadian Artists," and "Emma Lake Artists' Workshops: An Appreciation." These titles suggest the important place of New York in the art world, and emphasize the significance of its influence on the Emma Lake artists.
[143] Paul Arthur, "Editorial," *Canadian Art* 21, no.5 (September /October 1964): 260.

included work by three contemporary American artists: Jules Olitski, Morris Louis, and Kenneth Noland.

With *Three New American Painters*, Greenberg initiated his belief that Post-Painterly Abstraction was the next natural phase of Modern art.[144] The work in this exhibition followed a philosophy that minimizes the importance of expressive mark making by eliminating the presence of the artist's hand. Jules Olitski's 1962 work, *Ino Delight,* is a pristine articulation of pure organic shape through the opacity of flat colour (Fig. 21). Olitski frequently stained colour directly onto his canvases, or used a spray gun so that the artist's hand was completely absent from the painting's aesthetic. In particular, Olitski's work had an impact on Kenneth Lochhead, as evidenced in his *Blue Extension*, from 1963 (Fig. 22). Brush strokes are completely absent from both artists' paintings, and they both use irregular and imperfect geometric shapes that fill out the space and extend beyond the canvas edge. Lochhead began this series of new work in 1962, and Greenberg would have contributed greatly to its inspiration by introducing Lochhead to the American painters, and advising him on new directions for his work.

The *Three New American Painters* exhibition was the result of a ripple effect that conveniently reinforced and expanded the relationship between Greenberg and the Regina artists. At that time, the Norman McKenzie Art Gallery was both the university gallery and the only major public art institution in the province. It was no

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[144] Greenberg does not officially make such a claim with this exhibition, but he hints at it with this particular assemblage of artists. Later on, in the *Post-Painterly Abstraction* exhibition, he was more forceful in asserting his opinion of Post-Painterly Abstraction as, "an authentically new episode in the evolution of contemporary art."
Clement Greenberg, *Post Painterly Abstraction* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1964), 6.

coincidence that the university's art department and gallery were both run by members of the Regina Five, who also organized the Emma Lake Workshops and actively supported American Modernism. The Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery purchased Olitski's *Ino Delight* in 1963, and the following year Olitski became a guest leader at Emma Lake; Kenneth Noland was the leader in 1963, while the show was in Regina. Artists such as Kenneth Lochhead noticeably changed their painting style following the Greenberg workshop, and Greenberg chose to bring the exhibition to Saskatchewan because of his experience at Emma Lake. Each link was important in bringing the show to a Canadian venue, and especially to a smaller city like Regina.

Why would Greenberg choose to open such an experimental exhibition in Saskatchewan? He described the artists in the show as semi-established and distinguished in New York, yet they remained "difficult," making artists and critics nervous.[145] He understood that attention was shifting away from Abstract Expressionism, and the future of Modernism was uncertain. He did, however see a new audience in Canada who welcomed the next phase of Modernism. He saw western Canada:

> ...as being less set in its ways than most publics... [and that] a good deal of the art being produced right now in Saskatchewan is far less provincial than most of that shown downtown on Tenth Street in New York today.[146]

This perspective may have been informed by his prior knowledge of Saskatchewan politics, and the willingness and mobilization of Saskatchewan artists to shape their futures despite their isolated location. In less than seventy years, the province had grown from an underdeveloped and entirely rural pioneer settlement to a booming

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[145] Clement Greenberg, "Introduction," *Three New American Painters* (Regina: Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery, 1963), 3.
[146] Ibid.

province with rapidly growing cities complete with two university art campuses, a province-wide art funding agency, and a major public gallery. Perhaps Greenberg saw potential in Saskatchewan that others in Canada did not.

Clement Greenberg has made several major statements of support for Saskatchewan art over the years. Two months after his trip to Emma Lake, Greenberg wrote a brief introduction to a catalogue for an exhibition of Ernest Linder's work. In it, he says, "I find more imagination and modernity in Ernest Lindner's sharply focused rendering of a tree trunk than in the largest part of current abstract painting."[147] Greenberg had only recently met Linder, and yet he agreed to write such a strong statement of support. Linder was one of Saskatchewan's most celebrated landscape artists, specializing in highly realistic minute details of marshland and forest plant life. His 1968 canvas *Regeneration* captures decaying underbrush from unexpected angles, which brings out the beauty and simplicity of the northern Saskatchewan forest floor (Fig. 23). His work is honest and emotional, and effectively captures his environment. Greenberg's statement implies that he had respect for Lindner's work, even though he was distinctly associated with abstract art. More importantly, Greenberg's words reveal his distaste for the derivative turn that Abstract Expressionism had taken during this time, and that he reserved his support for a select few artists. Greenberg never claimed that all Saskatchewan art was great, but he often said that a few artists were capable of making work that could compete on an international stage.

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[147] Clement Greenberg, "Introduction," *Ernest Lindner* (Regina: Norman McKenzie Art Gallery, 1962), 1.

In a letter to Kenneth Lochhead in 1963, Greenberg further revealed his faith in a small selection of Saskatchewan artists: "You have no idea of how much I'm betting on Saskatchewan as NY's only competitor...which means I have something of a stake in Saskatchewan."[148] Two months later, he informed Lochhead that he was organizing an exhibition of Post-Painterly Abstraction art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and that he hoped to include works by Lochhead and McKay in the show.[149] Greenberg was also looking for exhibition possibilities in New York for the two artists, and it may be assumed that he used his *Canadian Art* article as a tool in promoting their work in America. In the same letter, Greenberg informs Lochhead that art dealer Martha Jackson read the article and was interested in showing the Regina artists at the Martha Jackson Gallery. He further states that he would consider approaching such New York dealers as Elkon, Emmerich, Poindexter, and Green.[150]

Why did Greenberg include Lochhead and McKay in his *Post-Painterly Abstraction* exhibition? There were a number of big-name American artists included in the show, such as Helen Frankenthaler, Frank Stella, and Ellsworth Kelly, and it is significant that the show included work by Lochhead, McKay, and Toronto's Jack Bush. In the case of McKay, Greenberg felt that his work was original and "some of the best as well as ambitious painting [he had] ever seen anywhere in Canada," and that his paintings were "as new in Paris or New York as they are in Regina."[151] Although his work exhibited painterly qualities, it was included because of "the linear

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[148] Letter from Clement Greenberg to Kenneth Lochhead, 10 March 1963, *86-29 Kenneth Lochhead Papers, General Files, Clement Greenberg: 1962-1966.* University of Regina Archives.
[149] Letter from Clement Greenberg to Kenneth Lochhead, 08 May 1963, *86-29 Kenneth Lochhead Papers, General Files, Clement Greenberg: 1962-1966.* University of Regina Archives.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Greenberg, "Clement Greenberg's View of Art on the Prairies," 92.

clarity, and plainness, of his design."[152] Greenberg was similarly impressed with the new direction that Lochhead's work had taken. His *Dark Green Centre* (1963) exhibited his ability to express two-dimensional form through minimal and immaculate applications of colour (Fig. 24). This work reveals Lochhead's interest in the arrangement of simple design elements through bold colour combinations, which he applied with a high degree of control and precision.

Even though Greenberg thought that *Post-Painterly Abstraction* was the next big phase of Modern art, the exhibition was not a huge success, and it cast doubt on his place as the leading expert on contemporary art. In a review of the exhibition, the critic John Coplans rejects Greenberg's views on the future of abstract art in America. He agrees with Greenberg that there is a crisis in painting, but he does not believe that the show is a cohesive and logical exhibition with carefully chosen artists. Instead, he considers this exhibition to be merely, "a personal notion of style; that is, to reveal what in his opinion the major ambitious art after Abstract Expressionism *ought to look like* and what means it ought to employ to gain this look."[153] Coplans also questioned the basis for the assemblage of artworks in the exhibition. In his essay, Greenberg discusses Heinrich Wölfflin's stylistic binary comparison of Renaissance and Baroque art, and he equates this to the painterly and post-painterly tendencies that he sees in Painterly and Post-Painterly Abstraction.[154] Coplans asserts that slight similarities in style alone are not adequate enough to legitimize the exhibition, and "if the critic does focus on certain aspects of what is being created from time to time, surely his

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[152] Greenberg, *Post-Painterly Abstraction*, 5.
[153] John Coplans, "Post Painterly Abstraction: The Long-Awaited Greenberg Exhibition Fails to Make its Point," *Artforum* 2 (Summer 1964): 5.
[154] He first introduced this argument in his article, "After Abstract Expressionism," published in *Art International* in 1962, a few months after his time at Emma Lake.

intention is to clarify, not confuse."[155] Coplans was displeased with the exhibition because he felt Greenberg did not offer a strong enough direction, or prediction, for the future of contemporary art.

Coplans also attacks Greenberg's assertion that, "there is only one correct logical style at any one given time."[156] Greenberg rightly argues that once artists have created a significant artistic style, "it [turns] into a school, then into a manner, and finally into a set of mannerisms. Its leaders attract imitators, many of them, and then some of these leaders ... [imitate] themselves."[157] The school he refers to is Painterly Abstraction, or Abstract Expressionism, and Coplans criticizes Greenberg's narrow view that only Post-Painterly Abstraction can follow a natural progression as a reaction to the decline of this school and its mannerisms. Greenberg was not open enough to be capable of seeing a natural progression if it included anything other than formalist Modernism, and certainly not if it involved Pop Art.

If the thesis of Greenberg's exhibition fell short, he did manage to assemble an exhibition of contemporary artists from controversial locations, due to the symbolic nature of their geographic locations. Los Angeles emerged as a new cultural contender and was the first serious American competitor to challenge New York. It was also Greenberg's intent to spark debate with his insistence that Saskatchewan art was capable of competing with New York. Decades later, he continued to support this notion:

> ...I say when I'm talking in public that the best painting and sculptures now are being done in western Canada...and of course the audience says 'What do you mean, western Canada? Who's ever heard of it?' They don't even know

[155] Coplans, 6.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Greenberg, *Post-Painterly Abstraction*, 2.

> where Edmonton or Saskatoon are. I have fun saying that because it's the truth. I'm not being provocative.[158]

Greenberg likely felt he was being both truthful and provocative, and his comment seriously considered the positioning of centre and periphery within the international art world. In a 1980 lecture entitled "Decline of Taste," Greenberg states that "Art — new art — may originate somewhere else but it has to be confirmed in New York...In effect New York is the international scene."[159] He says that in his travels he has seen "feeble efforts to resist New York's predominance," with English sculpture being the only possible exclusion, and when he visited Japan and India he preferred ethnic art to the new, generic international style, which he conveniently forgets he helped create.[160] Although he claimed to be looking for a replacement for Abstract Expressionism, Greenberg clearly did not support the replacement of New York as the centre of art. He travelled the world, looking for potential challengers; however, he was still holding on to the belief that Modernism was the epitome of contemporary art and he was really searching for artists who supported that belief.

Unlike Coplans, critic Jules Langsner believed that Greenberg was on his mark by applying Wölfflin's concept of *malerisch* to Painterly and Post-Painterly Abstraction, in relation to the social differences between the two Schools. He recognized that Post-Painterly Abstract artists:

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[158] Clement Greenberg, "Interview with Clement Greenberg," interview by Russell Bingham, Graham Peacock, and Michel Smith (Edmonton, 1991), *The Edmonton Contemporary Artists' Society Newsletter,* Vol. 3, no. 2.
[159] Clement Greenberg, "Decline of Taste," Lecture at Kalamazoo, 20 November, 1983, *Series III: Lectures 1980s – 1990s,* Box 31, 1980-83 folder, Getty Research Institute Research Library and Archives, 1.
[160] Ibid.

> ...avoid the virtuoso performance of the Abstract Expressionist approach to the making of a picture. They prefer to let a work exist as a visual object independent of themselves as personalities.[161]

The reputation of Abstract Expressionism relied heavily on the relationship between an artwork's aesthetic and the vigorous personality of the artist, such as Jackson Pollock. Greenberg believed that Saskatchewan Post-Painterly artists were timid and restrained, especially in comparison to the big personalities associated with the Big Attack group, and so it is logical that a quiet restraint is visible within their work.[162] This does not mean that the work is weak, but the *perceived* personality of the artists certainly had an effect on the ways in which their work was viewed.[163]

As a writer for *Canadian Art* magazine, Langsner chose to highlight the three Canadian artists in the exhibition. This says something of importance about how Canadians received the artists in comparison to the American response, which virtually ignored them. The Los Angeles review was written for the American publication, *ArtForum,* and thus Coplans made little mention of the Canadians. Instead, he focused on the New York/Los Angeles binary that Greenberg also emphasized in this show. Langsner was writing for a Canadian magazine for Canadian readers, right before the Canadian debut of the exhibition in Toronto. His readership would be more interested in the Canadian participants, and in particular, other artists working in a Post-Painterly Abstract style.

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[161] Jules Langsner, "What's Next After Abstract Expressionism," *Canadian Art* 21, no.5 (September/October 1964): 283.

[162] "The handicap of art in Saskatoon is a diffidence and modesty I find characteristic of Anglo-Canadian art as a whole. Diffidence is better, as I find out more increasingly, than brashness; it tends to guarantee honesty."
Greenberg, "Clement Greenberg's View of Art on the Prairies," 104.

[163] The ambition of the Emma Lake workshops and the longevity of McKay's and Lochhead's successful careers contradict the notion that they had quiet, unassuming personalities. Considerations of the artist's body and personality are explored further in chapter 3.

Greenberg's *Canadian Art* article highlights the lack of knowledge that the rest of Canada had about Saskatchewan and its art. There was no incentive for major Canadian artists to travel west because western Canada was still perceived as underdeveloped. Greenberg made an astute commentary on the lack of interest and knowledge that Canadians had about other parts of Canada, when he recalls *Canadian Art* asking him, an outsider, to write about western Canadian art: "Didn't they know about that situation in Ottawa? Was that how difficult communication was between prairie Canada and the rest of the country?"[164] The three prairie provinces account for almost half of the nation's land mass, and the total population of Canadian artists was relatively low. However, a map of the prairies was included in the article, reinforcing the assumption that most Canadians were uninformed of their own geography (Fig. 2). Greenberg had essentially written a cultural colonial exploration guide to the provinces for other Canadians who would never dare to explore it for themselves.[165] The rest of Canada had shown little interest in Saskatchewan art until it was "discovered" externally through New York. It was important to publish Greenberg's opinion on the prairies because his reputation validated Saskatchewan art for the Canadian public.

Through the vehicle of the Emma Lake workshops and the subsequent relationships that grew between artists from Saskatchewan and New York, Saskatchewan Modernists began to develop connections with Ontario abstract artists. Jack Bush, in particular, had an immense impact on Saskatoon abstract painters. He

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[164] Greenberg, "Clement Greenberg's View of Art on the Prairies," 90.
[165] In 1962, the same year that Greenberg went to Emma Lake, the Trans-Canada Highway was completed. Theoretically, it should have been easier to travel within a nation's borders, but it is much more likely that international travel by plane was easier and more attractive to travellers.

abandoned the more painterly style that was common among the Painters Eleven in favor of the Post-Painterly Abstraction aesthetic that Greenberg supported.[166] His oil paintings often looked like large abstract watercolours, with vibrant transparent colours and visible under drawings, as in *Blue Green Thrust* (1959) (Fig.25). Bush employed the staining technique that made his work comparable to Olitski's, as well as many other abstract painters in Saskatchewan.

Although Bush did not attend an Emma Lake Workshop, he became a major influence for Saskatoon artists like William Perehudoff and Robert Christie.[167] Perehudoff met Bush through Kenneth Noland, and frequently visited him when he passed through Toronto on his way to New York.[168] The two artists shared much in common, including painting aesthetics. They were both interested in high-key contrasting colour combinations, with each swipe of colour emphasizing the intensity of the next. They also draw attention to the placement of shape in composition. In Perehudoff's 1967 painting, *Colour Improvisation*, he experiments by stacking unstable, irregular shapes in order to suggest movement. The relationship of colour to negative space is emphasized in an almost sculptural yet two-dimensional way (Fig. 26).[169] Bush similarly arranges his colour swatches in a fluid and semi-circular composition in *Slow Fall* (1976) (Fig. 27). Both artists suggest the movement and instability of flat spaces in their paintings. Like Perehudoff, Bush pushed the dynamic

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[166] Painters Eleven was a group of Abstract Expressionist painters from Toronto, organized in 1953. They met Clement Greenberg in 1957 on his first visit to Canada.
[167] Bush was invited as a workshop leader in 1969, but declined the offer.
[168] Ken Carpenter, *The Heritage of Jack Bush: A Tribute* (Oshawa: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 1981), 55.
[169] By the 1960s, Perehudoff had abandoned representational works for colour-field painting. This later work is not so different from his earlier Cubist paintings, in that he always used strong, saturated colours. However, the New York influence at the workshops had clearly led him into this new direction.

irregularity of asymmetrical design, which employed the use of geometric shapes that were not entirely straight-edged. Both artists also make use of broad, painterly swipes of colour, which are simultaneously un-painterly in that they are completely opaque.

Bush also influenced Robert Christie, a Saskatoon artist belonging to the second generation of Emma Lake Modernists, as evidenced in his *Untitled I* of 1970 (Fig. 28). In this hardedge abstract work, Christie begins with a series of stained and slightly skewed diagonal stripes, using a grid motif common in colour field painting of that time. The overlapping solid colour planes and slightly distorted shapes in this work interrupt the line that the eye naturally creates; the eye also continues the line infinitely beyond the edges of the canvas. Bush's work, *English Visit* (1967), also demonstrates these qualities (Fig. 29). Despite the build up of layers of vibrant, contrasting cool colours, both paintings are unmistakably flat and two-dimensional. Stylistically, these two pieces are quite different from Bush's *Slow Fall*, although Christie's recent artworks share common attributes. As in Bush's work, Christie's *New Furrow* similarly depicts the sweeping action of the painter's stroke, which is at the same time weighted down with heavy, solid paint (Fig. 1). Like Bush and Perehudoff, Christie plays with the curve and heaviness of the painted line though in a much less casual way, as he considers the qualities and limits of paint in a much more contained and less improvisational manner.

Abstract artists in Quebec were also aware of the Emma Lake workshops, and many shared the same interests in Modernist painting. The scraping technique used by Bloore and McKay were more directly influenced by Bloore's time in New York, but it is also noticeable in Paul-Émile Borduas's work. Through their relationship

with Abstract Expressionism, Quebec artists rejected traditional representational painting and developed relationships with artists from Paris and New York. Although his philosophy later became associated with Quebec independence, Borduas left Quebec not long after writing his manifesto, *Refus Global.* The premise of the manifesto is that cities like New York and Paris were more open and international than Canadian municipalities, including Montreal, which was "a Canadian spot surrounded by borders."[170] Additionally, artists such as Guido Molinari, Claude Tousignant, and Rita Letendre turned to colour-field painting and were similarly interested in American developments in this area. Molinari attended the 1962 workshop on a Canada Council grant, and although he did not paint at the workshop, he participated in discussions and spoke about his work in a formal slide presentation (Fig. 30).[171] It is reasonable to assume that he attended the Greenberg workshop because of his interest in modular design, repetition, and colour theory, as evidenced in his hardedge abstraction painting, *Opposition Rectangulaire* (1961) (Fig. 31).[172] Molinari's attendance at the workshop speaks to the importance of the Emma Lake Workshops on a national level, as he was a premier Quebec painter.

Politically, Saskatchewan and Quebec both had distinct regionalist interests and resented the way they have been treated by Ontario; however, they often worked at cross-purposes and did not collaborate in an effort for change. This is because the two provinces evolved in very different ways and had dissimilar cultural and political interests. Quebec was established in the 17th century as a French colony settled by

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[170] François-Marc Gagnon, "Borduas and America," *Borduas and America* (Vancouver: The Vancouver Art Gallery, 1978), 16.
[171] O'Brian, *The Flat Side of the Landscape*, 84.
[172] The Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery purchased this painting shortly after the 1962 workshop.

Catholic missionaries, explorers, and fur traders. In 1763, Great Britain acquired New France in the Treaty of Paris, but still allowed for the continuance of French culture in the colony. Since then, the struggle between English and French Canada as the founding colonial nations has persisted. In contrast, the prairies developed under different circumstances, and the French-English Question was not central to its unfolding history.

The point of political tension between Quebec and the prairies became one of western alienation, exacerbated by Quebec's desire for sovereignty. The transplantation of the French language throughout Canada through federal legislation in the 1960s prevented western Canadians from sympathizing with their cause. While bilingualism in central Canada has a long history, western Canada did not share this history, and larger minority populations spoke multiple other languages:

> ...the creation of a French language television station in Edmonton – where fewer than 6 percent of the viewers list French as their mother tongue but almost 8 percent of the viewers list German and 8 percent Ukrainian as their mother tongue – says some interesting things about the determination of the federal government to push a bilingual policy on all parts of the country, regardless of local needs or circumstances.[173]

Western Canadians viewed Quebec as a major threat to their independence because their language and culture was foreign, and it was forced on them by central Canada. John Barr asserts that they also resented the negative perceptions that Canadians had about western independence in comparison to Quebec: "when Albertans propose something in a national forum it is 'selfishness'; when Quebecers propose something it is 'the legitimate aspirations of the people.'"[174]

In the 1960s, the positioning of Canadian art was complicated, and a number

[173] Barr, 249.
[174] Ibid, 250.

of identity issues arose around the problematic binary relationships between central Canada and the country's peripheral regions. In "Art on the Edge of Empire," Robert Fulford writes that Canadian artists exist:

> ... simultaneously in at least three imaginative geographies: (1) His own city or region, with its own art politics and its esthetic and professional connections; (2) English Canada or Quebec, each of which makes certain demands on its artists and offers certain rewards – national recognition, for instance...; (3) North America, with its far-reaching artistic currents, generated in New York or Los Angeles and delivered to Canada through magazines, books, and exhibitions.[175]

While his analysis holds some weight, Fulford's position clearly only considers Canadian artists from Ontario or Quebec in his discussion, or he assumes that all artists form an allegiance with one or the other. While most Canadians are positioned within the French/English binary depending on their primary language, it is much more complicated because in many regions there are bigger cultural issues, which often have little to do with English or French culture, let alone both. This is a regional issue with considerably more relevance in central Canada, and for the most part it is assumed that English Canada that is the source of comparison for each binary relationship.

A further question about nationalism and Canadian art at this time refers to subject matter and nationalism. Many Saskatchewan artists were just as nationalistic as they were concerned with regionalism and internationalism, and they felt that the current state of Canada included global concerns. If an artwork contained quintessential Canadian icons, it was considered Canadian. If it was abstract and referred to international artistic roots in the U.S., then it was not uniquely Canadian, even if a Canadian made it and existed as a reflection of that artist's creative

[175] Robert Fulford, "Art on the Edge of Empire," *ARTnews* 73, no.7 (September 1974): 25.

environment. Canada is not solely defined by the maple leaf, Maurice "the Rocket" Richard, Molson Canadian beer, and the beaver, especially since these are symbols specific to central Canadian culture and history. Moreover, support for an independent Canadian flag marked Canada's separation from British rule, as well as its difference from the U.S., and the maple leaf at its core was symbolic of central Canada's regional and national independence.

Fulford's third grouping assumes that all relationships with American artists are passive and limited to "one-way internationalism," and that Canadian artists were not active contributors in an international dialogue. He argues that most Canadians are influenced by the international art scene through magazines and books but are not active participants of the movement, and they are certainly never mentioned in the company of these artists.[176] For most artists this was true, and most of them did not believe themselves to be part of that community or group; they knew they might never receive recognition beyond a local level. If their own community is large enough, or if they attain a certain amount of local success, they may not care about international notoriety. On the other hand, the more successful artists did in fact become part of that community, even if they were only minor players. This was a major achievement for the artists and the status of Saskatchewan art, yet their association with the U.S. raised questions about their national loyalty, and as such, their patriotism was questioned.

The New York orientation of Emma Lake specifically opposed the new Pop Art movement that demonstrated nationalistic traits in central Canada. Born-again Canadianism was praised in the 1960s and 70s by artists such as Joyce Wieland, who

[176] Fulford, 25.

used Pop Art, feminist craft, and bold nationalistic text to promote Canadian pride. She has said that her work is, "not so much a vision of Canada, it's making things about what we have in common in Canada."[177] Wieland became closely associated with patriotic Canadian art in the 1960s, despite her emigration to New York in 1962; this was coincidentally the same year that Clement Greenberg "discovered" Emma Lake. It was after her return from the United States that her work affirmed a strong Canadian identity, despite glaring American influences from American Pop icons such as Claes Oldenburg and Jasper Johns. Wieland's *La raison avant la passion* (1968) expresses feelings of nationalism and regionalism, all in one (Fig. 32). This large quilted panel both acknowledges and refutes regionalism, which is considered more emotional than rational. It can be argued that regional protest and separation comes from an *emotional* state of dissatisfaction, which threatens the stability and order of the *rational* nation state. This sentiment is contrary to the passion that a political leader like Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau stood for at that time.[178] Although this diptych exists in both official languages and acknowledges issues in Canadian politics, viewers may see it as a warning to separatists, and associate it with Trudeau's heavy-handed efforts to unite Canada. With the impending fear of Quebec separation, nationalism became a very important tool for the Canadian government.

While Canadian Pop Art became a form of propaganda in an anti-American campaign, American Pop Art had similar nationalistic origins. Pop Art defined contemporary American culture by drawing attention to the mundane symbols that

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[177] Charlotte Townsend-Gault, "Redefining the Role," *Visions,* (Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1983), 124.
[178] "Reason over Passion" is a phrase quoted by Prime Minister Trudeau at the 1968 Liberal Convention. These words, like Trudeau himself, become a strange paradox in the struggle for French sovereignty in Quebec.

American consumerism stood for: Hollywood, rock stars, and fast food. The growing acceptance of Post-Modernism throughout North America bears witness to Canada's love-hate relationship with American culture. Pop Art had a major influence in the work of London, Ontario artist Greg Curnoe. Although the London scene was a regional development, artists took a nationalist approach to their work, and on a political level, they actively worked to represent the interests and rights of artists throughout Canada.[179] Curnoe's *True North Strong and Free* series (1968) is a prime example of anti-American sentiment in Canadian art (Fig. 33). With such slogans as "Close the 49th Parallel," "Canada Always Loses," and "Did Chartier Die in Vain?" Curnoe uses his mechanical, mass-produced rubber-stamp technique in order to express passionate expressions of Canadian patriotism. Curnoe was highly influenced by American Pop Art, Assemblage, and Happenings and although he has adopted an American style of art, he has turned his message against America.

Both Canadian and American Pop Artists used images from popular culture to reach their audience, and Greenberg reviled this attention to middlebrow taste. American Pop Artists were increasingly aware of the impact of consumer culture on America, and their artworks criticized this tendency in society. Canadian artists similarly understood the influence of popular culture on Canadian society, and in turn, they used a similar strategy to endorse patriotism within Canada by exploiting similarly marketable Canadian symbols. According to Greenberg's 1939 essay "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," the difference between Modernism and kitsch is that

[179] In 1968, London artist Jack Chambers led a group of artists who founded CAR (Canadian Artists' Representation), a unique non-profit artists union with interests in improving the living and working conditions of Canadian artists. This organization has set many precedents for artists not yet realized elsewhere in the world.

Modernism requires a higher development of learning, while kitsch is a "campy," watered-down version of art: one is the epitome of high culture and the other represents low-culture.[180] He characterized Pop Art as kitsch, and believed it was incapable of inspiring the intellect because it can be enjoyed without effort, and with little thought.[181] Art McKay echoed Greenberg's concerns about the status of Pop Art: "it is anti-aesthetic and really more of a sociological phenomenon than an artistic one. It contains very little new visual experience."[182] Greenberg was concerned that the popularity of kitsch threatened the art world and the existence of high-culture, and as such, he refused to recognize the place of Pop Art in the evolution of Modern and contemporary art. However, Pop Art challenged the supremacy of the theory of formalism since the 1950s by using everyday objects, in which the mundane becomes poetic, and its popularity eventually led many in the art world to abandon support for Greenberg's view of Modernism.

Does Canadian kitsch assert the country's difference from America by giving voice to Canadian uniqueness, or is national patriotism merely a means of controlling protest? In the 1960s, there were fears of losing western Canada to America, and Quebec to its own interests. These fears were manifest in Canada's federal policies on the arts, which had a tremendous impact on Saskatchewan artists, and jeopardized the continuance of the Emma Lake Workshops.[183] According to the editorial in the September 1964 issue of *Canadian Art,* none of the Canadian artists in residence in

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[180] Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" in *Art and Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 10.
[181] Ibid.,18.
[182] Arthur McKay, "Emma Lake Artists Workshop: An Appreciation," *Canadian Art* 21, no.5 (September/October 1964): 280.
[183] The Canada Council had shown its support for the workshops by awarding grants to workshop participants, as well as substantial funding to pay workshop leaders and to build studio facilities.

the United States at this time received funding from the Canada Council.[184] This may indicate certain preferences and unofficial policies held by the Canada Council, which as a funding institution should not, in theory, dictate the subject matter or working environments of artists. Federal policies and cultural councils, including the Canada Council for the Arts, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, and the National Film Board encouraged exposure of Canadian content and subject matter in the visual and performing arts, radio, television, and film. They enforced strict guidelines on Canadian culture by restricting the amount of American content in popular culture.

In a letter to Kenneth Lochhead, Clement Greenberg reveals his knowledge of the anti-American sentiments made known through the Canada Council:

> ... Art [McKay] tells me the Canada Council is putting pressure on you to lay off the NY orientation at Emma Lake...I think you could do a good deal of arguing with the Council to demonstrate just why you people in Saskatchewan consciously and knowingly choose to have your seminar-leaders come from NY at this particular time; and I also think you could convince them that it was not because of any personal or local infatuation with American art, given that you could find so many people in France and Italy, let alone England, to agree with you in your present course.[185]

As Greenberg points out, Canada does not exist in a vacuum, and it was impossible to avoid the American influence in art. In the post-war years, every critical political event on the international scene involved America; the same was true in art, as other nations were rebuilding their arts communities after the shock of war.

Culture makes a nation unique, but culture is precisely what Canadians disagree about the most, even amongst themselves, and it is what separates Canadians

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[184] Paul Arthur, "Editorial," *Canadian Art* 21, no.5 (September/October 1964): 260.
[185] Letter from Clement Greenberg to Kenneth Lochhead, 08 May 1963, *86-29 Kenneth Lochhead Papers, General Files, Clement Greenberg: 1962-1966.* University of Regina Archives.

by regional borders. Despite this contradiction, Canadians believe in the myth of national unity, and when a separatist group attempts to gain political autonomy, Canadians come together to protect the national myth of unity. In recent years, Canadians as a whole have disagreed with Quebec separatism, Aboriginal self-government, and the privatization of Alberta, based on a fear of the unknown if Canada implodes. Protest is believed to be self-indulgent and does not advance the needs of the nation. Promotion of the nation over the region is encouraged with the belief that regional development is selfish, and regions are often pitted against each other in order to strengthen the nation.

Stuart Hall argues that globalization is considered a threat to national identity and homogenization of culture, but that "*new* identities of hybridity are taking their place."[186] Through the national and international recognition of Saskatchewan Modernism, the province's artists were exposed to a wider range of artistic influence, and they were able to incorporate new approaches and philosophies into their work through that exposure. They also contributed their own perspective to the larger community, informing others of their success and achievements. Hall goes on to say that national identities "are formed and transformed within and in relation to *representation*."[187] The image of Saskatchewan art, within Canada and the world, changed due to the involvement of such influential Americans as Clement Greenberg, and permanently confirmed the representation of Modernism as a local phenomenon within an international context.

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[186] Hall, 300.
[187] Ibid., 292.

Chapter 3 – Over the Edge: The Crisis of Modernism in Saskatchewan

This chapter considers the decline of the Emma Lake artists' workshops since the early 1960s. Saskatchewan Modernism had achieved national and international recognition as an artistic centre, and in the following decades, new developments occurred that challenged the dominance of the Emma Lake workshops. Thirty-nine years after the Greenberg workshop, emerging artist Joanne Bell presented her exhibition, "The Zero Metaphor" in 2001 as a culmination of her work in the Bachelor of Fine Arts program at the University of Saskatchewan. Although her work contains references to gender and politics, her imagery is also based in an abstract tradition, with compositions of simple engendered shapes and bold, contrasting colour relationships (Fig. 34). With the success of Modernism in Saskatchewan, it is not surprising that further generations of artists continued to paint in an abstract manner. However, it is remarkable that between 1999 and 2004 only nine out of 105 student exhibitions worked in an entirely abstract manner.[243] Today, most artists approach their work from a more multidisciplinary perspective with an interest in new media and technology, illustrating a move away from the Modernist tradition. Although the department offers several courses in Canadian and contemporary art history, the words "Emma Lake" never entered class discussion, and most students graduate with no knowledge of the workshop's history and significance. How did this change occur, and how has it affected the legacy of the Emma Lake workshops?

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[243] This number is derived from the image archive files on the University of Saskatchewan's Snelgrove Gallery website. The website displays installation and detail images of each exhibition, and very few, if any, exhibitions have been excluded.
"Joanne Bell: The Zero Metaphor, January 22-27, 2001", Gordon Snelgrove Gallery, University of Saskatchewan, http://www.usask.ca/snelgrove/Archive.html, (Accessed 7 November 2005).

In the decades following the early years of the workshops, Saskatchewan artists seriously considered and analyzed their relationship to American Modernism, their sense of place, and new ways to identify themselves as contemporary artists. In her essay, "Notes on Centers and Margins," Poonam Pillai discusses the centre and margin binary, suggesting the potential of a centre to be dominant and defining, or dominant but not defining.[244] She recognized that artists may hold a certain amount of power in their community, but there is most often a limit to their influence. In the 1950s, New York was both central and influential, not only for its own artists, but also for artists elsewhere in the world. From the perspective of a Modernist painter, the notion of a vibrant artistic centre was crucial. In the post-war period, it was important for people to believe in Modernism as a powerful universal movement, with New York playing a crucial role in the building of its own myth. In Canada, Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal are dominant cities in terms of industry and culture, but their art does not necessarily have a *defining* quality for citizens outside their own city limits because the nation is culturally and geographically divided. Different regions have their own local aesthetics that rarely have an impact on other areas of the country. In Saskatchewan, interests are both local and global at the same time.

On a smaller scale, Modernism was dominant in Saskatchewan for several decades and although it is no longer the only dominant style, it is still the defining style associated with Emma Lake. An examination of Saskatchewan art must consider its interconnectedness and layered position because Emma Lake is positioned locally, nationally, and internationally simultaneously. In its early years, Emma Lake was

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[244] Poonam Pillai, "Notes on Centers and Margins," in *Mainstream(s) and Margins: Cultural Politics in the 90s*, Michael Morgan and Susan Leggett eds. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996), 4.

involved in a struggle between Western and central Canada, while also being caught up in the conflict between Canada and the U.S. This tension was also located within the province, as different artists encouraged a dialogue with New York, while others rebelled against its influence. For Saskatchewan, there is more than one centre and periphery model working concurrently, and an artist's position may change depending on the examined model.

Clement Greenberg constructed New York as an artistic hub, and following his time at Emma Lake, he helped define and establish Saskatchewan's peripheral relationship to that centre. Cultural theorist Naoki Sakai writes that "... particularism and universalism do not form an antinomy but mutually reinforce each other ... particularism has never been a truly disturbing enemy of universalism or vice versa." [245] In this sense, New York is the universalizing centre, and Emma Lake is the particular locality, and both were working together to promote what they felt was an evolutionary development of Modernism. They were able to work amicably because they understood their respective roles as centre and periphery and they respected these boundaries. For example, Greenberg often said that Saskatchewan Modernists were as good as the artists in New York, but he would never claim that the Americans were as good as artists in Saskatchewan. Such a statement would imply that New York as centre was comparable to the standard set by the periphery. Saskatchewan artists also understood that while they could be compared to the New York scene, the same would never be true in reverse.

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[245] Naoki Sakai, "Modernism and Its Critique: the Problem of Universalism and Particularism," *Postmodernism and Japan*, ed. Masao Miyoshi and Harry Harootunian (Durham: Duke University, 1989), 98.

This paternalistic binary relationship between Saskatchewan and New York lasted for several decades. Supporters of Modernism argue that the relationship was positive because it affirmed the success of the Emma Lake artists on an international level. The workshops have been mythologized as a great cultural awakening for local artists, and a highly productive opportunity that brought attention to Saskatchewan artists. Nearly thirty years after the Greenberg workshop, the interest in Emma Lake continues and although its role has changed, strong bonds have formed between the artists who continue to support it. Others claim that Greenberg's encouragement was destructive and that he is responsible for an enduring presence of Modernist painting in Saskatchewan. The workshops have been criticized for slowing down the development of regional artistic activity, as Post-Modern expression was not encouraged until the 1980s. Saskatchewan became a centre for Modernist art, and artists working in new media such as performance, video, and installation studied and worked elsewhere for many years. With Greenberg's arrival, the Emma Lake Workshops became an institution as well as a source of debate. After years of contextualizing Modernism in national and international terms, it became important for local artists to consider its place within their own community.

Throughout Greenberg's 1963 *Canadian Art* article, he implies that western Canadian art has potential, but that it could not be significant if artists continued to be reticent and provincial. In Saskatchewan, there was a strong desire to avoid the trap of becoming too provincial due to their isolated location. Greenberg drew attention to artists that he believed fit into this category: "the pictures of Ethel Christensen and

Les Graff were not only soaked in Tenth Street mannerisms,[246] they were also brash and aggressive in a Tenth Street way."[247] With the exception of a few painters, Greenberg revealed that prairie artists were too concerned with duplicating the New York-style of painting. Rather than contributing their own distinct interpretations of Modernism, they were merely replicating the painterly qualities of New York Action Painting, in a less compelling manner.

Greenberg's article on prairie art drew national attention to the American presence in Saskatchewan, but not everyone in Saskatchewan appreciated his views. Initially, it was advantageous to receive attention from leading New York artists, but not everyone valued their Modernist vision. Saskatchewan art achieved validation beyond its own provincial borders, and now people wanted to determine their own direction. In an editorial response to his article, several artists reveal their feeling that a lack of forcefulness was not the problem. These artists believed that the timidity lay in the prairie Modernist artist's reluctance to challenge Greenberg in his direction of their artistic process: "Timid or not, why paint like New York painters? We are here!"[248] and "I am no longer 'timid and tasteful.' Greenberg, go home!"[249] Other artists likely resented his preference for Saskatchewan art, as his critiques of other prairie artists, particularly those in Alberta, were less complimentary. Although *Canadian Art* had commissioned an article on prairie art, Greenberg was more

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[246] In his essay, "Post-Painterly Abstraction," Greenberg criticizes new generations following the rules of Painterly Abstraction, by turning the movement into "a school, then into a manner, and finally into a set of mannerisms." Rather than working towards Greenberg's vision of an evolution in painting through Post-Painterly Abstraction, they were copying a popular trend by duplicating the prescribed set of mannerisms of Painterly Abstraction.
Greenberg, *Post-Painterly Abstraction,* 4.
[247]"Greenberg, "Clement Greenberg's View of Art on the Prairies," 95.
[248] Rolf Unstad, "Letters to the Editor," *Canadian Art* 20, no.3 (May/June 1963): 196.
[249] Stanford Perrott, "Letters to the Editor," *Canadian Art* 20, no.3 (May/June 1963): 196.

interested in using the occasion to return to Saskatchewan to promote that work in Canada as well as in the United States.

Greenberg believed that Saskatchewan artists, due to their isolation and openness, were less likely to be provincial than other prairie artists. As Terry Fenton argues, "to deny access to the outside world was suicidal (and, thankfully, it is also impossible)."[250] It was impractical for Saskatchewan artists to ignore important trends from artistic centres if they were to succeed and not remain in total isolation. Local politics and aesthetics inevitably influenced the work, even if it is not immediately apparent. Greenberg believed that New York itself was becoming provincial, as its artists were content to rely on the reputation of New York as artistic centre. New York artists were reluctant to challenge the prevailing style in any significant way, and very few groups of artists provided an alternative that Greenberg felt was suitable. A region as remote as Saskatchewan could possibly provide an alternative, perhaps because no one expected them to present a challenge. More importantly, Greenberg supported Saskatchewan artists because they were moldable and willing to take direction from him, as a paternal figure with immense influence.

Although the Emma Lake workshops were significant for Saskatchewan painters for many years, Modernist sculpture developed much more slowly and it introduced a new generation of artists to the workshops through an increasingly international approach. This, in turn, breathed new life into the workshops as younger artists participated under the leadership of guests from England as well as America. Modernist sculptors were aware of abstract painting and much of their work responded to the same considerations. In 1969 Michael Steiner, then an emerging

[250] Terry Fenton, "High Culture in Prairie Canada," *ARTnews,* 73, no.7 (September 1974): 27.

New York artist, led the workshop and solidified abstract sculpture as a new genre of Saskatchewan art. The Steiner workshop was very important for artists like Douglas Bentham and Otto Rogers, as was the 1977 workshop with British sculptor Anthony Caro. When Caro came to Emma Lake, he worked on a series of large steel sculptures, taking over the main sculpture area, as well as two parking lots as his studio. Caro's pieces were transported to Bentham's farm after the workshop, and Caro later came back to see them in this environment.[251] For many artists who were part of a new generation of Saskatchewan art, this was a significant time because they did not attend the early workshops, and it was significant to work with an artist of such a high caliber, even if Steiner and Caro were newly established artists at that time.

Although his sculptures are abstract, Douglas Bentham's work demonstrates a consideration of landscape, both literally and metaphorically. He creates his sculptures in his outdoor studio, and they frequently remain in their rural environment for years afterwards; this is where they are often meant to be viewed.[252] Much of his early work from the late 1960s and early 1970s is very low to the ground and emphasizes it horizontal plane, which celebrates the distinctive qualities of the province's topography, and the emptiness of vertical form (Fig. 35). Throughout his career, Douglas Bentham has created monumental work that either accentuates its mass, or utilizes an openness of form through negative space. New directions in his

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[251] In the author's interview with Robert Christie, he talks about Greenberg's visit to see these works at Bentham's home, and that Caro reworked them there afterwards, and then moved them to New York where they were shown a few years later. This is known as the *Emma series*, and it has been acknowledged and exhibited as such.
Christie, 2005.

[252] Carol Phillips, "Introduction," in *Douglas Bentham: Getting to Now,* (Regina: Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery, 1980), 3.

work were occasionally undertaken as a result of his interaction with a guest at Emma Lake. It is through his time with Tony Caro that Bentham explored the relationship of an open and dynamic composition, as evidenced in *Prairie Duster* (1977) (Fig. 36). The sculpture's structure, though light and minimal, refers to the tumbleweed, as does the kinetic quality of the sculpture. It is very gestural and implies motion, as though the object is moving through a prairie storm. Similarly, such considerations are apparent in Caro's sculpture, *Emma Dipper* (1977) (Fig. 37). When Caro was at Emma Lake, he worked mainly with steel tubing, and his work from this time was much less dense, focusing on the linear possibilities of sculpture, and the perception of lightness and delicacy that an artist can achieve through manipulations of steel.

Saskatchewan Modernist art could potentially be created anywhere, but the specifics of place matters a great deal, and in turn, it has an effect on art from the region. These paintings and sculptures, representational or abstract, refer to the prairie landscape and represent a reaction to that landscape. In Ronald Reese's *Land of Earth and Sky*, he claims: "the landscape art of the prairies chronicles [the] changes in perception [of the prairies]. Landscape paintings and drawings are charts of feeling and attitude as well as records of places."[253] Landscape art can include painting, sculpture, or any medium that intends to interpret or interact with a natural or human environment. Western Canadian social historian R. Douglas Francis writes: "a study of prairie landscape paintings over time can be a study in intellectual and cultural history."[254] Although often abstract, the aesthetic and intellectual inspiration for Saskatchewan Modernist art derives from perceptions of the prairie landscape, from

[253] Rees, 1.
[254] Francis, 37.

the early European-inspired work, to the more sophisticated paintings of Ernest Linder and Dorothy Knowles. Many artists have a direct relationship to the landscape, perhaps because several of them are also farmers and understand the landscape from that perspective.[255]

When abstraction entered the prairies, it embraced the convergence of landscape and pure geometric form, on several levels. Saskatchewan is a perfect geometric isosceles trapezoid in its shape, with straight, symmetrical borders, and it is commonly imagined as completely flat, despite the rolling hills and valleys found throughout the province. Straight lines and grids divide the agricultural land, and crops differentiate visually through the segmentation of varied colour and pattern, as seen from an aerial view. It is pure geometric form, without the addition of extraneous topographic details. Even today, there are expansive stretches of highway between cities with very few vertical distractions in sight. The area is perceived as empty – an immense wasteland without the excess of urban sprawl. This is, of course, a myth, but the landscape of Saskatchewan and the myths that it evokes have become entwined with abstract art ideologies, which concerns the expression of pure line, shape, and colour.

Despite the reality that the province is populated with urban centres, a feeling of seclusion persists for many artists living among Saskatchewan's vast landscape. Several western Canadians wrote to Greenberg, speaking of the "isolation, loneliness,

[255] Several Saskatchewan artists have a long history associated with agriculture, including James Henderson, Augustus Kenderdine, William Perehudoff, Dorothy Knowles, Douglas Bentham, Alicia Popoff, and Les Potter.

and smallness" that they feel living in the prairies.[256] There remained relatively few opportunities for professional development and growth in smaller communities, and one of the dangers of living in a detached area is that a particular style can become institutional once it is accepted. Bruce Ferguson studied art in Saskatchewan in the 1960s and he felt that if Saskatchewan's "isolationism becomes institutionalized over time, there is a danger that it will become conservative."[257] This has, in fact, happened as Modernism in Saskatchewan became predictable with characteristic mannerisms and a regular group of observers.

Over time, the constructed image of Saskatchewan as a "pure" and isolated Modernist retreat prevented many artists from moving beyond that identity. Anthony Caro wrote to Greenberg about the artists he met following a trip to Alberta in 1984: "there's plenty of complaining in Edmonton, of their isolation, their poor market, their inability to get NY shows – little do they know how fortunate they are to be able to remain so pure, so unmolested by fashion."[258] This statement illustrates that most western Canadian artists understood their place in the art market, which would never allow them to be serious rivals of the major artistic centres; they were supporting actors on an international stage, and they were unhappy with this situation. Previously, it was to the advantage of Saskatchewan artists to accentuate their position as a geographical Other in order to attract interest in their community, because it was

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[256] Letter from Ann Clark. n.d. , Series I: Correspondence, 1928-1994. Greenberg's correspondence files for 1984, Box 6, Folder 1. ABC. Getty Research Institute Research Library and Archives.
[257] Robert Enright, "Saskatoon: An Isolated Bastion of Modernism or a Community in Which Art and Artists Thrive?," *Canadian Art* (Winter 1984): 55.
[258] Letter from Anthony Caro, 01 April 1984, Series I: Correspondence, 1928-1994. Greenberg's correspondence files for 1984, Box 6, Folder 1. ABC. Getty Research Institute Research Library and Archives.

the remote location that brought people to Emma Lake in the first place. However, the image of the naïve prairie artist reinforces the argument that Greenberg did not really consider Emma Lake as real competition, due to their location, even if the work was just as valid.

Some Saskatchewan artists reveled in the solitude and seclusion that the prairies provide, and were able to benefit from the continuance of Modernism as a result. Caro's statement implied that prairie artists were able to continue in a Modernist tradition longer, while those working at the centre of the art world were prodded to move on. Saskatchewan artist Jonathan Forrest claims, "'the isolation one feels in Saskatoon is really its blessing. We are not inundated by style changes or trends in the way eastern cities are.'"[259] What Forrest refers to is the ability for Saskatchewan artists to work diligently on a body of work, and to allow ideas to evolve. He recognizes the potential for artists to freely explore a style or medium for an extended period of time, until their ideas have matured. However, it also proves Ferguson's point, as without the injection of new trends, artists continue to recycle the same themes for years and the art market caters to a particular kind of work.

Not all Saskatchewan artists were Modernists, and new stylistic trends developed in response to Emma Lake. Towards the end of the 1960s, a new group of artists formed in Regina, and their subject matter was derived from a folk tradition based on local inspiration and symbols of rural life. The Regina Funk artists' work was typically narrative, playful, and satirical. These artists were frustrated with the international inspiration coming out of Emma Lake. They did not view it as *international*, but rather as purely *American,* which had little to do with their own

[259] Enright, 55.

personal, everyday lives. They were searching for a regional style, which "must deny being influenced by major, current, center-produced art."[260] This does not mean that they were not knowledgeable about national and international developments, but they were more interested in making art for a local audience made by local people, rather than a New York audience. For them, Modernism had become too intellectual and conceptual, and they grew tired of the pedagogical relationship between New York and Saskatchewan.[261] They emphasized their immediate geographical centre, rather than the centre of the international art world, where they would always be on the periphery.

The primary subject matter of Regina Funk work includes an agrarian landscape, but is not limited to rural imagery and an unpopulated geography. These artists parody the small-town view that the world has of the prairies, while also challenging it. For example, David Thauberger's art often considers prairie symbols and vernacular architecture. In *Banking Centre* (2001), Thauberger considers the lack of purpose-built structures in small town Saskatchewan, and how major corporations negotiate an existence within that landscape: "here in Saskatchewan, we fell into the 1981-82 recession and never came out of it...so there has been a lot of recycling of businesses and buildings"[262] (Fig. 38). The town appears unrefined, as the style of the building does not match the bank's standard corporate branding and identity. However, the use of this building is more environmentally and ecologically conscious because they have made use of an already existing structure. Thauberger is able to

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[260] Fenton, 27.
[261] Matthew Teitelbaum, "Returning Home: Regionalism, Emma Lake, and the Close of the 60s," in *The Flat Side of the Landscape*, 51.
[262] David Thauberger, "Showcase: Saskatchewan Portraits", The Saskatchewan Arts Board, 2001, http://www.artsboard.sk.ca/showcase/showcase_v_portraits_18.shtml. (Accessed 3 September 2005).

capture the unique, and often quirky or quaint, character of small-town Saskatchewan in his work.

The Regina Funk artists claimed to be looking for a new style that was unique to them, although the early leaders of the movement were from California, or were informed by trends in that area. Ceramicist David Gilhooly and art historian David Zack, both from California, joined the Regina faculty at the end of the 1960s. Regina artist Vic Cicansky lived and studied in California just prior to their arrival, and met Gilhooly there.[263] In America, there was a struggle between New York and Los Angeles for power as the most important cultural centre. The skirmish between these two cities transferred to Saskatchewan, finding its equivalent in Saskatoon and Regina. By this time, Modernism had a stronger following in Saskatoon, and the focus of the Regina campus changed as most of the members of the Regina Five moved elsewhere. The New York-inspired Modernists wanted to be part of an international art community in their own right, while the Funk artists wanted to create a community of artists who made work about their immediate environment, and external approval was secondary for them. However, the Funk artists' audience was somewhat limited by regional borders, which affected its exposure and influence. This conflict resulted in an examination of what it means to be an artist in Saskatchewan and how much of that identity comes from within.

The popularity of Funk art came from a local pride and appreciation of the Saskatchewan character, which is tied to its rural roots. Artists satirized negative assumptions that people have about rural life, and encouraged people not to take clichés too seriously. Fiction writer Guy Vanderhaege has said that writers from

[263] Teitelbaum, 55.

western Canada often have an inferiority complex from the belief that nothing interesting or important happens on the prairies.[264] In recent years, this image has become synonymous with the prairies, and many artists and entertainers have been able to capitalize on this view, including the Saskatchewan Funk artists. A large part of Saskatchewan's inferiority complex stems from the development of a unifying identity through negation instead of affirmation. It contributes to the mythology and assumptions that rural life is static. This is precisely the image that artists such as the Regina Five tried to destroy with the creation of the Emma Lake workshops, by reaching beyond their national borders for creative and intellectual stimulation.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Emma Lake workshops went through a number of changes in order to appear progressive. The changes were drastic, but a change of pace was necessary. The 1965 workshop included two unlikely leaders: experimental sound composer John Cage, and art critic and Pop Art enthusiast Lawrence Alloway.[265] There is no doubt that these individuals were invited as an alternative to Greenbergian Modernism, in an effort to make the workshops more inclusive and open to other modes of expression. As evidenced in 1965, the workshop still attracted prominent names in the international art scene, and these alternative additions allowed the community to expand. In 1972, the workshops were held in Regina under the direction of former Saskatchewan artist, Roy Kiyooka. Kiyooka was a former Regina Campus faculty member and abstract painter, but his stylistic interests also led him in other directions. He was likely chosen as a workshop leader

[264] Dennis Groending, *The Middle of Nowhere: Rediscovering Saskatchewan* (Saskatoon and Calgary: Fifth House Publishers, 1996), 5.
[265] The inclusion of musicians in the workshop setting began in 1964, with the Olitski/Stefan Wolpé workshop.

because he experimented with performance and alternative media.[266] Pop artist Greg Curnoe led the 1973 workshop at Emma Lake, and his attendance at the workshop is ironic as he was very much opposed to Greenberg's view of Modernism. However, the universities were beginning to embrace Post-Modernism, and this contrast of opinion affected the future existence of the workshops.

In 1973, University of Saskatchewan department head, Otto Rogers introduced students to the workshop experience, and the Curnoe workshop was a summer university credit program.[267] In 1972, American artist Ron Shuebrook joined the university department as a visiting instructor, and he discovered that students there had little knowledge of Canadian art.[268] He coordinated the 1973 student workshop, and recommended Curnoe as the leader. Additional visitors such as Karen Wilkin and Terry Fenton also attended. Shuebrook describes the summer school program as:

> ... an opportunity for undergraduate students to be taken seriously as developing artists and to get to know a major Canadian artist who had strong nationalist views, as well as several significant artists and curators with diverse aesthetic views.[269]

Students from Saskatoon and Regina attended the workshop, and schools from across Canada and the U.S. received invitations to send their senior students to the workshops.[270]

The shift towards a student workshop displeased many regular Emma Lake participants because there was an increased need for instruction, and the level of professionalism associated with the workshops declined:

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[266] Sandra Gillespie, Ann K. Morrison, and Colleen Skidmore, "Chronology" in *The Flat Side of the Landscape*, 72.
[267] Additionally, a professional workshop was held in Regina, which offered a wider range of facilities for artists working in sculpture and ceramics.
[268] Ron Shuebrook, e-mail message to author, 28 November, 2005.
[269] Ibid.
[270] Ibid.

> ... Eli Bornstein felt insulted that he had something to learn up there; that's why he didn't come. He was thinking it was a teacher-student situation. [Lochhead] was looking at it as a participatory sort of thing, or participants working together....[271]

Previously, the workshops were limited to professional artists, but the University of Saskatchewan always administered it, and credit courses allowed them to broaden the scope of the workshops and increase enrolment numbers. As a result, there is a misconception that the workshop is an instructional environment, where artists go to learn from the leader directly and in an instructional manner. Increased involvement from the Saskatoon campus also contributed to a dispute over the control of the workshops. Although the University of Saskatchewan originated in Saskatoon, the art department developed as a satellite campus in Regina, and the Regina Five initiated the Emma Lake workshops. In 1975, the administration of the workshops transferred from the new University of Regina to the University of Saskatchewan after the two campuses split, and a group of Regina artists held the "real" Emma Lake artists' workshop in Regina in protest in 1975.[272]

Despite different configurations of the workshops over the years, it was still the Modernist foundation that drew people and it is arguably the only arrangement that has been successful. Many of these artists resented the changes that were intended to make the workshops more inclusive and attendance began to decline. There was a strong recommendation from university faculty to introduce new approaches to the workshop, despite a lack of faculty participation in the workshops in the 1980s, from both Saskatoon and Regina. The workshops had always been

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[271] Kenneth Lochhead, interview by John D.H. King, reprinted in *A documented study of the artists' workshop at Emma Lake*, 404.
[272] O'Brian, "Introduction," *The Flat Side of the Landscape,* 16.

oriented towards painting and sculpture, and "the making of objects seemed to work in this workshop experience," while performance and video was not as successful, despite attempts to include it.[273] When the format changed, attendance dropped because regular participants did not want to work with people who had opposing aesthetic and philosophical interests. Since its early days, the purpose of the workshop was to invite like-minded guest leaders, in order to expand the participants' social and professional network. As a result, the workshops appealed to a particular demographic of artists associated with Modernism, which continues today.

Modernist abstraction is concerned with expressions of pure form and colour, although Abstract Expressionism also became involved with the *action* of painting and the representation and documentation of the artist's body. The artist's personality is part of the work, as much as the actual materials and placement of form. The artist's body, through Modernism, is assigned a particular gender (masculine), race (Caucasian), and class (bourgeois). Jackson Pollock is the most familiar example of this. Marcia Brennan asserts that Pollock's tough-guy image confirmed his masculinity and heterosexuality, as well as the photographic documentation of his aggressive painting process.[274] The focus is on the action of painting, and the painterly qualities of the work. Studio photos are not as common for colour field painters, because the emphasis is not on *action*; it is the result that matters. There is nothing particularly exciting about watching a man precisely taping stripes on a canvas, and applying thin stains of paint, slowly and painstakingly. Nevertheless, the absence of figurative art still draws attention to the corporeality of the artist.

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[273] Christie, 2005.
[274] Marcia Brennan, *Modernism's Masculine Subjects: Matisse, the New York School, and Post-Painterly Abstraction,* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 2004), 80.

For the most part, the Post-Painterly Abstraction artists of note in Saskatchewan were men, despite the steady participation of women at Emma Lake throughout its history. In the 1960s, there were a few women abstract painters attending the workshops, including Dorothy Knowles.[275] By several accounts, Knowles grappled with a decision about whether to paint abstracts or landscapes:

> Dorothy Knowles [Mrs. William Perehudoff], had at that time started to do non-objective work because her husband was doing it...While she was up there [at the 1962 Workshop] she was doing some landscape, and Greenberg said, 'Why don't you go back to landscape painting, don't you enjoy that more?' She said, 'Yes.' He said, 'Well, why do you do abstract work?' And that was right in front of all of us. And she was honest enough to say, 'Well, because I thought it was the thing I should do.'[276]

It is often said that the 1962 workshop was a turning point in Knowles' career, due to Greenberg's influence. Perhaps he genuinely felt she was a better landscape painter, and that this work was stronger than her abstract paintings. However, it is also likely that Greenberg encouraged men to paint abstractly, and encouraged women to paint what they feel they should, meaning not abstractly, because the aggressive, bold qualities associated with abstraction were considered a better match for male painters in the 1950s and 60s. To what extent did he push Knowles and other female artists into this decision, either directly or indirectly? Encouraging words from a major art critic would have held tremendous weight for an artist, and his praise of her landscapes would have had a tremendous effect.

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[275] While Knowles did paint abstractly prior to the 1962 workshop, very little documentation of this work exists. Additionally, Ina Meares was another abstract artist who attended the 1962 workshop. In a letter to Kenneth Lochhead, Greenberg wrote that "she should go on to greater things, and most probably would if she were not a woman."
Letter from Clement Greenberg to Kenneth Lochhead, 9 October 1962, *86-29 Kenneth Lochhead Papers, General Files, Clement Greenberg: 1962-1966.* University of Regina Archives.
[276] Ernest Lindner, interview by John D.H. King, reprinted in *A documented study of the artists' workshop at Emma Lake*, 374.

The implications of the lack of women abstract painters were long lasting, until such female artists as Marie Lannoo, Tammi Campbell, and Laura St. Pierre began to work abstractly in the 1980s and 90s. Until the 1980s, the majority of women at Emma Lake were landscape painters, including the Expressionistic landscapes of Wynona Mulcaster, the subtle watercolours of Reta Cowley, and Dorothy Knowles' large-scale prairie landscapes. While Knowles does paint from the landscape, she is one of the few artists who paint at such a large scale, for which she has received praise. However, was the choice of subject matter really hers to make? Roy Kiyooka remembers an interaction between Knowles and Greenberg, and reports:

> ... I also remember at that time, [his] talking with Dorothy Perehudoff and telling her, in her despair of being a woman ... and not having enough time to paint, that if she was serious about being a painter, those things that took up her time, those domestic things, would have to be dealt with in a way that gave her more time; and that as a woman, no exceptions would be made for her, in terms of that energy that must go into painting. She would have to deal with it somehow.[277]

Greenberg has made several chauvinistic statements to women over the years, but Knowles did not believe him to be discriminatory towards her work; in fact, he was very encouraging and supportive, and believed that she could be a great painter if she could negotiate her experiences of being a professional artist, wife, and mother.

Many contemporary First Nations artists in Saskatchewan work in abstraction, with the most notable example of Bob Boyer. Boyer studied under Ted Godwin and Douglas Morton in Regina, and their interest in simple geometric shapes and colour relationships is highly evident in Boyer's work.[278] Boyer's *Path to Piapot* (1999)

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[277] Roy Kiyooka interview by John D.H. King, reprinted in *A documented study of the artists' workshop at Emma Lake*, 120.
[278] Janet Clarke, "Introduction" in *Spiritual Landscapes: Recent paintings by Bob Boyer* (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Art Gallery, 1999), 2.

reveals the influence of such artists as Kenneth Noland and Jack Bush in his all-over use of diagonal lines and high-key colour, as well as in the stepped pyramid imagery (Fig. 39). The ziggurat shape, as well as his use of fresco application implies Boyer's interest in history and spiritualism, which several members of the Regina Five also expressed interested in. Boyer also commonly uses titles that refer to his Plains Indian heritage. In this work, the title refers to the Piapot First Nation in Saskatchewan. In his blanket paintings series, they refer to a critical examination of colonial history, with such titles as *Small Pox Issue* (1983), and *A Government Blanket Policy* (Fig.40). He painted on blankets, referring to the dissemination of deadly diseases to First Nations people through government-issue blankets and supplies in Canada's early colonial history. Through the synthesis of First Nations symbols and abstract forms, Boyer depicts the hybrid contemporary Aboriginal experience in a profound way.

Despite stylistic similarities between the works of Emma Lake participants and many Aboriginal artists in Saskatchewan, it is notable that these artists are absent at the Emma Lake workshops. It is surprising, given that many successful artists, including Bob Boyer and Allen Sapp, have trained under Emma Lake enthusiasts. Curator Elizabeth McLuhan writes, "the strongest influences [for First Nations Saskatchewan artists] today are through the north/south corridor into the United States via the powwow circuit."[279] Her statement suggests that while these artists received technical training in an academic setting, they were able to develop their artistic community separately and under different circumstances. Furthermore, many artists were unhappy with the Modernist approach that the Emma Lake group supported.

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[279] Elizabeth McLuhan, "Introduction" in *Horses Fly Too* (Regina: Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, 1984), 7.

Artist Neal McLeod says that when he attended the University of Saskatchewan to study studio art, he was frustrated that his figural paintings, though abstracted, were not encouraged: "Because my work was figurative, I have a Norval Morrisseau influence and they completely discounted that"[280] (Fig. 41). There was a definite push for a particular kind of non-representational art, and this discouraged him. The visual arts department in Saskatoon had emphasized an "abstract-design based program" in drawing and painting, under the leadership of Otto Rogers and Eli Bornstein.[281] Eventually, the department would change its orientation to support life drawing introductory courses, but this transition was slow. It was a change in focus that began an official discourse on the Emma Lake workshops, and officially acknowledged its successes and failures within the community.

By the 1990s, the Modernist focus at the University of Saskatchewan had lost its stronghold with major changes in faculty. Studio instructors Patrick Traer, Janet Werner, and Graham Fowler focused on a return to the figure in various expressions of representational art. Extended Media became increasingly popular under Susan Shantz and Linda Duvall, who encouraged explorations of gender and popular culture, primarily through performance, video, and installation. Art history professor Lynne Bell introduced post-colonial theory and visual culture to the curriculum, building the department's sizable contemporary film and video collection. Under this department, there has been a move away from Modernist painting towards newer, more interdisciplinary modes of expression which had found a place in Canadian art schools elsewhere much earlier. The department attempted to cancel the Emma Lake

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[280] Neal McLeod, interview by Morgan Wood, *Wildfire on the Plains: Contemporary Saskatchewan Art,* (Saskatoon: Mendel Art Gallery, 2003), 9.
[281] (Robert Christie 2005)

workshops in the 1990s, citing that there was a lack of funding, and that their goals were no longer compatible.[282] A number of artists who attended the workshops over the years prevented this cancellation because they believed in its sense of community.[283]

In order to demonstrate the importance of the history of the Emma Lake Artists' Workshops on a local, national, and international scale, the Mendel Art Gallery prepared *The Flat Side of the Landscape* (1989), a retrospective exhibition. Most of the contributors had much to gain from drawing attention to Emma Lake because they have been repeat workshop participants or critics who are strong advocates of the workshop, and they are able to legitimize their work and raise its value by highlighting the American interest in the workshops. They also insert themselves as the central focus in the history of Saskatchewan art by branding Modernism as the characteristic local style.

The exhibition raised awareness of the workshops, and to regain interest in Saskatchewan Modernist art at a time when new media was becoming increasingly popular. New faculty at the University of Saskatchewan felt that Emma Lake was dead, and by the late 1970s and 80s they were no longer attending the workshops, even though they retained control over them.[284]

It was important for the Emma Lake artists to regroup in order to justify their place of importance in the community, and they did this by publicly informing a new generation about their relationship to major international artists, through exhibitions

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[282] "The Emma Lake Artists' Workshop in Historical Perspective," the University of Saskatchewan, http://www.emmalake.usask.ca/aw-hist.html (Accessed on 3 September 2005).
[283] It was primarily Kate Hobin, the Emma Lake Kenderdine Campus Director of Programming, and artist Robert Christie, who took on the project of revitalizing interest in the workshops.
[284] Christie, 2005.

and writing. This was done with the hope that these connections would legitimize their place in the art community at a time when abstract Modernism had long lost its prominence. These artists had never really lost their positions of respect in the local community; artists such as William Perehudoff, Dorothy Knowles, Otto Rogers, Douglas Bentham, and Robert Christie were established artists and their work was commercially successful. However, they continue to have a Greenbergian view of contemporary art that has changed very little over the last forty years, and artists who are taking a more Post-Modern approach in their work looked to other sources of inspiration.

The strength of the Emma Lake artist community was that it included both senior and emerging individuals, and this community was supportive of one another. The workshops were particularly useful because it provides a place for professional artists to meet in an informal, friendly setting for the exchange of ideas. As Jonathan Forrest said in 1984: "young artists have been encouraged by the example of Dorothy Knowles, William Perehudoff, and Reta Cowley, who have stayed in Saskatoon despite their international success."[285] The original workshop participants who chose to stay in Saskatchewan became mentors to future generations. As Robert Christie has said, artists of the older generation, like Ernest Lindner, "establish a model for what it is to be a professional artist, and he has been a mentor for a generation."[286] In 2004, the Kenderdine Art Gallery organized an exhibition, "Three Generations," as evidence that three generations of abstract artists have grown in the province, through the work of William Perehudoff, Robert Christie, and Jonathan Forrest, and have

[285] Enright, 53.
[286] Ibid., 55.

formed a sort of unofficial union. The Emma Lake community is open to newcomers, but generally consists of like-minded people who are interested in the legend of Emma Lake as a magical time and place with which they want to learn from and be associated.

Saskatchewan Modernists learned from their association with American artists in order to shape their own localized centre. The Emma Lake artists drew inspiration from other artists' work, but it was the exchange of ideas that made the most impact. They were inspired by the personalities and the philosophies found at the workshops. They were looking for a social connection, rather than a style that they could imitate. Guest leaders were chosen because their work was similar to Saskatchewan artists' work, and they regarded their guest leaders as peers rather than instructors. The province's art community could only begin to examine itself after an external source had approved it, which affirmed its legitimacy. This affirmation would have the most impact locally, because local artists could believe in themselves with confidence only after receiving recognition from the centre. By creating their own Modernist centre, Saskatchewan artists inverted their peripheral position to become a centre that others compared themselves to. Previously it was a community without a strong local identity; now they had an identity that could either be supported or confronted. Although it was necessary to challenge the dominance of Modernism in Saskatchewan, it is problematic that the discourse surrounding Emma Lake has disappeared from Saskatchewan academic institutions. Initially, the intention of the workshops was to create a venue for professional development. It no longer generates the same kind of attention from abroad that it once did, but no institution can maintain

that kind of energy forever. Its main purpose is still to provide a communal working environment that encourages local artists.

Conclusion

The ever-evolving identity of the Emma Lake workshops always corresponds to perceptions of Saskatchewan art and conceptions of space. As bell hooks describes, "spaces can be real and imagined. Spaces can tell stories and unfold histories. Spaces can be interrupted, appropriated, and transformed through artistic and literary practice."[332] Associations of place are constructed from fact and myth that can have positive or negative implications, depending on who is telling the story. Ultimately, it is Emma Lake's physical space that attracts artists, and they continually describe it as magical. In the late 1950s, Emma Lake became a hotbed of international artistic activity. By the mid-60s, it was the site of contention between Modernists and Post-Modernists, Canadians and Americans, western Canadians and central Canadians. Since the 1970s and 80s it has become a shrine of Modernism, with a small but loyal following. In consideration of Saskatchewan identity, the assessment of the workshops is always in process and it is never final. Although it has gone through phases of growth and decline, it continues to have a profound affect on how Saskatchewan artists see themselves and their work, and how others view them.

Although attendance and support for the Emma Lake artists' workshops has declined in recent years, the workshops have had a lasting influence on Saskatchewan art and beyond. The workshops were never intended to produce art stars, and this should not be the measure of its success. Although it is strongly associated with a Modernist aesthetic due to the interests of returning participants, its goal was not to force a particular stylistic agenda on local artists. The purpose of the workshops was

[332] bell hooks, "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness," in *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 153.

to provide a place for dialogue and artistic growth, and for individuals to communicate within a group setting. It is a motivational and energetic environment, where artists learn new techniques that lead to different directions in their work. Many have formed strong friendships and professional contacts that opened up career possibilities, and in some instances, these relationships last for decades. For some, the workshops provide artists with a rare opportunity to work on their artwork, free from the distractions of everyday life. For artists who work in relative isolation, it is a place where they can get feedback on a new series of work, or try out ideas in collaboration with other artists. As interest grew, so did the caliber of the artists who were involved and major artists on the international scene accepted invitations to Emma Lake. This phenomenon has had an enormous lasting impact on the development of Saskatchewan art, even for those who have never attended a session.

The legacy of the Emma Lake workshops is that they have inspired artists to form other similar and significant artistic communities, and many Saskatchewan artists have been invited to attend international workshops due to their involvement at Emma Lake. In particular, the close community atmosphere and the rigorous working environment that participants experience at the workshop stimulated Anthony Caro. It motivated him to found the Triangle Workshops in 1982, based upon his belief that the three major centres of the art world were New York, London, and Emma Lake.[333] Held in New York, workshop coordinators arrange panel discussions, studio visits with artists and critics, and an exhibition of the work produced in the two-week period of the workshop. This workshop is more international in scope than the Emma Lake workshops as it attracts participants from many other countries, but its basic principle

[333] Christie, 2005.

is the same as it allows artists to work in a communal environment, stimulating intense artistic production in a concentrated period.

Saskatchewan has a long history of developing artist groups and colonies at a local level, and the workshops have had a tremendous impact within the province itself. Previously, Ernest Linder's "Saturday night parties" brought Saskatoon artists together to work and talk about art, as did the social gatherings hosted by University of Saskatchewan President W.C. Murray and local entrepreneur Fred Mendel, which encouraged social networking opportunities for individuals involved in all areas of arts and culture.[334] Artist cooperatives and artist-run centres have further encouraged the growth of professional and personal exchange. The Saskatchewan Craft Council, founded in 1975, provides exhibition and sales opportunities as well as workshops and lectures for artists working in various craft media. Film and video cooperatives such as the Saskatchewan Film Pool and Paved Art and New Media have developed in both Regina and Saskatoon, providing funding assistance, screening opportunities, and equipment rentals for its members. CARFAC Saskatchewan, an artist-run advocacy organization, supports paid mentorship and apprenticeship opportunities between established and emerging artists. They also deliver workshops and provide advisory notes for their members on such topics as copyright, and health and safety issues for artists. The Saskatchewan Writers/Artists Colony was established in 1978, on the model of Emma Lake, and it provides working spaces for writers and artists that are free from the disruptions of every-day life. Although the Colonies are held at Emma Lake, it is a residency program that provides artists with a more independent experience.

[334] Knowles, 2005.

In the early 1990s, New York artist Betsy Rosenwald attended the Saskatchewan Writers/Artists Colony at Emma Lake for the first time. She researched other colonies throughout the world, and chose Emma Lake because:

> ... I just knew that it was far from New York...I was living in New York and I was looking for some place to go where I would not meet other New Yorkers. There are other artist colonies out there but I really wanted to go some place different.[335]

It has been important for artists, whether they are from New York or a small prairie town, to get away from their regular working environment, to meet new people, and to immerse themselves in the northern environment of Emma Lake. The natural location of Emma Lake appealed to New York artists from the beginning because any community can become confined, even provincial, if one does not explore other environments. An outside perspective and a change of environment are crucial for creative growth. As Rosenwald notes:

> ...Places that are away from urban centers and have their own energy...there is a sense of openness that you get there, and I feel I can really let myself pursue some kind of inner voice that is unimpeded, because there are really no distractions.[336]

The natural environment of Emma Lake has attracted many artists over the years, and it has allowed a creative environment to emerge. The total absence of the urban environment is appealing as an authentic natural place that allows one to empty the mind, and the social landscape of Emma Lake is crucial to understanding the geography of Saskatchewan art.

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[335] Betsey Rosenwald, interview by author, 10 November 2005, Saskatoon, telephone interview in Ottawa.
[336] Rosenwald, 2005.

In *The Wizard of Oz*, a young prairie girl named Dorothy dreams of travelling to a magical world in order to escape the lackluster experience of living in the American Midwest. In doing so, she gained an appreciation of where she came from and discovered, "there's no place like home." The Emma Lake workshops allowed Saskatchewan artists to appreciate their locality and to have a strong sense of pride in their accomplishments, validated through the acknowledgement of an international art community. Artists understood that they did not need to go elsewhere to have fulfilling careers as professional artists, and that it was possible for the world to notice and appreciate their work for what it was. The relevance of the workshops is the sense of community that it created, not only among workshop supporters, but also for artists throughout the province that created other communities and opportunities for themselves. This is a huge accomplishment, and it is important that this history be told so that future generations of artists can understand how the workshops confronted isolation in the prairies.

While Modernism is no longer fashionable, it is the belief that one can establish oneself and ignore the limitations of location that makes the workshops so important. The Emma Lake Workshops proved this, by drawing attention to their particular and unique location. The workshops no longer appeal to emerging artists because few are working in the Modernist tradition, and they are far-removed from the vibrancy of the workshop's early years. Previously, Saskatchewan artists invited New York artists to Emma Lake in order to expand their community, and now Saskatchewan artists commonly go elsewhere to find success. The New York connection motivated artists to be proud of where they are and to recognize that they

were capable of contributing to an international discourse. The prairie landscape continues to provide challenges for artists, and emerging artists typically go elsewhere in search of opportunities, rather than creating their own. Consequently, this pride has disappeared, in part because there is a lack of knowledge about the Emma Lake workshops among young artists. As recent workshop guest leader, Ron Shuebrook has observed:

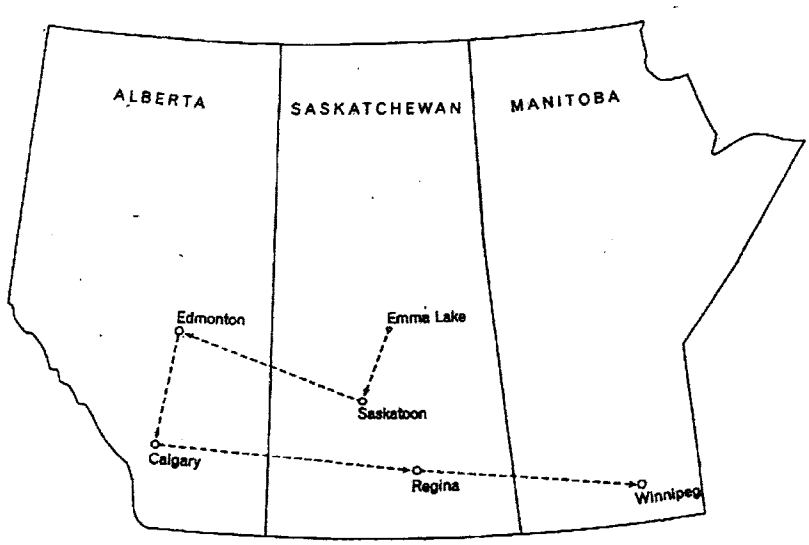
> ...there currently seems to be a fundamental distrust of the workshop among certain artists...who believe, apparently, that such influential traditions associated historically with the workshop should be erased from contemporary consciousness. [337]

This does not mean that the workshops should necessarily continue to have a stronghold on Saskatchewan art, but if the province is to maintain its creative momentum, an alternative source of inspiration must present itself in order to inspire future generations of artists.

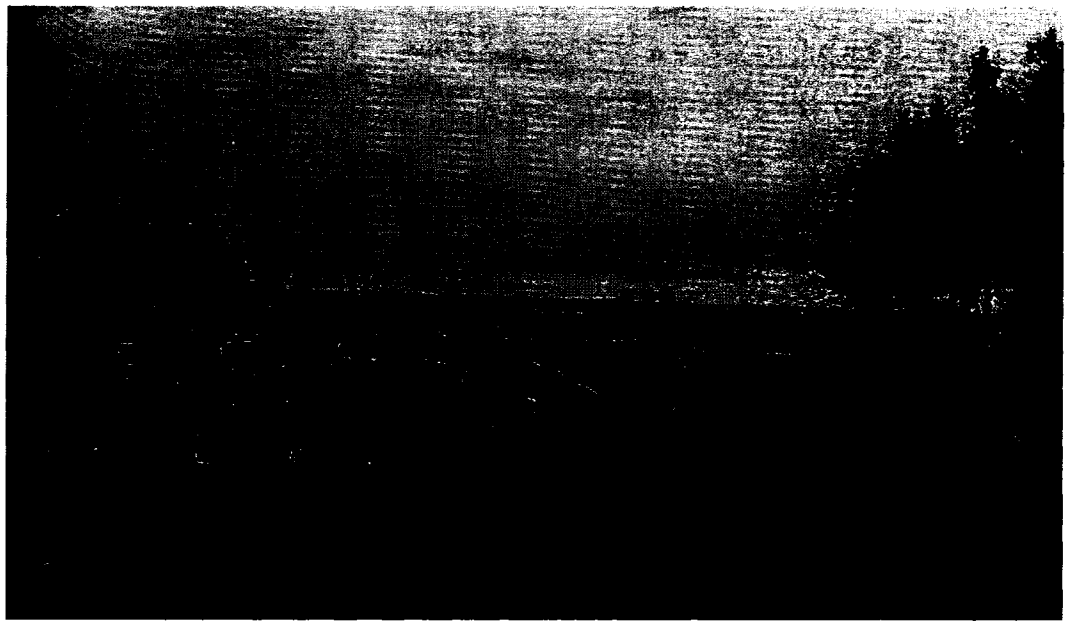
[337] Shuebrook, 2005.

Illustrations

(Fig. 1) Robert Christie, *New Furrow*, 2003/04.

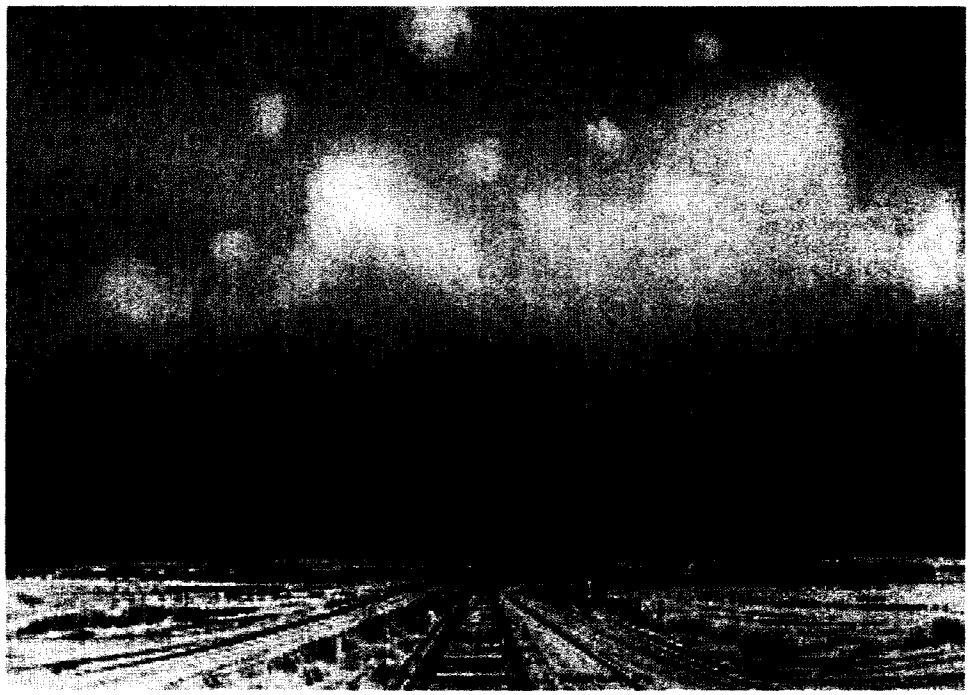


(Fig. 2) A map of the Canadian prairies, published in *Canadian Art*, with the route that Clement Greenberg traveled in research for his article, "Clement Greenberg's View of Art on the Prairies: Painting and Sculpture in Prairie Canada Today."

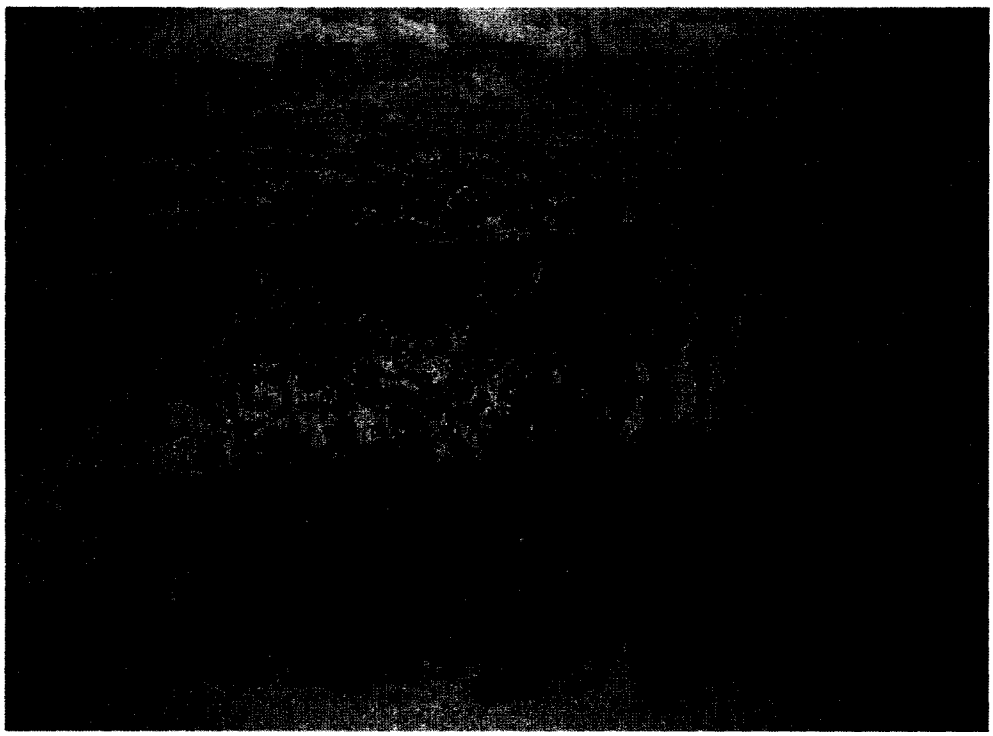


(Fig. 3) Edward Roper, *A Settler's Home near Carberry, Assiniboia*, c.1890.

(Fig. 4) Washington Frank Lynn, *The Forks*, c.1900.



(Fig. 5) Robert Hurley, *Untitled, Tracks in Winter*, n.d.



(Fig. 6) Dorothy Knowles, *Blue Water AC-16-2000*, 2000.

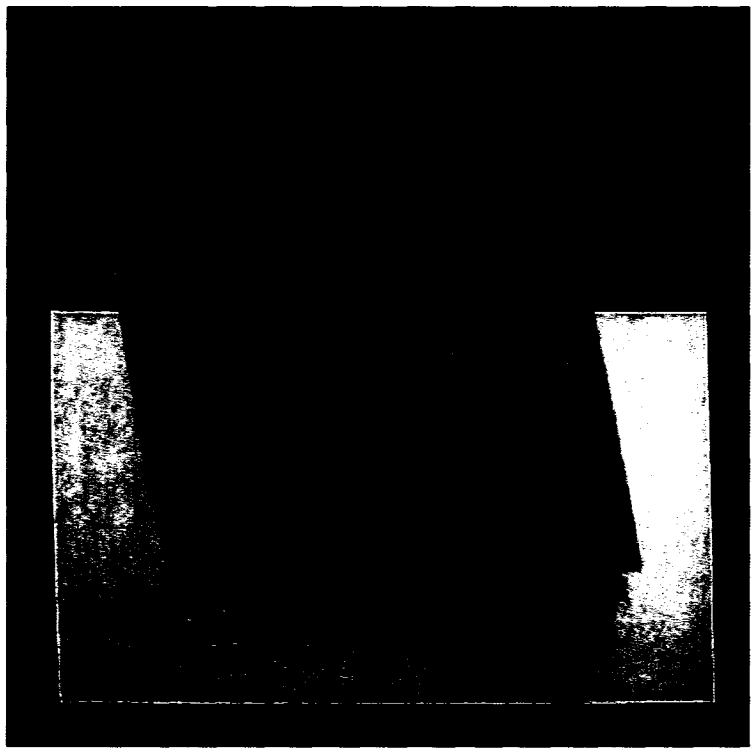
(Fig. 7) Dorothy Knowles, *Wind in the Reeds* (AC-7-98), 1998

(Fig. 8) Jean Charlot, *Cafeteria Workers and Custodians*, 1973.

(Fig. 9) William Perehudoff, *Untitled (butchering)*, c.1950

(Fig. 10) William Perehudoff, *The Dance*, 1953

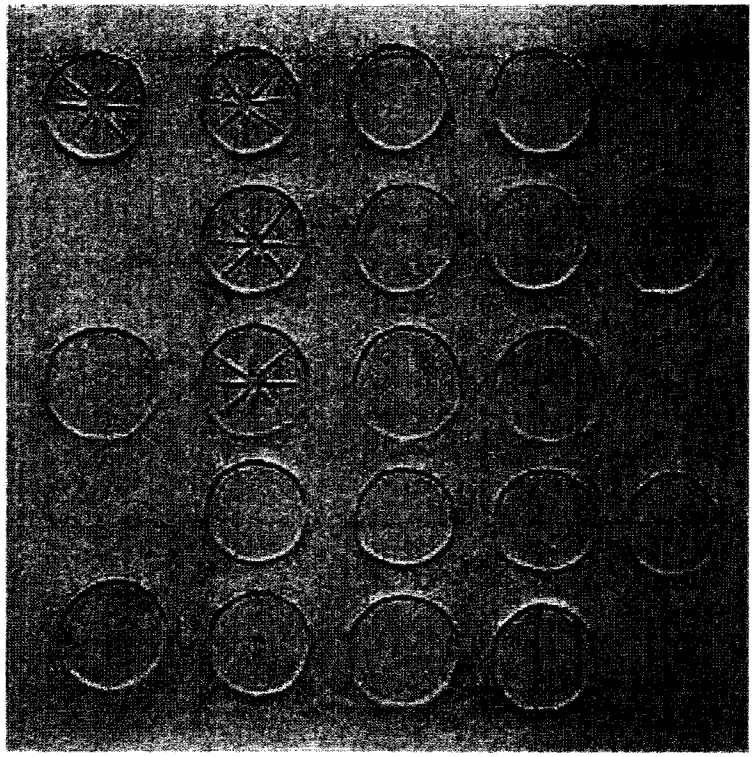
(Fig. 11) Pablo Picasso, *Three Musicians*, 1921.



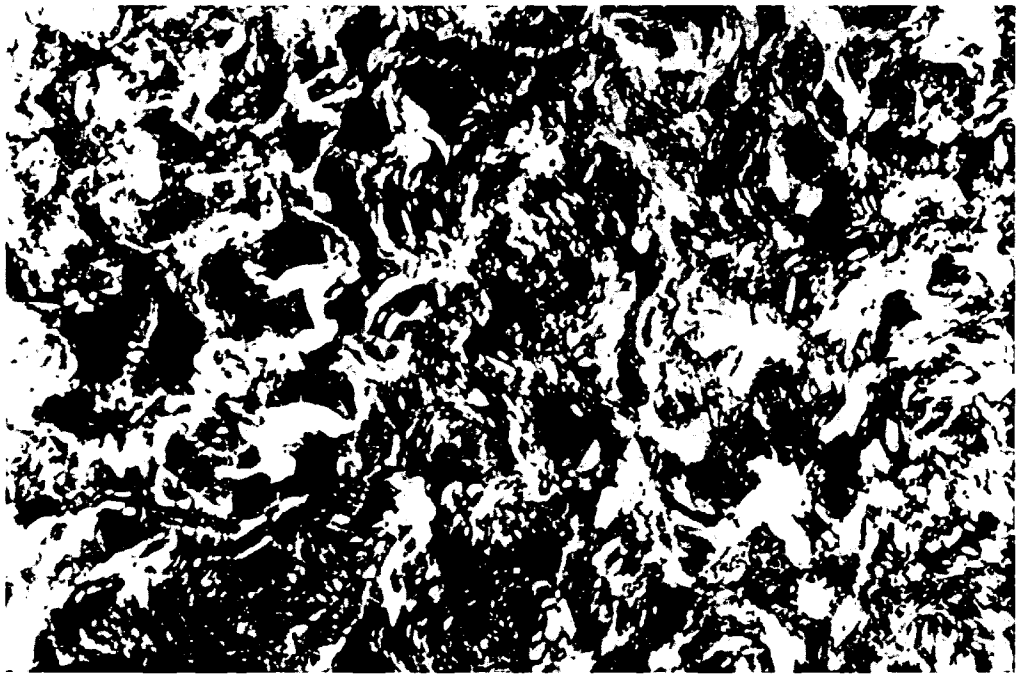
(Fig. 12) William Perehudoff, *AC-94-31*, 1994.

(Fig. 13) Kenneth Lochhead, *Collective Farming*, 1953.

(Fig. 14) Kenneth Lochhead, *The Bonspiel*, 1954.

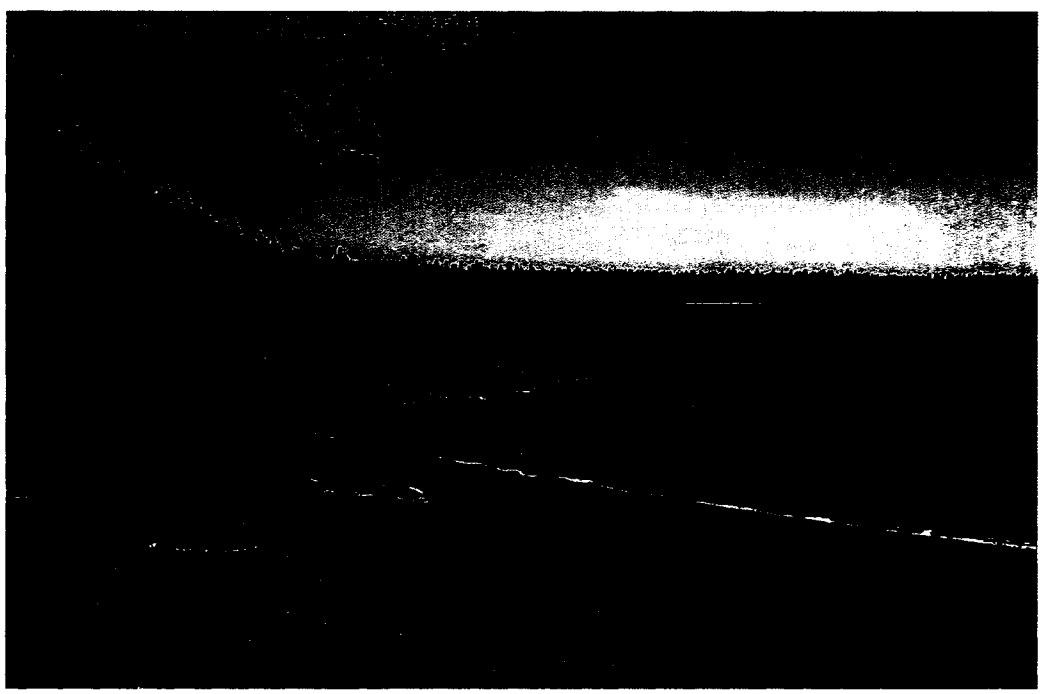


(Fig. 15) Ronald Bloore, *Untitled*, 1965.



(Fig. 16) Arthur McKay, *Flat Blue, Flat White, Stove Enamel*, 1960.

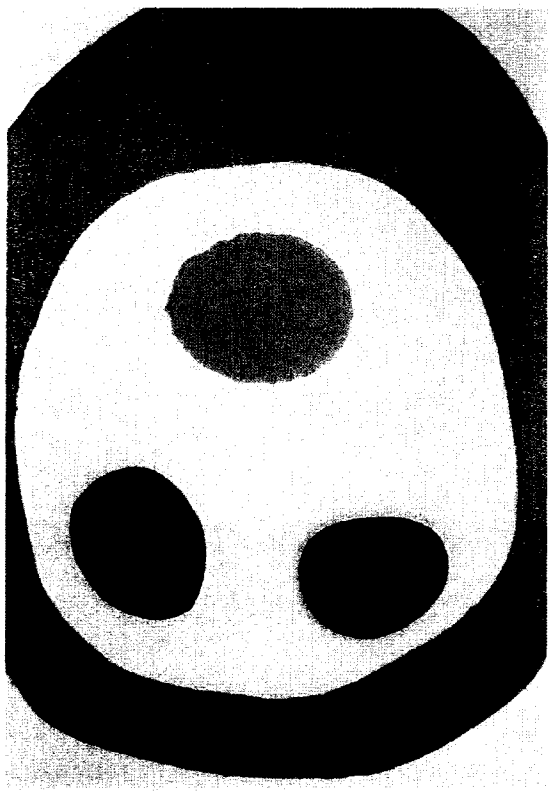
(Fig. 17) Artists' cabin accommodations at Emma Lake, Saskatchewan.



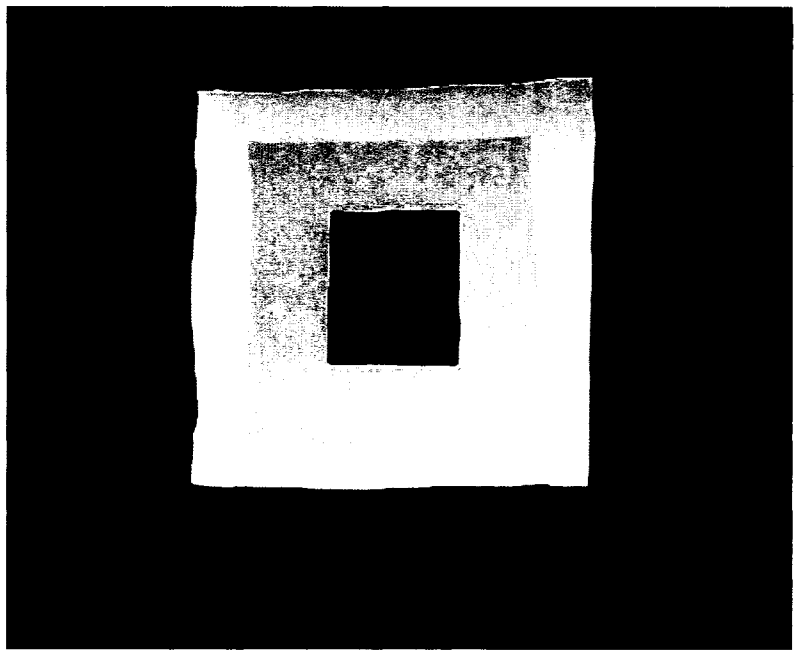
(Fig. 18) View of the beach from the Kenderdine Campus, Emma Lake, Saskatchewan.

(Fig. 19) Dorothy Knowles and children at Emma Lake, Saskatchewan.

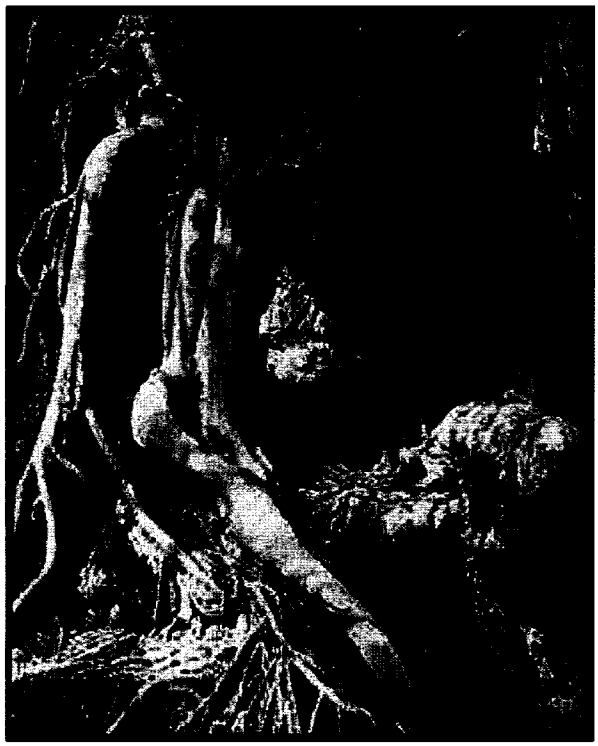
(Fig. 20) Studio critique at the 1962 Greenberg workshop.



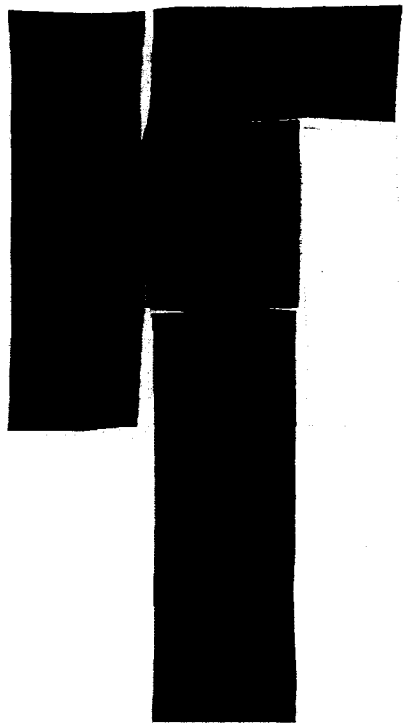
(Fig. 21) Jules Olitski, *Ino Delight*, 1962.



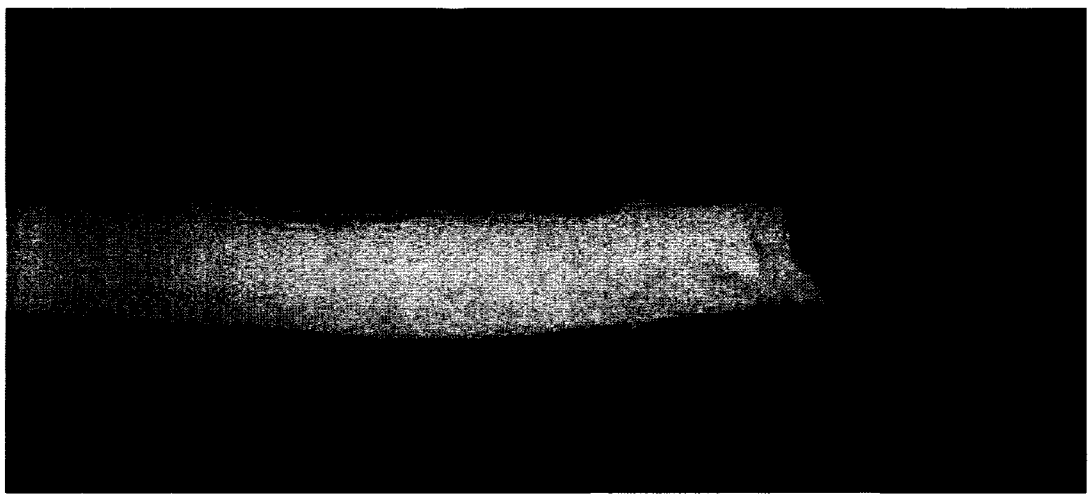
(Fig. 22) Kenneth Lochhead, *Blue Extension,* 1963.



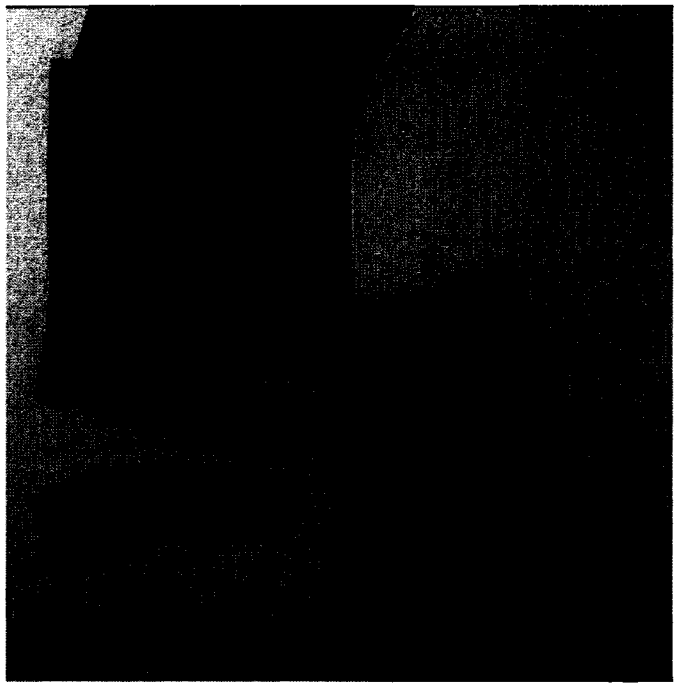
(Fig. 23) Ernest Lindner, *Regeneration*, 1968.



(Fig. 24) Kenneth Lochhead, *Dark Green Centre*, 1963.

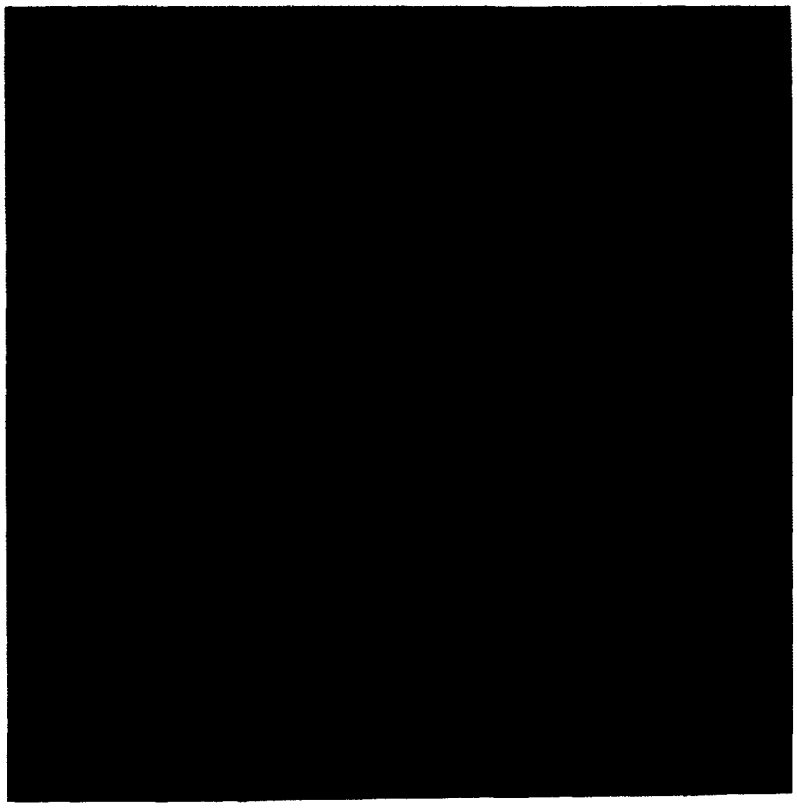


(Fig. 25) Jack Bush, *Blue Green Thrust*, 1959.

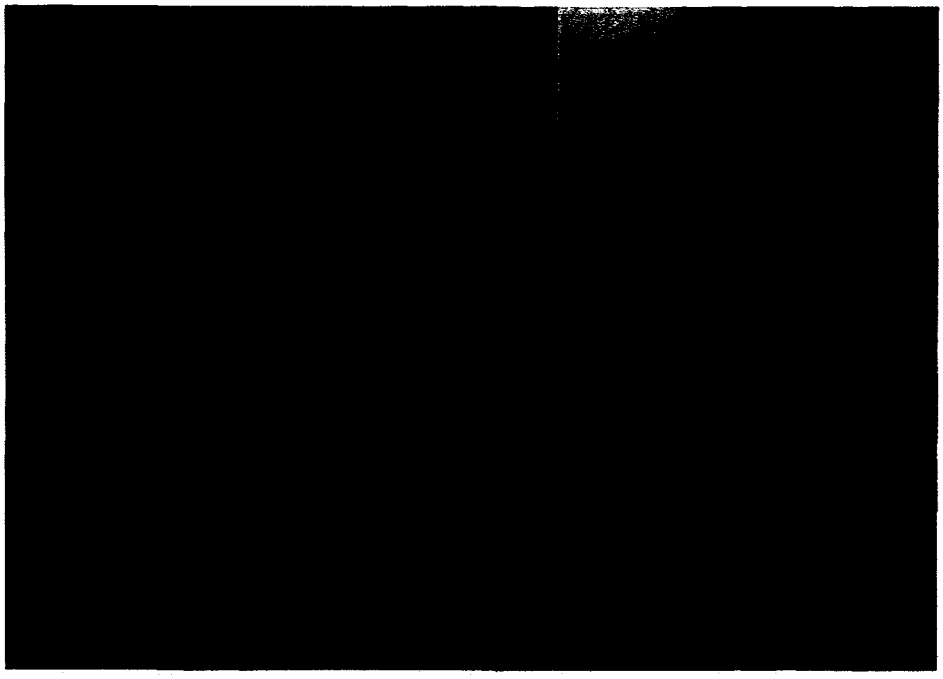


(Fig. 26) William Perehudoff, *Color Improvisation*, 1967.

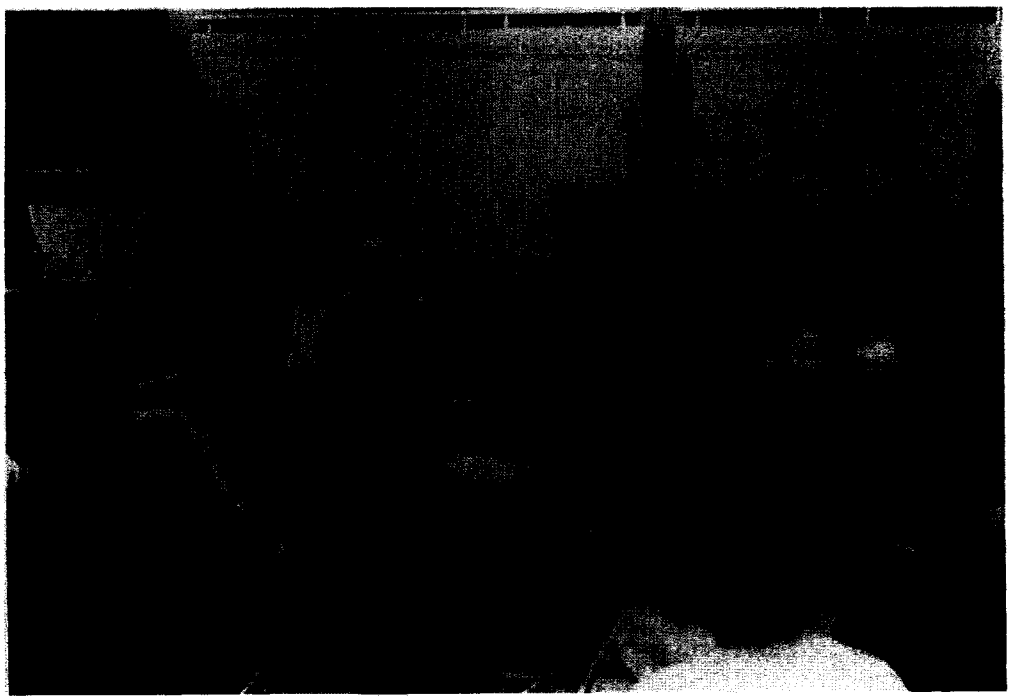
(Fig. 27) Jack Bush, *Slow Fall*, 1976.



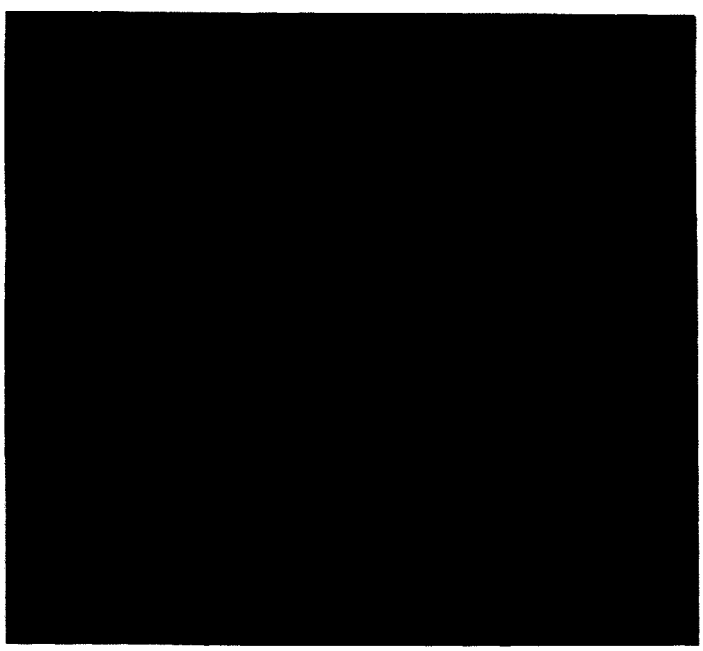
(Fig. 28) Robert Christie, *Untitled I*, 1970.



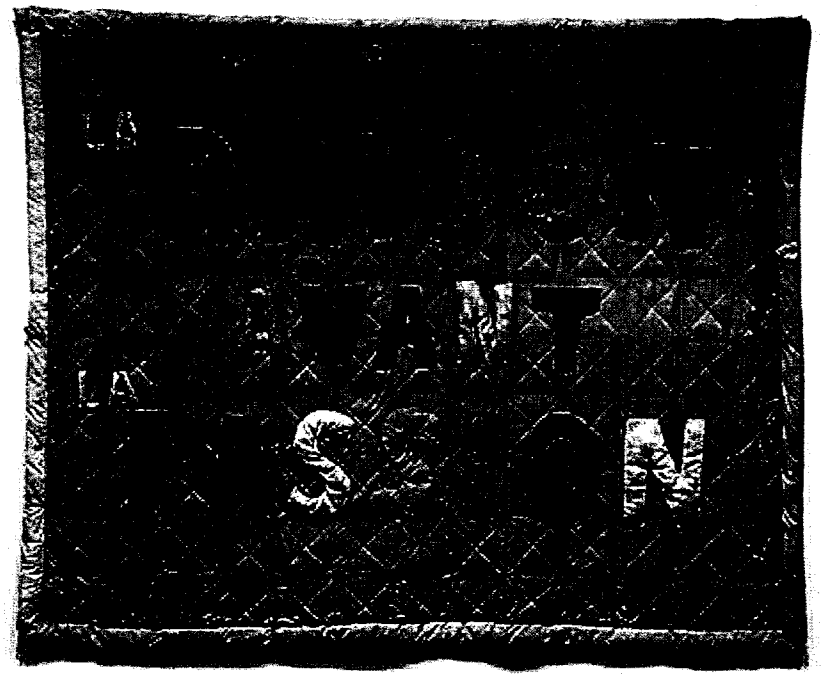
(Fig. 29) Jack Bush, *English Visit*, 1967.



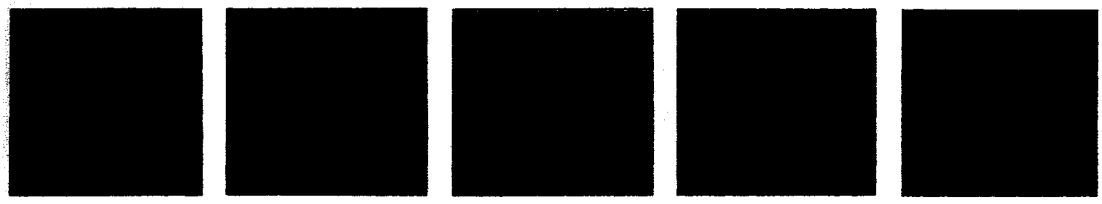
(Fig. 30) Clement Greenberg, Guido Molinari, and other attendees at the 1962 Emma Lake workshop.



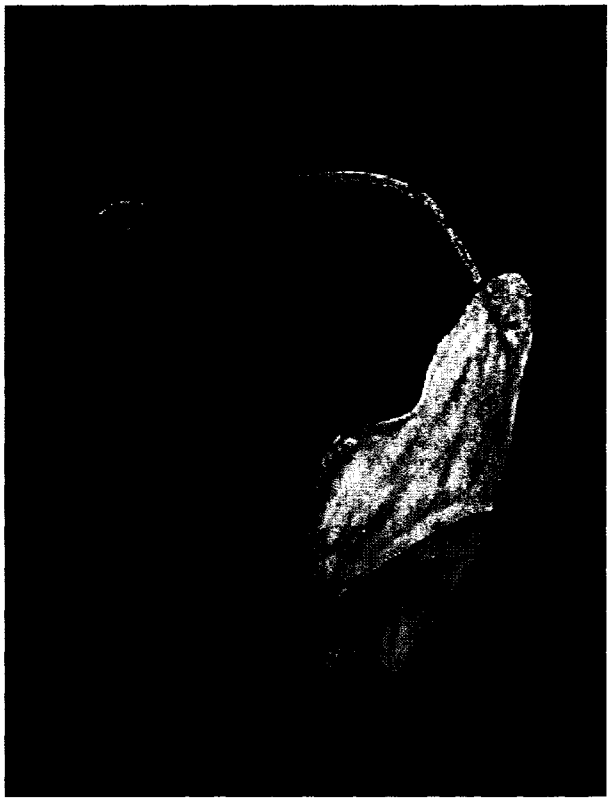
(Fig. 31) Guido Molinari, *Opposition Rectangulaire*, 1961.



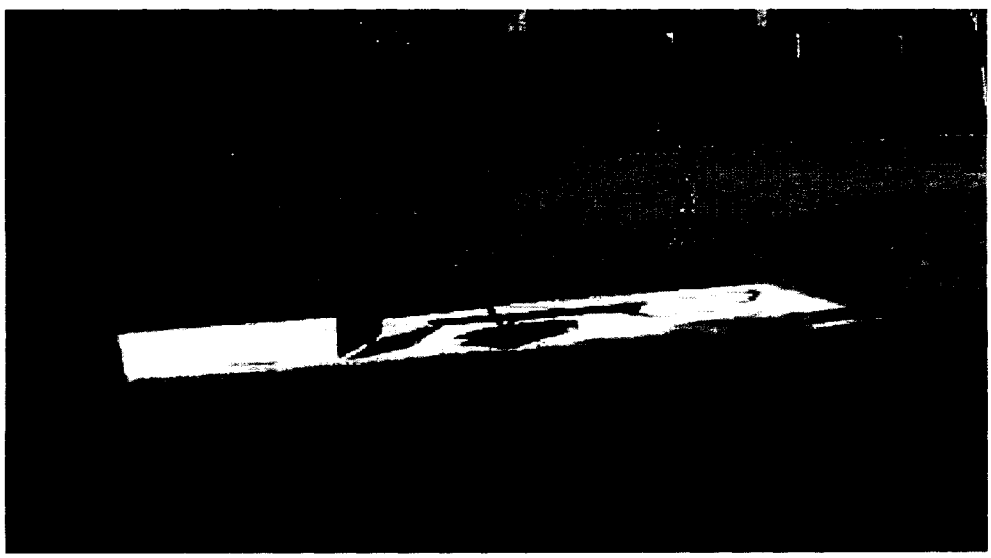
(Fig. 32) Joyce Wieland, *La raison avant la passion*, 1968.



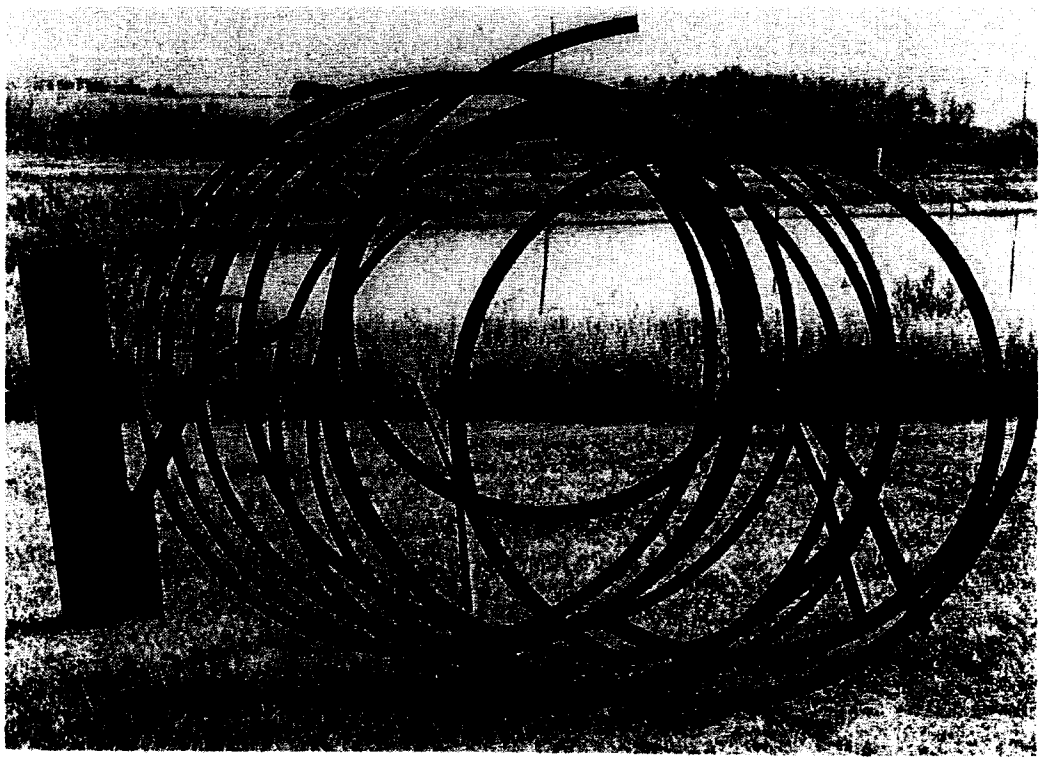
(Fig. 33) Greg Curnoe, *True North Strong and Free*, 1968



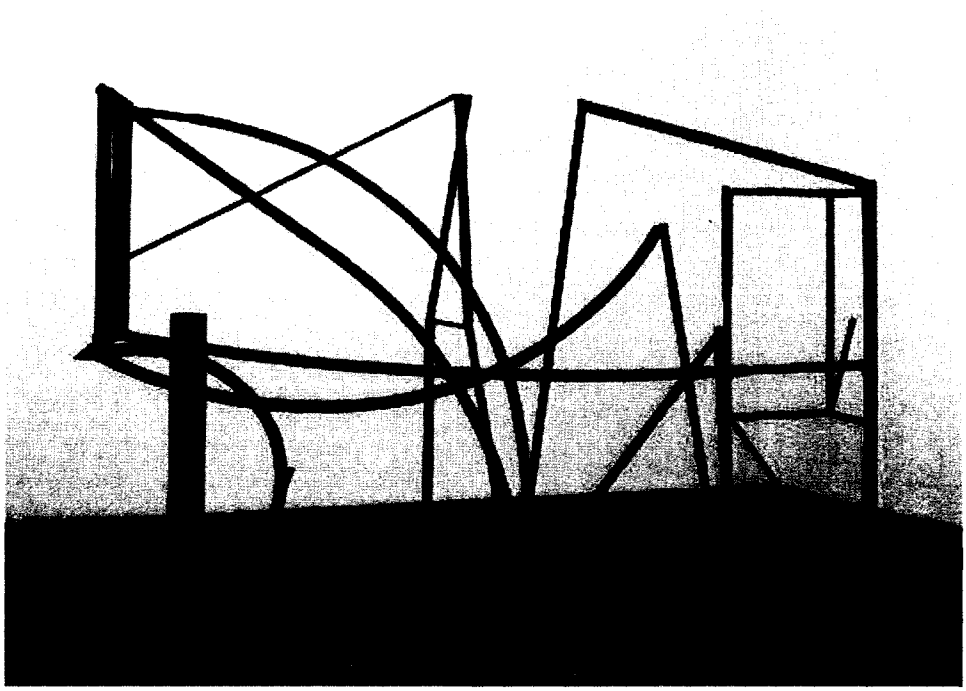
(Fig. 34) Joanne Bell, *The Zero Factor: Worried George?*, 2000.



(Fig. 35) Douglas Bentham, *Untitled*, 1971.



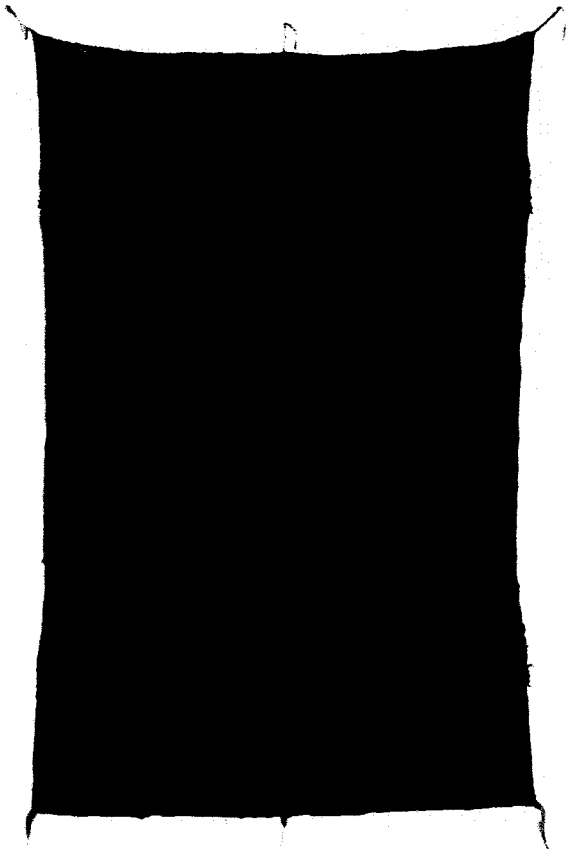
(Fig. 36) Douglas Bentham, *Prairie Duster*, 1977.



(Fig. 37) Anthony Caro, *Emma Dipper*, 1977

(Fig. 38) David Thauberger, *Banking Centre,* 2001

(Fig. 39) Bob Boyer, *Path to Piapot*, 1999



(Fig. 40) Bob Boyer, *Small Pox Issue*, 1983.

(Fig. 41) Neal McLeod, *Nimosômipan II*, 2002.

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