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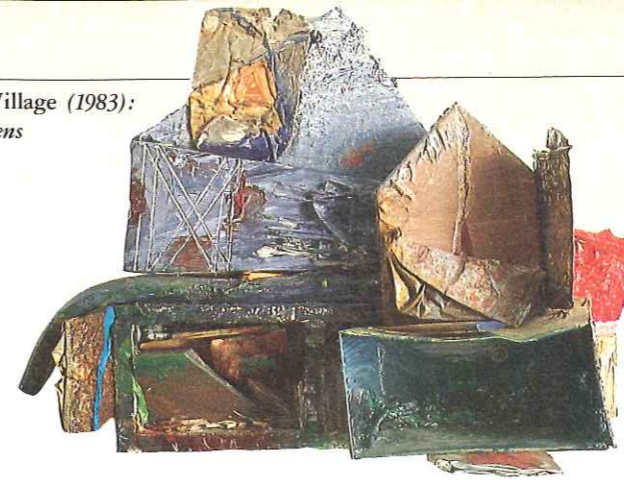
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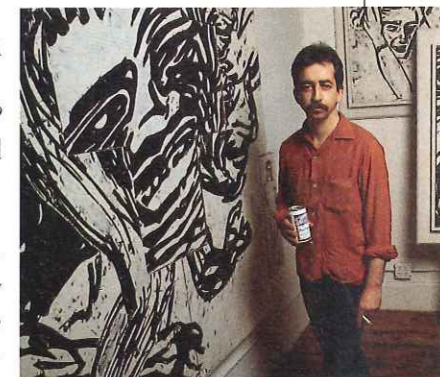
Gordon Rayner's Hill Village (1983): painting beyond the givens



## PERSONAL BESTS

- Who will survive the turbulent '80s with reputations intact?
- Whose works given unlimited funds would one purchase for pleasure and profit?
- What would be hauled to safety first if flames threatened to engulf a collection?
- What underrated and relatively unknown talents await full recognition?
- With whom would noted artists collaborate?
- Where is the most innovative, exciting and valid work taking place across the country?

To answer these and other questions we invited critics, curators, collectors, gallery owners, and of course artists themselves, to place on record their choices and — in spite of the inevitable reluctance to indulge in a ratings game — everyone talked. We present here a sampling of their views — some predictable, others downright idiosyncratic.



Painter David Craven: every shift is unexpected



A renewal of abstraction: Allyson Clay's Cross by the Sea, Canada, 1985 (1985)



**ALVIN BALKIND,**  
head of arts studio,  
Banff School of Fine Arts

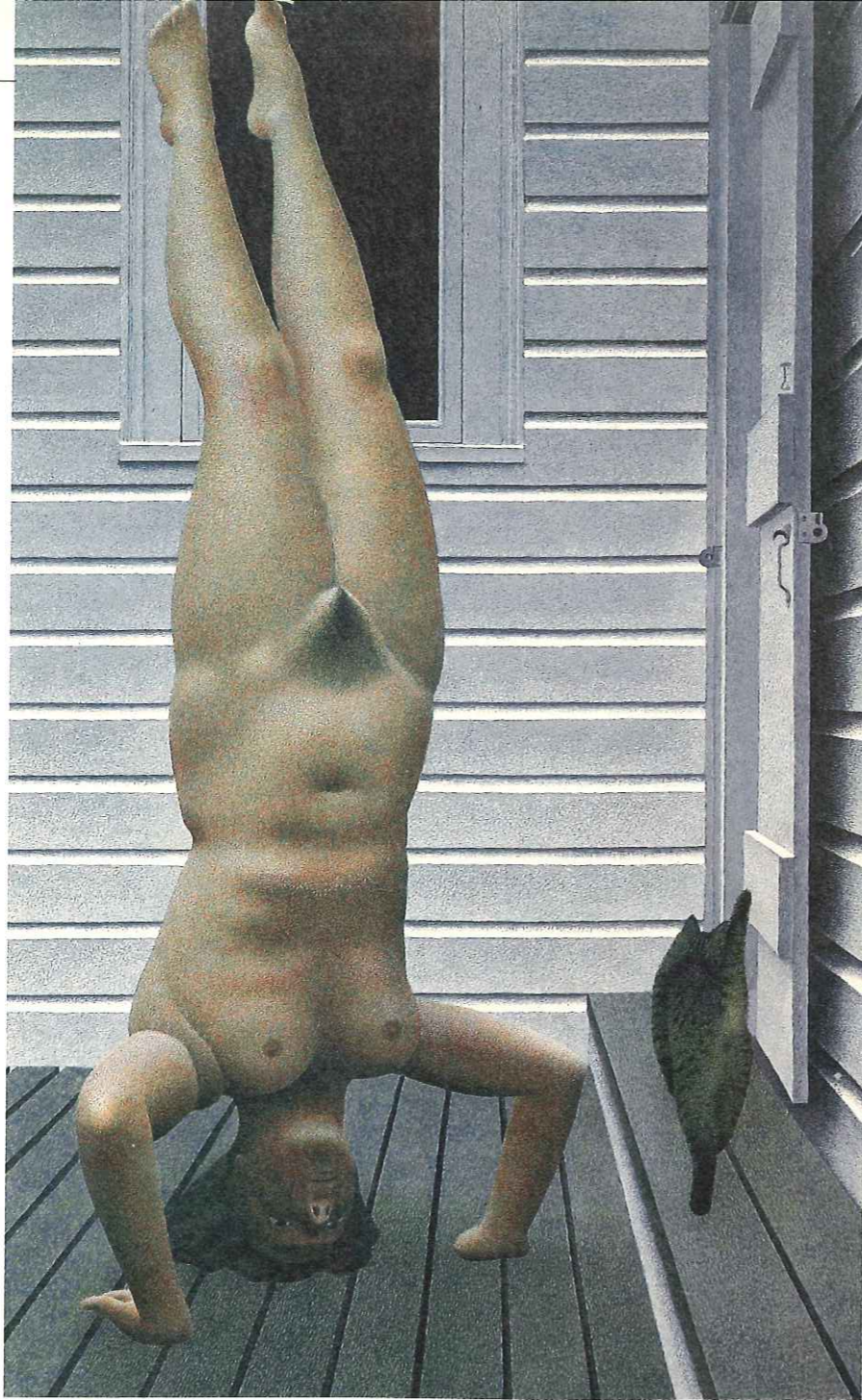
If the Vancouver Art Gallery were burning down, the one thing that I would *not* save would be the Emily Carrs. I would toss them on the fire! Not because of anything intrinsic in her work but because I object to what people have done to her. I'm very anti-plinth. Also, a little bit of Colville goes a long way. When you've seen them all, you've seen one! Again, he's someone who's been deified. I don't want to see another Michael Snow at this point. I don't want to see another Paterson Ewen in a group show. They're among the best artists we have ever had — they are marvellous artists and profound. But you see them all the time. Programming in the public galleries is, how shall I say, filled with recessive genes and out come monsters after a while.

I feel a need to go where I feel an explosive energy at work, some kind of obsession. There's a *mad* artist in Vancouver called Rick Lukacs. He's part of the *Young Romantics* show at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Also, Cliff Atkinson. He does large, very dense drawings. And Mark Grady, who does life-size war machines. He's not making an obvious political comment, he's making an aesthetic statement that's interesting. Last year, he painted a full-size American war helicopter and a full-size Russian tank and a full-size British fighter plane. They were quite imposing, but they were all done on little strips of plastic so that he can take them apart and ship them around.

**OLGA KORPER,**  
Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto

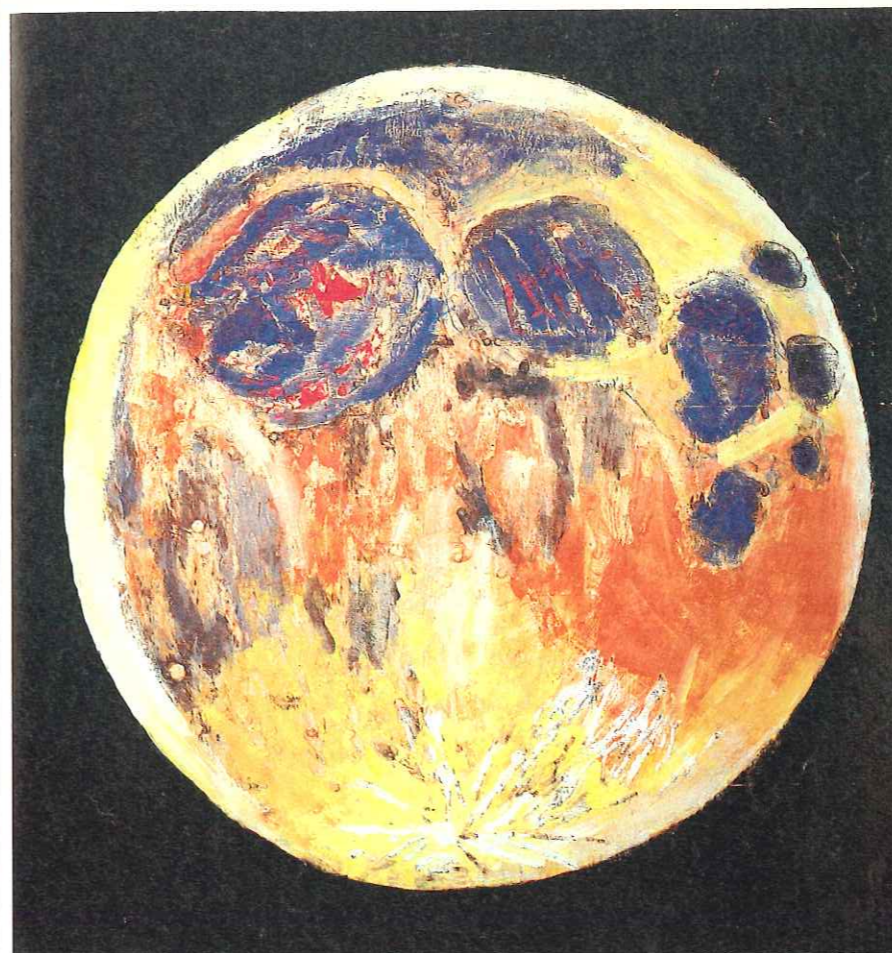
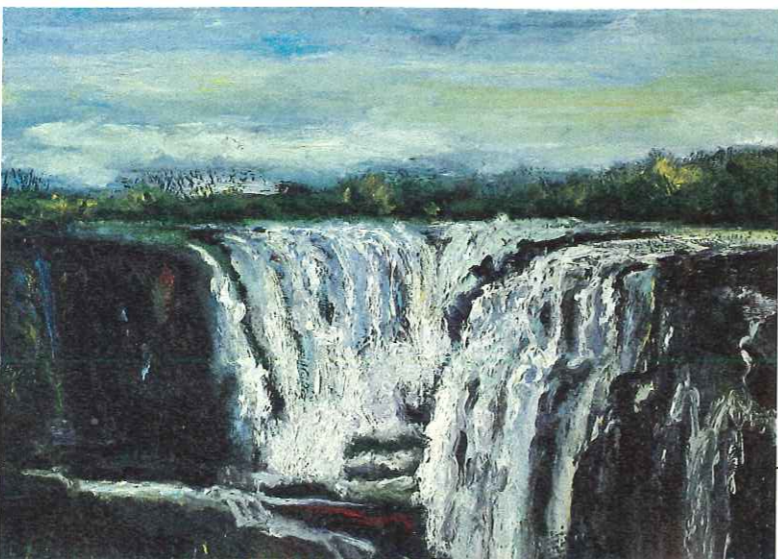
I guess my all-time fave is really Paterson Ewen, if you want to know the truth. Paterson Ewen and Michael Snow are the two people that I have up on pedestals, but that's not exactly saying anything new.

I was pretty excited about Greg Murdock's piece in the *Interiors/Tableaux* exhibition at Burlington this summer. It had all the qualities that I personally like — a combination of a formal resolution of the issues at hand with enough emotional seduction in it



*Alex Colville's Headstand (1982): filled with recessive genes*

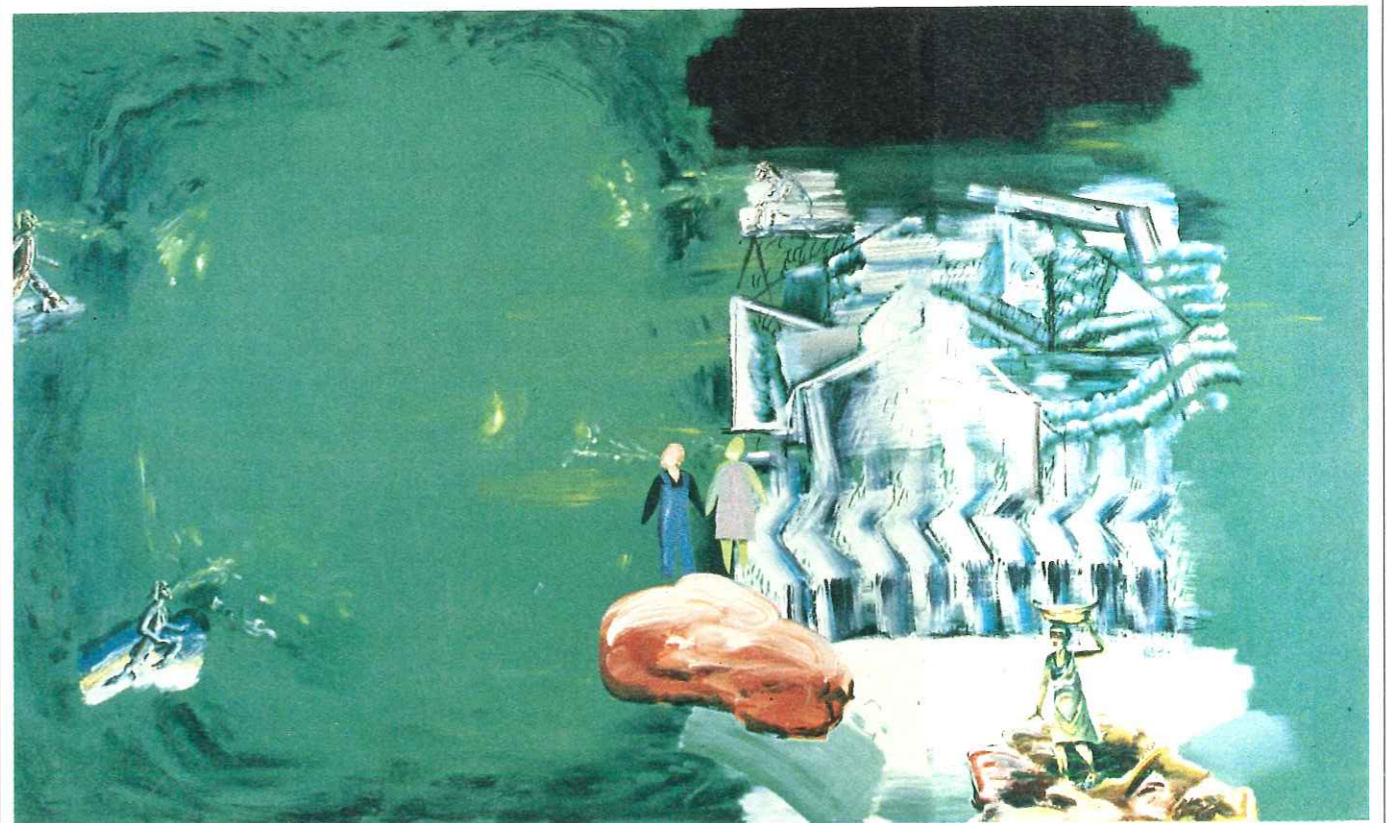
*Rising above the hype: Douglas Kirton's Intoxification: Waterfall (1985)*



*Paterson Ewen's Full Moon (1984): an all-time fave*



*A sneaky kind of humour: Vic Cicansky's Armchair Garden with Vegetables (1984)*



*Carol Wainio's Models (1984): this Montreal painter carries intellectual content without dropping the ball*



that it gets my gut. I am also very excited about the Stephen Cruise piece in the Toronto Sculpture Garden, but it excites me on a different level. I'm very keen on magic and I like a mystical, meditative kind of contemplative art that addresses the soul. Hugh Leroy has that quality for me. So does Yves Gaucher.

In terms of unsung heroes, I would have to say Vic Cicansky. Every time I see one of his cupboards filled with vegetables I go crazy! Now there's a guy that should be taken more seriously. If there's anything I can't stand, you know, it's funny art. I really feel that humour is very tricky in art, but Cicansky has a sneaky kind of strange humour. I think some of Mark Prent's pieces also have that



**Greg Murdock: formalism with feeling**

quality. I remember seeing his piece *Prickles* at The Isaacs Gallery in 1972, the one with the penis pickles in a jar. Now they have a bizarre sense of humour. Cicansky doesn't have the shock quality quite so overtly, but still, when you have a cabbage sitting in a chair it's not unlike pickling a penis in a jar. There's a strange kind of overlap, a slight Pirandellian shift of reality. I like David Gilhooly a lot too. I mean, who would not love a frog on a bagel?

**SUSAN WHITNEY,**  
Susan Whitney Gallery, Regina

My taste runs to the representational, but with an absurd, sort of exotic twist to it. There's a young woman in Vancouver whom



**Vicky Marshall: included in this summer's Young Romantics show**

I saw, Vicky Marshall, and I just thought her work was terrific. For me, her paintings tied in with a lot of the New Image painting, but they weren't just a quick experiment.

When I was in Toronto, it was Douglas Kirton whose work I really found exciting. I knew he had had a lot of hype, and sometimes you wonder where it's all going to lead, but I think some of the new landscape paintings are terrific. There was a waterfall in the show that was just wonderful.

Although I think that the term folk art has been overused to a great extent and that a lot of folk art is strictly decorative, the interest in folk art has been sustained. A lot of people from the East and from Vancouver say to me, "Oh, by the way Susan, uh, nobody's doing folk art anymore. It's out of fashion." I just sort of laugh and say, "Thanks a lot! I'll just throw it all out then!" I think that the good work will definitely survive. It's very much a part of the country.

**HAROLD TOWN,**  
artist, Toronto

Given that the fungible Canadian creative community has the same international standing in the arts as Bermuda, we'd be better employed shooting rain-clouds with spitballs than getting into this ridiculous rating game.

If I had to pick anyone to collaborate with, it would be Earle Birney. Artists are generally so damn dull they put me to sleep. I find writers so much more amusing. I think Birney's a great poet and with a long and consequential history of work, and what I truly admire about the man, as I do Morley Callaghan, is that here he is in his old age like Titian producing extraordinary stuff. He's still working, he's still brooding. Earle has been extremely avant-garde, he's done all kinds of design poems, pattern poems, sound poems. He also represents a part of the Canadian ethos that I've never had anything to do with. That's the travelling Cana-

dian, but he represents one of the good ones. The guy's been everywhere.

**MAUREEN McTEER,**  
lawyer, Ottawa

If I had a blank cheque, I think I'd definitely buy a William Pehudoff and I'd like a Maryon Kantaroff. There's a Riopelle that's owned by the National Gallery that I'd like to have — it's the one we had at Stormoway. I think, actually, the Mulroneys have it at 24 Sussex now. And I'd love to own an Alex Wyse, particularly the one entitled *Exercise in Flying Cows Over the Governor General's*. And a Barbara Ballachey.

**CHANTAL PONTBRIAND,**  
editor, *Parachute* magazine,  
Montreal

I've never defended figurative and neo-expressionist painting very much; I think it's just a market phenomenon. But of course, I think there are some excellent and true-blooded painters among them. I've defended Betty Goodwin, for example, all along.

I could name at least 20 top-notch artists who are, unfortunately, not well enough recognized on the international scene. The Rabinowitch brothers, for example. Or General Idea. In Montreal, I would say Irene Whittome, Betty Goodwin, Roland Poulin certainly. In Toronto, Ian Carr-Harris, Liz Magor, and in Vancouver, Jeff Wall. Pierre Boogaerts's photography as well. Also, John Massey. And of course, Michael Snow, but I think that goes without saying.

**Betty Goodwin: true blooded painting**



**Winnipeg's Ivan Eyre: bold that pose!**

**KARYN ELIZABETH ALLEN,**  
curator, The Nickle Arts  
Museum, Calgary

I am interested in artists who run the extra mile — creatively — and Barbara Astman is certainly one. Recently she has gone back to doing very traditional types of iconography like food on a plate but she's doing it on a scale that is vast in terms of the still-life tradition. And she's doing it in colour photography.

If the Nickle were burning down and I could only save one thing, I guess it would be an Ivan Eyre drawing that we have, called *Wrapped Head (Study for Birdmen)*. It's very much a self-portrait — an absolute gem. One person who I think will certainly be in the history books is David Craven. His last show at Sable-Castelli was just amazing. The surfaces were gouged, like Paterson Ewen's, but they were figurative, almost religious in connotation. Every shift that he has made has been the unexpected; he lives right on the edge.

Another person who I think will be important in the long run is Harold Klunder. The piece that he had in *Toronto Painting 84*, had all the power of traditional Dutch painting. Of course, Harold is Dutch. I think that particular work has brought him into a whole new realm.

**MIRIAM SHIELL,**  
Waddington & Shiell  
Galleries, Toronto

Let's put the young artists in perspective. I think there is an undue amount of attention paid to young artists by curators, critics and the like, at the expense of some of our senior artists. The Painters Eleven, for example, is one of the most neglected art historical facts in this country and in the

I could name at least 20 top artists who aren't well enough recognized internationally.

1980s we continue to ignore them. We should be seeing major retrospectives of these artists in our museums, but there don't seem to be any. General Idea gets a show at the AGO but when was even Paterson Ewen there?

I've always thought that Katja Jacobs is a fine artist. She has her ins and outs and roundabouts and her work is not always consistent but that's fine. Also, I can't knock him, I think Tony Scherman is a fine painter. He's a very ambitious young man — and I think sometimes his ambition gets the better of his paintings — but we mustn't lose sight of ability and Tony's paintings cut it like butter.

My private taste tends to be a bit esoteric, quite frankly. John Scott: now he is good. That one is for real.

**NANCY TOUSLEY,**  
art critic, *Calgary Herald*

I'm interested in a number of women artists these days, particularly Carol Wainio. Her paintings can carry rather complicated intellectual content without sacrificing the vehicle for the ideas. I also admire Liz Magor, for instance, and Janice Gurney — intelligent artists who have something to say and are saying it in a very original way. I have some reservations about Gurney's work because I think she runs the risk of making it an awfully dry and intellectual muddle. But I'm interested in what she's doing and the ideas she's working with. One person who hasn't been seen that much in eastern Canada is Carroll Moppett. She's dealing with very

complex visual ideas — blending figure and landscape in a very abstract way — to make sculpture.

How strong a place abstraction can find right now, I really don't know. I think it would have to be drastically different from modernism as we have known it because it will just fall prey immediately to that horrible criticism of being art for art's sake. On the other hand, there's a lot of "smart art" around these days that says, "I'm right and you're all wrong!" This is something I'm very tired of because the world is too complex a place for this kind of black and white thinking.

**DAVID MIRVISH,**  
art collector, Toronto

Twenty years ago one of the newspapers asked me what I would buy if I was given a blank cheque. At that time I said Borduas or Tom Thomson and some of the early pictures of Milne, Varley and A.Y. Jackson — the pictures that are straightforward and less stylized. I like Jack Bush — the greatest of our painters — which is not unexpected for me to say perhaps today. I may have thought that when I said Borduas way back then, but I just didn't have the nerve to say it. But now I do. If I had a blank cheque I'd probably buy a later Bush. The grounds were more turbulent than they were in the '60s pictures, there was more activity and the shapes float on them, whereas in some of the earlier pictures there's less of a figure-and-ground relationship.

**Toronto's John Scott: this one's for real says dealer Miriam Shiell**





**Canada gives fame fast and walks away. We must stop categorizing artists by decades.**

I think there's a problem today for young painters: they want to engage in what is the most attention-attracting style of the moment in order to make themselves felt. They want to be relevant painters and all the styles are just an excuse for getting elbow room. But, deciding between where the flash is and where the quality is — that's the collector's job.

**ALAN WOOD, artist, Vancouver**

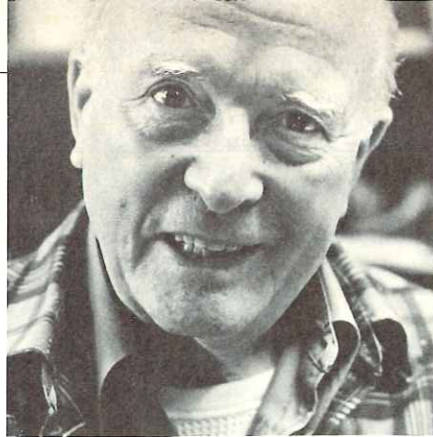
Certainly, on the West Coast, artists are making reference to the landscape again. David MacWilliam's paintings, for example, tend to be fairly abstract, but in his recent paintings the simple abstract forms were given a sort of sumptuousness of paint that makes reference to elements seen in the landscape, nuances of colour and so on. You can see this in Robert Linsley's work too — paintings about sky and walls and vistas. Derek Root is another one — he was in the *Young Romantics* exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery.



*Allyson Clay: a rising star in Vancouver*

Two of his strongest paintings in the show are works in which he decided to simply deal with the forest and water and light and tree stumps and so on. Rick Lukacs, another artist in the show, is just simply a good painter. I get the feeling that when he looks at a Rembrandt he thinks to himself, "I see how he does that..." And he can draw.

Another thing that seems to be happening here is a renewal of interest in abstraction. In



*Jack Shadbolt: more and more relevant*

this regard I think, again, of David MacWilliam and also Allyson Clay — someone who had a really spectacular show this summer at the Contemporary Art Gallery. She's excellent. Greg Murdock is another one. The most interesting thing about him is the range that he gets — the staining, smudging, scraping, scribbling, peeling — that suggests a wide range of possibilities, a whole area that the mind can romp in.

But if we are talking about underrated people, one of the best and most underrated sculptors working in Canada right now is Al McWilliams. When he finally gets a retrospective in the right museum space, people are going to realize that he's infinitely more important than a lot of people who are getting a lot more attention.

Outside of Vancouver, just to trot through a few names, I have a lot of admiration for Ron Moppett. He's just a very, very good artist. Sandra Meigs, in Toronto, is an artist who interests me as well as, of course, Graham Coughtry and Gordon Rayner. If you're talking about individuals, Winnipeg is loaded with them — Don Proch, Wanda Koop, and someone who looks like every other hard-edge painter until you actually see one of his paintings, Tony Tascona.

Also, of course, there's Jack Shadbolt. Shadbolt, for me, becomes more and more relevant all the time and it's heartening to have conversations with young artists who are thinking about his work.

**PIERRE BERTON, author, Kleinburg, Ontario**

If I was given a blank cheque I think I'd probably buy a Harold Town. I have two or three of his now and I think I'd really buy another one. I like his versatility, his very strong sense of draftsmanship and his imagination. He's one of the few artists who moves, you know. A lot of artists stay in the same groove. But Town doesn't. I like Jack Shadbolt very much and Gordon Smith. I suppose if I was able to buy a work by any historic Canadian artist I'd take Emily Carr. I think she towers above everybody else.

**SANDRA PAIKOWSKY, curator, Concordia Art Gallery, Montreal**

I think things in Montreal have changed in the last few years. There has been a revitalization here. You could see it in a show like *Peinture au Quebec* this summer at the Musée d'art contemporain. While it would be wrong to say that out of the 16 people in that show there were one or two who were head and shoulders above everybody else, there were a couple in the show, like Lynn Hughes, who've had a lot more experience and whose work looks a lot more assured.

David Elliott is an example of an artist doing interesting things who isn't perhaps as well known outside of Quebec as one might expect. Also, Bernard Gamoy and Michael Smith. What these three share is a real understanding of what painting is about, a traditional devotion to painting. More and more these days what you see is a pursuit of inventiveness for its own sake, but often the formal means of expression just doesn't follow through.

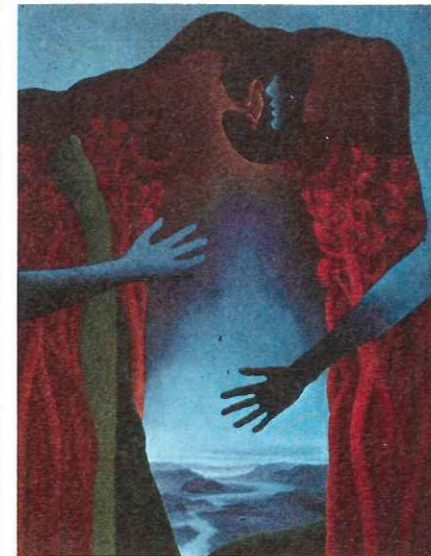
In terms of historical painters, this may sound corny, but I think James Wilson Morrice is Canada's greatest underrated painter. He wasn't a great innovator on an international scale, that's for sure, but he was a role model in terms of commitment and ambition.

Canada has a very bad tradition of producing good starters and bad finishers; this is a country that has given fame fast and then walked away. But the fact is that there are artists who have started well, like Gordon Rayner or Joyce Wieland, who have kept on going. We ought to get out of this habit of categorizing artists by decades.

**DONALD KUSPIT, art critic, New York**

I feel that in the United States, David Salle is an extremely important artist. I feel that in Europe, Anselm Kiefer has staying power although I wasn't entirely happy with his last show. But, I feel he's made an important statement and his work is durable. I feel the same about Immendorff and Polke.

I think there are several things that determine staying power. First of all, there is a



*Hot colour and social commentary: Carol Fraser's The Solopcist (1974)*



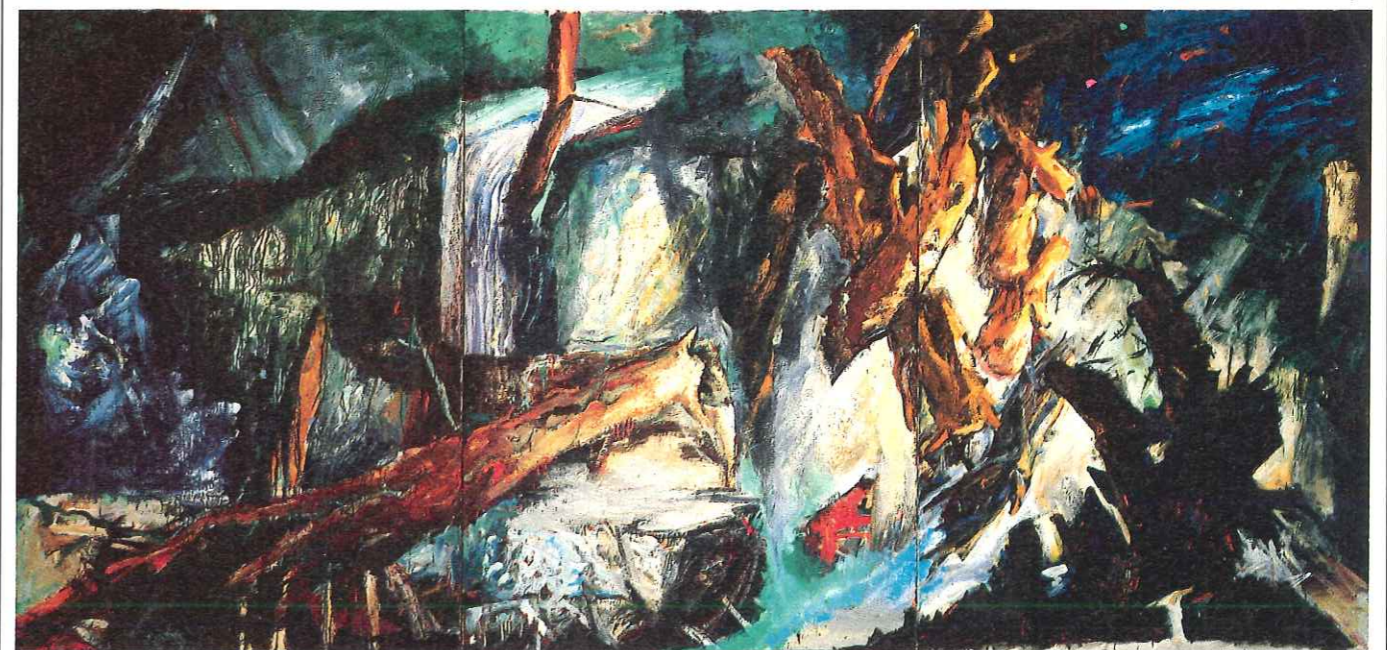
*Katja Jacobs's Tumaco/Healing Cloth (1985): getting better and better*



*Jeff Wall's Milk (1984): radical photography rejuvenated*



*Looking to Colville for cues: David Thauberger's Snow Falls (1983)*



*West-coast forest, water and light: Derek Root's Explosion in the Landscape (1985)*



**The presence of dead dogs does not necessarily guarantee profundity.**

JOHN REEVES

subject matter which involves some kind of moral dimension, by which I mean that it engages some kind of existential issue ... the human predicament, if you want to call it that. Then I think there has to be an acute consciousness of stylistic development, a comprehensive art historical self-consciousness. And then there's the artist's own sense of unfolding from where he is.

I'm tired of certain kinds of so-called radical photography. I include Cindy Sherman and Barbara Kruger in that. In Canada, I think Jeff Wall, as a photographer, is a very important figure. I think, in terms of his overall development, he has a much more complex vision than Sherman. I mean, Cindy has this wonderful image which she manipulates brilliantly, but it's a media manipulation and I think Jeff Wall is trying to move to another dimension of vision.

**KENNETH BAKER, art critic, San Francisco Chronicle**

What I like is a whole bunch of eccentric and largely unknown stuff. In Canada, I like John Scott a lot, and Gordon Rayner. John Scott seems to me to be somebody who really draws like hell. There's a certain kind of artist in the *neo-ex* corral that for one reason or another looks real to me, and John is one of them. It's got something to do with the energy of the performance, the spirit of the marks themselves.

What I really like about Rayner is that he really loves paint and that comes across. Also, he is capable of making things that, for me, count as paintings without starting with the givens of painting — the flat surface or any of that. He starts with whatever he wants to work on and puts paint on it and somehow a painting results. In a way it's kind of old-fashioned modernist stuff but there's nothing retro about it.

What really makes me sick about the New York scene and the likes of David Salle is that it's really kind of fraudulent work. They're using paint in a totally non-painterly way to make paintings about the end of painting. I have no interest in looking at anything that needs that kind of rationalization. As far as I'm concerned, David Salle is the yuppie avant-gardist.



*Saskatoon's Alicia Popoff: one of the new generation of Saskatchewan painters*

**LINDA MILROD, Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon**

I think there are some contemporary artists in this country who — deliberately or otherwise — have assured their posterity. Michael Snow comes to mind. Paterson Ewen comes to mind real fast. General Idea. I think, too, that video art in this country has been pretty important, not only here, but internationally.

There are probably lots of historical Canadian figures who haven't been given their due. For example, I hadn't heard of Stanley Brunst before I came to Saskatoon. His most prolific period was in the '30s and '40s. He was self trained, but he obviously looked at lots of art books. He never considered himself an artist, but in fact he was much more modern than many of his contemporaries here, much more attuned to New York or Paris.

The younger generation of artists here, like Alicia Popoff, Richard Gorenko and Don McVeigh, certainly deserve a lot more national attention. Tom O'Flanagan is another one that I have my eye on. He was a



*John Greer: part of the NSCAD achievement*

student of Otto Rogers. Recently, he's been making harlequin-like figures, wooden collages that are very beautifully painted. It's the kind of stuff that really grabs you around the esophagus. But, if you want to talk about something lasting for the next generation I

think that the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design is responsible for some of our most exciting young artists who will maintain life-long careers: Susan Britton, a video artist; Landon Mackenzie a really good painter; all the people who are still there like Jerry Ferguson, Gary Kennedy, Ron Shuebrook — all of them significant artists; Eric Cameron, Michael Fernandes, John Greer and a lot of other people. They are all over the country too. Rita McKeough is a really interesting artist who came out of the college. Colette Urban, who lives on the West Coast now. The list is endless.

**GREG CURNOE, artist, London, Ontario**

Christiane Pflug is one artist who is very underrated. She lived in Toronto and committed suicide 13 years ago. She was a funny kind of realist painter who painted domestic scenes in a tradition of very personal work. The Winnipeg Art Gallery gave her a posthumous show and she had a pretty good reputation when she was alive, but she deserves to be better known.

**IAN MUNCASTER, Zwicker's Gallery, Halifax**

One historical figure who has to be given much more recognition than he has received is Bertram Brooker. Brooker's problem was that he was too bloody successful. He won the first Governor General's award for literature. He edited some of Canada's artier books. He also was socially accomplished and actually in late middle age joined MacLaren Advertising. He was, of course, an influential artist. He had a huge influence on LeMoine FitzGerald. You know, Brooker started off pounding spikes with a section gang on the CP line. At that time he was very interested in Kandinsky's work. He was well educated and knew what was going on in the world; in fact, the Bohunks used to call him Kandinsky!

I think that much of the contemporary work will be forgotten in 10 or 11 years. But I would hardly need a very big crystal ball to say that somebody like Alex Colville would have staying power. He is probably the only

Canadian artist who has made it to any real extent internationally.

Some of the other Maritimers will have staying power too, I think — people like Carol Fraser, a woman whose work I think is fantastic. Christopher and Mary Pratt will last, I think some of Mary's work with nudes is a little more interesting than the eviscerated chickens, but that was her life. Mary's painting evolved with the evolution of her family.



JOHN REEVES

*Mary Pratt in her studio: more up her sleeve than eviscerated chickens*

**THERESE DION, consultant, Air Canada, Montreal**

That Tom Dean installation at *Aurora Borealis*... if you gave me a blank cheque I would buy this. Or if you gave me more money, I would go and buy more works but it would be installation art that I would buy. Also, I've seen beautiful works on paper recently by Sheila Butler and also Carroll Moppett's beautiful large paintings, charcoal on canvas, that I saw at the Wynick/Tuck Gallery in Toronto.

As for who will be remembered, the name that I have in my mind is Betty Goodwin. There is something very profound in what she is doing, very human. For the last two or three years, people have been talking about her but she has been doing good work for the last 10 or 15 years. Michael Snow, they will still be talking about because of the different possibilities in his work, the open mind in everything that he does. But I am more touched by the human side of Betty Goodwin.



*Renée Van Halm: inspiration in 3-D*

**SHEILA BUTLER, artist, Winnipeg**

I think Leslie Poole is one artist who is really underrated. The first time I saw his work was at the Bau-Xi gallery in Toronto in the late '70s and he was showing very gutsy, messy self-portraits at a time when nobody was using paint in that expressionist way. People complain about the decorative aspect of his work, but I don't feel that. I think he deals with some gritty subjects, and the decorative aspect is just a nice foil.

Since mostly my work is painting, if I were to collaborate with someone I would really enjoy collaborating with an artist who works in a three-dimensional area, maybe someone who does installation work. For instance, I always respond to Renée Van Halm's work.

**JOYCE WIELAND, artist, Toronto**

Without a doubt, the most exciting thing I've seen recently was *Amadeus*. There was such an amazing passion behind the realization of that film. So much joy and celebration. Unfortunately, I think this kind of thing is absolutely out in art these days. Everyone's into this second-hand angst. But there is a tradition of that kind of exuberance in this country — you don't see it in Colville or people like that, but it's there in Greg Curnoe. Dennis Burton has it — he's crazy! And Michael Snow's drawings. And mine, too, for that matter. There was a wonderful period there for a while when we were all being that way — perhaps it has something to do with the British tradition of humour here.

There are a couple of people that I can think of who deserve more attention. I admire Louise Noguchi very much. Her work has a wonderful, shamanistic quality. Also Mary Janitch — she shows at Carmen Laman-

*Toronto sculptor Louise Noguchi: a wonderful shamanistic quality*



BEN MARK HOLZBERG

VINCENT NOGUCHI

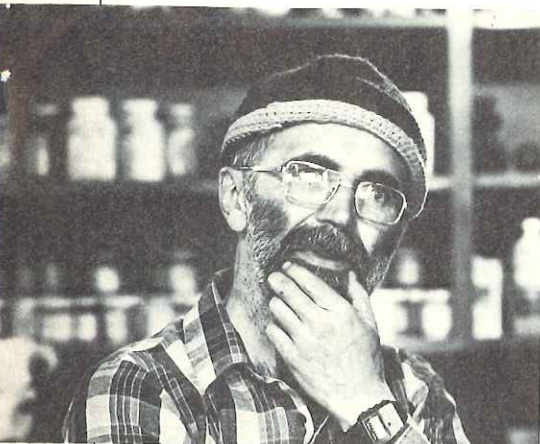


**I don't need a crystal ball to say that Alex Colville will have staying power.**

na's too. In her last show that I saw she made a little deer on brown paper and a long time ago I remember seeing a tree that she had made, with a little parcel inside it. Very shamanistic. Also, my friend Penny Glasser — in that she deals with cultural dreams. She's been involved a lot with the Indians on Manitoulin. Her work doesn't have a smart look or anything, but it's got the truth in it.

**DAVID THAUBERGER, artist, Regina**

Most of my kindred spirits are around here and I've worked with a number of them on projects. Joe Fafard and Vic Cicansky, for example. Jerry Didur and I built a bathtub together once. We didn't win the race, but we won the big prize — we had the most crea-



*Joe Fafard: Thauberger's kindred spirit*

tive bathtub. I'd love to work with Rick Gorenko in Saskatoon. People like that.

I saw the John Hall show at the Wynick/Tuck Gallery in Toronto the last time I was there. Now that stuff is really quite terrific. Also, I like Chris Pratt's work a lot, and Colville, obviously. I look to that work for cues, sometimes in terms of my own work — how to look at what's around you in your locale and use it as a source of inspiration.

I think my experience with folk art was crucial. It was folk artists in Saskatchewan who showed me the way out of the whole art school/art magazine syndrome into making some of my own work. It was a sort of signal to me of how you could be unique and independent.



*Jessie Oonark of Baker Lake: the lasting achievement of the Inuit*

**MARY SPARLING, director, Mount Saint Vincent University Art Gallery, Halifax**

One artist who I think deserves more attention outside of the Maritimes is Carol Fraser. Expressionism has been at the core of her work for all of her artistic life yet still she doesn't get the recognition her work merits. Her use of colour is obsessive and her images are very expressive of social problems, but recently she is dealing more and more with landscape. I would certainly think of Susan Gibson too; she has just been included in Ron Shuebrook's *News from Nova Scotia* show in Toronto. Also, Dawn MacNutt, a weaver who has made the difficult transition to the use of fibre as art.

The last time I was in Toronto I saw Dorothy Cameron's studio show and I thought it was an absolute knock-out. It was made up of these wildly surrealistic and enormously communicative, funny and even horrifying tableaux. The one of her being force-fed by her father really lives in the brain.

I suppose one of the most moving visual experiences I have had recently was a visit I made to Jessie Oonark's grave on Blueberry Hill, outside of Baker Lake. She was one of Canada's major artists. Perhaps 50 years from now Canada might realize that one of our most major art forms is Inuit art. Time after time when I ask people outside the country, "What do you think is significant in Canadian art?", they say, "The work of the Inuit."

**KAREN WILKIN, critic, consultant, Toronto**

I was in Edmonton recently and what was impressive there was the generally high level of sculpture being made. I saw a number of pieces in Doug Bentham's studio and they were clearly a great step forward for

a very talented and productive artist getting, incidentally, better. Al Reynolds is another sculptor in Edmonton who is, similarly, working in a larger scale. The last time I was in his studio he was working in a territory that is coming out of Cubism. And Peter Hide, who also works in Edmonton — also one of the most gifted sculptors of his generation. They all put pressure on each other, they make each other good, and that's exciting.

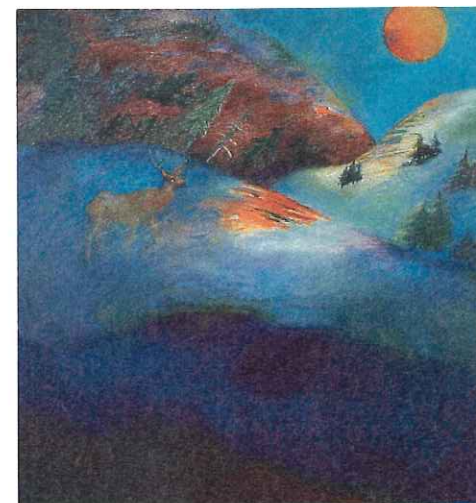
One thing that I am really most angry about is this artificial polarization between figurative and abstract art. People are not looking hard enough. On one side you have a blanket acceptance of distinctly second-rate abstract art and on the other side you have a blanket acceptance of distinctly second- or third-rate figurative art because it looks as though it's responding to some kind of current issue. I'm sorry, but I don't think the presence of dead dogs necessarily guarantees profundity. Of course, there are lots of figurative painters who are doing excellent work. Medrie MacPhee's recent show was really strong. Robert Berling makes very potent, deeply felt, very painterly pictures. Certainly Eric Fischl, although he is getting lumped together with a lot of people who are doing different things. But, yes. He's the real thing. I was not 100 per cent sold on Douglas Kirton's latest show. He's exploring new things, and colour is not his strong suit at the moment, but he's a painter that I take very seriously.

Then there are people whose work I look at with continued interest and pleasure. Katja Jacobs just seems to get better and better. I was in Carol Sutton's studio recently and she had a group of absolutely the best pictures of hers that I've ever seen. But then, she's always been on a very high level.

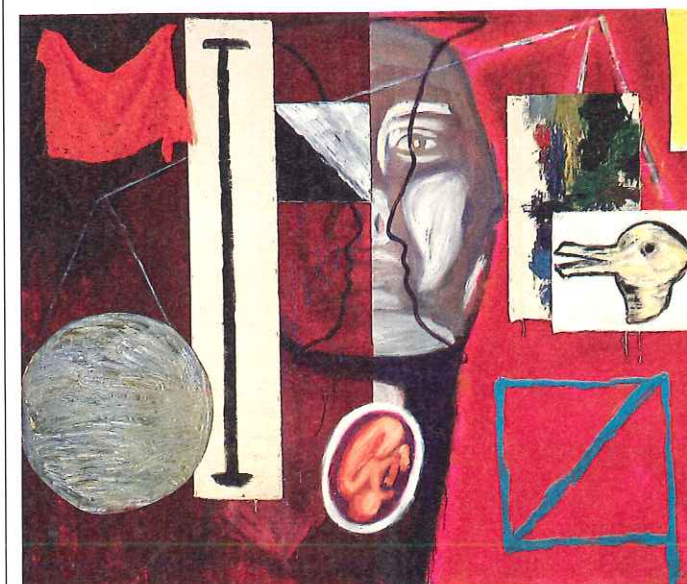
Basically, though, I don't like this kind of horse-racing. Ten years ago I would have reeled off a list of maybe 20 people who I thought were promising. Today, they're starting to sort themselves out. For example, if anybody had asked me in the late '70s who the candidate for most boring painter in Canada was, Doug Haynes would certainly have been a competitor. But, to my mind, since then he has produced very strong, exciting paintings. Now, he's off in some crazy territory of his own, reinventing Cubism, and making very good pictures. So, you see, you can't predict.



*A tradition of very personal work: Christiane Pflug's Avrom Isaacs (1964)*



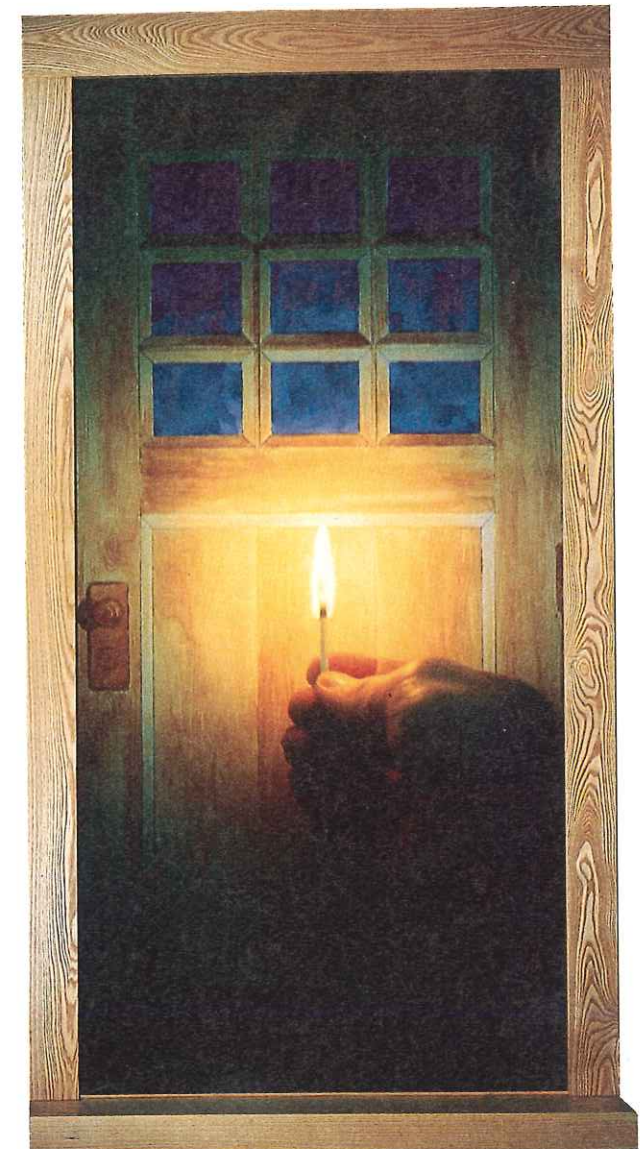
*Joyce Wieland's Wieland and Mozart (1985): Mozart-mania vs. second-hand angst*



*A devotion to painting: David Elliot's Painting for LKJ (1984)*



*Vicky Marshall's Breakfast (1984): more than just a quick experiment*



*Michael Snow's Door (1979): his posterity is assured*