



Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada 1965–1980

Grant Arnold and Karen Henry, co-editors

Published by:

Art Gallery of Alberta

Halifax INK

Justina M. Barnicke Gallery (Hart House, University of Toronto)

Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery (Concordia University)

Vancouver Art Gallery

Vera Frenkel, *String Games: Improvisations for Inter-City Video*, 1974, detail



[Previous page](#)
Joyce Wieland, still from
Pierre Vallières, 1972

[Above](#)
N.E Thing Co., *ART is all over*, 1972

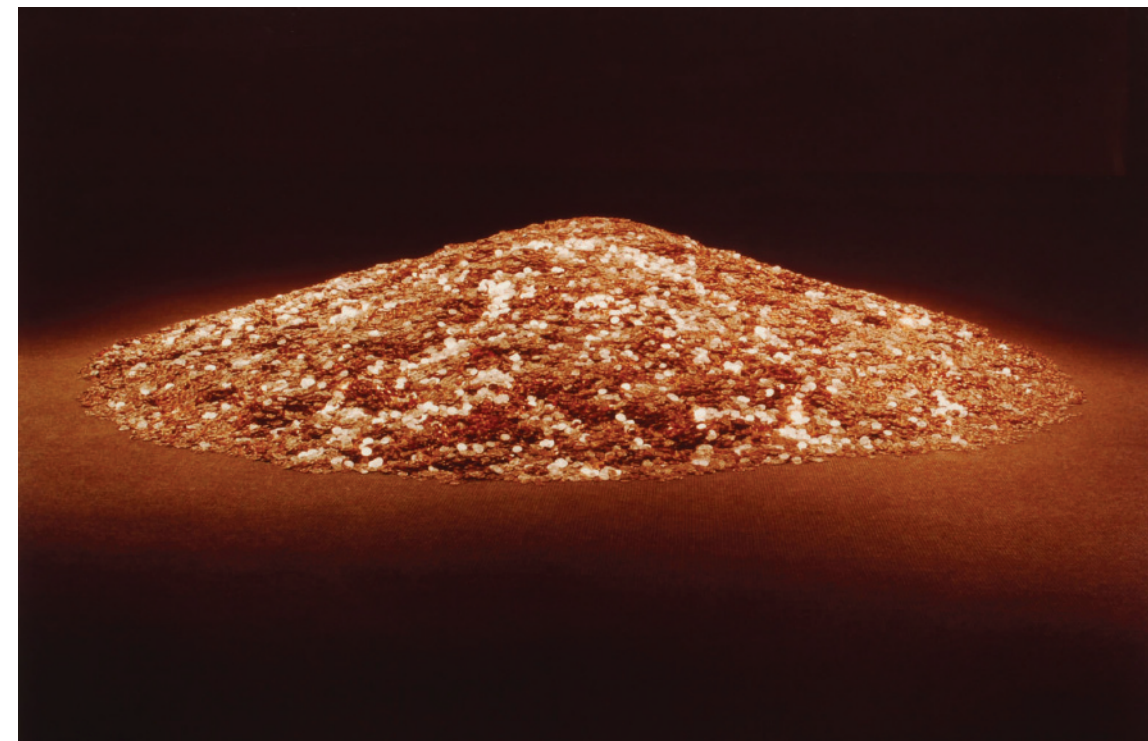
Contents

- 9 Directors' Foreword
[Kathleen S. Bartels / Catherine Crowston / Peter Dykhuis / Barbara Fischer / Michèle Thériault](#)
- 13 Introduction
[Grant Arnold / Vincent Bonin / Catherine Crowston / Barbara Fischer / Michèle Thériault / Jayne Wark](#)
- 16 Conceptual Art in Canada:
The East Coast Story
[Jayne Wark](#)
- 38 Language Is Not Transparent:
Translating Conceptual Art in Montréal
[Vincent Bonin](#)
- 54 Dated Conceptualism: Toronto, London, Guelph
[William Wood](#)
- 70 Episodes in Conceptual Art on the Prairies
[Catherine Crowston with Grant Arnold](#)
- 84 Reference/Cross Reference:
Conceptual Art on the West Coast
[Grant Arnold](#)
- 105 Early Conceptual Practices in Context:
A Conversation
[Blair French / Lucy Lippard / Chantal Pontbriand / Mari Carmen Ramírez / Charlotte Townsend-Gault / Jeff Khonsary, Moderator](#)
- 122 Conceptual Art in Canada, 1965–1980:
An Annotated Chronology
[Compiled by Vincent Bonin \(1965–1969\) and Grant Arnold \(1970–1980\)](#)
- 151 Artists and Works in the Exhibition
- 170 Author and Contributor Biographies
- 172 Acknowledgements



Richards Jarden

<p>1. Photographic Deceleration A 16mm film loop based on a piece called Speed Limit (1970) in which slides were taken at successively faster shutter speeds from the window of a car traveling 60mph. Each image is filmed for a regular length of time so that, placed in the context of film, the "stills" are reconstructed into motion. 1971</p> <p>2. A 16mm continuous single surface loop (mobius strip) made from a segment of film of the artist walking from the center of the room to the wall on the camera's left and back again. The ends of the film are joined with a half twist which cinematically allows the continuation of the activity to the opposite wall. 1970</p> <p>February 2,3,4, 1973</p> <p>Anna Leonowens Gallery Nova Scotia College of Art and Design 6152 Coburg Road Halifax, Nova Scotia Canada</p>	<p>1. Facial Angle; Cinderella; Active and Passive States; Falling; High Tide (Simulation); Running in Place (Simulation); The Image of the Artist is Reversed by the Mirror, The Image is Reestablished by Turning the Negative Over; Five Shutter Speeds Empirically Determining my Blinking Speed; Two Attempts to Disappear; Test for All-Night Time Exposure; All-Night Time Exposure; Front/Back; Approximate Symmetry for Pier 18; Leg Animation; Walking in a Circle. 1969-1972</p> <p>2. Recent Works 1972-1973</p> <p>February 5-11, 1973</p> <p>Mezzanine Gallery Nova Scotia College of Art and Design 6152 Coburg Road Halifax, Nova Scotia Canada</p>
---	---



Above, top
Allan Harding MacKay with Lionel Simmons,
36 Halifax Corner Grocery Stores, 1972, detail

Above, bottom
Invitation for Richards Jarden, Anna
Leonowens Gallery, 2-11 February 1973

Above, top
David Askevold, Still from Nova Scotia Fires,
1969

Above, bottom
Gerald Ferguson, 1,000,000 Pennies, 1979

Conceptual Art in Canada: The East Coast Story

Jayne Wark

Conceptual art emerged around 1967 as an art form in which the concept or idea was primary and the execution was secondary. Although it has been associated mostly with the activities of artists in the art world's established centres, it is now acknowledged that conceptual art was a global phenomenon.¹ Conceptual art also had an unlikely but major manifestation on Canada's East Coast. The odds of such a development were hardly propitious in a place where notions of art at the time were still rooted in the beaux-arts conventions of the nineteenth century and there was no support for contemporary art of any kind, let alone something as foreign and perplexing as conceptual art.

As Vincent Bonin insightfully demonstrated in his essay "Documentary Protocols," the indifference to contemporary art in this period even in Canada's large urban centres led artists to establish their own communities and institutions.² The situation on the East Coast was distinctly different. It was not a matter of redressing exclusion or finding alternatives to existing institutions and markets, but rather one of establishing something in the midst of a complete void. What was needed was the creation of an entirely new community and an institutional infrastructure to support it.

In Halifax, the opportunity for such creation arose unexpectedly in 1967 with the decision of the Nova Scotia College of Art to hire Garry Neill Kennedy as president. The college had been founded in 1887 as the Victoria School of Art and Design by a group of citizens led by Anna Leonowens (later made famous by the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *The King and I*). It survived through periods of growth and stagnation, but in 1967 it essentially remained a backwater.³ When Kennedy was interviewed, he had just completed his MFA at Ohio University and was in his second year as head of the art department at Northland College in Ashland, Wisconsin. Upon accepting the position, he immediately set out to modernize and professionalize the school.⁴ This entailed upgrading the facilities and expanding the cramped building. Kennedy also took the crucial step of establishing an art gallery, named after Anna Leonowens, to provide a venue for exhibitions by students and faculty as well as by national and international contemporary artists.

In addition to changing the name to the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD), Kennedy revamped the curriculum, implemented the first MFA program in Canada and hired a new roster of *au courant* faculty, including Gerald Ferguson and David Askevold, both of whom he knew from his time in the United States. These changes were avidly reported in the local

¹ See Philomena Mariani (Ed.), *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origins, 1950s–1980s* (New York: Queen's Museum of Art, 1999).

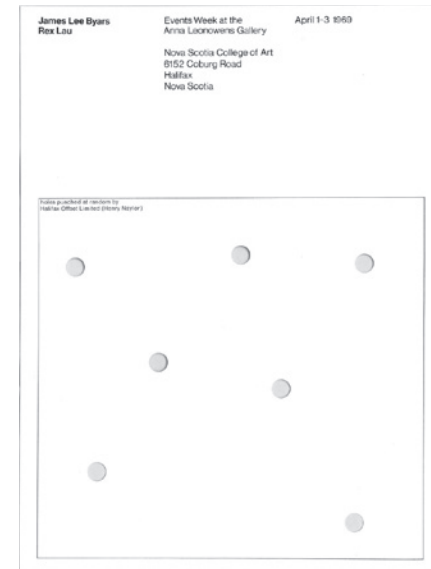
² Vincent Bonin, "Documentary protocols (1967–1975)." In Vincent Bonin and Michèle Thériault (Eds.), *Documentary Protocols/Protocoles documentaires (1967–1975)* (Montréal: Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University, 2010), 18.

This publication is the third part of the *Documentary Protocols* project conceived by Bonin, preceded by two exhibitions at the gallery in 2007 and 2008.

³ David Soucy and Harold Pearse, *The First Hundred Years: A History of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design* (Fredericton: University of New Brunswick and Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1993), 2–8, 135–146.

⁴ See Garry Neill Kennedy, "NSCAD and the sixties," in Bruce Barber (Ed.), *Conceptual Art: The NSCAD Connection, 1967–1973* (Halifax: The Anna Leonowens Gallery of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 2001), 20.

Opposite
Students executing *I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art*, John Baldessari, 1971



press, especially his hiring of so many non-Canadians.⁵ The two prominent Canadians Kennedy did attempt to recruit, Greg Curnoe and Iain Baxter, were unable or unwilling to move to Halifax.⁶ By contrast, it was easy to attract Americans, many of whom saw Canada as a liberal refuge from the escalating social turmoil then afflicting the United States, especially over racial conflict and the Vietnam War.⁷

The effects of Kennedy's overhaul were sudden and sharp. Askevold, who was teaching the new Foundation course and wanted to provide opportunities for students to engage directly with contemporary art, brought about the college's first encounter with conceptual art by inviting three New York artists to conduct projects in Halifax in April 1969. The first two visitors, Rex Lau and James Lee Byars, executed installations and performance events at the Anna Leonowens Gallery. Lau poured 200 pounds of liquid urethane onto the gallery floor, while Byars orchestrated performances using various red acetate garments worn simultaneously by several people.⁸ While some local reporters like Gretchen Pierce wrote enthusiastically about these strange new goings-on at NSCAD, others responded with bafflement and outright hostility. Reporter Jack Hambleton was particularly incensed at the publicity mailer Lau and Byars sent out, which consisted of a sheet of paper with the gallery information at the top and a blank box below with a header stating "holes punched at random by Halifax Offset Limited (Henry Naylor)," He decried conceptual art as a "snow job" and demanded to be taken off NSCAD's mailing list.⁹

Undeterred by such local hostility, the college confirmed its commitment to conceptual art with an exhibition five days later (April 7–27) by Lawrence Weiner. By this time, Weiner had shifted from his previous minimalist orientation to adopt a format whereby the work of art would be constituted by a descriptive title that served simultaneously as the proposition for its execution.¹⁰ For Weiner's NSCAD show, simply called *5 Works*, these titles/propositions were listed on the mailer, which also reproduced, for only the second time, Weiner's now-famous "Statement of Intent":

1. The artist may construct the piece
2. The piece may be fabricated
3. The piece need not be built

Each being equal and consistent with the intent of the artist the decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership.¹¹

Some of the works in Weiner's NSCAD show were actually executed, such as *Five Gallons Water Base Tempera Paint Poured Directly upon the Floor and Allowed to Remain for the Duration of the Exhibition*. Yet Weiner's "Statement of Intent," which theorizes and explicates the premise of his works, makes their execution secondary or irrelevant. The statement also invokes several

⁵ Soucy and Pearse, *The First Hundred Years*, 149. See also the press clippings in the NSCAD Archives at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia (PANS), Box 23, Scrapbook 5. For Kennedy's defence of his hiring decisions, see his letter to Dr. G. Holbrook, chairman of the board, Nova Scotia College of Art, 6 September 1968, NSCAD Archives, PANS, Box 3, File 19.

⁶ Garry Neill Kennedy, letter to author, 30 November 2003.

⁷ Gerald Ferguson, interview with author, 18 October 2003. Ferguson added that Prime

Minister Trudeau's 1970 endorsement of the War Measures Act was profoundly disillusioning in this regard.

⁸ See unattributed article, "Foam experiment produces blob," *Chronicle Herald*, 3 April 1969, 10. NSCAD Archives, PANS, Box 23, Scrapbook 5.

⁹ See Gretchen Pierce, "A message from other end of garment," *Halifax Mail-Star*, 3 April 1969, and Jack Hambleton, "All about art," *Chronicle-Herald*, 11 April 1969, NSCAD Archives, PANS, Box 23, Scrapbook 5.

¹⁰ According to Gerald Ferguson, who was very close with Weiner, the turning point was the April 1968 exhibition at Wyndham College in Vermont called *Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Lawrence Weiner*. When the outdoor installation of his piece was vandalized, Weiner concluded that it did not matter since the work could exist just as adequately in the form of its title as verbal description: *A Series of Stakes Set in the Ground at Regular Intervals to Form a Rectangle—Twine Strung from Stake to Stake to Demark a Grid—A Rectangle Removed from This Rectangle*. See Gerald Ferguson, "On NSCAD and conceptual art,"

in Barber (Ed.), *Conceptual Art: The NSCAD Connection*, 33.

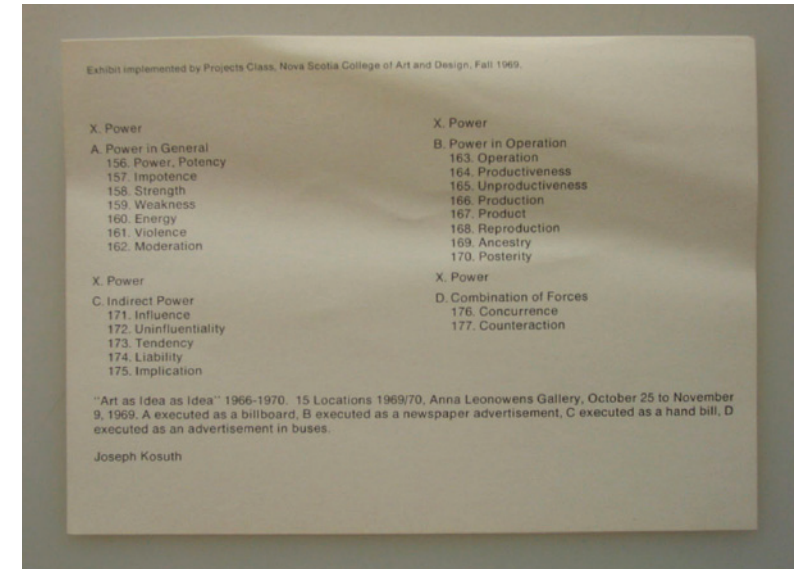
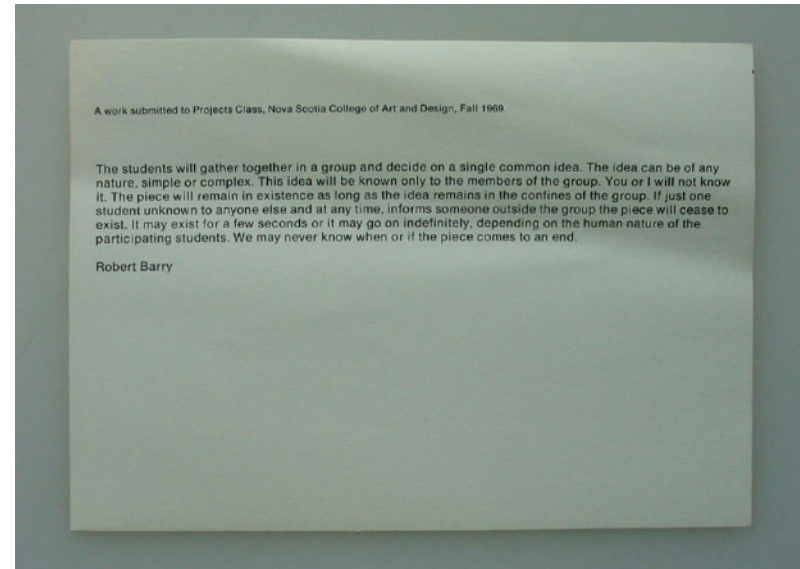
¹¹ This statement first appeared in *January 5–31, 1969* (New York: Seth Siegel, 1969), unpaginated. This was the second of three groundbreaking exhibition catalogues published by New York dealer and impresario of conceptual art Seth Siegel, in which the exhibition and its presentation in catalogue form were one and the same. Weiner was also included in Siegel's two other similar publications, *Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris,*

Lawrence Weiner (New York: Seth Siegel and Jack Wendler, December 1968) and *March 1969* (New York: Seth Siegel, 1969). Weiner's NSCAD show was especially significant, however, since it was the first solo show of his mature conceptual art practice.

From top left
Les Levine, *Peggy's Cove YR BB*, 1973

Invitation for James Lee Byars' (with Rex Lau) *Events Week at the Anna Leonowens Gallery*, 1–3 April 1969

Lawrence Weiner, *FIVE GALLONS WATER BASE TEMPERA PAINT POURED DIRECTLY UPON THE FLOOR AND ALLOWED TO REMAIN FOR THE DURATION OF THE EXHIBITION*, as installed by Garry Kennedy, 1969. Photo courtesy of Moved Pictures Archive, NYC.



Cards describing artworks to be executed for David Askeveld's *Projects Class*, 1969

key tenets of conceptual art, such as decentering the artist's traditional authority over the work, transforming the viewer from passive spectator to active participant, and emphasizing an egalitarian method for the production, distribution and reception of the work of art.¹²

Following the visits by Byars, Lau and Weiner, Askeveld devised a new course for the 1969–70 academic year called the Projects Class. His original plan was to invite a series of artists to the college for a period of time to interact directly with students, but as this was deemed too expensive, several agreed to convey their proposals by mail or telephone to be executed by students.¹³ This compromise was fortuitous, since it was both pedagogically innovative and ideally suited to overcome NSCAD's geographic isolation. Moreover, by deferring the execution of the artists' work to students, it perfectly embodied the essence of conceptual art as delineated by Sol LeWitt in his 1967 text, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art":

In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form in art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art.¹⁴

The first Projects Class had twelve international participants: Jan Dibbets (Dutch), N.E. Thing Co. (Canadian, with co-presidents Iain and Ingrid Baxter), and Robert Barry, Mel Bochner, James Lee Byars, Dan Graham, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, Lucy Lippard, Robert Smithson and Lawrence Weiner (all American). Askeveld subsequently published all

twelve proposals as a set of individual cards.¹⁵ Some projects required the students to enact or document an activity or event such as the recording of tree shadows (Dibbets), the fabrication and materialization of a myth (Huebler) or the dumping of 1,000 tons of mud over a cliff (Smithson). Others had little or no material manifestation. Barry instructed the students to choose a single common idea, stipulating that the piece would cease to exist if it was revealed to anyone outside the group. Bochner had them "measure/consider" the classroom objectively and subjectively in every way they could think of, but didn't care about the specifics of their findings or how they were presented. Byars' proposal merely stated: "Mr. Byars is the Artist in the Pentagon."

The projects proposed by N.E. Thing Co. (NETCO) and Joseph Kosuth included elements exhibited in the Anna Leonowens Gallery. The former called for the installation of "Teletype and Telcopier [sic]" machines from September 15 to October 5, through which NETCO sent instructions to be carried out by students.¹⁶ The printouts from the machines were posted on the gallery walls and subsequently compiled into a book called *Trans VSI Connection NSCAD–NETCO: Sept. 15–Oct. 5, 1969*.¹⁷ This project built upon the experiments NETCO had conducted at the National Gallery in Ottawa in June–July 1969 and would serve as the format for several in the future.¹⁸

Kosuth's project, *Art as Idea as Idea*, was part of a larger series of word-based pieces demonstrating his fundamental premise that "the 'purest' definition of conceptual art would be that it is an inquiry into the foundations of the concept 'art'."¹⁹ *Art as Idea as Idea* consisted

¹² For a more detailed discussion of these aspects of Weiner's work, see Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 92–100.

¹³ See David Askeveld, "The projects class," in Barber (Ed.), *Conceptual Art: The NSCAD Connection*, 38.

¹⁴ Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs on conceptual art," *Artforum* 5, no. 10 (Summer 1967): 80.

¹⁵ A set of the cards as well as the original proposal letters sent to Askeveld by six of the artists (Bochner, Dibbets, Huebler, LeWitt, Lippard and Weiner) are located in the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Art Metropole Collection,

Accession no. 9503.

¹⁶ Most of the transmissions came from Vancouver, but some were sent from Inuvik during a brief junket (25–27 September) the Baxters made there with Lawrence Weiner, Lucy Lippard and Edmonton artist Harry Savage as part of the *Pace & Process* exhibition organized by Edmonton Art

Gallery director Bill Kirby. For more on this expedition, see Charity Mewburn, "Sixteen hundred miles north of Denver," in Scott Watson (Ed.), *Sixteen Hundred Miles North of Denver* (Vancouver: Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, 1999), 3–29. See also Lucy R. Lippard, "Art within the Arctic Circle," *The Hudson Review* 22, no. 4 (Winter 1969–1970): 665–674.

¹⁷ Iain Baxter and David Askeveld, *Trans VSI Connection NSCAD–NETCO: Sept. 15–Oct. 5, 1969* (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1970).

¹⁸ These included, for example, NETCO's participation in the *Information* show held at the Museum of Modern Art 2 July–20 September, 1970, and its *Network 70* project

(7–24 October, 1970), for which NETCO sent transmissions from the UBC Fine Arts Gallery in Vancouver to numerous points across North America, including NSCAD.

¹⁹ Joseph Kosuth, "Art after philosophy II: Recent art and conceptual art," *Studio International* 178, no. 916 (November 1969): 161.



Dan Graham, rehearsal of *Two Correlated Rotations* (with Tim Zuck), 1969



of abstract concepts such as “Intellect,” “Sensation” and “Abstract Relations,” each with subcategories. These concepts were exhibited in fifteen international locations in various forms of printed matter in public places. The concept for the Halifax version was “Abstract Relations: Power,” and the texts for its subcategories were executed by students as a billboard, a newspaper advertisement, a handbill and a bus advertisement, with the resulting ephemera displayed in the gallery from October 25 to November 9.

Kosuth was also one of the three Projects Class participants, along with Graham and Lippard, who visited the college in 1969–70.²⁰ These visits were of great value to the NSCAD community, but were equally important for many of the artists. This was particularly true for Graham. Graham initially came in September to execute his Projects Class piece, *From Sunset to Sunrise*, a series of 160 photographs of the sky from a fixed point at set intervals. Taking advantage of equipment he had access to at NSCAD but not in New York, he also made a film version of this work, his first work in this medium. Over the course of this and subsequent visits to NSCAD, Graham executed many firsts: the performance *Lax/Relax* (September 1969); rehearsal for the dual Super 8 films *Two Correlated Rotations* (October 1969); rehearsal for the performance *Like* (1971); and premieres of his video performances *TV Camera/Monitor Performance* (October 1970), *Two Consciousness Projections* (1972) and *Nude Two Consciousness Projection(s)* (1975).²¹ Graham also had his first solo show at NSCAD, mounted in two parts (8–15 October, 1970, and 10–22 March, 1971). As Rhea Anastas notes in the exhibition catalogue, *Dan Graham: Beyond*, these experiences were so important for Graham

²⁰ During these visits, the artists typically gave public presentations. The transcripts of many of these talks were published in Peggy Gale (Ed.), *Artists Talk: 1969–1977* (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 2004). Lippard’s talk, given in November 1969, is a notable omission from this publication. Called “Toward a Dematerialized or Non Object Art,” it essentially outlined the thesis of what would become her touchstone publication on conceptual art, *Six Years:*

The Dematerialization of the Object from 1966 to 1972 (New York: Praeger, 1973).

²¹ For further discussion of these works, see Chrissie Iles, “You are the information: Dan Graham and performance,” in Bennett Simpson and Chrissie Iles (Eds.), *Dan Graham: Beyond* (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 55–70.

²² Rhea Anastas, “Minimal difference: The John Daniels Gallery and the first works of

Dan Graham.” In Simpson and Iles (Eds.), *Dan Graham: Beyond*, 124.

Above, from left
John Greer, *Ladder of Commitment*, 1976

Invitation for Michael Snow’s *Works and Films*, Anna Leonowens Gallery, 17–30 January 1972

that, even though he had been director of the John Daniels Gallery in New York since 1964, it was only *after* doing this work and having his first solo show at NSCAD that he felt confident to request a show of his own work at Daniels' gallery.²²

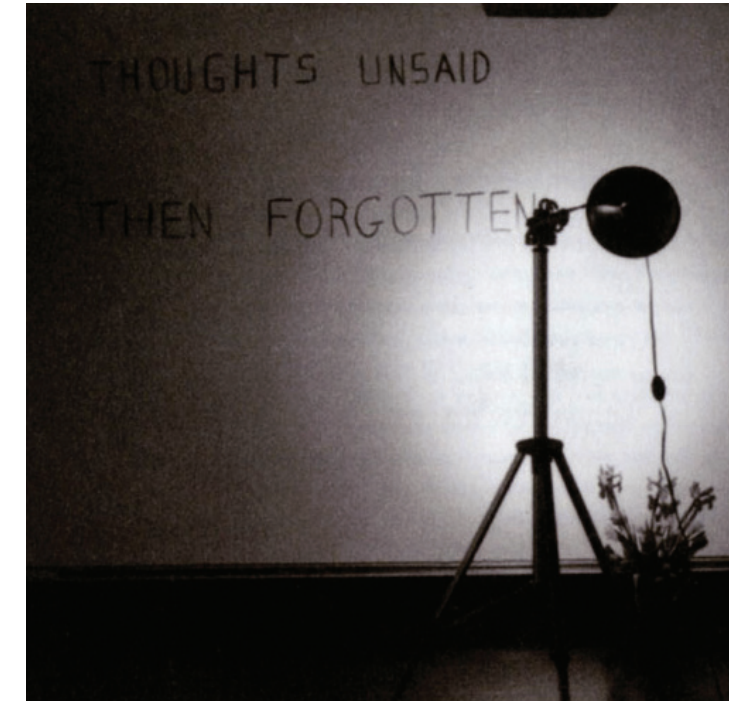
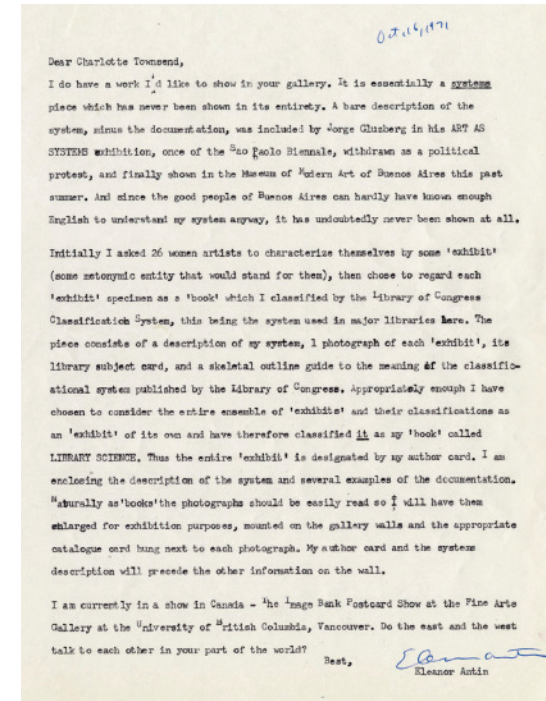
As important as the Projects Class was, it was not the only means by which NSCAD circumvented its geographic isolation and established itself as a key locus for the international production and dissemination of conceptual art. Artists were also given opportunities to exhibit at the Anna Leonowens and Mezzanine galleries, produce prints with the Lithography Workshop and publish books with The Press. As Gerald Ferguson noted, these opportunities established a quid pro quo that was of benefit both to the college and the visiting artists.²³

The establishment of the Mezzanine in 1970 was one of the most significant of these initiatives. The Mezzanine was a small space adjoining the Anna Leonowens Gallery that was used occasionally since 1969 for projects. It became formally constituted as the Mezzanine in September 1970 with the appointment of Charlotte Townsend as director. As Townsend recalls, it was conceived as a facility rather than a gallery, with the objective of disseminating the kind of ephemeral, transient and conceptual artwork then being produced internationally.²⁴

The Mezzanine ran on a shoestring budget and relied largely on shows or projects amenable to the postal and telecommunication systems. One such notable example was the 1971 exhibition by the Californian conceptual artist John Baldessari. He wrote to Townsend saying he had a "Punishment Piece" for her. But since he couldn't be there, student "scapegoats" would be needed to take the punishment for his sins by covering the gallery walls top to bottom with the handwritten phrase "I will not make any more boring art."²⁵

Eleanor Antin was another Californian artist who showed work at the Mezzanine based upon instructions sent by mail. Antin's *Library Science* catalogued responses by twenty-six women to her request to provide "a piece of information" (object or document) that described themselves. Antin then catalogued each response as if it was a book, in accordance with the Library of Congress subject classification system, and exhibited the resulting cards along with the "pieces of information" at the Mezzanine.²⁶

Despite their different methods and subject matter, these two exhibitions demonstrate the essential principle of conceptual art as an "idea machine" that generates the work. Both Antin and Baldessari adopted the objective logic of a system as their generative model, thus obviating what Sol LeWitt referred to as the viewer's "expectation of an emotional kick."²⁷ Yet their works also had a subjective and irrational aspect, and though this may seem incongruous with conceptual art, LeWitt acknowledged it as one of the art form's central characteristics



when he stated, "Conceptual artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach."²⁸

Two other shows held at the Mezzanine exemplify this subjective irrationalism that was inherent to much conceptual art. One was by Bas Jan Ader, the Dutch artist who went missing in 1975 while attempting to complete his triptych, *In Search of the Miraculous* (1973–75), with a solo voyage across the Atlantic in a tiny sailing boat. Ader's Mezzanine exhibition in April 1973 was an installation work called *Thoughts Unsaid, Then Forgotten*, the instructions for which were sent as a letter and sketch to Townsend.²⁹ They called for this phrase to be hand-painted on the wall and a vase of flowers to be placed on the floor to the right. A clip light with a reflector was to be attached to a stand set in front for illumination. After several days, the wall text was to be painted over, leaving the flowers and light undisturbed. The recent discovery of these documents at NSCAD has clarified misperceptions of this work, which was previously

²³ Ferguson, "On NSCAD and conceptual art," 32.

²⁴ See Charlotte Townsend-Gault, "Conceptual daze at NSCAD—The Mezzanine," in Barber (Ed.), *Conceptual Art: The NSCAD Connection*, 42–44. The Mezzanine Fonds are located at NSCAD in the Gallery Archives. The key document, "Mezzanine Gallery—Chronological History and Inventory of Announcement Cards," lists a total of 107 group and solo projects or exhibitions, starting in October 1970 with Bruce McLean's *King for a Day and 999 Other Pieces/Works/Stuff, etc.*

and ending in July 1973 with the closing of Ian Murray's *Keeping on Top of the Top Song*. There is some crossover in this document between the Anna Leonowens and Mezzanine galleries, however, and Murray's show was probably at the former.

²⁵ Baldessari's letter and sample text are located at NSCAD University, Gallery Archives, Mezzanine Fonds, Halifax, Baldessari Artist's File no. 1-1.8.

²⁶ The documents are located at the NSCAD University, Gallery Archives, Mezzanine Fonds, Halifax, Antin Artist's File no. 1-1.3.

The exhibition of *Library Science* at the Mezzanine was particularly significant since it was the first time it was shown both in its entirety and in an art context (its previous and partial exhibition was at the San Diego State College Library in April–May 1971; see Lippard, *Six Years*, 231.

²⁷ LeWitt, "Paragraphs on conceptual art," 80.

²⁸ Sol LeWitt, "Sentences on conceptual art," 0-9, no. 5 (January 1969): 3. Johanna Burton has examined this incongruity

in "Mystics rather than rationalists," in Donna de Salvo (Ed.), *Open Systems: Rethinking Art c. 1970* (London: Tate Publishing, 2005), 65–81.

²⁹ The documents are located at the NSCAD University, Gallery Archives, Mezzanine Fonds, Halifax, Correspondence 1970–73, File no. 1-3.1.

Above, from left Eleanor Antin, correspondence relating to *Library Science*, Mezzanine, 1–9 February 1972

Bas Jan Ader, installation view of *Thoughts Unsaid, Then Forgotten*, 1–7 April 1973

JAN 22, 71 FRI

DEAR CHARLOTTE:

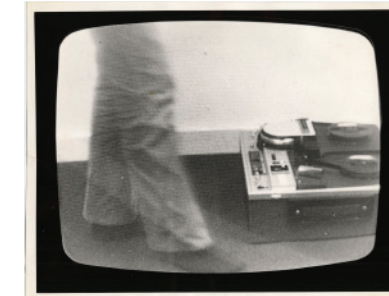
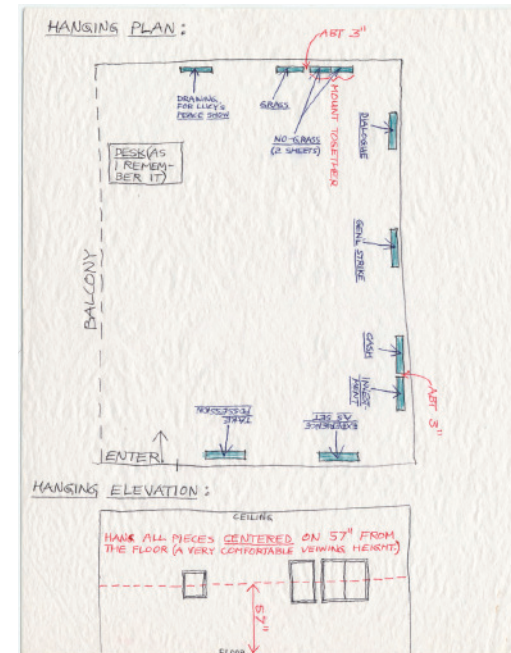
ENCLOSED IS HANGING PLAN & 10 (SHEETS) DRAWINGS WHICH COMPRISE 9 PIECES. NOT HAVING SIZE OF GALLERY I CANT GIVE ~~THE~~ WIDTH OF SPACE BETWEEN PIECES; DISTRIBUTE THEM WITH PLENTY OF SPACE BETWEEN BECAUSE I'LL BE SENDING MORE (MON OR TUES) WHICH CAN BE HUNG IN THE ~~THE~~ INTERSTICES (WILL SEND PLAN)

PLEASE SHOW DRAWING IS ALREADY MOUNTED. PLEASE SHOW ALL EDGES IN MOUNTING BUT USE SIMPLEST METHOD. PERHAPS A PLASTIC FOLDER TAPED (WHITE) ALL AROUND IS BEST. SOME DRAWINGS ARE ~~THE~~ CARBONS OR FRASILE & WILL NEED BACKING (WHITE), BUT IF YOU FIND A FOLDER OF VERY HEAVY PLASTIC THE BACKING ~~WILL~~ MAY NOT BE NECESSARY.

ENCLOSED ALSO ARE 2 PROPS WHICH I SUGGEST YOU KEEP AT YOUR DESK FOR REFERENCE. SO FAR I CANT FIND ANOTHER COPY OF THE BOOK WHICH I HOPE NOBODY TAKES POSSESSION OF UNTIL I DO. (IT'S STILL IN PRINT & CAN PROBABLY BE ORDERED)

LOVE & THANKS FOR EVERYTHING & MAYBE THIS SHOW HAS GOT ME INTO WRITING AGAIN.

LEE



Top, left
Invitation for Colin Campbell's *Video Tapes*, 1–10 December 1972

Bottom, left
Douglas Waterman, still from *Shuffle*, 1971

Right
Invitation for Tim Zuck's *Untitled*, 13–21 February 1971

known only through a Polaroid photograph of the installation that Townsend sent to Ader. As Wade Saunders has argued, these documents reveal the extent to which the juxtaposition in this work between the chronological dimension of human consciousness (thoughts unsaid, then forgotten) and biological decay (the dying flowers) reinforces the centrality of pathos and melancholia in Ader's work.³⁰

An even more pronounced irrationalism was evident in Lee Lozano's (1939–99) *Infiction* exhibition at the Mezzanine in January 1971. Lozano was a successful New York artist in the 1960s, but by 1969 she had begun to reject the art world. Just before dropping out altogether, however, she agreed to a mini-retrospective in Halifax of her *Language Pieces*. These were derived from her journal recordings and called for the completion of self-prescribed tasks or activities within a set duration.³¹ Lozano's Mezzanine show was the only individual presentation of *Language Pieces* during her lifetime.³² These pieces attest to the highly idiosyncratic nature of Lozano's work, ranging from a scornful disdain of the art world (*Printed Matter Pile*, *General Strike*), a desire for art to foster both verbal and non-verbal communication (*Dialogue*, *Experience as Set*) and the self-examination of extremely

private experiences (*Grass* and *No-Grass*, *Masturbation Investigation*). While the linguistic and documentary aspects of Lozano's *Infiction* pieces conform broadly to the tenets of conceptual art, the works also demonstrate how those tenets could be radically stretched to accommodate her uniquely irrational predilections.³³

While the exhibitions outlined here demonstrate how the Mezzanine's innovative programming structure facilitated projects by international artists, the gallery also sponsored many shows by Canadian artists as well as by NSCAD faculty and students. Notable examples of the former include shows by N.E. Thing Co. (1971); Karl Beveridge, Colin Campbell, Ian Carr-Harris and Bill Vazan (1972); and Christos Dikeakos (1973). Some of the faculty and students who showed at the Mezzanine were David Askevold (1970); Richards Jarden, Pat Kelly, Douglas Waterman and Tim Zuck (1971); and Wallace Brannen and Sharon Kulik (1972).

Whereas the Mezzanine operated only from 1970 to 1973, the Anna Leonowens Gallery also played a vital role in fostering the dissemination of conceptual art at NSCAD during the entire period covered by the *Traffic* exhibition.³⁴ In addition to the previously cited exhibitions by Lau,

Above, from left
Lee Lozano, correspondence relating to *Infiction*, 27 January–13 February 1971

Lee Lozano, installation plan for *Infiction*, 27 January–13 February 1971

³⁰ Wade Saunders, "In dreams begin responsibilities," *Art in America* 92, no. 2 (February 2004): 61–62.

³¹ See Helen Molesworth, "Tune in, turn on, drop out: The rejection of Lee Lozano," in Adam Szymczyk (Ed.), *Lee Lozano: Win First Dont Last/Win Last Dont Care* (Basel: Kunsthalle Basel, 2006), 133–135.

³² The documents are located at the Anna

Leonowens Gallery Archive, MG Fonds, Lozano Artist's File no. 1-1.37. Included in the show were *Printed Matter Pile*, *Grass* and *No-grass*, *Dialogue*, *General Strike*, *Cash*, *Investment*, *Experience as Set*, *Masturbation Investigation* and *Take Possession*, all from 1969–70. For a brief synopsis of the significance of Lozano's *Infiction* show at the Mezzanine as well as reproductions of the individual pieces, see Adam Szymczyk, "Infiction, January

27–February 13, 1971," in *Lee Lozano: Win First Dont Last/Win Last Dont Care*, 144–160.

³³ These predilections were further evident in Lozano's participation in David Askevold's Projects Class on 16 July, 1971. For this she realized her *3-State Experiment*, which entailed giving a "lecture" to students in three states: sober, stoned on marijuana and stoned on

LSD. Three days later, Lozano reflected on her Halifax experience in an entry containing phrases that seem to constitute the key aperçu to her work: "Information is content. Content is fiction. Content is messy . . . Form is reduplicable, content is not reduplicable. Fiction has meaning, but only in a given instant of time." For further documentation of Lozano's activities in Halifax, see Adam Szymczyk and Charles Esche, "Lee Lozano's lecture at NSCAD,

Halifax, July 16, 1971" and "Halifax *3-State Experiment*," and David Askevold, "David Askevold on Lee Lozano," in *Lee Lozano: Win First Dont Last/Win Last Dont Care*, 161–178.

³⁴ The gallery's exhibition records are located at the NSCAD University, Gallery Archives, Anna Leonowens Gallery Exhibitions Fonds, Halifax

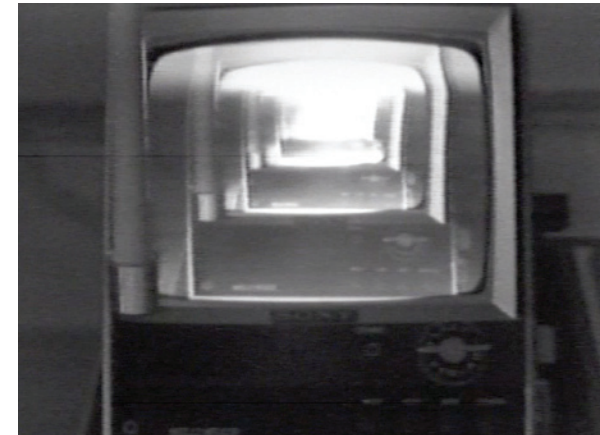


AROUND A BLOCK
a sculpture in situ
by Daniel Buren

visible from June 5, 1979 to June 22, 1979

Anna Leonowens Gallery
1889 Granville Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia

opening at 8:30 p.m., Tuesday, June 5, 1979



Brian MacNevin, still from *Audio Visual Feedback (completing two cycles)* (*The Vancouver Tapes No. 1*), c. 1970

Nova Scotia College of Art and Design
6152 Coburg Road
Halifax Nova Scotia
Canada

(Trying to become another person)

Copying another person for a week in an attempt to become him. Others, simultaneously and unconsciously, copy my copy (of a copy) destroying the original by breaking the mirror, concluding in diminishment of my disappearance.

Sharon Kulik

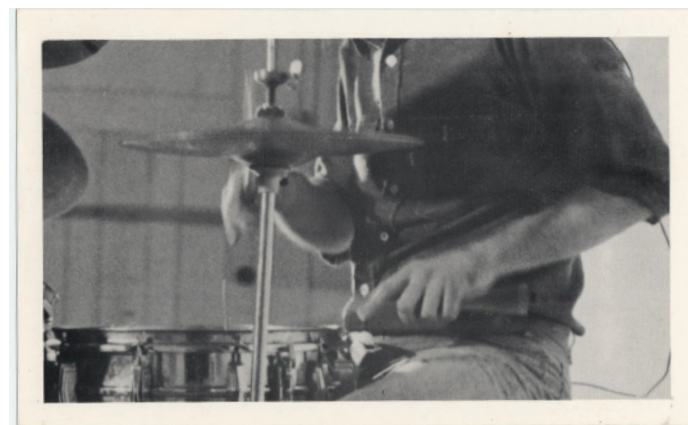
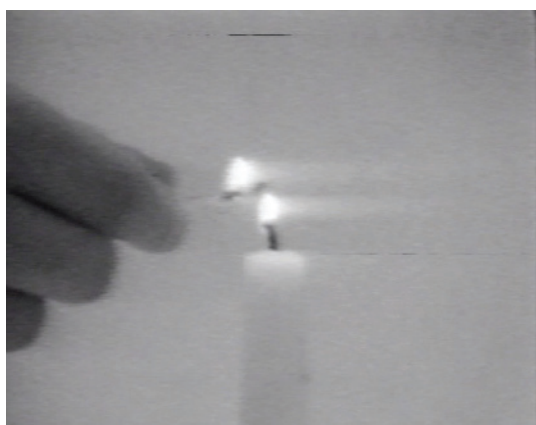
Winter 1972

March 13-17 1972

Byars, Weiner, NETCO and Kosuth, other notable artists who showed there include Gerald Ferguson, John Greer and Michael Snow (1972); Les Levine and Ian Murray (1973); Michael Asher, David Askevold and Carole Condé (1974); Daniel Buren (1979); Dara Birnbaum, Jenny Holzer, Martha Rosler and Allan Sekula (1980); and Mary Kelly (1981).

Yet no matter how significant these exhibitions were both for the artists and for the history of conceptual art in Canada, the main function of the Anna Leonowens and Mezzanine galleries was to serve students. This meant providing them with opportunities to see work by professional artists in a city where they could not otherwise have done so. Equally important, it meant providing students with a gallery where they could exhibit their own work alongside professional artists, and be treated as professionals themselves. The Anna Leonowens Gallery still operates this way and its integration of student and professional exhibitions remains unique in Canada.

Along with the Projects Class and the galleries' exhibition programs, the founding of the Lithography Workshop and The Press were key gambits in NSCAD's overall strategy for creating innovative connections with the larger contemporary art world. When the Lithography Workshop started up in January 1969 it emulated the Tamarind Lithography Workshop, founded by June Wayne in Los Angeles in 1960 "to rescue . . . the art of the lithograph" by having artists work directly in the shop with the master printer.³⁵ The main objectives of the NSCAD Lithography Workshop were to attract prominent artists to the school through the incentive of producing a limited edition print (normally a run of 50, split between the artist



³⁵ June Wayne, "Preface." In Garo Z. Antreasian and Clinton Adams, *The Tamarind Book of Lithography: Art and Techniques* (Los Angeles: Tamarind Lithography Workshop, 1971), 7.

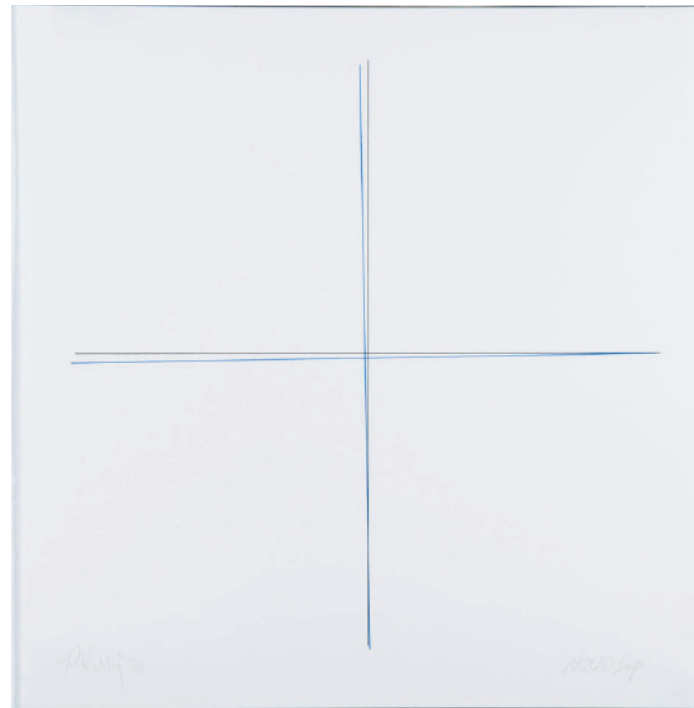
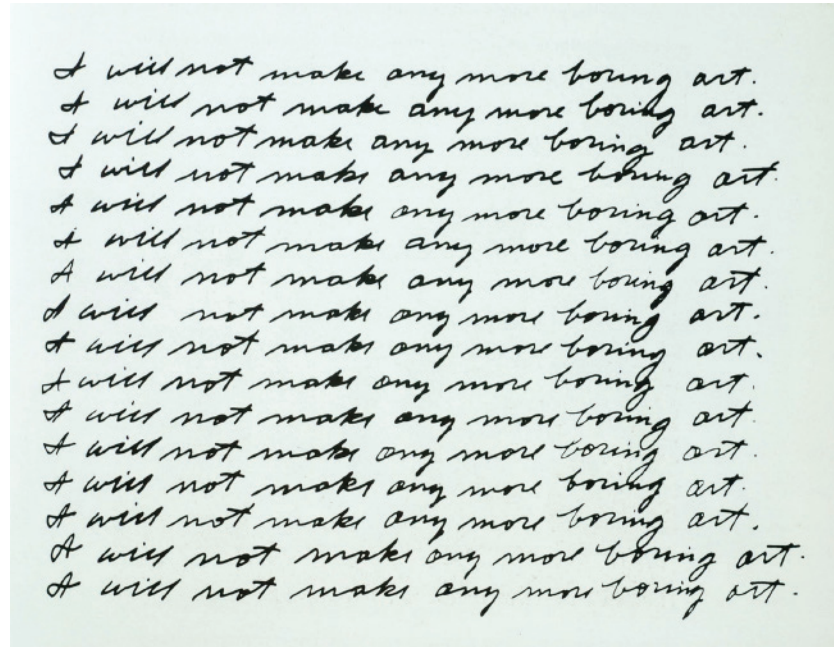
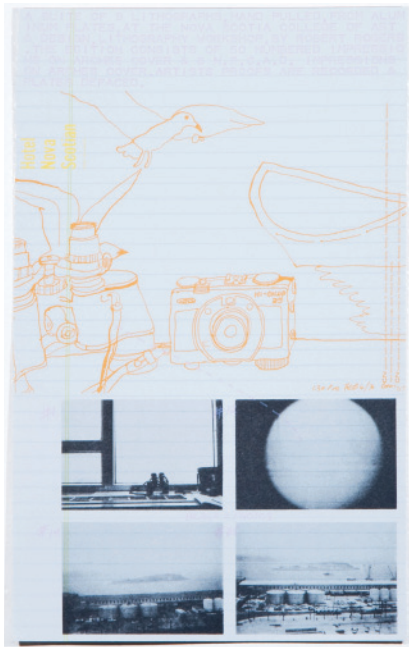
Opposite, clockwise from top left
Wallace Brannen, still from *Mile Walk* (*The Vancouver Tapes No. 3*), c. 1971

Invitation for Ian Murray's *Keeping on Top of the Top Song*, 25 June–2 July 1973

Invitation for Daniel Buren's *Around a Block: A Sculpture in Situ by Daniel Buren*, Anna Leonowens Gallery 5–22 June 1979

Barry MacPherson, still from *Untitled* (*The Vancouver Tapes No. 1*), c. 1970

Invitation for Sharon Kulik, Anna Leonowens Gallery, 13-17 March, 1972



Top, left
Greg Curnoe, *Homage to Sam Langford*
(detail), 1970

Bottom, left
Vito Acconci, *Kiss Off*, 1971

Top, right
John Baldessari, *I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art*, 1971

Bottom, right
Pat Kelly, *A Shot in the Dark*, 1971

and the college); provide students with opportunities to interact with artists during their residencies; and generate revenue through sales of prints.³⁶

During its first eighteen months, under the directorship of Jack Lemon, the Lithography Workshop produced a series of technically spectacular works, including *Homage to Sam Langford*, a suite of 10 prints by Greg Curnoe that simulate a writing pad with accounts of his visit to Halifax to work on the prints in February–March 1970. When Lemon left in mid-1970 and Gerald Ferguson took over as director, however, the Lithography Workshop took a very different direction. As Eric Cameron has said, it often went so far against the Tamarind ideals as to travesty them.³⁷ Ferguson's goal was to increase the Workshop's marketability by producing prints with artists who were then establishing international reputations as innovators of conceptual art. This objective accorded with Ferguson's lack of commitment to the aesthetics of lithography per se, which he considered "no more or less valuable than any other medium for the demonstration of an idea by an artist."³⁸

This new orientation showed the unexpected ways in which such a traditional medium as printmaking could be reinvented under the principles of conceptual art. In some cases, such as John Baldessari's *I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art* (based on his 1971 Mezzanine show) and Sol LeWitt's 1971 suite of 10 prints, the execution was deferred to students and/or the master printer, thus exemplifying LeWitt's definition of conceptual art as a practice where "the execution is a perfunctory affair."³⁹ In other cases, the basis of the prints was a self-reflexive reference to the process of printmaking. Pat Kelly's *A Shot in the Dark* (1971), for example, entailed registering two black lines intersecting at the centre of the paper and then having the artist attempt to match these by repositioning each paper manually on the printing bed, the results of which were superimposed in blue ink.

Other Lithography Workshop prints incorporated conceptual art principles through methods that indexed systems, locations or memories. Gerald Ferguson's *Length 4* (1970) was an excerpt from his systematic cataloguing of dictionary words in his book, *The Standard Corpus of Present Day English Language Usage arranged by word length and alphabetized within word length*. For his *Location Piece #25* (1973), Douglas Huebler reproduced his own composite photograph of a postcard of the Trevi Fountain in Rome. Below this image, the print gave instructions for the purchaser to contact the artist, who would have a postcard of the fountain sent from Rome to the purchaser, who was then to affix it to the print in order to complete the work. Garry Neill Kennedy's print, *My Fourth Grade Class* (1972), was an index of

³⁶ For a more detailed discussion of the Lithography Workshop history, see my article "Conceptual lithography at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design," *Journal of Canadian Art History* 30 (Fall 2009): 60–88.

³⁷ Eric Cameron, "The Lithography

Workshop." In Garry Neill Kennedy (Ed.), *NSCAD: The Nova Scotia College of Art & Design* (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1982), 9.

³⁸ Gerald Ferguson, "Lithography Workshop." In Michael Knigin and Murray Zimiles (Eds.), *The Contemporary*

Lithographic Workshop Around the World (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1974), 117.

³⁹ LeWitt, "Paragraphs on conceptual art," 80.



memory consisting of his class photograph with the names written in for all the children he could remember.

Still other prints employed this indexing principle by referring to the artists' own embodied subjectivities. For her iconic *O Canada* (1970), Joyce Wieland applied lipstick and then mouthed the words of the national anthem on the litho stone. Shortly afterward, in February 1971, Vito Acconci produced *Kiss Off* and *Trademarks*. *Trademarks* documented a previous performance by Acconci where he attempted to bite as much of his body as he could reach, but *Kiss Off* was a unique production for the Lithography Workshop. By covering his mouth with lipstick and then wiping it off on the stone in a process described on the print as "rubbing off my female characteristics, 'cleaning myself up,'" Acconci clearly seems to have responded directly to the gendered implications of Wieland's *O Canada*.

The Lithography Workshop was very successful both in demonstrating how printmaking could become a vehicle for conceptual art and in attracting artists to the college. But by 1976 it was deemed financially unsustainable and was closed. This decision was eased, however, by the founding of The Press in 1972. The suggestion for initiating a press came from Dan Graham, who also suggested the appointment of German curator and book dealer Kasper Koenig as editor.⁴⁰ On the advice of NSCAD art historian Dennis Young, The Press adopted the mandate

Above
Joyce Wieland executing *O Canada*, 1970

⁴⁰ Kennedy, "NSCAD and the sixties," 26. For a detailed overview of the history of The Press, see Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "The Press of NSCAD: A brief incomplete

history and its future books," in Kennedy (Ed.), *NSCAD: The Nova Scotia College of Art & Design*, 64–75.



of publishing "Source Materials of the Contemporary Arts." This mandate suited the college's commitment to advancing research and knowledge in the contemporary visual arts and, like the Lithography Workshop, it provided a means to bring contemporary artists to NSCAD to work with the editor and interact with students.

The Press published nine books with Koenig, including three by leading dancers and musicians of the New York performance scene (Yvonne Rainer, Simone Forti and Steve Reich) and five by visual artists (Claes Oldenburg, Hans Haacke, Michael Snow and two by Donald Judd). After a two-year hiatus, The Press resumed activity in 1978 under the editorship of Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, previously the editor of the German journal *Interfunktionen*. Buchloh published seven books with The Press, including several by international conceptual artists such as Michael Asher, Dan Graham and Daniel Buren. He also started a second series called the Nova Scotia Pamphlets, which published books by Martha Rosler, Allan Sekula, Jenny Holzer, Dara Birnbaum, Gerhard Richter and Lawrence Weiner. The Press closed again in 1983 after Buchloh took a teaching position in New York. It was relaunched in 2002.

This overview of the history of conceptual art on Canada's East Coast has necessarily focused on the NSCAD. To be sure, there were other instances of conceptual art in the region, such as the book *Exzêo* (1975) that Sylvain Cousineau and Francis Coutellier produced as a document

Above
Joyce Wieland, *O Canada*, 1970



of their road trip along New Brunswick's Acadian Peninsula, and the 1974 exhibition that Chris Youngs organized at the Owens Art Gallery in Sackville called *Investigations: Ian Carr-Harris, John Greer, N.E. Thing Co. Ltd.*⁴¹ Eye Level, the artist-run centre founded in Halifax in 1974, also held exhibitions of conceptual art, such as Michael Fernandes' *AD.AP.TA.TIONS.* (1975) and John Murchie's *Opening.Open.Closed.* (1980). On the whole, however, the concentration of conceptual art was at NSCAD.

For all the reasons cited at the beginning of this essay, it was implausible and yet possible that such a flourishing of conceptual art could take place in such a remote and provincial outpost as Halifax was at the time. It never would have happened without the institutional context of an art school with a critical mass of students and an administration and faculty dedicated to fostering rigorous thinking about what art is or might be. At NSCAD, this dedication extended not only to supplying professional-quality facilities and initiating a range of innovative courses and programs, but also to creating an intellectually challenging environment that has attracted scores of artists and students over the years. It seems fitting to close by quoting the late Gerald Ferguson, who summed up what he regarded as the pivotal importance of the Visitors Program in words that succinctly captured NSCAD's tough yet supportive ethos: "An aggressive visitor program will be controversial, make some angry and threaten others. No one in their right mind votes for that. Only the President can endorse such a program, and that was done here beginning in 1968."⁴²

⁴¹ Sylvain Cousineau and Francis Coutellier, *Exzéo* (Moncton: Éditions d'Acadie, 1975). Youngs had previously founded the Nightingale Gallery in Toronto and served as director of the Owens Art Gallery from 1970 to 1976.

⁴² Ferguson, "On NSCAD and conceptual art," 33.

Opposite
Martha Wilson, *Breast Forms Permutated*, 1972

Above
Eric Cameron, stills from *Keeping Marlene Out of the Picture*, 1973-76