COLLAPSE #3
THE VIEW FROM HERE
HOME IMPROVEMENTS
INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER PERVERSIONS, 2.24 PR.

Vancouver Art Forum Society, Judith Mastai, John O'Brian, editors, Nathan Phillips Services, Burnaby, B.C., U.B.C. Press, Dec. 1997, ISBN 1295-7126. http://home.istanza.ca/collapse

The contributors to this third edition of Collapse collectively suggest that the arts, and in particular the visual arts, play an important role in registering relationships to authority and institutions at the end of the twentieth century. The subtitle suggests that there is always room for improvement and that a perversity of institutions occurs when stasis turns them inward toward self-sustenance. A chapter with the same title as Mark Lewis' recent film Touch of Evil, is factual and ironic, yet still not cynical. Rosie Greenberg's essay, Defining Canada prepares the way for one definition to supplant yet another definition, in the same way that Western institutions have become estranged from Utopian origins.

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Keith Bell. Sheila Petty introduces filmmaking in the chapter (Re) positioning: the Stable Frame: Early Cinematic Visions of the Canadian Prairies, and (Re) Visioning Geography and Culture as a Commodity.

ARTHUR F. MCKAY: A CRITICAL RETROSPECTIVE
1997, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina. 64pp. ISBN 1-896470-07-6, Brenda Beckman-Long, Merit Printing Ltd. Texts: curator Dr. David Howard, Alex Kelly and Timothy Long.

In the 1950's and '60s the Regina Five: McKay, Bloore, Ixchel, Morten and Godwin, with Kiyooka, and Wiens, were a stimulus to the Regina Art community. In this second retrospective, following the 1991 exhibition, RONALD L. BLOORE: Not Without Design, curator David Howard examines McKay's work in the context of cultural Cold War politics, rather than raising issues of the relationship of modernism to postmodernism, or the omnipresence of U.S. culture in Canadian society.

Howard traces Art McKay's momentary international status by his inclusion in Clement Greenberg's controversial Post Painterly abstraction Los Angeles exhibition in 1964. McKay's studies at the Barnes Institute and the influence of instructor Violette de Mazia are highlighted. The Mandala characterizing McKay's enamel paintings for over two decades is discussed in context of the influence of Zen and Satori on his work. McKay, in an unpublished essay "The Basic Dichotomy", is quoted: "...We float in a sea of other beings and objects. We know they are as we are, but do not experience them being, except on our periphery at the interstices of our common experience. The state of love is the only exception to this condition of alienation, either personal or generalized love and compassion." McKay's synthetic abstraction is examined in light of its universality. Research for this project began in 1982. The Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon, July 3 - 23 August, 1998; The Glenbow Museum, Calgary, 23 January - 21 March 1999.

GORDON SMITH: THE ACT OF PAINTING
Ian M. Thom, Andrew Hunter, 1997, Vancouver Art Gallery and Douglas & McIlwraith, Vancouver, 164 pp. ISBN 1-55054-385-X, hardcover, with 55 full colour plate reproductions.

Canadian soldier, and returned from Sicily, wounded in battle, via London to Vancouver in 1944. Smith taught at The Vancouver School of Art and exhibited his landscapes at The Vancouver Art Gallery in the 1950's. In 1960, Smith represented Canada at the Sao Paulo Biennale. The Vancouver Art Gallery's first acquisition of work by Gordon Smith in 1953, when the artist won first prize at the First Biennial of Canadian Painting at the National Gallery of Canada, was followed by the acquisition to 1996 of another 17 paintings and 105 works on paper. Smith played a vital part in defining the aesthetic direction of West Coast painting. In Smith's work, painting is a recreation of experience as opposed to an illustration thereof. His paintings are balanced between colour field abstraction and the depiction of the British Columbia wilderness, the physical act of painting and his affection for the land. Gordon Smith: The Act of Painting, presents a composite view of the artistic production by one of Canada's most prominent and influential artists.

Michael J. Molter