

THE LIMNERS: ART IN VICTORIA
1920-1989

by

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ABSTRACT

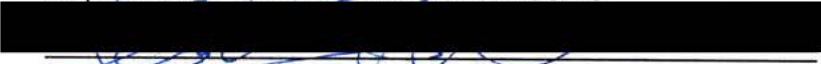
The development of modern art during the twentieth century in Victoria, British Columbia, can be traced through a study of the city's most important artists' group, the Limners. Formed in 1971 in Herbert Siebner's living room, the Limners are still functioning today. From the beginning they were a group of friends, many of whom had known each other for decades. They joined together in order to support each other and arrange for exhibitions of their work. Charter members were Siebner, Maxwell Bates, Myfanwy Pavelic, Nita Forrest, and Richard Ciccimarra. Robin Skelton soon joined as their spokesman. Within a short time Elza Mayhew, Robert De Castro, and Karl Spreitz were also added.



Although initially sharing a common interest in depicting the human figure, the Limners later evolved a looser artistic agenda that concerned what Skelton called a "depth exploration of the human creature." They often portrayed images of loneliness and human relationships, and their work relates to the human need for worship and ritual. Although several of the charter Limners have died, new members have joined the group in the late seventies and eighties, and their enthusiasm and organization will ensure the longevity of this society of artists. It is the artistic development of the nine core members, however, which concerns this study.

Parts One and Two offer a survey of the history of art in Victoria from the mid-nineteenth century to the present and deal with the conservative Island Arts and Crafts Society and its demise, the movement to create a public art gallery, and the state of art education in the city. Important figures, like Mark Kearley, Colin Graham, and Jan Zach, who brought a modern art aesthetic to Victoria, are examined.

Part Three focuses on the artistic development of the charter members of the Limner Society of artists from 1920 to the present. It includes an examination of how these artists, many of whom were immigrants, affected the local scene, whether they were influenced by indigenous Northwest Coast art, and whether they influenced each other's art. The Limners played an important role in an emerging art scene. Never before the focus of a scholarly study, these artists, and art in Victoria in general, are now attracting a great deal of attention and are finally receiving the kind of recognition they deserve.


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- fig. 121. * Elza Mayhew, Zong I, 1986. Bronze sculpture, 7' high, Collection the artist.
(Source: Photograph by author)
- fig. 122. * Herbert Siebner, Giants in a Stormy Landscape, 1984. Acrylic, 59.5 x 74.0 cm., Collection the artist.
(Source: Nicholas Tuele, Herbert Siebner: Dualities, Victoria: A.G.G.V., 1984, Pl. 19.)

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DEDICATION

For my parents, Jan and Geertruid Kolkema,
who taught me the value of an education
and struggled to give me the best one they could.

For my parents-in-law, John and Sandra Whittaker,
and grandparents-in-law, Arthur and Phyllis Whittaker,
for their constant support.

But mostly for my husband David,
without whose love, advice, and encouragement
this thesis could not have been written.

INTRODUCTION

The Limners are a group of visual artists which formed in Victoria in 1971 and which is still active today. Maxwell Bates, the unofficial leader of the Limners, wanted to gather together artists primarily interested in depicting the human figure in their art. Although the works of the original and later Limners do not always strictly follow this original plan there is nevertheless a theme of humanity and human needs that runs throughout their work. I first became interested in the Limners in the fall of 1986 while working as a curatorial assistant at the Maltwood Art Museum & Gallery during the final year of my B.A. program at the University of Victoria. I was assisting in the organization and installation of a retrospective exhibition of the work of Bill West and, along with fellow assistant Montserrat Gonzalez, was in charge of picking up works by West in private collections around Greater Victoria.

The first stop on our list that week was the home of artist Herbert Siebner, who owned a small West pen-and-ink drawing entitled Three Men in a Leaky Boat. I had vaguely heard of Siebner but knew little about his work or his international reputation. I was astonished at the mastery displayed in the dozens of lively watercolours and prints which lined the walls of his Prospect Lake home. More than anything, however, I was struck by his warmth, hospitality, and extraordinary sense of humour. Ms. Gonzalez and I had an enjoyable short visit made more pleasant, it seemed, by a glass or two of wine. Siebner brought out the catalogue to an exhibition of works he had shown recently in Berlin and was very enthusiastic about the response his work had received in his mother country.

I suppose a few prejudices I had held about art in Victoria were dispelled that day. I had imagined that the isolated nature of Victoria, as well as its conservative tastes in art, would stifle any creative or remotely avant-garde artist, yet here was an artist whose remarkable output and international reputation belied this thinking. I also must admit to not having paid much attention to the artists of Victoria while I was completing my B.A., partly perhaps because I used to feel that there were no exciting artists to study here, and partly because the history of art in our city was not offered in any course, except, of course, for the important contributions made by Emily Carr. I was to learn in the coming weeks, as I worked on the West exhibition, visited the homes of other local artists such as Carole Sabiston, and started reading about the artists of Victoria, that there were in fact many artists living in our area who deserved a closer look.

I had already decided to write my master's thesis on some aspect of Canadian art but now realized I wanted to concentrate on art in Victoria. I had seen an exhibition of work by the *Limners* in the Maltwood Art Museum & Gallery in 1985 and was familiar with this group but did not know much about it except that Maxwell Bates had been a member. As I began to look closely at the works of members of this group in the University and Maltwood collections I decided to write my thesis on the nine artists who comprised this society of artists during the early seventies when it was first formed and their role in the development of modern art in Victoria during this century. These artists are Maxwell Bates, Richard Ciccimarra, Robert De Castro, Nita Forrest, Elza Mayhew, Myfanwy Pavelic, Herbert Siebner, Robin Skelton, and Karl Spreitz. (figs. 1-9)

Very little scholarly research has been done on these artists, and virtually nothing has been written about them as a group. Much of my information, therefore, had to be gathered from newspaper articles, a few journal articles, and personal taped interviews with the living Limners, their fellow artists, and friends. The interviews were for me the most satisfying aspect of the project. I had virtually no experience in interviewing before I began work on this thesis, but each artist welcomed me into his or her home and enthusiastically answered all my questions. Instead of relying solely on information from secondary sources, I was able to reach the source, get first-hand information, and form my own conclusions.

I felt it was important for several reasons to document these artists who had played and are still playing such an important role in the advent and development of modern art in Victoria. Many of the Limners have national and international reputations, yet most Victorians do not even know about them or their group. I wished not only to increase my personal awareness of them but also wanted to study the Limners in the hope of publicizing them in some way and making their work more well-known locally. Several core members of the group have already died and other members are elderly. I felt it vitally important to document the lives and art of these artists while they were still alive to relate their experiences. I feel that what I have researched and written about these artists is ground-breaking material which I hope will be useful to later art historians writing about this exciting era in the history of art in Victoria.

In an introduction to a catalogue for an exhibition of Contemporary Works on Paper by British Columbia Artists (1978), Colin Graham, Director Emeritus of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, discusses a

problem which I feel is central to studying the history of art in Victoria.¹ Graham discusses how a viewer of works by artists of a foreign country usually tries to determine whether or not these artists are talented, whether or not they are outstanding artists in their region, and whether or not we can discern a regional influence in their art. Graham goes on to say that the artists of B.C. are cut off from art in the rest of Canada. While they are aware of the national and international art scene "they tend to feel a sense of apartness and to be thrown back on their own resources."² The result, according to Graham, is not the emergence of a coastal school "but of a group of individualists each going very much his or her own way."³ Many of our local artists follow a western tradition and depict our vast and overpowering landscape. Other artists, such as the *Limners*, are influenced by European and American art and tend to concentrate on the human figure, human needs, and the human environment.

There is a great deal of validity to Graham's comments in this catalogue and I will explore them in my study of the *Limners*. I will examine the influence of the international avant-garde on these artists, their sense of apartness in isolated Victoria which traditionally seems to lag a generation behind other cities in terms of art styles, the presence or absence of a regional flavour in their work, and their influence upon each other.

This thesis is divided into three parts. *Part One* consists of a survey of the history of art in Victoria from the beginning to 1945 as a background to the thesis; *Part Two* will continue this survey up to the present day; and *Part Three* will focus specifically on the artists who would later form the *Limners* and will discuss their role in twentieth century art in Victoria. In all cases I have dealt with the material in a chronological fashion so that

major themes will have an historical context. For this reason *Part Three*, the section on the Limners, is divided into five chronological sections: 1920-1949, *the Formative Years*; 1950-1959, *The Point Group*; 1960-1969, *Exploration and Growth*; 1970-1979, *The Limners*; and 1980-1989, *Looking to the Future*.

NOTES

1 Province of B.C., Contemporary Works on Paper by British Columbia Artists (Victoria 1978), introduction.

This exhibition was comprised of works in the provincial art collection and travelled to London, Paris, and Brussels as an expression of B.C.'s goodwill to those cities and as a way of publicizing our artists.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

PART ONE

ART IN VICTORIA: From the Beginning to 1945

"TRADITIONS"

The Nineteenth Century

The Island Arts and Crafts Society (1909-1951)

Changes: The Modern Room, 1932

Ina D.D. Uthoff and Art Education

Other Aspects of Victoria Life

Notes

It was Spring, 1843, when the first steamship came to the coast of Vancouver Island. The Beaver brought Hudson's Bay factor James Douglas, who had been sent to survey the area and choose the perfect site on which to build what would become Fort Victoria.¹ In a letter to a friend back home Douglas described the beauty of the location he had picked:

The place itself appears a perfect Eden in the midst of the dreary wilderness of the Northwest coast, and so different is its general aspect from the wooded rugged regions around that one might be pardoned for supposing it had dropped from the clouds.²

The physical beauty of the land came to be captured in works by colonial artists like J.C. White, Frederick Whymper, and W.G.R. Hind and has attracted many artists since then.³ The dominant artistic aesthetic of Victoria was formed by the wave of settlers who came here in the nineteenth century, mostly from Great Britain and Europe. It is a peculiarity of European colonies that traditions and art forms brought by settlers from their homeland often become fixed and remain the cultural ideal long after new styles have replaced their counterparts back home.⁴ Such was the case in nineteenth-century Victoria, not only in terms of art but also in customs and matters of social etiquette. Thus, Victorians are often considered "more English than the English" in their steadfast adherence to old values and lifestyles.⁵ I feel this phenomenon is the result in part of our isolated location on an island and is perpetuated by the image we propagate of our city in order to attract tourists who provide our economic stability.

The artistic trends and media that settlers brought with them to Victoria reflected the mainstream art aesthetic of nineteenth-century Britain. Landscape artists such as Turner and Constable were greatly admired, and the

theme of the Picturesque was popular with most artists. The tradition of painting in watercolours had been accepted by the Royal Academy, Britain's most influential art organization, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and was taken up by artists in the new land. Military draughtsmen such as Paul Sandby, colonial artists such as Whymper, and early settlers in Victoria tended to work in watercolour and pencil because of their portability. Except for European trained portraitist Sophie Pemberton,⁶ there were no real professional artists living here in the nineteenth century, and the tradition of the amateur artist as a painter of landscapes became very important and led to the formation of the first art organization in Victoria in the early twentieth century.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century travel became much easier and Victoria artists such as Emily Carr and Sophie Pemberton were able to go to Europe where they were influenced by the modern art movements being pioneered there. Works influenced by these innovations took a long time in being accepted back home, however, because traditional styles and subject matter were so firmly entrenched in people's way of thinking. The amateur painters of Victoria hated modernism and, because of their large numbers and prominent positions in society, made up the popular taste in art.⁷ It is this conservatism that led Carr to complain that Victoria was "about the most sleepily behind spot on earth for Art."⁸

The bulk of Victoria's population was of English and Scottish origin and had conservative tastes in art which they had brought with them to their new home. The first major arts organization in the city was formed in 1909. The Vancouver Island Arts and Crafts Society echoed the provincial

English art society and arose mainly out of an interest in the British tradition of watercolour landscapes and the Arts and Crafts movement. The group changed its name in 1910 to the Island Arts Club, in 1912 to the Island Arts and Crafts Club, and finally in 1922 to the Island Arts and Crafts Society.⁹ It was founded by local amateur artists and others interested in the arts, mostly genteel ladies, who wanted to stimulate interest in arts and crafts, especially in sketching.¹⁰ Apparently even at the turn of the century, artists felt that Victorians were apathetic towards the arts, and members of the newly formed group, some of who had been active artists in Vancouver, wanted to "wake them up."¹¹

These artists, however, were not interested in any of the modern art movements which were being developed on the continent at that time. When the Society members thought of art, "they generally meant 'western' art as defined by their predominantly British heritage,"¹² and what they thought of as modern art was most likely works of the Victorian period and of the eighteenth and nineteenth century British tradition in watercolour landscapes. They were also influenced by the Oriental and American aspects of the popular Arts & Crafts movement. This conservative aesthetic was to continue to dominate the art scene in Victoria until the mid-1940s. This changing environment meant the end for the Island Arts and Crafts Society, which finally disbanded in 1951.¹³ Its spirit remains alive even today, however, in the form of the Victoria Sketch Club. This group formed in the late 1950s as an offshoot of the defunct Society.

Although the Society was narrow in its outlook, hostile to modernism, and was characterized by its "anachronistic continuance of the British watercolour tradition long after modern trends in painting were

accepted elsewhere",¹⁴ it was nevertheless the first group of its kind in Victoria and should be given credit for playing an important role in bringing the arts to the attention of the general public. The Society held annual exhibitions almost every year of its existence and, although the works shown were mostly picturesque landscapes, these exhibits did afford Victorians some contact with the art produced in the city. Emily Carr exhibited several times in these Society exhibitions, although it is said there were times when some of her "strangely modern" works were hung facing the wall,¹⁵ and she would in time come to poke fun at the provincial tastes of members of the "arts and crafts".¹⁶

The I.A.C.S. did educate its members in matters of art, albeit in a highly conservative manner. Regular sketching trips were planned by the Society during the summer months, and studio space was rented in the winter. In 1922, life drawing classes were introduced, and four professional models were hired who posed both draped and nude.¹⁷ It is not clear whether women were allowed to draw from the nude male model at this time, but it seems unlikely. The Society also had a library and clubrooms, and in 1917 held subscriptions to two British art magazines, Studio and Colour.¹⁸

Many members of the Society were prominent citizens of the city from well-known families such as the Creases, Pembertons, Langleys, and Shallcrosses, and were also closely connected to the Anglican Church.¹⁹ The Society emphasized the importance of beauty in art. In 1914 the Secretary of the Society, J.R. Blaikie, wrote an essay entitled "Designing Pictures and Ideas of Beauty" which was considered so important by the Society that it had it printed. The Society believed that art had to be beautiful to be worthy of the title *Art*, and Blaikie outlines that

a successful painting must have something in it that engages some intellectual facilities of the observer, and the greatest pictures are those that appeal strongly to large masses of people, awakening in various degrees a consciousness of truth and pleasure in the subtle appropriateness of expression.²⁰

This traditional interest of beauty in art continued into the 1940s, when the Society's last President, John Kyle, gave lectures on British, French, Italian, and Flemish art, as well as talks on the definition of beauty and the purpose of art.²¹

John Kyle (1871-1958) represented the old school of art education in British Columbia and exhibited in the B.C. Society of Fine Artists exhibitions, which were similar in tone to the ones held by the I.A.C.S. in Victoria. Although he was a contemporary of the influential art teacher Ina D.D. Uthoff (1889-1971) and was still alive when Jan Zach and Herbert Siebner were attracting students eager to learn about modernism, Kyle to them unequivocally stood for everything that was conservative in art and, by the fifties, very much outdated. In the 1880s he had attended night classes run by the Hawick Science & Art Committee in Hawick, Scotland. This school was affiliated with the official British art-teacher training system operated by the Department of Science & Art, South Kensington, London.²² Kyle had been trained in this traditional South Kensington "system" of drawing and painting and was well versed in such academic exercises as drawing from plaster casts of classical statuary. From 1906 to 1938 he held the powerful position of drawing teacher in the Vancouver public school system, was responsible for training art teachers, and was provincial supervisor for correspondence courses in art.²³ Kyle believed that there should be no division between the arts and crafts, an idea the Society had also held since it was formed. In the thirties he wrote three books on industrial design which

are used as official textbooks in some school systems even today.²⁴

It is not surprising that the conservative I.A.C.S. was actively opposed to the modern art movements practiced in Europe. Instead of ignoring modernism (which is what one would have expected them to do) they actually publicly denounced it in lectures and newspaper articles. In his 1914 lecture entitled "Art After the War", J.J. Shallcross maintained that Cubism and Futurism would soon disappear from the art scene.²⁵ Similarly, another member of the Society denounced modernism and held that attention to beauty would soon return; Edward Hasell proclaimed that these modern movements were the result of a "flood of Teutonic influence before the war" and "would disappear with the unwholesome emanations of Prussianism. Real *Beauty* would come to claim greater attention."²⁶ In 1931, George Southwell, painter of the murals in the Parliament Buildings, also denounced modern art as being "entirely grotesque. It has reverted to the savage, and when it expresses itself in forms of cubism, it becomes an abysmal mystery."²⁷

Emily Carr must have clashed with the Society on many issues. The main problem was, of course, the denunciation of modernism by the Society. Carr had been greatly influenced by her art studies in France and England in 1911 and had actually had two canvases "accepted and well hung in the Salon d'Automne (the rebel Paris show of the year)."²⁸ She felt unable to work in an outdated style once she returned to Victoria simply because the people of Victoria were not prepared for her new ideas. During her lean years one of her sisters became exasperated by Carr's stubborn adherence to a modern style not yet popular in Victoria. She said "It is crazy to persist in this way - no pupils, no sales, you'll starve! Go back to the old

painting." Carr replied "I'd rather starve! I could not paint in the old way - it is dead - meaningless - empty."²⁹

Another cause of ill-feeling between Carr and the Society was the fact that the Society held to strict "white Anglo-Saxon Protestant attitudes to society and art."³⁰ Carr herself was from a prominent family but during her lifetime chose to ignore the social conventions of her class. She elected for a more bohemian lifestyle; she hated class-snobbery, painted in Indian villages, and preferred her animals to people. For these reasons she was looked down upon by members of the I.A.C.S. Carr's older sister Edith was a member of the Society and, since she always clashed with her older siblings, perhaps this was another reason Emily did not play an active role in the group.³¹

The conservative Island Arts and Crafts Society was to be "shaken up" considerably in 1932 with the addition of a "modern room" to that year's Society exhibition. Artist Edythe Hembroff (Schleicher) was one of the exhibitors in the modern room and says that

In 1932 seven Victoria artists, belatedly acting on J.M. Whistler's cry of revolt, 'Art for Art's Sake', stormed the city's fortress of academic art to rescue their townfolk from the yoke of conservatism and the Island Arts and Crafts Society.³²

The force behind this revolt was artist and Society member Max Maynard, who, in a far-sighted tactical move, agreed to serve on a certain committee in return for a separate room in the annual exhibition in which modern artists could exhibit separately from the others. This exhibit was undoubtedly the first time modern art had been shown in Victoria and perhaps the first time it had been shown in the province under the auspices of an art society.³³ The artists who exhibited in the modern room that year were Emily Carr (b. 1871),

Ina D.D. Uthoff (b. 1889), Max Maynard (b. 1903), Edythe Hembroff (b. 1906), Jack Shadbolt (b. 1909), Ronald Bladen (b. 1918), and John McDonald (b. 1909).

This Modern Room not surprisingly shocked the citizens of Victoria enormously. Max Maynard wrote a modern art manifesto of sorts specifically for the occasion entitled "The Modern Point of View" in which he echoed the art theories of Clive Bell, Roger Fry, and Herbert Read and discussed "significant form" and art as formal creations rather than imitations of nature.³⁴ About one hundred copies of this document were placed in the Modern Room but all mysteriously disappeared when Maynard left the room unattended for a short while to have a cup of tea. Perhaps they were taken away by disapproving members of the I.A.C.S. or the conservative public. Max Maynard remembers that the exhibition of modern painting was coldly received by many viewers, and his humorous recollections of the exhibit paint a vivid picture of prim and proper art exhibit visitors in Victoria in the 1930s. He said that "many genteel ladies... came to the door, sniffed and turned away. The men, for the most part, were more positive: they entered in groups and made sarcastic comments to each other in loud voices." The works by Carr were naturally derided by this group, but one particular cubist-inspired landscape of Maynard's also received a "severe mauling". It was a study of houses in James Bay, entitled Blind Houses because they lacked windows. One 'Arts and Crafts' member considered it "a ridiculous title for a ridiculous painting", and apparently all present enthusiastically agreed.³⁵

Both the Daily Colonist and the Victoria Times commented favourably on the fact that the "moderns" had secured two little rooms for themselves at the annual exhibition but, as was the norm in art journalism until the mid 1940s or later, no attempt was made to analyze or criticize the

works of art in any way. These exhibitions were reported in a social and superficial manner, reflecting the general view that art functions were more like social gatherings than important intellectual events.³⁶ It would not be until the fifties and sixties, the growth years of art activity in Victoria, that any kind of enlightened art criticism appeared in local newspapers.

Although 1932 was the first and only year a modern room was added to the annual exhibition it nevertheless caused a stir and had a great effect on artists and the general public in Victoria. It had the effect of shaking Victorians up and caused fruitful debate, discussion, and probably some heated arguments as well. Young people who were concerned about the state of art in Canada stayed behind and asked questions of the exhibitors,³⁷ and a small spark was ignited that would start to flame in Victoria a little over a decade later. Contemporary art lectures began to take place more frequently, although naturally not always held by the Society. A local club called the Canadian Club offered some lectures in Victoria on the arts and crafts. It sponsored a talk by Arthur Lismer of the Group of Seven in 1932 and a talk by Emily Carr in 1930. The Society was not to hold lectures by these two important Canadian artists until 1940 and 1932 respectively.³⁸

The Modern Room affected local artists in many ways. Apparently some Society members who had shown no modernist tendencies in their work before the 1932 exhibit began developing a more impressionistic brushstroke, using brighter colours, and painting in a larger format.³⁹ It is safe to surmise that this change came about as a direct result of the Modern Room exhibition. Although fellow artists like the Maclures and Edythe Hembroff had always supported Carr, the general public saw for the first time that the "crazy Carr lady" was no longer alone in her style. This added

much-needed support for modern art in the city and gave Carr at least some of the recognition she had deserved for so many years.

One of the exhibitors in the Modern Room was Ina D.D. Uthoff, an important figure in the local art scene. She was also the only exhibitor able to bridge the gap between the modern and the traditional, having been the only artist to have works hung in both sections of the 1932 exhibition, a fact testifying to both her artistic talent and her sense of self-preservation. She is considered to be the most important art teacher during the prewar period⁴⁰ and as such must have taught both those interested in traditional art and those more modern. Uthoff had studied at the Glasgow School of Art under Charles Rennie Mackintosh.⁴¹ She had exhibited often in B.C. since 1925 and in Victoria since 1926, and worked in many different media. A watershed year for Uthoff came in 1928, when, at almost 40 years of age, she attended Mark Tobey's "master class" in Emily Carr's studio and soon thereafter began experimenting with non-objective art.⁴² She was one of the first Canadian artists to do so and was very influential upon other local artists. During the thirties and forties she ran her Kingston Street art school practically single-handed and taught a variety of arts and crafts including painting, sculpture, etching, pottery, and commercial illustration.⁴³ Her school eventually, in the later thirties, became the Victoria School of Art under the aegis of the Provincial Department of Education.⁴⁴

Limner Nita Forrest remembers Uthoff and comments on the fact that "she was not old-fashioned at all" like most of the other older artists in Victoria.⁴⁵ Uthoff, in fact, wanted very badly to be represented in the Modern Room of 1932⁴⁶ and was perhaps disappointed when only one of her

works was chosen. She taught art to Victoria residents for many years, including Colin Graham and Audrey Johnson as children. Although the majority of her work was only mildly avant-garde (probably as a result of the fact that she was much older than other pioneer modernists in Victoria and perhaps still felt an affinity for her academic artistic roots), it is for her excellent and dedicated teaching and important contributions to the art scene in Victoria that she is most remembered. She was an active participant in the group that would eventually succeed in forming Victoria's first public gallery and is fondly remembered by many artists working in Victoria during this time. She died in Ontario in 1971 at the age of eighty-two.⁴⁷

There were other important art teachers in Victoria at this time, teaching both in a conservative and more modern style. I have already discussed John Kyle's academic style of teaching. Another conservative art teacher was a man named Wil Menelaws, who taught art in local high schools.⁴⁸ A veteran teacher at Victoria High School (1908-1945) was Earl W. Clarke, a conservative but highly creative artist who taught both Jack Shadbolt and Max Maynard.⁴⁹ Other teachers followed Uthoff's example and advocated a more open and modern approach to art education. Painter and sculptor Peggy Walton Packard (b. 1914) had been a pupil of Uthoff's and she herself taught art, primarily sculpture, from the forties to the sixties.⁵⁰ From the late forties to the sixties two high school art teachers, Mrs. Dorothy Williams at Oak Bay Senior Secondary and Mrs. Frances Cameron at Victoria High School, were noted for their energetic teaching.⁵¹ Colin Graham recalls that these two women often brought their classes to the Art Gallery and that they were both up to date with what was happening in the world of art.⁵²

The developments in the art scene in Victoria relate closely to

what was going on in the economic situation in Victoria from 1900 to 1945. The years before the First World War have been called "Victoria's Indian Summer" because the city was bustling with industrial activity.⁵³ It was at this time of optimism for Victoria's future that the Island Arts and Crafts Society was formed. This must have reflected the artists' feelings that Victoria was coming into its own as an important centre and should have its own cultural groups like Vancouver did. At the same time, however, Vancouver was becoming the more important centre and alternative sources of revenue had to be found in Victoria. It was at this time that Victoria became the tourist haven which it remains today, relying on its quaint character and beautiful gardens to attract tourists from all over the world. The 1910s saw Victoria in the midst of a land boom. Roads were built, buildings erected, and heavy mineral deposits were found, but this economic prosperity was short-lived and many people lost their investments.⁵⁴ Land prices fell, and in fact it was not until as late as the 1960s that some people realized the prices they had paid for their property fifty years earlier!⁵⁵

A large increase in Victoria's population had been predicted in the early years of this century but did not materialize; in fact, the city's population increased by only 300 people in the decade between 1921 and 1931.⁵⁶ Jobs were scarce, and ambitious young men often chose to leave and try their luck elsewhere. British Columbia was especially hard hit during the Depression because it was the final stop of the railway line. Many young Canadians hoping to find work in the west were disappointed and added to an already strained economy.⁵⁷ The abundance of natural resources here, however, must have kept people relatively well-fed. Fruit, vegetables, and fish were plentiful, and many generous citizens shared what they had with others.⁵⁸

Victoria was definitely a sleepy town in the twenties and thirties. To illustrate just how quiet it was we could look at the story of how, in 1926, a cougar managed to get as far as the steps of the Public Library downtown before being shot!⁵⁹ Although Victoria was economically in a slump, the local historian Harry Gregson points out that this does not imply that it was in a cultural and social slump as well.⁶⁰ "Gay parties" were held by the town's social elite and, as we have seen (although Gregson does not discuss it), the Island Arts and Crafts Society was quite active during these years. The British sculptor Katherine Maltwood (1878-1961) and her husband John retired to Victoria in 1938 where she exhibited her work with the Society.⁶¹ There is, I feel, a close relationship between the lack of economic stability in Victoria from 1914 to 1945 and the absolute artistic dominance of the conservative and narrow-minded I.A.C.S. During either political or economic hardship people tend to favour a traditional art, and it becomes difficult not only for modern artists to make a living but also to be accepted by the majority of the population. So it was with Emily Carr and other exhibitors in the Modern Room of 1932. Similarly, renewed prosperity after the war coincided with a growing interest in contemporary art and in creating an art gallery. The influx of immigrants from Great Britain and Europe to Victoria after WWII, bringing with them knowledge of contemporary world art, definitely breathed new life into a stale and stodgy art scene.

NOTES

- 1 Harry Gregson, A History of Victoria: 1842-1970 (Victoria 1970), 1.
- 2 Ibid., 2.
- 3 For a detailed study of these artists see Helen Bergen Peters, Painting during the Colonial Period in British Columbia: 1845-1871 (Victoria 1979).
- 4 Edythe Hembroff-Schleicher, The Modern Room (Victoria 1981), 4. (From this point on will be referred to as The Modern Room.)
- 5 Referred to in the title of Terry Reksten's book More English than the English: A Very Social History of Victoria (Victoria 1986).
- 6 For a study of Sophie Pemberton see Nicholas Tuele, Sophia Theresa Pemberton: 1869-1959 (Victoria 1978).
- 7 The Modern Room, 4.
- 8 Ibid., 3.
- 9 Ibid., 20.
- 10 Christina Johnson-Dean, The Crease Family Archives: A Record of the Arts in Victoria, M.A. Thesis, University of Victoria, 1980, 159.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid., 170.
- 13 The Modern Room, 20.
- 14 Ibid., 3.
- 15 Julia Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Colin Graham," 11 November 1988.
- 16 Hembroff-Schleicher, Emily Carr: The Untold Story (Victoria 1978), 249.

- 17 Johnson-Dean, The Crease Family Archives..., 166.
- 18 Ibid., 180.
- 19 Ibid., 182.
- 20 Miscellaneous papers of the Society, quoted in Johnson-Dean, 171.
- 21 Ibid., 170.
- 22 Maltwood Museum & Art Gallery, John Kyle: Artist and Educator 1871-1958 (Victoria n.d.), n.p.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 "Art After the War", Victoria Daily Times, May 4, 1917, p.6, quoted in Johnson-Dean, 172.
- 26 Johnson-Dean, 172.
- 27 "Modern Tendencies in Art", Victoria Daily Colonist, Mar. 19, 1931, p.3, quoted in Johnson-Dean, 172.
- 28 Emily Carr, Growing Pains: The Autobiography of Emily Carr (Toronto 1946), 295.
- 29 Ibid., 310.
- 30 Johnson-Dean, 172.
- 31 Ibid., 197.
- 32 The Modern Room, 11.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ibid., 14.
- 35 Max Maynard, "Reminiscences" (Mar. 1981), Provincial Archives of British Columbia (P.A.B.C.), quoted in The Modern Room, 17.

- 36 The Modern Room, 15.
- 37 Ibid., 17.
- 38 Johnson-Dean, 187.
- 39 The Modern Room, 18.
- 40 Nicholas Tuele and Liane Davison, Art in Victoria: 1960-1986 (Victoria 1986), n.p.
- 41 The Modern Room, 12.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Whittaker, "Conversation with Colin Graham", 24 January 1989.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Nita Forrest," 10 December 1988.
- 46 The Modern Room, 12.
- 47 Whittaker, "Conversation with Colin Graham," 24 January 1989.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 In conversation with Dr. Peter Smith, January, 1989.
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- 51 Ibid.
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- 53 Gregson, A History of Victoria..., 144.
- 54 Ibid., 189.
- 55 Ibid., 204.
- 56 Ibid., 210.

57 Tony Emery in The Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver: Art and Artists 1931-1983 (Vancouver 1983), 259.

58 Gregson, 219.

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60 Ibid.

61 Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, British Columbia Women Artists 1885-1985 (Victoria 1985), 15.

PART TWO

ART IN VICTORIA: 1945-1989

"Transitions"

Movement for a Gallery

The Honourable Mark Kearley and the *Little Centre*

Colin Graham and the *Art Gallery of Greater Victoria*

Jan Zach and Art Education

An Expanding City

Notes

The movement to build a public art gallery in Victoria actually had its beginnings in the early years of this century. Art exhibitions were often held in peoples' homes or at local fairs, and the first annual exhibition of the Vancouver Island Arts and Crafts Society (later the Island Arts and Crafts Society) was actually held on the Willows Fairground in 1910¹ because there was no permanent structure available for exhibitions. The Society held its annual exhibitions in a variety of places over the forty-two years of its existence, including the Alexandra Club on Courtenay Street and the Crystal Garden amusement centre on Douglas Street.²

This problem of lack of proper exhibition space had not been solved by the thirties and forties. Audrey Johnson, who reviewed theatre, music, and art for the Victoria Times from 1939 to 1987, tells me that art exhibits during this time were put on in a variety of strange places. She often wrote about these exhibits for the Victoria Times and recounts how exhibitions were sometimes held in the dining rooms of the Hudson's Bay and Eaton's department stores, and that larger shows would take place in the private banquet rooms of the Empress Hotel.³

Promises from the provincial government for a permanent art gallery first came in 1912 when Dr. H.E. Young, Minister of Education, announced that the provincial government had plans to build a gallery in the proposed museum to be built in a new section of the Parliament Buildings.⁴ By 1919, however, this gallery had still not materialized, and an Art Workers Guild (which later came to be known as the Provincial Arts and Industrial Institute) was formed to specifically address the need for a permanent gallery

and for improved art education in Victoria.⁵ Several members of the Island Arts and Crafts Society were also members of the P.A.I.I., but the group was not successful in achieving its aims and amalgamated with the I.A.C.S. in 1922.⁶

The Society continued to play an important role in the demand for a permanent art gallery. When the plans were unveiled in 1923 for the erection of the Crystal Garden amusement centre, then Society President F.B. Pemberton voiced the request that a space in the complex be allotted for a permanent gallery.⁷ This request fell on deaf ears as so many others had. Although the Society's minutes during the 1930s continued to stress the need for a permanent art gallery,⁸ the members of the Society were never able to organize one.

As a result of the successful 1932 Modern Room exhibition and growing awareness and acceptance of modern art in Victoria, Emily Carr initiated plans to organize a public art gallery in the city. She held a meeting in her home at 646 Simcoe Street on December 14, 1932 to discuss turning the lower floor of the "House of all Sorts" into a "People's Gallery".⁹ The meeting was attended by forty people interested in the arts and chaired by Jack Shadbolt, an English-born and Victoria-raised artist who had at this point not yet relocated to Vancouver.¹⁰ An exhibition was planned, probably to raise money for this venture, but Carr made the mistake of inviting several conservative artists to exhibit. The exhibition was a failure because the public was expecting another exciting Modern Room, and Emily's plans remained unfulfilled.¹¹ She died in 1945 without seeing her dream of a civic gallery become reality a few years later.

Carr had envisaged a gallery as "a warm and pleasurable place to visit on raw winter days; and she wanted it especially for honest working people - not for snobs, dabblers, dilettantes or supercilious members of the 'Arts and Crafts'."¹² At one point she went to ask the City Mayor for financial help in getting the gallery started. His reaction to her request gives some idea of the state of art and importance placed on it in Victoria before the war. Apparently the mayor looked at Carr in astonishment and said "We have Beacon Hill Park, Oak Bay over there, ducks, swans, a cage of parrots - what more could a city want in terms of recreation?"¹³ Carr must have walked out in disgust at this lack of help and understanding. She wrote of her unsuccessful attempts to Eric Brown, Director of the National Gallery: "...Well, anyhow I'm not sorry I tried. It's set some thinking and someday, somehow, something may come of it."¹⁴

A gallery was not started until 1946 when the Little Centre was organized by the Victoria Branch of the Canadian Federation of Artists.¹⁵ The members of this group represented Victoria's few advocates of modern art and included artist and teacher Ina Uthhoff. The fact that they in a matter of months were able to organize a gallery when the Society had not been able to do anything in over thirty years speaks of the weakening of the Society during the 1940s and the increase in power of other organizations.¹⁶ The driving force behind the Little Centre group was a non-resident named Mark Kearley who came to Victoria from England to sit-out the war.

The story of the advent of modernism in Victoria after the Second World War can be told in terms of a few important individuals who almost single-handedly introduced Victorians to modern European art since 1880. Colin Graham, Jan Zach, and the Honourable Mark Kearley are three

such important figures. Kearley arrived in Victoria with his family in 1944 to escape war-torn Europe.¹⁷ He was an Englishman of aristocratic parentage, the son of the Viscount of Portsmouth,¹⁸ and had been living in neutral Switzerland prior to coming to Victoria.¹⁹ He was apparently an authority on art and was accustomed to the large galleries and museums of Europe. He also turned out to be one of those rare people who is a man of action as well as a man of ideas, and his ideas proved to be an important stimulus for art in Victoria. He was astonished to find that Victoria did not have a public art gallery (or any other kind of gallery for that matter) and promptly organized a group of art-minded citizens to initiate the opening of one.²⁰

Ina Uhthoff was a member of this group, and so was Audrey Johnson, columnist for the Victoria Times. Johnson had been a pupil of Uhthoff's and they were very close friends. Because it was war-time and there were few automobiles available for sale or being bought, this gallery group was able to rent Thomas Plimley's automobile showroom on Yates Street. This first location was called the Little Centre. Kearley did not want to name it a gallery yet because it was not a proper gallery space with security, humidity and light control and so on.²¹ I suspect he also avoided calling it a gallery, calling it instead a "little" centre, because he wanted everyone to realize that this was only a temporary location and the diminutive name implied that they planned on growing quickly in the near future.

Kearley enraged some conservative Victorians because he had the audacity to boost Emily Carr and to bring in large colour reproductions of works by such artists as Renoir, Van Gogh, and Cézanne.²² The only reproduced works of art that Victorians had probably seen up until then were to be found in the conservative British art magazines such as Studio and

Colour to which the Society had subscribed. The following humorous anecdote, told to me by Colin Graham, retired director of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, illustrates what anyone in the least sympathetic to European modernism, especially if he hoped to bring it to Victoria, was up against.²³ The current president of the Island Arts and Crafts Society was a moustachioed colonel, no doubt an upstanding Anglo Saxon Protestant and typical of many Victoria residents at the time. One day Kearley was walking in Beacon Hill Park with one of his two sons when suddenly this colonel came from behind a bush brandishing a riding crop. "You", he said, "are the upstart Kearley, are you not? You with your Van Goghs, Renoirs, and Picassios (sic) - we have no need of you in this town!" This outraged defender of the Empire was about to hit Kearley with his crop when out of nowhere his diminutive wife called out "John, John! Remember, manners maketh man!" So in the end the English sense of propriety won out over passionate feelings about modern art. This story clearly illustrates, not only the stifling atmosphere in Victoria as far as experimentation in art went, but also how diametrically opposed were the ideals of art of the members of the Island Arts and Crafts Society and the group which would found the Little Centre.

The Little Centre began exhibiting works by local artists and also received travelling shows from the National Gallery and the Canadian Federation of Artists.²⁴ Audrey Johnson often wrote reviews of exhibitions held in the Centre. When the war ended, however, so did the Little Centre's lease on the auto showroom. The owner wanted to sell cars in the showroom now that the war was over, and the Centre had to look for new accommodations. During the past year the Centre had amassed a few possessions, some chairs and a few paintings. Kearley decided these would be put into storage until new space could be found.²⁵

A new location was soon found on Broughton Street next to the Royal Theatre. C.F.A.X. Radio now occupies the space that once was divided into two stores. The Little Centre rented one of the long and narrow street-level stores.²⁶ The Centre was unable to receive certain travelling shows because of lack of proper security and the necessary insurance money.²⁷ There were, nevertheless, important exhibitions held there, and Audrey Johnson believes that she saw her first war artists show at the Little Centre on Broughton Street.

The Centre, later called the Arts Centre and now the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, was able to move into its present location on Moss Street through the generosity and vision of Sara Spencer. She was the last remaining living child of David Spencer who had started the Spencer Department Store, now Eaton's. After her sister Mary died Sara was left alone in the Spencer mansion. Miss Spencer had been involved with Kearley's group and in 1951 decided to give her mansion to the City of Victoria to become a public gallery.²⁸ The members of the council must have been a near-sighted group of bureaucrats, for they were extremely reluctant to accept the offer because they did not want the financial burden of paying for its upkeep. One of them even said that Spencer was just donating her home to get out of paying taxes! It was almost to the point that Miss Spencer was going to withdraw her generous offer when some wiser people on council overcame the dissenters and in 1951 the city accepted the mansion and the upkeep of the grounds.²⁹

The volunteer group established by Kearley in 1944 gave its time freely when the Centre moved into the Spencer mansion in 1951 but soon

realized it could not be run successfully on an amateur basis alone. The Gallery needed someone knowledgeable and experienced to be director. Audrey Johnson believes that Ina Uthhoff was offered the position but that she refused to accept it because it would take time away from her painting and teaching.³⁰ Colin Graham says that around that time he was contemplating moving his young family from San Francisco to Victoria. He wrote Uthhoff, who had once been his art teacher, and asked her whether there were any arts-related positions coming available in Victoria in the near future. Luckily for Graham (for there were few arts-related jobs in Victoria in the early 1950s), this coincided with the Gallery's need for a director and he was offered the position, one which he was to hold for almost twenty-five years until his retirement in 1973. With him the Gallery grew from a small operation not particularly appreciated by the public to a nationally known art gallery with a strong following.³¹

Colin Graham is another of those forward-thinking figures central to our story of how modern art came to Victoria. Graham was born in Vancouver in 1915 and attended Shawnigan Lake Boys School, about an hour's drive from Victoria.³² He remembers happy times spent in downtown Victoria with his school friends and already knew Victoria well when he started as director of its first public gallery. He was educated at Cambridge University and the University of California at Berkeley.³³ Before coming to Victoria in 1951 he was Director of Education at the California Palace of the Legion of Honour Art Museum in San Francisco. In an interview he described what exciting times those were in terms of the art scene in San Francisco. Artists such as Clyfford Still and Mark Rothko were still there, and Graham had met them and was familiar with their work and with modern art in general.³⁴ When Graham arrived in Victoria he quickly

realized that this was not a hotbed of modernism. He says, "I could only find about half a dozen people who had any idea of what had happened in world art since the death of Cézanne."³⁵

Uhthoff and a few other artists must have been among these few, as well as Jan Zach, a Czech sculptor who also arrived in Victoria in 1951. It was up to Graham and Zach to bring twentieth-century art to Victoria. The first exhibition staged by Graham of works of Quebec modernists such as Borduas and Riopelle was so shocking to the citizens of Victoria that the show was nicknamed the "Wildmen of Quebec".³⁶ What followed was an interesting balancing act played by Graham for years, and one that to some degree persists at the A.G.G.V. even today; since the gallery has always relied heavily on financial support from the private sector Graham showed the "traditional stuff" as well as modern works. He could not afford to alienate the conservative wealthy patrons, most of whom were of British extraction and preferred Landseer to Van Gogh. However, at the same time, Graham wanted slowly to introduce Victorians to modernism so that an appreciative audience (one which would in time buy works by local artists) could be built up. Graham would continue this quest to educate people about the arts over the years by introducing lectures, workshops, exciting and thought-provoking exhibitions, and later with the creation of the Art Rental, a service still popular today which allows people to hang original works of art in their homes at a much lower cost than if they were to purchase them. His aim was to enlighten people and develop slowly but surely an art-literate audience, one that was comfortable with all forms of art. If it had not been for Graham's patient groundwork in the fifties it is doubtful whether Victoria would have seen such an explosion of energy and artmaking in the sixties.³⁷

In 1954 Herbert Siebner was preparing to immigrate with his wife and daughter to Victoria from Berlin. Mrs. Siebner's sister had already been in Victoria for one and a half years, and Siebner, who was living in a city which boasted 10,000 working artists,³⁸ must have thought his sister-in-law was joking when she said that Victoria only had one professional artist of any importance - Jan Zach. (1914-1985)³⁹ The Czech sculptor had studied art in Prague at the Superior School of Industrial Arts and the Academy of Fine Arts.⁴⁰ He was supervising the erection of his country's pavilion at the 1939 World's Fair in New York City when the Germans invaded Czechoslovakia.

He naturally decided to remain in North America and married a woman from Esquimalt. They lived in Brazil for many years where Zach was a popular artist and became accustomed to receiving large commissions from wealthy Brazilians.⁴¹ The Zachs moved to Victoria in the summer of 1951, probably to be near her family. This was the same year Graham and his family arrived from San Francisco and the Art Gallery moved into Sara Spencer's mansion. The Zachs lived at 218 St. Andrews Street, the house Emily Carr had shared with her sister Alice. Alice still lived in one half of the house, the Zachs in the other.⁴²

Zach was both a sculptor and a painter, but he is best known for his sculpture. Colin Graham maintains that "it was impossible to make a living selling paintings in Victoria at that time."⁴³ Zach, accustomed to receiving substantial commissions, must have had a difficult time adjusting to Victoria where people had never thought of such a thing and only recently had even acquired a public gallery. Private galleries where local artists interested in modernism could exhibit and sell their works would not be started in the city until the late sixties. It seems that Zach never really adjusted to this situation, because Colin Graham says that Jan phoned him at

the gallery one day with a wonderful art proposal he wanted the gallery to finance. In his heavy and almost unintelligible accent Jan exclaimed excitedly "Coleen, Coleen! Can you give me \$15,000 - I have a *magnifique* idea!"⁴⁴ This was at a time in the mid 1950s when the total annual budget of the gallery was only \$11,000!⁴⁵

In order to support himself in this artistically backward city Zach became an art teacher. He established an art school above what are now the offices of Pemberton Holmes Realty on Government Street. His students included future Limners Elza Mayhew, Robert De Castro, and Jack Wilkinson. Zach was by all accounts an extremely inspiring and enthusiastic teacher. In Colin Graham's words: "he really stimulated these people."⁴⁶ Elza Mayhew relates that Zach never showed his students *how* to make art, nor did he ever paint or sculpt in front of them. He wanted his students to develop their own artistic vocabulary and would simply walk around the studio and give excited advice in three languages simultaneously.⁴⁷ Tony Emery remembers that his English was poor and whenever he could not think of an English word he would simply substitute a Portuguese one.⁴⁸

The publisher of the Victoria Daily Times newspaper, Stuart Keate, was one of the few boosters of local contemporary art in the 1950s. He commissioned Zach and his students to paint a mural in the old Victoria Times office downtown.⁴⁹ Other than these few opportunities the future in Victoria looked bleak for Zach. Colin Graham recalls that Zach could not make a living here and that most of his paintings were sold to his students,⁵⁰ who must have wanted to keep him here as long as they could. Apparently, the reason Victoria was unreceptive to him was that he was an abstract artist. Graham as director of the new gallery was attempting to get Victorians to

appreciate twentieth century art and was finding it hard-going. His first exhibition in the Spencer mansion of Quebec modernists such as Borduas and Riopelle would hardly have been considered shocking elsewhere in Canada by 1951, but in Victoria, it caused something of a scandal. After several years Zach finally gave up on Victoria and left in 1958 when offered a teaching position in the Visual Arts department at the University of Oregon. Local artists such as Elza Mayhew always kept in contact with him, however, and he continued to exert an influence on Victoria artists over the years if only in spirit. According to Graham, Zach died in 1985 in Eugene, Oregon.⁵¹

The economic prosperity of the post-war years transformed Victoria from a sleepy town in 1945 into a thriving and rapidly growing city. The influx of people to this region wanting to start fresh in a new land, both retirees from the Prairies and the many European immigrants, like Zach and Siebner, caused an increase in the value of real-estate. Modern office buildings and apartment blocks changed the look of downtown Victoria, just as huge shopping centres and increased building during the sixties expanded the city's suburbs. Architects such as John Di Castri, John Wade, Peter Cotton, and Alan Hodgson transformed architecture in Victoria, bringing a modern style inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright and the Bauhaus to a city where architecture had previously been the province of conservative architects such as Rattenbury and Maclure. These new young architects had served in the war, and many had their post-secondary education financed by the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Several were products of the newly created U.B.C. School of Architecture which had been formed in 1947.⁵²

Newcomers to Victoria included not just retired people and European immigrants but many students who came here after the new

University of Victoria was built in 1963, replacing the old Victoria College which was located at what is now Camosun College's Lansdowne Campus. As is the case with every university city, new blood, life, and money were injected into Victoria. More important than that, however, especially in terms of the local art scene, was the growing cosmopolitan and pluralistic nature of the city shown in the increase in intellectual and artistic activity.

The 1960s were an exciting time for the arts in Victoria. The Department of Visual Arts at the University of Victoria was formed in 1967, and almost immediately began graduating more visually literate people each year than Victoria had seen in her entire history. Educators such as Donald Harvey and John Dobereiner continued in the tradition of Jan Zach and Herbert Siebner and taught their students about twentieth century art, including the current avant-garde movements of New York.

Although the university was turning out many informed students, the difficulty was still that they had few opportunities actually to see contemporary local art. Since the early fifties, the University (then Victoria College) had been an important patron of local artists. Harry Hickman, ex-Principal of Victoria College and the University of Victoria, started what is now the University Collection and which is comprised primarily of works by contemporary B.C. artists and is exhibited on campus. This collection was and still is an important source to view local art. The Art Gallery of Greater Victoria also kept in step with Victoria's increasing demand for art. Since its beginnings in the Spencer mansion the gallery had added several modern art wings, one in 1958, another in 1960, and other changes in the seventies.⁵³ During the late sixties private galleries began to open in Victoria to serve the increasing demand for quality local and national art.⁵⁴ New galleries

continued to be created and today number in the dozens.

As Victoria continued both to produce and attract professional artists they sometimes banded together to form groups and came to be given more critical attention in local newspapers. Art commentary today has come a long way since the "social reviews" of the thirties and forties, and exhibition spaces are no longer confined to society ladies' homes or local fairs. We will examine in *Part Three* how all these rapid and important changes in art in Victoria during the twentieth century relate to the single most important group of local artists, the Limners. How did this group of both native-born and foreign artists help bring twentieth-century modernism to this isolated town which traditionally seems to lag a generation behind other centres in terms of artistic and architectural styles? Can a regional style be seen in their work, and if not, why not? These issues will be studied and a clearer and more detailed picture of this exciting time in Victoria's art history will emerge in the study of this central group.

NOTES

- 1 Johnson-Dean, The Crease Family Archives..., 181.
- 2 Ibid., 191. For more on the history of the Crystal Garden, see Pierre Berton, et al., The Crystal Gardens: West Coast Pleasure Palace (Victoria 1977).
- 3 Julia Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Audrey Johnson," 5 December 1988.
- 4 Johnson-Dean, 190.
- 5 Ibid., 175.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid., 191.
- 8 Ibid., 192.
- 9 The Modern Room, 18.
- 10 Ibid. For more on Shadbolt see The Vancouver Art Gallery, Jack Shadbolt: Act of Painting (Vancouver 1985).
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Edythe Hembroff-Schleicher, Emily Carr..., 249.
- 13 Whittaker interview with Colin Graham.
- 14 Letter from Carr to Brown, 20 Jan. 1933, quoted in The Modern Room, 19.
- 15 Whittaker interview with Audrey Johnson.
- 16 Johnson-Dean, 192.
- 17 Whittaker interview with Graham.

- 18 Nicholas Tuele and Liane Davison, Art in Victoria..., n.p.
- 19 Whittaker interview with Johnson.
- 20 Whittaker interview with Graham.
- 21 Whittaker interview with Johnson.
- 22 Whittaker interview with Graham.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Whittaker interview with Johnson.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Whittaker interview with Graham.
- 30 Whittaker interview with Johnson.
- 31 Tuele and Davison, Art in Victoria..., n.p.
- 32 Whittaker interview with Graham.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Tuele and Davison, n.p.
- 38 Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Herbert Siebner," 6 December

1988.

39 Ibid.

40 Portland Art Museum, Paintings and Sculptures of the Pacific Northwest. (Portland 1958), 68.

41 Whittaker interview with Graham.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Elza Mayhew," 9 December 1988.

48 Whittaker interview with Anthony Emery.

49 Whittaker interview with Graham.

50 Ibid.

51 Whittaker, "conversation with Colin Graham," 24 January 1989.

52 The Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver: Art and Artists 1931-1983 (Vancouver 1983), 110.

53 Tuele and Davison, Art in Victoria..., n.p.

54 Ibid.

PART THREE

ART IN VICTORIA: THE LIMNERS

"A GROUP OF FRIENDS"

Introduction

1920-1949: Formative Years

Notes

1950-1959: The Point Group

Notes

1960-1969: Exploration and Growth

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1970-1979: The Limners

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1980-1989: Looking to the Future

Notes

INTRODUCTION

The Limners are currently preparing for a group show to be held at the Maltwood Art Museum & Gallery in January 1990, celebrating almost twenty years of their group's existence. The story of Maxwell Bates, Richard Ciccimarra, Robert De Castro, Nita Forrest, Elza Mayhew, Myfanwy Pavelic, Herbert Siebner, Robin Skelton, and Karl Spreitz, does not, however, begin when the Limners formed in 1971. Many of these artists had known each other for many years prior to that year and had, in fact, been part of an earlier artist's group formed in the late fifties called the Point Group. Not only had many of the future Limners played an active role in Victoria's art scene since the Second World War, but other members who had not reached Victoria until much later were developing their art in other centres. The purpose of *Part Three* is to study chronologically the artistic development of those core members of the Limners from the early years of this century to the present and, in some cases, from their places of origin to Victoria. We will also look at how the Limners affected the art scene in Victoria.

The flowering of these artists from the fifties to the present coincides with a most exciting period of art activity in Victoria. By studying the activities of Victoria's most important artists' group, the Limners, during the latter half of this century we will get a clearer picture of what it was like to be a member of the art community in Victoria at that time.

1920-1949: FORMATIVE YEARS

Only two of the nine original members of the Limner Society were actually born and raised in Victoria; the remaining seven artists came to Victoria from other parts of Canada and from Europe during the fifties and sixties. Our story of the Limmers before 1949 in Victoria, therefore, revolves around Myfanwy Pavelic and Elza Mayhew. Pavelic and Mayhew were both born in Victoria in 1916, at a time when the conservative Island Arts and Crafts Society represented the tastes in art of the majority of the citizens. Both these artists' families had come to Victoria from Britain, but the history of their early lives, experiences, and involvement in art is quite different.

Myfanwy Spencer Pavelic's paternal grandfather was David Spencer, founder of the Spencer Department Store, now Eaton's, in Victoria during the late nineteenth century.¹ She was an only child and grew up in a privileged family. As a young child, Pavelic travelled extensively in Europe with her parents.² Her youth was marked by ill health, however, and her schooling was as a result irregular. She had poor eyesight and suffered from congenital shallow kneecaps which were operated on when she was sixteen.³ Perhaps as a result of these health problems the young Pavelic chose activities which did not require physical strength. She herself states that music, books, and painting, in that order, were the most important things for her at that time.⁴ She started playing the piano at age five and planned to become a concert pianist, but as a young woman her wrists began to weaken. She had to stop playing for long periods of time and ultimately had to give up this vocation. It was at this point that Pavelic began to paint and draw in earnest. As a child she loved to read children's books, especially ones with lavish

illustrations,⁵ and we could assume that these beautiful figurative illustrations influenced her own art.⁶ For her sixth birthday her father gave her a beautiful small mahogany watercolour paint box, complete with lock and key, and "lovely little colours."⁷ Pavelic had been drawing since the age of three and, although she does not recall exactly how, was introduced to Emily Carr in 1922 at the age of six,⁸ beginning a close relationship that would last off and on until Carr's death in 1945. Pavelic vividly remembers her first meeting with Carr, who had a reputation for not getting along well with children.⁹ She recalls

I was really sick that day and would have enjoyed the monkey [Woo, Carr's pet monkey] but it was sick and...I was frightened of being sick. It was hot, damp, and my head was pounding. I wanted my mother to pick me up but she wouldn't come.¹⁰

The meeting seems to have taken on nightmarish proportions for the young Pavelic as evidenced by the frantic tone of her childhood recollections. She would meet Carr again several years later under better circumstances. Carr was impressed by fifteen-year old Pavelic's drawings and organized an exhibition of her work in 1931.¹¹ Pavelic does not recall where this exhibit was held and no photographs were taken of it, but states there were thirteen pieces in all, some drawings, all depicting people.¹² Even as a teenager Pavelic had developed the interest in painting the human figure, which would remain her predominant subject matter.

After completing high school in Montreal at age eighteen, Pavelic decided to go to London, England to study art and music.¹³ She took a room at the Monkey Club, a lodging for girls of all nationalities, and continued painting.¹⁴ For three months she attended an art class run by a

Mr. Barraclough and copied paintings in the National Gallery.¹⁵ In the art class she began her study of anatomy by drawing and painting from live models. She continued this practice on her return to Victoria in the summer by drawing skulls and other natural objects. At this point Pavelic was still not considering art, or anything else for that matter, as a career. Because of her family's wealth she was in the fortunate position of not having to earn her living. This can be, however, a disadvantage for an artist. Pavelic felt that people tended not to take her seriously because art was not her "job" and that she, in fact, had to fight to be allowed the time to paint. She felt the need to gain independence from her family and to find "my own something."¹⁶ Like many women of her generation she gained this freedom through marriage.

She married Victoria lawyer Donald Campbell in 1939 soon after war broke out. Campbell immediately joined the air force and Pavelic continued painting in Victoria. She envisaged a plan whereby she could raise money for the war effort by exhibiting her work across Canada; she would accept commissions in each city and donate the proceeds to the Red Cross.¹⁷ Her husband thought her foolish and said she would be smarter to donate the cost of her trip to the Red Cross than to go running across the country. She was determined to prove that she could successfully contribute something to the war and spent half of 1941 on the road.¹⁸

She spent the longest amount of time in Toronto where she occupied a small studio and had a gruelling schedule of as many as five portrait sittings a day. She remembers painting some "ghastly portraits" during this marathon painting trip but says that she did one of a plain tomboy in a frilly mauve dress that was particularly ugly. Years later when her

reputation as a good painter was being established she was taken by some friends to a home and was shocked to see this particular portrait hanging above the fireplace. She spent all evening worrying about this work being brought up in conversation because she was too embarrassed to admit it was one of hers. Luckily no one mentioned it.¹⁹

Her trans-Canada trip was extremely successful; she made over \$10,000 for the Red Cross and considered it a "good working period."²⁰ That is a staggering amount considering that at the time she only charged about \$75 for a drawing and \$150 to \$200 for a painting.²¹ More important, she had established her independence and proved to her husband that she could donate more money to the Red Cross by painting than she could by simply donating her travel and living expenses.

A few years later, in 1944, Pavelic decided to study art and music in New York.²² While there she stayed at the Algonquin Hotel, a famous meeting place of a group of writers which was called the Algonquin Round Table. Owner Frank Case was interested in all the arts, and Pavelic came into contact with many artists and writers.²³ She executed a portrait of the hotel's chef which was hung in the hotel lobby. It caught the eye of an academically trained Italian painter named Vittorio Borello, who during the next seven months came to critique Pavelic's work for a few hours five days a week.²⁴ Although Borello's conservative and dogmatic approach to art did not appeal to Pavelic, these seven months were the only real art schooling she ever had and must have influenced her later conviction that an artist should master the basics before attempting to simplify and abstract his or her work.

At this point she attended a few classes at the Art Students'

League in New York with an artist named Steinberg because the work being produced there at that time was "as far removed from anything I'd ever done."²⁵ At the first class she attended about fifty students were given the choice between painting a still life or a nude black women. Pavelic naturally gravitated towards the nude figure and says that "she was huge and grand - she should have been painted on a huge canvas."²⁶ Pavelic felt lost and had trouble seeing the model because she was situated near the back of the classroom. During the break she walked around to see how the other students were dealing with the subjects, but she could not tell whether they were depicting the nude or the still life! It was nothing but colour, form, and shape, and "that confused me considerably."²⁷ She admits that

frankly...there was nothing I saw in that room that I could relate to in any way....I didn't want to go to an academic class but I wanted to have some understanding, but to me this was so forced....I felt [these students] were working from the outside in. They weren't feeling anything they put down....They hadn't had enough experience to have gone through drawing or looking at that nude negress and feeling her weight, and then perhaps distilling it all until perhaps it was just colour or one form.²⁸

Steinberg must have sensed Pavelic's confusion because at the end of the class he said to her that "if you are utterly confused and you have no idea where you're going, or what you're doing, then you are on the first step on the road to modern art."²⁹ Pavelic decided those classes were not right for her and continued working on her own. She relates, "I didn't feel that I wanted to be on the first step of modern art - it was phony to me."³⁰ Although she later did experiment briefly with purely abstract and non-objective art, it never satisfied her because it did not have enough content and was painting from the "outside", not capturing the "inside".³¹

Pavelic and Campbell's marriage had ended in divorce, and while in New York Pavelic met Nikola Pavelic, a Yugoslav lawyer who had fled his native country with his brother. Myfanwy and Niki were married in 1948 and returned to Victoria the following year.³² In 1950 their daughter Tessa was born and from 1958 to 1969, the Pavelics lived in New York, returning to Victoria each summer.

Pavelic had not spent long periods of time in Victoria during her youth and young adulthood and would not really settle there for any appreciable amount of time until 1969. She was not aware of Victoria's art community as she was growing up, except for her friendship with Carr and awareness of Jack Shadbolt, because her father was a businessman and did not really know any artists or musicians.³³ She had not had any real art training in Victoria except from Ina Uhthoff, who was a teacher at one of the schools she attended at irregular intervals because of her poor health. Pavelic met Carr periodically in the thirties and forties but says Carr's work had no direct influence on her own. She was impressed by Carr's enthusiasm for her work and determination to stick to what she was doing. When asked by Edythe Hembroff-Schleicher how she, with her more traditional way of painting in the thirties, reacted to Carr's new way of painting, Pavelic replied "I didn't like the way I [Pavelic] painted - I admired her oneness of purpose."³⁴ It seems that Carr's energy and devotion to her art was more influential upon Pavelic than her more modern way of painting.

Towards the end of her life Carr devoted most of her time to writing, and Pavelic would often read her manuscripts. Carr was obsessed with the fact that time was slipping away and that she had so much more to say.³⁵ More than forty years later, Pavelic said much the same thing to me at

the end of our interview. Time is running fast, she said; "I hope I'm going to learn a lot between now and the end, but I've got a hell of a long way to go."³⁶

The story of Elza Mayhew's early life and interest in art is quite different from Pavelic's. She was born Elza Lovitt in 1916, the only girl in a family of three children and not as extroverted in nature as her two brothers.³⁷ As a child she was never interested in drawing or painting, but loved dance and music and took piano lessons for six years. She enjoyed playing the piano and loved to practice but had to stop at age thirteen because "I was getting too much" and there were other children in the family who also deserved lessons.³⁸ Mayhew inherited her creative energy from her mother. Mrs. Lovitt was an extraordinarily imaginative woman who sewed dresses and evening gowns without a pattern, redesigned furniture, and later designed the houses her husband built.³⁹ She was constantly wanting to create new things and must have been an influence on her daughter's later art career.

Mayhew attended Oak Bay High School where at age thirteen she met her future husband Alan. In school she still did not study art but preferred languages and Classics. She went on to study classics and French at Victoria College for two years, transferred to the University of British Columbia and received her bachelor's degree in 1936 and a diploma of education the following year. She had taken courses in Greek at U.B.C., but these had not included any study of Greek art and architecture, an omission she later regretted. One of her favourite projects was writing an essay on Italian tombstones and their Latin inscriptions. She remarked "I liked ruins. I liked the stones more than what was on them."⁴⁰ A local sculptural object Mayhew was fond of was the Chinese bell, formerly located at Beacon Hill

Park and now in the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. It had sentimental value for her because she had her picture taken next to it as a child.⁴¹ Her love of language can be seen not only in her choice of studies at university and interest in early writings on sculptural monuments, such as tombstones and the Chinese bell, but is also evident in the markings on the sculpture of her mature style. Her later philosophy about sculpture also relates directly to the learning and translating of a foreign language. She says that "sculpture is a language to learn over the years; it is only when a sculptor ceases to translate that he can achieve any firm expression."⁴² It is well known that one of the first signs of becoming fluent in another language is to stop consciously translating one language into another and start "thinking" in the new language. This process of becoming fluent is what Mayhew is describing.

Mayhew, De Castro, Skelton (in his sculpture), and Siebner (in a few of his early paintings made in Canada) are the only four Limners who have been influenced in their work by the arts of the native Westcoast Indians. Mayhew feels her work is influenced by the huge trees in our vast forests and agrees that she has been influenced by Vancouver Island's indigenous arts. She comments on the fact that there were very few totem poles on display in Victoria when she was growing up. She did not see her first pole until she was seventeen, although there were masses of "little tourist things" in shops all over the city. Mayhew was aware of native art, however, through her many books and says "I look at everything, I always have."⁴³

Elza and Alan were married soon after they graduated from university and went on a two-month honeymoon to Cuba, the Caribbean, New York, and Quebec. They settled in Vancouver where, out of casual

interest, Mayhew attended evening art classes with Jack Shadbolt for three months. She had her first child, Anne, shortly before war broke out and a second child, Garth, in 1942. Alan Mayhew volunteered for the R.C.A.F. and trained to become a pilot.⁴⁴ Raising two children alone was difficult, and in 1943 Mayhew's husband was reported missing flying to Malaysia over India. What followed for Mayhew was years of not knowing whether her husband was dead or had somehow survived in a prison camp. This was a difficult time and she made very little art at this point, except for a few lessons with Ina Uthhoff.⁴⁵ Her contentment and creative urge were not to come until 1951, a year she travelled around the world, saw the country where her husband had gone missing, felt an "enormous release" and, finally, peace of mind.⁴⁶

Like Elza Mayhew, Nita Forrest was late in developing an interest in the fine arts. She was born in Quesnel, B.C., in 1921 and raised in Vancouver.⁴⁷ Her parents were British and had emigrated to Canada after the First World War, probably in 1919. Her father, a professional engineer, was interested in art, and Forrest recalls that he was more of an intellectual than was her mother. Her home life was not particularly happy: her father was an alcoholic, and her parents separated when Forrest was a teenager. She suffered a nervous breakdown as a result of this family turmoil and left school in grade ten because she "had to take courses I didn't like."⁴⁸ Forrest decided to work as a secretary at this point and took typing courses. "You could always get a job in those days" she recalls, although she admits to having been hopeless as a secretary.⁴⁹ When asked what her career goal was at this time Forrest jokingly says she wanted to become an archeologist.⁵⁰ She laughs her wonderful throaty laugh and goes into no details, making you wonder whether she is serious or just joking.

Forrest's first experience in drawing and painting began when she was in her late teens or early twenties. There was a friend of the family staying at her house who was writing a book and had another friend who was making the illustrations for it. Forrest was very interested in this artist's illustrations, and he agreed to give her a few little lessons. Although Forrest later took a few evening art courses in Vancouver she did not study art seriously until she moved to Victoria. When she was first dabbling in art she "never really considered the fact of being an artist; I still don't for that matter - it just sort of happened."⁵¹ Her modest and self-effacing nature is as evident today as it was when she was a young woman.

Like Pavelic, Forrest married just before the Second World War only to find when the war was over and her husband returned that they had nothing in common and did not really know each other.⁵² In 1950 Forrest began a new chapter in her life and moved to Victoria where she would become an integral part of Victoria's emerging art scene.

While Pavelic, Mayhew, and Forrest were forming their artistic sensibilities in Victoria, New York, and Vancouver, future Limner Maxwell Bates (1906-1980) was developing his artistic vocabulary in Calgary and England. Bates's family was English; his father had been an architect before emigrating to Canada in 1905. The family kept close ties with England when Bates was young. They returned there for holidays and also often visited Victoria which seemed very much like their homeland. When Bates was six the family lived in England for approximately one year, and the memory of the seaside hotels he stayed in as a child would lead him to create his Grand Hotel series of drawings years later. On his return to Calgary, Bates began

making art in school. His family had brought back 1909 and 1910 issues of Studio magazine from England, and Bates began copying illustrated works by such artists as Dürer and Daumier. Later in life Bates still considered Daumier to have been an important early influence upon his work. Bates also read books in his father's library by Roger Fry, Clive Bell, and John Ruskin and was influenced by their theories on art.⁵³

Calgary's art scene was not exciting or avant-garde during the twenties when Bates was growing up. The Calgary Art Club had been founded in 1922 and met in a room of the public library until it was banned from meeting there further because of its "immoral practice of drawing from the naked model."⁵⁴ Bates was one of the first students to enrol in evening art classes when the Provincial Institute of Technology and Art was formed in 1926. There he studied for two years under a Norwegian impressionist painter named Lars Haukaness. Haukaness was not, to every student, a stimulating teacher. He had his students follow the traditional academic exercise of drawing from plaster casts of Greco-Roman sculpture. Bates had started developing his own style and found a soul-mate in another young painter Roy Stevenson. The two of them would often study the art books in the local library, discuss current art movements such as Surrealism, and criticise each other's work.⁵⁵ They were probably the only two artists in Calgary during the late twenties who were interested in modern art. Said Bates

When I first began as a painter in Calgary, with Roy Stevenson, I don't know of anybody who was interested [in what we were doing]....There were lots of books in those days, on paintings, the modern movement in art...it was difficult in as much as there was no interest whatever in it. But we took no notice of that. We thought that one day we would get some things and go down to some big city and sell them to some dealers, or maybe

an exhibition. Some vague idea like that.⁵⁶

In 1928 Bates painted his first abstract painting entitled Male and Female Forms. The original painting has been lost but an early study still exists. (fig. 10) According to R.L. Bloore Bates was "probably the first Canadian-born artist to execute a non-objective painting"⁵⁷ but Dennis Reid credits Bertram Brooker, who exhibited abstract paintings in 1927, with this distinction.⁵⁸ This painting, which contains mechanistic forms reminiscent of El Lissitzky's Prouns, was lampooned in the press and caused Bates to be expelled from the Calgary Art Club. Stevenson must have painted a similarly offensive work for he too was expelled.⁵⁹ Bates recalls that the president or some other official was annoyed at the work and suggested "neither I nor Stevenson be allowed to exhibit with them again. We rather enjoyed that."⁶⁰ These two young artists decided to leave stodgy Calgary and travelled to Chicago in 1929 where they immersed themselves in the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist works in the Chicago Art Institute.⁶¹

Realizing his art was more akin to the art being produced in Europe, Bates made plans to move there as soon as he could. In 1931, he moved to England, a country he remembered from his childhood trips, and stayed until after the war because "I had reached a stage where I wanted to go to a bigger place to learn more, a bit more scope."⁶² England was suffering from the Depression, and Bates supported himself by taking a variety of odd-jobs. Occasionally he had an exhibition and sold a painting at the Wertheim Gallery. Mrs. Wertheim, wife of the Dutch Consul in Manchester, had opened her galleries in London and Manchester in 1930 and had organized a group of artists called The Twenties Group, so-named because the artists were all in their twenties.⁶³ Bates soon joined and exhibited with this

group which also included Barbara Hepworth, Christopher Wood, Robert Medley, and Nora McGuinness. At this time Bates was developing art theories that would many years later form the theoretical basis of the Limners. In his 1934 article "Naive Painting", Bates stresses that instinctive emotional painting is individual and reflects the personality of the painter more than traditional academic art. Academic art, he states, is "the result of the use of traditional methods, is never as unaffected, simple and fresh, because academic painters are too learned in the craft and history of their art to see nature in a naive way."⁶⁴ Bates holds that naive painters are humanists "making plastic comments on the residue of daily life....In the subjects chosen we see an absorbing interest in people and all those things commonly used by them."⁶⁵ He admired the work of Wood who painted in a naive figurative style. These ideas continued to play an important role in Bates's art over the years and affected the development of the Limners in the seventies. Bates wanted to form a group of artists specifically interested in depicting the human form and the human environment. The name he gave the group, the Limners, affirms his earlier connection with naive art, and this will be examined later in greater detail.

Bates enjoyed London's art scene in the thirties. He saw exhibitions at Burlington House and other galleries and also spent a great deal of time in the reading room of the British Museum. At this time he was also influenced by the flat decorative Japanese prints he saw at the Victoria and Albert Museum and began his own collection. During 1936 and 1937, Bates visited Europe. At the World Fair in Paris in 1937 he saw for the first time Picasso's Guernica and was deeply affected by it.⁶⁶

London's art scene was very exciting when Bates was there in

the thirties. During the previous decade British art had been insular, and many artists were still painting in an impressionist mode. The thirties, on the other hand, witnessed an increased interest in international modernism, and it was the "first decade in which British art achieved unqualified international status."⁶⁷ In 1926 the Tate Gallery (originally the National Gallery of British Art) for the first time displayed contemporary European art.⁶⁸ Important British modernists whose works Bates would have seen during his stay (and in some cases artists he associated with) were Paul Nash (1889-1946), Edward Burra (1905-76), Ben Nicholson (1894-1982), Barbara Hepworth (1903-74), and Henry Moore (b. 1898). Nash and Burra had travelled to France in 1930 and been influenced by French Surrealism.⁶⁹ Later, in 1936, Nash was instrumental in forming a British Surrealist group. Burra, on the other hand, was more interested in employing social comment in his paintings and was influenced more by the German art of Grosz and Dix than by French art.

Developing at the same time in Britain's visual art scene was an interest in abstraction and constructivism. Like the United States during World War II, Britain, during the thirties, benefited from an influx of European modernists fleeing fascism. Former Bauhaus instructor Laszlo Moholy-Nagy had arrived in 1935, followed by Russian Constructivist Naum Gabo in 1936 and Dutch De Stijl artist Piet Mondrian in 1938. Under the influence of these artists, Nash, Moore, Hepworth, and Nicholson, who had been members of such contemporary artists' groups as the Seven and Five Society (1920), The Twenties Group (1930), and Unit One (1933), organized the first non-objective art exhibition in London in 1935.⁷⁰

The thirties were difficult economic and political times in

England. Unemployment was high, and many of the modern artists were left-wing sympathizers in support of the working class. Although Bates was not political he did believe in social comment in art and was probably more influenced by the Social Realism of British artists like Clive Branson and Percy Horton than he was by the abstraction, constructivism, and Surrealism that interested artists such as Nash, Moore, Nicholson, and Hepworth. Branson and Horton depicted the poor and unemployed in their art, a theme which also interested Bates. In his article, "Naive Painting", he had made clear his allegiances to figure painters like Christopher Wood. Although Bates saw much abstract art in Britain during this eventful decade it did not make an impact on his art. He had briefly experimented with non-objective art in the late twenties and would again in the early sixties, but Bates remained foremost a figurative artist.

As well as making art Bates had also written poetry since he was young. Although he enjoyed his trips to the continent, there is a sense of tragedy, danger, and loneliness that is noticeable in his poems of the late thirties, most likely reflecting his own feeling of being lost in a foreign place and possibly also mirroring the political chaos of Europe on the brink of war. His poem "Paris, 1938," published in his 1964 collection of poems entitled Far Away Flags, reflects this melancholy:

They call that city gay;
It is not so to me,
Unless the exaltation
Before the storms breaks
Is gaiety.
The faubourgs' silver grey
And wood-smoke acrid smell
permeates the day
With light melancholy.
The noises of the night,

Rumours of the dark,
 Tell the dangers of tomorrow.
 Assassins in the doorway,
 And under the high wall
 Stained by decay,
 Wait expectantly
 Until the tragic city
 Is lighted by opal fire.⁷¹

Although this poem reflects the political turmoil of the thirties, Bates himself was not a political person nor did he approve of politically motivated art movements. In fact, when the British Surrealists held their first exhibition in London in 1936, Bates wrote a letter to the newspaper The Listener criticizing the avant-garde movement.⁷²

The location of much of Bates's work of his period in England is unknown, but judging from his painting Working Man of 1933 (fig. 11) he was at this point already influenced by social realism and interested in depicting everyday people in a humanistic and sympathetic way. The central figure of this work is massive and simplified. His rough features and powerful hands are emphasized and exaggerated. We will see a similar style develop in the forties and fifties in his paintings of Canadian Prairie farmers and their families. His sense of humanity is clearly conveyed in this and later works.

In early 1939, when war seemed imminent, Bates joined the Territorial Army in England. In November he began training with the 44th Division which was to leave for France in April the next year as part of the British Expeditionary Force. Bates hated army life and sketched whenever he could. One of his superiors disapproved of his making art and told Bates to give it up, saying, "I went through an arty period myself when I was at

Oxford, but it passed off!"⁷³

Bates's division was captured in France by the Germans in June 1940, and he spent the next five years as a prisoner of war in Thuringa, Germany, labouring in the salt mines.⁷⁴ He wrote of his experiences as a P.O.W. in Germany in his book A Wilderness of Days, published in 1978. Although there was little time to draw or paint since he had to labour in the salt mines, Bates did make some sketches of his fellow prisoners. He also ran a weekly art class and traded cigarettes for paper and pencils but says "there was nothing very serious about it."⁷⁵ In their spare time the inmates staged plays, and Bates usually painted the sets with any paint he could find.⁷⁶ He describes how the men relied on Red Cross food parcels during these difficult years: "We depended on the parcels, could hardly have survived without them, and it would be difficult to over-estimate their value to us."⁷⁷ One would like to think that Myfanwy Pavelic's donations to the Red Cross through her trans-Canada art exhibits somehow helped future fellow-Linner Max Bates.

On the last page of his war recollections Bates comments on what he gained during this experience:

We had all learned much, perhaps not so much as we would have learned in five years of normal living, but what we had learned could not be learned in any other way. Many of us had come to despise things we had valued before, and had learned to value things that we had despised or overlooked. It was up to us whether we lapsed back into the old grooves of hypocrisy, snobbishness and humbug. At least some of us had been freed.⁷⁸

Bates had had the chance during those five years to reflect on life, the

meaning of his art and how it would develop in the years to come. He commented on the effect his imprisonment had on his art and said

I don't think it had any effect on my art except to intensify it when I got out, because I had been thinking so much about it all the time. Some of my ideas may have clarified a little bit. I knew I wanted to do things simply and intensely and as directly as possible, and I've never changed from that idea.⁷⁹

Bates returned to Calgary in 1946, after having been away for fifteen years. His mother, in the meantime, had suffered a stroke and died in 1944. Bates took up art again and in 1947 joined the Canadian Society of Graphic Artists and the Alberta Society of Artists. He began teaching adult and children art classes at the Provincial Institute of Technology and Art where he himself had been a student as a young man. In 1949 Bates married a New York schoolteacher and settled in New York for two years, where he studied with the German Expressionist Max Beckmann, beginning a new era in his artistic career.⁸⁰

The sculptor Robert De Castro, (1923-1986) like Bates, had difficult experiences during the war. Some say he was permanently psychologically traumatized by it.⁸¹ Unlike Bates, however, De Castro rarely spoke of his early life, not even to his closest friends, and little is known of what happened to him during the war. De Castro was born in Winnipeg in 1923. His father was an inspector for the Canadian National Railway,⁸² and it would be interesting to know whether the young De Castro was in any way influenced by the look of the rough massive wood ties of the railroad tracks his father inspected. Certainly the texture and colour of his mature sculpture reminds one of these dark solid ties. Even as a child he loved to read and "practically lived in the library," something that continued as an adult.⁸³ He

was a poor student; school bored him and he would rather read all day. Elza Mayhew, the Limner closest to De Castro, related to me a trick he used to play in order to stay home. He would tell his mother he was sick and could not go to school. She would inevitably find several books under his covers that he had planned to read instead.⁸⁴ His stubborn nature was evident even as a child; one could not make De Castro do anything he did not want to do. Little is known about his early life in Winnipeg. He was always a deeply private person who did not waste words on unimportant matters.

At age seventeen De Castro must have decided to strike out on his own because he moved to Montreal and lived there for two years before joining the army. He was part of a division that crossed France right after D-Day and took part in the push into Germany.⁸⁵ According to Mayhew, De Castro's regiment was responsible for liberating Holland.⁸⁶ After the war, he joined his mother who had recently moved to Victoria. For the next few years he supported himself doing odd-jobs such as construction work, and it was not until he started studying art with Jan Zach in 1955 that he began to make the sculpture of his mature style and to associate with other local Victoria artists.

Like future fellow-Limner Myfanwy Pavelic, Herbert Siebner (b. 1925) had been very interested in art from an early age. He was born in Stettin, Germany (now part of Poland) to a Prussian father and a Viennese mother. Herr Siebner was a wealthy businessman, and the family lived in a huge apartment and had many servants.⁸⁷ Siebner had a brother, Manfred, who was three years older and completely opposite to him in both looks and temperament. Manfred liked mechanical things and "had no fantasy", says Siebner "...I always had fantasy."⁸⁸ He was given his first set of oil paints by

his father's sister Lotte. Siebner still remembers loving the smell and the bright colours and beginning to paint pictures of his grandmother's garden. ⁸⁹ These early attempts Siebner fondly recalls as his "dilettantic beginnings." Although he had experimented with watercolours earlier, at about age ten, it was the oil paints that captured his interest and remained a favourite medium throughout his career.⁹⁰

Herr Siebner wanted one of his sons to take over the family business and Siebner, swiftly realizing his personality was poorly suited to such a life, announced he wanted to study art. According to Siebner, the rule in Germany at that time was that before you could enter an art academy you had to have completed a two-year apprenticeship with a recognized master.⁹¹ He studied at Max Richter's studio in preparation for entering the academy but before long was drafted into the German army in 1942 at the age of seventeen.

Just as Siebner was not suited towards business he was even less suited to army life. According to Skelton, his family had always been unsympathetic to the Nazi cause and Siebner, in particular, was pacific in nature and deeply mistrustful of authority.⁹² Luckily during the war he was able to be a military draughtsman and not a regular soldier, thanks to a sympathetic company commander at the western front who learned of Siebner's artistic talents.⁹³

The war years were extremely difficult for the Siebners. Bombs had destroyed their Stettin home and all its contents in 1944, and his brother Manfred had died at the end of the war. Things seemed hopeless for Siebner in 1945 when he found himself the last living German soldier in a basement

of a building raided by a group of drunken Russian soldiers. At that time, he later said, he felt "less than a number, no identity, no rights, no individuality, little food, no drinks, no smokes, no hope."⁹⁴ Along with many other prisoners Siebner was marched into Poland and interned in a camp where he managed to earn cigarettes by making sketches. The prisoners were divided into two groups, the dying and the healthy, with the latter being sent to labour camps in the Soviet Union. In order to escape this fate Siebner ingeniously managed to switch a dying man's stool for his own to show to the doctor and as a result was repatriated to Germany.⁹⁵ Since this experience Siebner has ferociously guarded all aspects of human existence and comfort and has consistently exerted his individuality and sense of humour.

The years following the war were very important in Siebner's artistic development even though he was extremely poor and said he was "hungry for at least five years."⁹⁶ He managed to enter the newly reopened College of Fine Arts (*Hochschule für bildende Kunst*) in West Berlin in 1946 and until 1949 studied under Max Kaus, who had been associated with the Die Brücke artists. He found Max Kaus's art too sombre, however, and later studied under Ernst Schumacher, a Fauve-influenced painter who was more "light-hearted".⁹⁷

These years were exciting times for Siebner. He was greatly influenced by the Expressionism which had replaced the academic realism of the Nazi regime.⁹⁸ The students at the academy dreamed of a new and better Germany, one without dogmatic authority. They also eagerly caught up with what had happened in world art since 1933. Germany had been deprived of modern art for many years as a result of the Nazi "degenerate" art campaign. The directors of the German museums and galleries played a large role in the

dissemination of this knowledge after World War II by committing themselves to exhibiting works by the Expressionists, the members of the Bauhaus, and later the Dadaists and Surrealists.⁹⁹

The art of the older Expressionists like Max Pechstein (1881-1955) and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (1884-1976) was influential upon the young generation of West German artists. Both these artists taught at Siebner's art school although he never studied under them. Even though a strong interest in expressionist figure painting has always been evident, there was increased experimentation among young German artists with abstraction during the years following the war.¹⁰⁰ Clearly Siebner's art was not influenced markedly by this development.

At this time Siebner befriended an older man named Felix and together they discovered oriental philosophy, especially Taoism,¹⁰¹ which remains important to Siebner today. During these years he also avidly studied late nineteenth-century German Romantic art, especially artists such as Böcklin and Friedrich. He was also influenced by such important artists as Cézanne, Van Gogh, Munch, and Gauguin, who he says "came from my own background,"¹⁰² meaning the expressionist tradition. Siebner was looking back to the long tradition of expressionism and was influenced more by past art than the works of his contemporaries.

In 1950 he married an expressionist dancer named Hannelore Roehr, who has been a strong driving force in his life. Hannelore's sister had already moved to Canada and in 1954, deciding to make a new start and leave behind a country which reminded him of war and death, Siebner and his wife and young daughter emigrated to Victoria where he would come to play an

extremely important role in the developing art scene.¹⁰³

Meanwhile two very different future Limners, Richard Ciccimarra (1924-1973) and Karl Spreitz (b. 1927) were growing up in Austria, immersed in a Germanic tradition similar to that which surrounded Siebner. Ciccimarra has recently been the subject of a major retrospective exhibition at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria and a biography by Frank Nowosad, who for many years has contributed art reviews and articles to Victoria's weekly and daily newspapers.

Ciccimarra was born in Vienna in 1924, the only child of Ernst and Steffie Ciccimarra. His parents were attractive and wealthy, and Ciccimarra grew up accustomed to a semi-aristocratic lifestyle. He was a third-generation descendent of a Viennese bourgeois class which had made its fortunes during the industrial expansion of the late nineteenth century. The Austro-Hungarian empire had collapsed with the First World War, yet this bourgeoisie continued to aspire to a noble way of life, now lost.¹⁰⁴ Although this social class was crumbling in Vienna during the inter-war period, never to be recreated, the Ciccimarras were able to continue living in their accustomed style because Steffie Ciccimarra's family gave them a generous allowance. The young Ciccimarra was used to an elegant lifestyle, devoting himself to aesthetic and creative pursuits, where the "harshness and realities of another kind of existence (a practical one) could be avoided."¹⁰⁵ Even after he grew into adulthood and moved to Canada Ciccimarra retained an impractical and aesthetic view of life and an unrealistic longing for the past glory of Vienna. Turn-of-the-century Viennese writer Peter Altenburg devised a motto for the social class to which Ciccimarra belonged. He said "Art is art and life is life, but to live life artistically: that is the art of life."¹⁰⁶

The young Ciccimarra's life was not completely rosy, however, and his whole life in fact was characterized by a troubled and unhappy home life. His parents divorced when Ciccimarra was very young; each later remarried. His father's new wife Gertrude recalls meeting the precocious and charming fourteen-year old Ciccimarra in 1938, whose artistic talent was already evident at this young age. Gertrude remembers that "we were at dinner and Ricky took a cigarette box and suddenly he had my portrait on it, so quick and so good."¹⁰⁷ Encouraged by his early work, Ernst and Gertrude took several of Ciccimarra's paintings and drawings to the atelier of a well-known local painter Joseph Engelhart (1864-1941). Engelhart was a member of the Vienna Secession which advocated breaking away from the confines of the Academy. He was enthusiastic about Ciccimarra's work and stated that it was "natural and remarkable and of such an order that it should never be placed in the confines of an academy where it surely would be destroyed."¹⁰⁸ Ciccimarra never had any formal art training, not so much because of Engelhart's advice, but because he did not like a strict education regimen and throughout his life had an aversion to discipline.¹⁰⁹

Ciccimarra may have inherited his artistic talents from his mother. Steffie Ciccimarra and her sister Hilusch had both studied art. Hilusch studied at the Academy of Art in Berlin and later became a portrait painter, while Steffie turned to graphic design. As a teenager Ciccimarra favoured painting flowers but also rendered occasional portraits of his family and friends. Steffie Ciccimarra often modelled for a sculptor named Dr. Fritz Behn, who had a studio at the Academy of Art in Vienna. Ciccimarra would usually accompany his mother to these sessions and, although he never studied under Behn, was influenced by the work in his studio. When

Ciccimarra was approximately sixteen years old he and his mother visited an exhibition of floral watercolours by nineteenth-century painter Moritz Michael Daffinger. This artist was following in the tradition of central European floral painting, and his works greatly impressed the young Ciccimarra because of their beauty and great technical skill.¹¹⁰ Ciccimarra himself later painted minutely detailed realistic paintings of flowers and fishing lures which proved to be popular with collectors and which he called his "finger exercises."¹¹¹ An example may be seen in his watercolour Trillium, Pink Easter Lilies of approximately 1962. (fig. 12)

Ciccimarra decided to become an artist after finishing school but the outbreak of the war ended his plans to study art.¹¹² He received his papers for military service in 1941 but with his parents' help was able to escape active duty and be placed in the topographical department of the Ministry of War in Vienna. Ciccimarra had a minor knee problem and, with the help of a sympathetic doctor who agreed to perform an unnecessary operation on it, was declared unfit for active duty. Later in Victoria a rumour developed that Ciccimarra had worked for the Austrian Resistance during the last part of the war and provided it with copies of top-secret Nazi maps.¹¹³ It is unsure what role Ciccimarra played in the war, however, since he later exaggerated events of his early life. A myth grew around him and for a long time his friends in Canada believed he had fought at the Russian Front!¹¹⁴

After the war Ciccimarra met and married a wealthy English woman named Penelope (Penny) Gibson. They were both young and sought adventure, seeing each other as extremely romantic figures. The couple settled in London in 1948, and Ciccimarra decided to take up painting again.

He continued working on his botanical drawings and paintings and a few of his works were well-received in a floral art exhibit at the Royal Horticultural Society. Ciccimarra was a reluctant and irregular worker, however, and his unpredictable work patterns would continue to frustrate his family and fellow artists for the rest of his life. Ciccimarra's restless, reclusive, and depressive nature had been evident even as a child but became worse as he grew older because of his increased dependency on alcohol.¹¹⁵

In 1948 Penny and Ciccimarra made a trip to the Bahamas. After they came back Ciccimarra was determined they should move there, so enraptured was he with the place. The following year they embarked on another romantic adventure. Although neither of them had sailed before they bought a sailboat and remained in the West Indies for almost four years. Ciccimarra made few paintings while there but was deeply influenced by the climate, geography, and people of the islands. It was only when he settled in Canada in the fifties that he began to paint scenes, from memory and a few sketches, of his West Indian sojourn.¹¹⁶

Unlike Ciccimarra, fellow Austrian Karl Spreitz grew up in a simple artisan-class home in rural Graz-an-der-Mur and from the start was surrounded by artmaking and craftsmanship. His father was a sign painter, picture restorer, and muralist in Austria's folk tradition. During the winter months he carved traditional wooden bottle stoppers in the shapes of little figures and also made bookmarks, usually depicting religious figures. Each Christmas he made his children's presents himself. They often included carved rocking horses, toy soldiers and castles, and elaborately designed hand puppets in the form of traditional Austrian folk heroes. At the age of twelve Spreitz traded his magnificent puppet collection for a film projector and

films, and although he regretted doing it, this event became important for his later development as an filmmaker and photographer.¹¹⁷

Spreitz's hometown was like a living folk art gallery. It had no fewer than seven brightly painted beer halls, various small toy-like churches, and exciting and colourful circuses and fairs which frequently came to town. As a child Spreitz loved going to the cinemas in town and often missed classes to watch adventure-horror shows involving Frankenstein, Dracula, and Tarzan. Although Graz was filled with naive folk art there was very little avant-garde art to be found. Spreitz was aware of artists like Klee and Picasso through books, and he also admired Hieronymus Bosch. The year 1938, however, was the most important year for Spreitz's own development as an artist. During that year the eleven-year old Karl saw a travelling exhibition of "degenerate art", works by artists such as Grosz, Munch, and members of the Bauhaus, whom the Nazis considered to be mental defectives.¹¹⁸ It is clear from a study of Spreitz's mature work that he was most influenced by these early twentieth-century modernists.

In 1944, at the age of seventeen, Spreitz was sent to join the Youth Corps in the German city of Hamburg but upon arriving there he found that the city had been declared an open city and returned to Austria on foot. Once returned he discovered that Graz was occupied by the Russians, and the city remained divided into two zones until the Russians left after two months.¹¹⁹

Life began to return to normal after the war, and Spreitz decided he wanted to enrol in art school. His unorthodox manner and unique sense of humour which is evident even today is exemplified in the events that took

place when he took his entrance exam at the school he wanted to attend. The examiner was a sculptor named Professor Gosser. For the test Gosser placed a lump of clay and a crumpled chestnut leaf in front of Spreitz. Spreitz proceeded to smooth out the leaf and make a flat leaf-shaped cookie out of the clay. Gosser gave him one more chance, crumpling the leaf again and placing it in front of Spreitz who repeated his defiant act and not surprisingly failed the exam. Obviously Gosser had not expected a student to question his authority. In response to Spreitz's insolence Gosser wrote a quote by the German philosopher Schiller on the blackboard: "Fame is nothing but an empty ego and success will only come with talent."¹²⁰

Spreitz did not want to admit to his family that he had failed the exam so he joined a friend and took the entrance exam for physical education studies instead and passed it. For months his family did not know he was not an art student, and for a long time he was the only student who carried a sketchpad to class because his father always wanted to see the work he was doing. Spreitz became a promising physical education student and worked his way up to being an assistant teacher. By 1948 he was assistant coach for the Austrian track and field team which competed in London and there he met Ina, his future wife, who had won a bronze medal for shot-put.¹²¹

Spreitz's interest in movies and movie cameras had always been strong and in 1950 he contrived to get a sixteen millimetre movie camera. He was still with the Austrian track and field team, and the athletes were going to compete in an international meet in which the Soviet Union was taking part for the first time. Spreitz had spotted the camera in a shop and persuaded the team leaders to buy it so he could document the event for training purposes. Although he did not really know how to operate the

camera (he told his superiors otherwise) he memorized the instructions and managed to make some good films.¹²² This intuitive and adventurous nature would serve Spreitz well when he and his wife emigrated to Canada a few years later.

The poet and writer Robin Skelton, (b. 1925) who would later be the important spokesman for the Limners and write most of the information we have on them, was developing his craft in England and associating with other British writers and visual artists. Skelton was born in Easington, East Yorkshire, and, like many of the other Limners in the visual arts, showed early talent and promise as a writer. He began writing verse as early as age nine and published his first poems at age eighteen in 1943 while a student at Cambridge. After working primarily as a code and ciphers clerk in the Royal Air Force during World War II, Skelton enrolled at Leeds University in 1947 where he studied English language and literature. There he continued to publish his writing in the university periodicals and also began directing and reviewing plays.¹²³

Although Skelton and his family did not come to live in Victoria until 1963, the experience he had in writing, publishing, teaching, and organizing arts groups (which we will examine later) has made him a vital contributor to Victoria's art scene since the sixties. Without his expertise and enthusiasm for developing a lively arts community where *all* the arts work together, the Limners might not have lasted as a group for the past eighteen years.

I have spent a fair amount of time detailing the early developments of the members of the Limner Society because I feel that their

individuality and early experience contributed a great deal to the development and philosophy of the group. Most of the artists came to the group already possessing a clear sense of their artistic influences and where they wanted their art to lead them. The more inexperienced artists were greatly influenced by the others. In almost all cases these artistic influences have their roots in early twentieth-century European modernism and the story of the Linniers is also the story of how modern art came to the conservative city of Victoria.

NOTES

- 1 Robin Skelton, "Myfanwy Pavelic: Perception & Solitude," Malahat Review XXXX (July 1972), 51.
- 2 Roberta J. Pazdro, "Interview with Myfanwy Pavelic," 1975. P.A.B.C. Tape 2710:1.
- 3 Skelton, "Myfanwy Pavelic...," 52-53.
- 4 Pazdro interview.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid. When Pavelic's father died in 1946 about 1000 of her beloved children's books were accidentally sold. Pavelic still regrets this.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Edythe Hembroff-Schleicher, "Interview with Myfanwy Pavelic," 1975. P.A.B.C. Tape 2710:1.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Pazdro interview.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Skelton, "Pavelic...," 54.
- 14 Pazdro interview.
- 15 Skelton, "Pavelic...," 54.
- 16 Pazdro interview.
- 17 Skelton, "Pavelic...," 54-55.

- 18 Pazdro interview.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Julia Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Myfanwy Pavelic," 7 December 1988.
- 22 Skelton, "Pavelic...," 56.
- 23 Pazdro interview.
- 24 Skelton, "Pavelic...," 56.
- 25 Pazdro interview.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Skelton, "Pavelic...," 58.
- 33 Pazdro interview.
- 34 Hembroff-Schleicher interview.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Whittaker interview with Pavelic.
- 37 Skelton, "Elza Mayhew: A Language for Humanity," Malahat Review XVIII (April 1971), 59.

- 38 Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Elza Mayhew," 9 December 1988.
- 39 Skelton, "Mayhew...," 58.
- 40 Ibid., 59-60.
- 41 Ibid., 60.
- 42 Jan Gould, Women of British Columbia (Saanichton 1975), 198.
- 43 Whittaker interview with Mayhew.
- 44 Skelton, "Mayhew...," 60.
- 45 Whittaker interview with Mayhew.
- 46 Skelton, "Mayhew...," 61.
- 47 Whittaker, "Conversation with Nita Forrest," 30 January 1989.
For the 1986 catalogue to the exhibition Art in Victoria 1960-1986 Forrest "stretched the truth" and stated that her year of birth was 1926.
- 48 Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Nita Forrest," 10 December 1988.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Skelton, "Maxwell Bates: Experience and Reality," Malahat Review XX (October 1971), 57-58.
- 54 Ibid., 58.
- 55 Ibid. Roy Stevenson's name is spelled incorrectly in this article as *Stephenson*.

- 56 Vancouver Art Gallery, Maxwell Bates in Retrospect: 1921-1971 (Vancouver 1973), 11.
- 57 Skelton, "Bates...," 59.
- 58 Dennis Reid, A Concise History of Canadian Painting (Toronto 1973), 182.
- 59 Skelton, "Bates...," 59.
- 60 Maxwell Bates in Retrospect: 1921-1971, 11.
- 61 Skelton, "Bates...," 59.
- 62 Maxwell Bates in Retrospect: 1921-1971, 11.
- 63 Skelton, "Bates...," 62.
- 64 Maxwell Bates, "Naive Painting," Phoebus Calling (Spring 1934), 20-23.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 Skelton, "Bates...," 63-64.
- 67 Larry Berryman, "British Abstraction of the 1930s," Arts Review XXXX (Feb. 12, 1988), 78.
- 68 Frances Spalding, British Art Since 1900 (London 1986), 107.
- 69 Charles Harrison, English Art and Modernism 1900-1939 (London and Bloomington, Indiana 1981), 233.
- 70 Spalding, British Art Since 1900, 109, 112.
- 71 Maxwell Bates, Far Away Flags (Victoria 1964), 36.
- 72 Skelton, "Bates...," 81.
- 73 Ibid., 82-83.
- 74 Bates, A Wilderness of Days: An Artist's Experiences as a Prisoner of War in Germany (Victoria 1978), 11.

- 75 Maxwell Bates in Retrospect: 1921-1971, 10.
- 76 Skelton, "Bates...," 85.
- 77 Bates, A Wilderness of Days..., 73.
- 78 Ibid., 133.
- 79 Maxwell Bates in Retrospect 1921-1971, 13.
- 80 Skelton, "Bates...," 86.
- 81 Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Colin Graham," 11 November 1988.
- 82 Skelton, "Robert de Castro," Malahat Review XXXX (October 1976), 60.
- 83 Whittaker interview with Mayhew.
- 84 Ibid.
- 85 Skelton, "De Castro," 60.
- 86 Whittaker interview with Mayhew.
- 87 Skelton, "Herbert Siebner: The Man and the Vision," Malahat Review XVII (January 1971), 54.
- 88 Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Herbert Siebner," 6 December 1988.
- 89 Skelton, "Herbert Siebner...," 55-56.
- 90 Whittaker interview with Siebner.
- 91 Ibid.
- 92 Skelton, "Siebner...," 57.
- 93 Whittaker interview with Siebner.

- 94 Skelton, "Siebner...," 57.
- 95 Ibid., 58.
- 96 Ibid.
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- 99 Christos M. Joachimides, ed., et al., German Art in the 20th Century: Painting and Sculpture, 1905-1985 (London 1985), 55-57.
- 100 Ibid., 56.
- 101 Skelton, "Siebner...," 58.
- 102 Whittaker interview with Siebner.
- 103 Ibid.
- 104 Frank Nowosad, Ciccimarra: A Biography (Ann Arbor 1988), 32-33.
- 105 Ibid., 33.
- 106 Ibid., 36.
- 107 Ibid., 18.
- 108 Ibid., 19.
- 109 Ibid.
- 110 Ibid., 29-38.
- 111 Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Richard Ciccimarra (Victoria 1974), n.p.
- 112 Ibid.
- 113 Nowosad, Ciccimarra..., 58-60.
- 114 The error that Ciccimarra fought at the Russian Front was printed in the

1974 A.G.G.V. retrospective catalogue.

115 Nowosad, Ciccimarra..., 68-74.

116 Ibid., 77-82.

117 Skelton, "Karl Spreitz," Malahat Review XXXVII (January 1976), 56-57.

118 Ibid., 58-59.

119 Ibid., 59.

120 Ibid., 60.

121 Ibid.

122 Ibid.

123 Barbara E. Turner, ed., Skelton at 60 (Erin, Ont. 1986), 221-227.

1950-1959: THE POINT GROUP

As we know, the fifties were an exciting time of growth in Victoria's art scene. The Art Gallery of Greater Victoria opened in 1951 with a director sympathetic to modern art at its helm. Jan Zach came to Victoria in that year and revolutionized art education, influencing many local artists including future Limners Elza Mayhew and Robert De Castro. Not long after Zach, arrived Herbert Siebner who not only taught art and got people like Nita Forrest to start painting seriously, but also enthusiastically organized what can be considered Victoria's first contemporary local artists' group, the Point Group. During this decade there were still no private galleries where artists could exhibit their work, however, and the fifties were characterized by art exhibits in such strange places as restaurants and furniture stores.

As we have seen, the Czech artist Jan Zach was very influential in encouraging his students to experiment with modernism, but it was not until the mid-fifties that Elza Mayhew and Bob De Castro began to study under him. In 1951 Mayhew and a friend took a trip around the world. They were going to arrange an organized world tour with a travel agent, but Mayhew did not like the idea of having to keep to a strict schedule. They were able instead to buy an around-the-world ticket which was valid on four different airlines and allowed them to plan their trip as they went along.¹ Their trip took them to San Francisco, Hawaii, Fiji, New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, India, Egypt, Greece, Rome, Switzerland, Paris, and London. She had a wonderful time and "saw more than I knew".² She says, "I was all eyes, always sensitive to what I saw."³ The trip not only introduced Mayhew

to many other cultures and art forms, but also enabled her finally to put behind her the years of uncertainty about her husband's fate. She visited India where Alan Mayhew had disappeared during World War Two and she says "it absolutely freed me from everything."⁴ A part of her life had come to an end and, at the start of a new decade, Mayhew was able to begin developing her own artistic interests.

The year 1953 proved especially important to Mayhew's career, and it is at this time that she says she "really consolidated my resources and got over everything."⁵ Her father-in-law Robert Mayhew was appointed Canadian Ambassador to Japan, and Mayhew and her two children accompanied her parents-in-law and helped them with their official duties. Robert Mayhew was invited to all cultural events and exhibitions and usually asked his daughter-in-law to attend these in his place. During that year she saw a great deal of art, studied Japanese, read Zen, learnt *Ikebana*, or "flower arranging," and became interested in the Japanese tea ceremony. When she returned to Victoria in 1954 she brought back with her a Japanese student named Midori who had studied the tea ceremony for five years, and together they put on a public demonstration of the ceremony and of *Ikebana*.⁶

Back in Victoria Mayhew started to make art in her house. She made drawings of Midori, went to the junkyard and created interesting constructions of scrap metal, and collected and arranged stones all over her home. In 1955 well-known London dance critic Fernau Hall came to give a lecture at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. The Gallery telephoned Mayhew and asked her whether she could organize a small get-together for Mr. Hall after the lecture and she agreed. That evening Hall noticed Mayhew's scrap arrangements and realized she should study sculpture

because she had talent for sculptural form. Mayhew received a call from him the next day and agreed to his request to see him the following afternoon. It was then that Hall said to Mayhew "Don't you know you're a sculptor? Don't you know that?" and she replied "No, I'm just fooling around."⁷ Meanwhile Hall had made inquiries and discovered that Jan Zach was teaching art in town. Hall arranged for Mayhew to meet with Zach with the idea that she would become his student. When they arrived at Zach's studio he agreed that Mayhew should take lessons and told her to come to class on Monday. On a whim Mayhew replied "Well, I wouldn't except that Monday's April Fool's Day", and so it happened that "I started and I never stopped."⁸ At nearly forty years of age, Mayhew began an art career which developed rapidly from this point on.

Mayhew had very limited experience in drawing and painting before she came under Zach's instruction. She recalls, "I found myself drawing next to Jack Wilkinson and I'd never drawn before in my life."⁹ Jack Wilkinson (b. 1927), who would later join the Limners in 1981, lived in England from 1937 to 1955 and was an academically trained artist.¹⁰ Although he had little to learn from Zach about art theory, he must have enjoyed Zach's enthusiasm and appreciated the companionship of fellow artists. Mayhew admits to having been apprehensive about working next to an accomplished artist, but she nevertheless produced some excellent figure studies of her own, including one painting she completed in less than twenty minutes, much to Wilkinson's surprise.¹¹

Mayhew was at the same time experimenting with sculpture but says Zach did not even see any of her work until she had made about three tons. Her earliest sculpture experiments were small iron reliefs and masks,

such as the mask in figure 13.¹² She started by making relief drawings in sand and having these cast at an iron foundry. Later she began to make cement and bronze sculptures.¹³ To explore her art ideas she often went to a local ballet school and sat there and "did drawing scribbles." She was not, however, following in the footsteps of Degas and sketching the dancers. Surprisingly these studies were usually totally unrelated to the subject of dancers and were more often sketches for her abstract sculptures. She says she just liked the atmosphere of hard-work and dedication she found in a dance studio because it inspired her to create more art.¹⁴

In 1955 Zach had about ten students, among them Mayhew, Wilkinson, De Castro, Virginia Lewis, who had studied in Eastern Canada, and Sylvia Sutton, who was English-trained like Wilkinson. Zach's excitable and fiery temperament insured that only those dedicated to the study of art stayed on. Mayhew related that he often insulted his students because he felt it "egged them on" and forced them to create art to the best of their ability.¹⁵ Needless to say not all of his students appreciated his behavior.

Mayhew first met Bob De Castro while they were both students of Zach. De Castro had already been with Zach for a short while when Mayhew came to study there, but she does not believe that he had had any prior art training.¹⁶ He was painting and drawing but not yet making much sculpture, and it was "Jan Zach who was largely responsible for convincing Robert De Castro that sculpture was his business."¹⁷ According to Mayhew, De Castro did not do or say much except upset the class as much as he could because he was the kind of person who needed a lot of space. De Castro's work area was at the Government Street side of the studio opposite to Mayhew's section. She relates that one day, during the first week she was at

the studio, De Castro suddenly got up, kicked over his stool and easel, and ran out of the studio, noisily bounding down the three flights of stairs to the street. Mayhew thought that something terrible had happened but in fact the fiery De Castro had just had enough and wanted to get out. This was Mayhew's first encounter with the fellow artist whom she would come to know very well over the next thirty years and with whom she would "live through all the storms".¹⁸

According to Mayhew, Zach did not believe in instructing his students in how to make art but it "was just a matter of being around him that turned you on!"¹⁹ Of Zach, De Castro would later say that "he didn't teach us anything - no techniques, nothing - he wanted us to find our own techniques."²⁰ Zach did not as a rule show his own work to his students and never made art in front of them.²¹ Nevertheless Zach's sculpture must have had a profound influence on Mayhew and De Castro, not necessarily in its form but in its experimental spirit. Colin Graham mentions that Zach's students often bought his work,²² and it would be safe to compare the master's work to that of the students. This connection has never been discussed in scholarship but seems valid considering the enormous effect Zach had on his students and the scarcity of any modern sculpture in Victoria in the fifties.

When Tony Emery arrived in B.C. from England in 1953 he says that "there were perhaps four artists who were of the level that you could expect to be successful in a Canada Council application."²³ One of the four was probably Jan Zach, whom Emery knew while living in Victoria from 1953 to 1967. In 1957 he was, according to Emery, "one of the few sculptors in Canada technically and intellectually equipped to experiment in the

contemporary idiom on the grand scale...."²⁴ Little is known of his early work, but it was usually small in scale and depicted the human figure. Always experimental in his art, Zach stated that "the powerful organic world of the Pacific Northwest" has had a great deal of influence on his work. He continued to say that the

endless variety of shapes cast up by the sea, roots of trees, branch fragments, seaweed, natural rock formations impressed me with their immense vitality...and clarified for me certain sculptural concepts of growth and movement through time.²⁵

These biomorphic shapes are evident in his sculptures Crowd of 1959 (fig. 14) and Wrestlers, probably made in 1956 (fig. 15), both made of poured concrete. In his Crowd each person fits together as if part of a vertebrae or vegetal formation. This work is highly abstract, simplified, and tactile. His Wrestlers seem to blend into each other and look more like tree branches than human beings.

Mayhew and De Castro were influenced by Zach's love of experimentation and by the natural forms of Victoria's landscape. Mayhew agrees that in her large totem-like sculptures she has been influenced by B.C.'s huge forests.²⁶ De Castro, sometime during the late fifties, developed his characteristic sculptural form and motif, which he never abandoned. Mayhew calls it a "pea-pod" shape, suggesting a biological origin.²⁷ De Castro's sculptures were usually left untitled, but when he did give them a descriptive title early in his career he gave them titles like Forest, Forest Ghosts, or Fossils, suggesting a relationship with nature. His sculptures are primarily carved in wood and are usually small in format. His first sculpture that shows his pea-pod motif is in Elza Mayhew's collection and was made sometime during the late fifties. (fig. 16) It is difficult to date many of De

Castro's works because he preferred to work in private and talked little about his art, even with his closest friends. Much of his work is undated. This early sculpture is much more rough-hewn than his later mature work, and the characteristic form is not as distinct as it would become in later sculptures, suggesting that these criteria could be used to date De Castro's work. His work of the sixties is more polished and smooth. One of his untitled sculptures of the fifties (fig. 17) reminds us somewhat of the forms used by Jan Zach at the same time, such as in his work Crowd of 1959. Here De Castro's row of pea-pods resemble Zach's stylized human figures, but De Castro's work remains much less three-dimensional than Zach's and is designed as a wall relief.

Although De Castro was extremely well-read he did not read much about art because he found it boring. One early twentieth-century sculptor admired by both De Castro and Mayhew (and Zach naturally) was Brancusi. Mayhew feels that no sculptor coming after him can avoid being influenced by him because he was a great sculptor and his work is so simple.²⁸ Like the sculpture of Brancusi, the art of Mayhew and De Castro is concerned with a simplified abstract form and with contrasts in textures, although not as much with a contrast in materials. Mayhew recalls that De Castro was not impressionable and had discerning tastes in art. They would often go to gallery shows together and, although De Castro was a private person and did not like much of the art he saw, when he did see something he liked he would say "Look! that's it!", and Mayhew recalls he would always be right.²⁹ This discriminating taste in art was probably developed under Zach. Mayhew recalls that "Zach caused us to think. The main thing you learned is to recognize a good piece of art when you see it - you can't teach that...to get into the core of artistic experience."³⁰

When Zach left Victoria for Oregon in 1958, his students continued to meet and work in the studio for a while but it was not the same without him.³¹ Nevertheless Zach had started something in Victoria that continued to grow even after he left. He had instilled in this small group of dedicated artists a love of experimentation and creating art.

The gap left by Zach was filled by German-born Herbert Siebner who had come to Victoria in 1954 and was also teaching art. He had, like Zach, created a loyal following of students whom he also "turned on" to art, including future fellow Limners Nita Forrest and Karl Spreitz. When Siebner arrived in Victoria he knew very little English and recalls that he would have been willing to work even as a house painter if they had not been on strike at the time for a wage increase.³² He had come prepared with a letter of introduction from his art academy, addressed to the Canadian Minister of Culture, only to find that Canada did not have one. Siebner soon got a job, however, for a Mr. Hare who owned a shop which sold "the most gruesome little flower paintings".³³ As soon as he met Siebner, Hare, who according to Tony Emery was something of a con-artist,³⁴ hit upon the idea of opening up an art school downtown. Siebner spent the first month as a virtual slave labourer, painting the inside of the school and building easels and benches. Students paid \$10 a month to learn how to draw and paint. Siebner was told to teach many different media all at once, instead of concentrating on one method for a period of time as he would have preferred. After about two months, Hare and Siebner had a falling out and Siebner left the school.³⁵

It probably came as no surprise to Siebner that, although he had

not intended to steal them away from Hare, most of his students left with him. He opened his own school on Hillside Avenue, and most of his students continued studying with him because "I knew I had something to give and they wanted to learn something."³⁶ In 1956 the school moved to Goldsmith Street. It is quite ironic that, according to Siebner, although Siebner knew Jan Zach and tried to befriend him, Zach was always afraid that the younger artist was trying to steal his students away.³⁷ One would have thought that these two isolated propagators of modernism would have supported each other instead of being suspicious of one another, but the fact remains that there was very little these artists could do in Victoria to make a living besides teach.

When Siebner first arrived in Victoria he weighed a mere 125 pounds and was extremely shy. He says it took two or three years for him to learn the language and overcome his "culture shock".³⁸ Siebner was a German Expressionist artist who concentrated on depicting the human figure at a time when neither expressionism nor figural art were popular in Canada, because, according to Siebner, it "goes too close to our feeling and is too honest."³⁹ This outspoken Berlin-trained artist had to adjust to Victoria's predominantly British society which favoured emotional restraint and correct conduct. One story Siebner related illustrates how foreign this life was to him. When he was first in Victoria he was at a party and decided to try to start a conversation with someone. He found it strange and rude when this guest did not reply to his attempted conversation. Later in the evening the host properly introduced them and the person was finally able to converse with the bewildered artist. This he found stupid. He remembers saying to his wife "Why should we adapt ourselves idiotically to a society which has these kinds of rules? I am a free person and like to express myself."⁴⁰ After that

Siebner had a three-day party (then unheard of in Victoria) where, he says, he lost some friends but ended up knowing who his true friends were.⁴¹

Siebner has continued to this day to play the role of gadfly, poking fun at conventional society. He is famous for his unconventional parties and for his Dadaist acts and events, including stripping down to his shorts in public.⁴² In one of his stream-of-consciousness letters appropriately written on April 1, 1984, Siebner sums up his philosophy and personality: "Please excuse my frankness; but by now you should know, that besides an expressionist there is also an exhibitionist."⁴³

Siebner speculates on how he feels he and his art have changed by his move to Canada. He does not think he would have become as outspoken and expressionistic as he is now if he had remained in Germany. In Germany he was bound to tradition, discipline, and would have always been under the eyes of fellow students and learned professors of the academy.⁴⁴ Here he was not bound to a long tradition because art in Victoria did not go back very far. Siebner describes it: "all of a sudden, I was free. For the first time I could make all mistakes in art, all experiments necessary to an artist without having a guilt complex about my teachers and colleagues."⁴⁵ In Victoria he developed his characteristic forms of mother goddesses, centaurs, and giants but has continued as an expressionist and has not been extensively influenced by local art.

During the early years in Victoria Siebner had been influenced by Victoria's Northwest Coast Indian art in that he was impressed by the way they used stylized humans and animals as symbols in their art.⁴⁶ A sgraffito mural he made for the Crown House Restaurant in Victoria in 1959-60 (fig.

18) shows his simplification, flattened space, and dramatic contrasts of red, black, and white, perhaps influenced by the design and colour of Indian prints. In this mural are depicted Siebner's characteristic fleshy women who could represent fertility goddesses. Siebner was especially fond of the ancient fertility figure, the so-called *Venus of Willendorf*, and commented on her eternal meaning by saying that "The funny thing about [her] is that when I was a student she was about 15 or 16 thousand years old - now she is 30,000 years old."⁴⁷ From his own experience during the war it is obvious Siebner yearns for a time when the Mother Goddess was the guiding force and there were no wars. In a cabinet in his home Siebner houses his collection of ancient and non-western figurines. They include a replica of the *Venus of Willendorf*, examples of Pre-Columbian Meso-American figures, and small African carvings.

Sgraffito has been a favourite medium of Siebner's since the fifties. It is a technique made popular during the Italian Renaissance that involves scratching into layers of pigment or plaster which have been put on a board or architectural surface (from the Italian *graffio*, meaning "scratching"). As an art form sgraffito has enjoyed a revival in postwar art. Artists often make sgraffito reliefs using pigmented cement and, in Siebner's case, he mixes sgraffito with other media like encaustic. Siebner tends to work in three colour layers: a basic dark shade like black or umber, a second layer of medium colour, and finally white. He scratches through the different layers to create his image. This colour scheme recalls traditional sgraffito of the Renaissance: the underlayer was usually a blackish-brown made by mixing burnt straw with the plaster.⁴⁸ This interest in layers and textures is also found in Siebner's paintings on canvas. He states he sometimes paints over a painting eight or ten times because he likes the texture of the ground

★
Red

underneath. Many of his works have this "built-up" quality and the marks on the canvas sometimes resemble hieroglyphics, making the painting appear like an ancient work.

In his interest in a textured surface Siebner is connected with other European artists of his generation. Immediately after the war a group of artists working in Paris began exhibiting heavily-textured impasto paintings. This movement was called *Art Informel* (Informal Art) or *Art Autre* (Other Art) and sprang up before the development of a similar aesthetic in New York which came to be called Abstract Expressionism. Artists connected with this development were Jean Dubuffet, Jean Fautrier, Hans Hartung, and Nicolas de Staël. Dubuffet, who was interested in child art, art of madmen, graffiti on walls, and accidental markings,⁴⁹ created works that are similar to some of Siebner's images of the sixties. His oil painting Woman in High Heels of 1946 (fig. 19) recalls Siebner's sgraffito mural images in its heavily-textured surface and simplified drawing. Dubuffet's watercolour Corps de Dame of 1950 (fig. 20) also reminds us of Siebner's giantesses and fertility goddesses in its schematic drawing and exaggerated sexual organs, as we will see later. Siebner's art is also similar to the work of a Spanish artist named Antonio Tapiés, whose fascination with surfaces and textures links him stylistically with the French *Art Informel* artists. Unlike Siebner, however, Tapiés created mostly abstract paintings such as his oil on canvas Black with Two Lozenges of 1963. (fig. 21) There is, nevertheless, a link between the sgraffito paintings and reliefs of Siebner and the art of his European contemporaries.

It is significant that one of Siebner's first commissions was for

the Crown House Restaurant in Victoria. Its owner, Paul Arsens, was a great booster of local artists. Tony Emery describes Arsens as one "who backs an educated fancy with a fine blend of taste and courage, and has an enviable collection to show for it, much of it on permanent view in his coffee shops."⁵⁰ Considering that there were few good restaurants in Victoria at this time⁵¹ Arsens's move to hang original artwork by Victoria artists on the walls of his restaurants made the general public aware of the expanding art scene. Since the fifties, restaurants have remained a popular location where both amateur and professional artists can exhibit their art. It benefits the artists because it gives their work exposure it might otherwise not receive, and it benefits the restaurant owners because they are able to decorate their establishments at no cost.

During the coming years Siebner came to have a great deal of influence on his students, especially Nita Forrest, Molly Privett, Michael Morris, Ann Kipling, Karl Spreitz, and Flemming Jorgensen. Nita Forrest moved to Victoria from Vancouver in 1950 with her eldest daughter after the break-up of her first marriage. She continued the casual interest in art she developed in Vancouver and, when Siebner came to Victoria in 1954, became one of his students. She says she studied with Siebner "because I liked the look of his work and studio."⁵² Like Zach, Siebner did not teach technique but rather got his students excited about art and eager to find their own style. It was his philosophy of art, not what he taught, that was important. Because Forrest was older than most of the other students, Siebner guided her but left her alone to come up with her own idiom.⁵³

At that time she was raising a couple of young children and, like many women artists, had to do her painting after they had gone to sleep. She

recalls that she painted in any spare space in the house and once even converted a closet into a studio by removing its doors.⁵⁴ Through Siebner, Forrest became involved in Victoria's art scene and met many of the artists who would later form the Limner Society.

Although Forrest enjoys her art her artistic output is relatively small compared to other local artists. Her friends have always encouraged her to paint more, but we must take the events of her troubled personal life into consideration when judging her success as an artist. She had a difficult childhood and several failed marriages. She states that "personal problems took up a lot of time and emotions"⁵⁵ as did raising three daughters, mostly on her own. When asked if she could recall a date of an early Limner exhibition she admits that "I had so many problems in my personal life that I can't remember a lot of these things."⁵⁶ Nevertheless she gained confidence through Siebner's teaching and came to feel part of Victoria's artistic community.

Through Siebner, Forrest met artist Richard Ciccimarra, who had been living in Vancouver since 1953 and moved to Victoria two years later. Ciccimarra's first marriage had ended and in Vancouver he met his second wife. The two settled in Victoria, where Ciccimarra for the next four years worked at an office job at Growers Wine. The closest Ciccimarra came to using his artistic talents there was designing several wine labels for the company.⁵⁷

It was at this time that Ciccimarra's well-known West Indian studies were painted, mostly from memory. He had made a few unfinished sketches while in the Caribbean, but it was not until he came to Victoria that

Ciccimarra gave full expression to these themes. One of his most celebrated West Indies paintings is the Laughing Woman of 1956. (fig. 22) Ciccimarra was primarily a draughtsman, and his paintings are like tinted drawings.⁵⁸ His strong and rhythmic line is evident in this work as is his interest in massive shapes. This theme of a laughing person is unusual in Ciccimarra's *oeuvre*, however, and his figures of the sixties and early seventies are all solemn, lonely, and anxious creatures such as in The Clown of 1958. (fig. 23) This work is one of Ciccimarra's circus series and is viewed by his biographer Frank Nowosad as one of the first examples of a "psychological self-portrait." Nowosad writes, "It is touchingly wistful, softly theatrical, certainly heavy with a mood of self-pity that can be associated with Ciccimarra."⁵⁹

The medium Ciccimarra used for the Laughing Woman and The Clown is an unusual one. Ciccimarra's second wife Chris tells us that these early gouache, graphite, and conté works were executed on Manila paper and, as was Ciccimarra's habit, drawn and painted quickly and intuitively.⁶⁰ He finished these works, however, with coats of a wax/varnish mixture as if they were traditional oil paintings. He may have learned this technique from his mother who was a graphic artist, or he may have been recalling the traditional works he had seen in Dr. Fritz Behn's studio in Vienna. Although he did not work using the methodical and laborious methods of the old masters, Ciccimarra nevertheless wanted his work to look like that of an old master.⁶¹ His works always have an aged golden glow, and an exhibition of these works strikes one as a room full of "modern" old masters. It seems natural that Ciccimarra would choose this classicizing element in his work because he was a displaced European living on a remote island that had been inhabited for only a century. He may have secretly yearned for his European roots and in doing so separated himself artistically

and psychologically from the group of artists he associated with in Victoria.

In 1958 Ciccimarra joined a group of artists, mostly students of Zach and Siebner organized by the German expressionist, who were exhibiting at Don Adams's modern Scandinavian furniture store on Fort Street. Exhibitors included former students of the departed Zach such as Mayhew, De Castro, Virginia Lewis, Sylvia Sutton, and Duncan de Kergemaux; Siebner with his students Jorgensen, Forrest, Privett, and Morris;⁶² as well as Margaret Peterson, a Paris-trained artist who had taught art at the University of California at Berkeley for 22 years and who had moved to Victoria in 1956,⁶³ and well-known Victoria artist Bill West, art teacher at Central Junior High School.⁶⁴

Being an artist in Victoria in the fifties was not easy, given that there were very few people in the city buying original art. The newly formed Art Gallery of Greater Victoria was constantly in need of funds and could not aid the artists much financially, and there were no private galleries where the artists could exhibit and sell their work. Siebner, as was his natural inclination, organized the artists' group which came to be called The Point Group. Elza Mayhew tells how the artists decided on this name: "We had all come to a point in our lives and careers where we had to break out of our insularity and so we simply decided to call ourselves The Point."⁶⁵

Nowosad discusses elements of the nature of the group that would hold true for the later Limner group which formed in 1971. He notes that the group was composed of twelve very different artists who had each reached artistic maturity and who would not have tolerated any aims to create a uniform "group style" in their art. He feels, however, that these

marked differences may have been what kept the group together until Don Adams closed his shop and left Victoria a few years later. Like the Limners, the members of the Point were "a union of colleagues and their gatherings were mainly social; they partied and bought one another's work."⁶⁶ The members did not really influence each other in art matters because they were all mature individual artists.

The opening of the first Point exhibition appears to have been Victoria's first "happening". Tony Emery, who was active at the Art Gallery and wrote a weekly art column for the Victoria Times from 1956 to 1967, was friends with members of the Point Group and was asked to open the exhibition. Emery had hung a black balloon (to stand for "the point") and was planning to shoot it and open the exhibit with a bang. Something went wrong, however, and he missed the balloon and the pellet bounced back and, according to Siebner, hit Ciccimarra in the face!⁶⁷ This was Victoria's first experience of what one could term a Dada event. Member Nita Forrest remembers the Point Group as being a bit more intimate than the later group, the Limners.⁶⁸ These artists definitely viewed themselves as being the lone bastion of modernism in Victoria. They influenced local younger artists with their exhibitions and reputation. Recently Forrest met a teacher at the Emily Carr College of Art & Design, formerly the Vancouver School of Art in Vancouver. This man, who was in his forties, told Forrest that the thing that had made him decide to make art his career was meeting the members of the Point Group in Victoria and seeing their exhibits. With her characteristic sense of humour Forrest replied, "Well I hope you don't regret it!"⁶⁹

A few years before avant-garde artists in Victoria began studying under Zach and Siebner and forming themselves into a group, Maxwell Bates

was living in New York and attending art classes at the Brooklyn Museum Art School.⁷⁰ He studied painting with German Expressionist Max Beckmann (1884-1950). When the Nazis took control of Germany in 1933 Beckmann was soon classified as a "degenerate" artist. He was fired from his teaching position in Frankfurt, sat out the war in Amsterdam, and emigrated to the United States in 1947. He taught at the Art School for two years until his death in 1950.⁷¹

Bates was greatly influenced by Beckmann but was troubled by the fact that only students who slavishly imitated his style seemed to get much attention.⁷² Bates was later to remark that he had profited more from Beckmann's enthusiasm and personality than from the actual lessons⁷³ although he did admire Beckmann's work because he was a great colourist and they were both figurative painters.⁷⁴ Clearly Bates was much more influenced by Beckmann, both in terms of style and subject matter, than he admitted. The German Expressionist painted in a loose almost-naive style using bright, arbitrary colours. Like Bates, he commented on human nature by depicting scenes of people living on the fringes of society such as circus artists, carnival revellers, femmes-fatales, and cocktail party guests.⁷⁵ He also painted expressionist allegories on religious themes and many searching self-portraits.

Around the time Bates was a student of Beckmann the German painted one of his last works, Columbine, in 1950. (fig. 24) It depicts a massive femme-fatale/death goddess figure who wears a black mask and holds a clown hat. Her body is distorted, and the interior is painted in harsh purples and greens. This work, painted the year Beckmann died, may be compared to Bates's last painting, Woman in Blue of 1978. (fig. 25) The

features are similarly distorted and grotesque, and the colours and brushwork used equally harsh and spontaneous. Bates often depicted a femme-fatale type similar in tone to Beckmann's, especially images from fashion magazines.

A linocut print Bates made years later in 1955 called "Departure" (fig. 26) demonstrates the pupil's recognition of his indebtedness to the master. Beckmann's famous painting by the same name was painted in 1932-33, shortly before the Nazis classified him as degenerate. This painting, however, is much more graphically violent than Bates's print. (fig. 27) For the rest of his life Bates continued to paint in an expressionist mode, using bright, arbitrary colours, a flat space, and simple almost child-like shapes, as a direct result of his studies with Beckmann.

Bates's father had been an architect before the war and Bates himself worked as an architect's assistant while in England. In 1950, on his return to Calgary, Bates joined forces with another architect, and together they started their own architectural firm. From 1950 to 1961 Bates worked as an architect and painted in his spare time. His most important commission was for Calgary's new St. Mary's Cathedral (1954-57) which he co-designed with A.W. Hodges. (fig. 28) At the same time his career as an architect was developing, Bates was also beginning to gain recognition for his art. In 1957 he joined the Canadian Group of Painters, and his paintings and prints began to be exhibited in the U.S. and Canada.⁷⁶

The years 1955 to 1960 were extremely productive for Bates. He had been making monoprints since 1950, but in 1955 he and fellow artist Jack Snow began experimenting with lithography after finding two lithography

presses that had been thrown out by a commercial art store. There was not anyone in Calgary at that time who taught lessons in this medium, so Bates and Snow taught themselves how to use the presses and got some good results. Colour was always important for Bates. He said "I like a great intensity of colour, if I can....You can get good colour in litho ink, very rich colour...."⁷⁷ A lithograph by Bates entitled "Showgirls" of 1957 foreshadows his later interest in commenting on our society. (fig. 29)

In 1957 Bates made studies for what would have been his most important painting had it been executed: his entry to a competition for a huge mural for the Calgary Airport representing the history of Alberta. In one of his watercolour studies for the mural called Alberta (fig. 30) we see that Bates was planning to paint a complex arrangement of buffaloes, Indians, R.C.M.P., early settlers, churches, trains, cowboys, grain elevators, oil rigs, and office towers against a backdrop of the Rockies and prairie wheatfield alive with wildlife.⁷⁸ Bates's love of colour and almost child-like composition is evident in this sketch.

During the later fifties themes such as scarecrows, beggar-kings, barbaric figures, and common washerwomen begin to appear in Bates's work. They all represent the underdogs of society. Bates once said

You see, I've always been interested in contrasts, complete opposites. It seems to me that the beggar and the king are complete opposites. I've put them together, into one being....The beggar kings are symbolic types.⁷⁹

Similarly, the scarecrow, for Bates, was "a sort of symbol of the condition of man. That was the idea of the scarecrow, as a kind of despised object - a bunch of straw with a stick under it...."⁸⁰ These universal themes of the human

condition continued to occur in Bates's later work.

Bates's first wife had died in 1952, and he remarried two years later to Charlotte Kintzle of Calgary. After the completion of St. Mary's Cathedral in 1957 Bates and his wife went on a tour of Europe and visited Edinburgh, London, Paris, Munich, Vienna, Venice, Florence, Rome, and Nice.⁸¹ This was to be his first and last visit to the continent since the war and was a productive period when he filled many sketchbooks with views of the European landscape. These sketches were to form the basis of many paintings on Bates's return to Canada.⁸²

Meanwhile in England Robin Skelton was involved with writers and artists in Manchester. He had started lecturing in the English department at the University of Manchester in 1951 and throughout the fifties continued writing poetry. In 1957 he began reviewing poetry for The Manchester Guardian and subsequently organized an exhibit of books, paintings, and photographs relating to twentieth-century poetry for the university's art festival. Skelton was founder, with Michael Seward Snow and Tony Connor, of the Peterloo Group of Poets and Painters which had regular meetings to discuss the arts, organize art exhibitions, and hold poetry readings and lectures. This group was largely responsible for the showing of the British Arts Councils' exhibit of open air sculpture in Manchester in 1959.⁸³ Most likely as a result of his close contact with visual artists, Skelton himself began making collages/photomontages in 1957. That same year he married Sylvia Jarrett and together they began collecting art.⁸⁴

This discussion of Skelton's activities in the fifties will be relevant when we look at his role in the arts community in Victoria in the

sixties, seventies and eighties. He was experienced in organizing and managing a group of artists and was one of the leaders of the Limners in the early seventies. By then he had built his reputation as an outstanding Canadian poet and was a natural choice as their spokesman. He also had experience in organizing exhibits, running a publishing company, and getting his own work published which would prove to be useful when the Limners wanted to publicize their group. Most important, however, was the fact that Robin and Sylvia Skelton were friends with visual artists in England and collected their work. They took a tight-knit and vital arts community for granted and brought these ideas with them from England to Victoria where they settled permanently in 1963.

NOTES

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- 5 Skelton, "Mayhew...," 62.
- 6 Ibid.
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- 13 Jan Gould, Women of British Columbia (Saanichton 1975), 197.
- 14 Whittaker interview with Mayhew.
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- 17 Skelton, "Robert de Castro," Malahat Review XXXX (October 1976), 61.
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- 22 Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Colin Graham," 11 November 1988.
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- 25 The Portland Art Museum, Paintings and Sculptures of the Pacific Northwest: Oregon, Washington, British Columbia (Portland 1959), 68.
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- 32 Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Herbert Siebner," 6 December 1988.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Whittaker, "Personal interview with Anthony Emery," 19 October 1988.
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- 40 Ibid.
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- 43 Siebner related in his interview with me that he writes more than he paints and often writes stream-of-consciousness letters in the middle of the night. Several of these cathartic outpourings are in the Siebner file in the A.G.G.V. library.
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- 46 Herbert Siebner, Color, Line & Form (Sidney 1970), 13.
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- 77 Maxwell Bates in Retrospect: 1921-1971, 14. Mrs. Jack Snow of Calgary is currently writing a biography of Bates.
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- 81 Skelton, "Bates...," 87-88.
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1960-1969: EXPLORATION AND GROWTH

It was during the sixties that Victoria's visual arts scene really came into its own. A large and growing group of local artists, taught by diligent and creative teachers such as Uhthoff, Zach, and Siebner, were emerging and becoming more professional in their art-making. The creation of the Visual Arts Department at the new University of Victoria campus meant that many more art-literate people were being trained in the city and a more sophisticated and informed art audience was being formed. The amount of art commentary and criticism in local newspapers was increasing. Finally after many years private galleries began to spring up in Victoria during the late sixties. Some of the early galleries could not survive financially and closed down, but an important step had been taken and other galleries would in time take their place. Three future Limners, Maxwell Bates, Robin Skelton, and Karl Spreitz, moved to Victoria around this time and were to play an important role in the development of an active and growing arts community.

The sixties are also the time of the renaissance or revival of Northwest Coast Indian art. Carvers such as Mungo Martin and his son and grandson Henry and Tony Hunt were working at the same time as the Limners, and we will examine the relationship between these two traditions.

Maxwell Bates arrived in Victoria in 1962 and immediately became involved with local artists such as those who had formed the Point Group. During 1960 and 1961, while still in Calgary, Bates had experimented extensively with pure abstraction. Future Limners Siebner and Pavelic also

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went through such a phase during the fifties and sixties in response to artistic developments in New York but, like Bates, quickly returned to their figurative style. These artists were influenced by the Abstract Expressionism of the fifties and Op and Pop art of the sixties but painted in a style outside these concerns. Bates completed six "Op art" works and sixty others in an abstract expressionist mode.¹ He soon returned to his expressionist figurative style, however, stating that the non-objective works were "only a sort of diversion, that's all, a change. I like to change now and then, for a refreshment."²

In November, 1961, Bates suffered a stroke that left him paralyzed on the left side of his body. The following year he retired with his wife to Victoria, as had always been his intention because he remembered the happy holidays spent there as a child. It is easy to imagine the impact Bates had upon the art scene in Victoria. Even with a leg brace and walking cane he still was a formidable character whose national reputation as an artist was firmly established. To the artists of the former Point Group, he was a mentor figure and remained an active member of Victoria's artistic community until a second stroke in 1978 left him almost completely paralyzed. According to Nita Forrest, the artists all looked to Bates, and, when the Limners formed, everyone saw him as their leader because he was not only a good name to attach to the group but also a friend to all the artists.³

His paralysis does not seem to have affected his art, since he painted some of his most important works in the sixties, and a change in style is not evident. In Calgary he had already begun to simplify his figures, using an awkward, almost child-like brushstroke, using bright, arbitrary colour and bringing his figures to the front of the picture plane. Many of Bates's works are biting comments on the state of modern society, with all its danger and

ugly darker sides. Paintings such as his Girls at the Cafe Congo of 1963 (fig. 31) and one of his *Cocktail Party Series*, Cocktail Party No. 1 of 1965 (fig. 32), are caricatures designed to show the shallowness of the human creature. Features are exaggerated and made ridiculous. Bates held that he was not consciously trying to comment on the state of the world. He stated "I don't think it [my art] is as depressing as some critics say...I don't feel that I'm criticizing society at all. If I do, it just happens, quite by accident, as a by-product - it's not an intentional thing."⁴ In works such as the *Cocktail Party Series* Bates would often paint figures with distorted features of fellow Victoria artists or of himself, but then disclaim that that had been his intention.⁵

When it came to painting his own self-portrait in 1965 (fig. 33) there is no biting sarcasm. It is an honest view of an artist who is no longer in full command of his body and who stares straight out at us and allows the viewer to scrutinize him, reminiscent of the many searching self-portraits of his teacher Beckmann. His left hand awkwardly clutches a paintbrush and his right arm hangs limply to his side. He paints his arms and hands much smaller in proportion to his body to emphasize his paralysis. On his easel is a non-objective painting made up of a real plastic placemat and a stencilled image of the same placemat. Bates enjoyed the patterns created by using elements such as an intricately woven plastic placemat to stencil a design and often encompassed this device in his work.

Throughout the sixties Bates continued to paint scenes of seeming innocence with hidden elements of danger. His painting Kindergarten of 1965 (fig. 34) is painted in a crude, child-like way using sickening shades of green and ochre. This classroom is not a happy place

where children play but a nightmarish hell. This sense of danger is created by the fact that this is a nighttime scene and by the children's frantic expressions. The figure who appears to be their teacher has a skull face and is very threatening. Bates may be simply commenting on children's cruelty towards each other, or he could be making a stronger statement on the corrupted nature of human beings even as children.

In his painting Assassin of 1969 (fig. 35) we see a similar, apparently harmless theme with more menacing overtones. A little boy slyly holds a bouquet of flowers as if to give them to his mother, perhaps. The title of the work, however, causes us to understand why this boy is holding his right hand behind his back and quickly turns an innocent picture into a frightening one. The theme of the assassin had sprung up in Bates's poetry thirty years earlier. In his poem "Paris, 1938," studied earlier, he had discussed the "dangers of tomorrow./Assassins in a doorway."⁶ He had always been acutely aware of the dangers that await unsuspecting people.

Almost as soon as he settled permanently in Victoria in 1963, Robin Skelton began changing Victoria's cultural scene. At the reception following a poetry reading at the University of Victoria Skelton served wine to the guests, not realizing that this had never been done before in a city that was accustomed to tea and buns and strawberry shortcake.⁷ Skelton and his wife Sylvia were boosters of local art and quickly became friends with all the artists. In 1964, at Colin Graham's urging, Skelton began writing a column of art criticism for the Victoria Daily Times. Graham had been working in that capacity as well as running the Gallery but felt there was perhaps a conflict of interest considering he operated the City's gallery. Graham had the mistaken idea that Skelton had written art criticism for the Manchester Guardian

during the fifties whereas he had written literature and drama reviews. In order to fill a weekly column Skelton attended all the gallery shows, openings and parties and came to befriend artists such as Siebner, Bates, De Castro, and Mayhew. In the mid-sixties there were very few art exhibits and no commercial galleries, so in order to fill his column Skelton visited the studios of local artists, occasionally reviewed art articles or books,⁸ "or simply let fly at the philistinism of Victoria."⁹

Skelton also played an important role in the development of the new University of Victoria established in 1963. He had founded the Creative Writing program within the English Department and became the first editor of the literary journal The Malahat Review in 1966. During the early years under Skelton's direction many articles on local artists appeared in it, including works on most of the Limners. Because of his urging the Special Collections room was created in the McPherson Library in order to house the library's rare and old books. With Tony Emery and Don Harvey, Skelton sat on the Art Collection committee that had been created by Victoria College principal Harry Hickman in the early fifties. These men ensured that the collection continued to concentrate on contemporary works by local artists and only purchased less expensive prints by non-B.C. artists.¹⁰ It is thanks to the efforts of these early art collection committees that UVIC now has an excellent collection of works by B.C. artists and, not surprisingly, many works by future Limners, especially Siebner.

The Point Group had developed around them a small but enthusiastic group of collectors, mostly professionals such as lawyers and doctors, who were friends of the artists and who appreciated contemporary art because they had travelled and become acquainted with European

All art is juxtaposition, placing images beside each other in such a way as to suggest previously unnoticed or unimagined relationships. In making collages I attempt to discover relationships by selecting images from magazines and then moving them about until they combine to form a visually exciting composition that is not totally without meaning. The exact meaning is something I do not think about; I am only concerned that the final combination of images should hint at possible interpretations so that any one collage may have a slightly different significance for each observer.¹⁶

Skelton's sculptures may arise from his collection of rocks and Northwest Coast Indian art. He and his wife had a collection of rocks from Yorkshire and Cornish beaches that they could not bear to part with so they brought it with them to Victoria. When the moving men lifted some of the heavy boxes into their new home and jokingly asked "what's in these...rocks?" they had to admit that that was exactly what they contained.¹⁷ A love of rock-like forms was already evident in Britain, and when the Skeltons moved to Victoria and began to collect Native and Inuit art they were naturally drawn to the jade and soapstone sculpture. Skelton recalls that one day a piece of one of his soapstone sculptures broke off and he took the piece and began to shape and sand it. He realized how easy soapstone was to manipulate and began making his own sculptures.¹⁸ A selection of them (fig. 37) shows his work to be abstract and biomorphic in shape and very tactile.

Karl Spreitz had emigrated to Canada in 1952 but did not move to Victoria until 1959. He and his wife worked in Ontario for the first few years, until 1957 when Spreitz enrolled in a two-year course at the Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, California. He completed the program in one year. From 1958 to 1959 he was a newspaper photographer in

Prince George before finally settling in Victoria in 1959.¹⁹


That same year he met and studied with Herbert Siebner who rejuvenated his interest in art.²⁰ Siebner, Ciccimarra, and Michael Morris encouraged Spreitz to paint, draw, and make photocollages. Spreitz has always been primarily a commercial photographer and filmmaker and has made fine art in his spare time. He enjoyed early success when his photocollages were exhibited in the Vancouver Island Jury Show of 1960.²¹ Spreitz, in his collages, rebelled against the restrictions placed on him by the magazines that commissioned him to take photographs for them. From 1965 to 1968 he was a staff photographer for Beautiful British Columbia magazine, and Maxwell Bates recalls Spreitz telling him about the magazine's standards. He said that

if they were going to use one of his photographs for the magazines, it had to have perfectly blue sky, and everyone had to be smiling and all that. There had to be just a nice little leaf, just in here, and so on and so forth. Everything had to be roses, so to speak. Propaganda.²²


Nevertheless Spreitz was prudent to realize it would be difficult to make a living in Victoria as an artist and chose to earn a living doing more practical things that were also more in demand.

Spreitz made three documentary films of future Linnets including two of Ciccimarra fishing, one of which was shot in 1966 called Steelhead River. Ciccimarra had been a champion flyfisherman while still a teenager in Austria, and continued this hobby in Victoria where he came to earn his living as a fishing guide. Spreitz's film captures Ciccimarra in his role of the patient fisherman and it won first prize at the first International Film Festival in Victoria.²³ Spreitz also made a film about Elza Mayhew and


her sculpture called The Making of the Column of the Sea. The film was started in 1973 and contains clips of Ciccimarra taken one month before his suicide, but was not completed until 1985.²⁴

Siebner and Spreitz brought the spirit of Dada to Victoria in the sixties and came to be known for their crazy antics. The stories of their films, "happenings", and general outrageous behaviour are legendary and, although not extensively documented, deserve a closer look. Dada was enjoying a renewed popularity in North America during the sixties and influenced new movements such as Pop Art, Performance Art, and Conceptual Art. Siebner and Spreitz were influenced by Dada because it represented for them a rebellion against middle class society, war, and authority. 


Before Spreitz came on the scene Siebner was already well-known for his colourful behavior. Intently keen on honesty he would sometimes issue moral challenges, such as asking University professors whether or not they were honest and then telling them they had "sold out." He also often liked to shock the bourgeoisie by taking his clothes off in public. He usually did this at parties after he had had sufficient to drink, and Skelton remarks that "It got to be that we never thought a party involving Herbert was a success unless he had made his symbolic assertion."²⁵

When Spreitz first came to Victoria in 1959, he, Morris, and Siebner made a Dada-inspired film called the No Film.²⁶ They filmed it on a rainy day at Beaver Lake. The idea was for everyone to do in front of the camera whatever he or she liked to do in private when he or she was not watched. This was Siebner's idea of freedom of expression. The "No Figure" was Bob De Castro, who wore small dark glasses, carried around an umbrella 

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and walked around around saying "no" to everyone who was about to assert himself. Siebner says they showed the film to the National Film Board but received no comment.²⁷

Siebner and Spreitz conspired to create the Rumour Centre during the mid-sixties. They would sell a rumour to the public for \$1 and charge \$1000 to undo it. Later they raised this rate to \$5000. Howard Gerwing of Special Collections at the McPherson Library, a friend of these artists, told them he thought it was a big joke. Siebner, never one to back down from a challenge, told Gerwing "we'll show you!" Siebner and Spreitz contacted the local news media and said there was a rumour going around that an illegitimate child of Nazi Hermann Goering was living in Victoria under the assumed name of Howard Gerwing! Naturally Gerwing realized immediately who was behind the plot when he was suddenly approached by several journalists wanting to know about his so-called past.²⁸

Another Dada-inspired project during this decade was their "rent a shadow for an overcast day" scheme which was a whimsical statement on Victoria's often overcast weather. These shadows were made of dark cloth and fastened around the ankles.²⁹ Siebner explained that you could wear the shadow or "lean it against a building and everyone would think it was a sunny day."³⁰ At one point during the sixties Siebner, Spreitz, and Skelton tried to get Colin Graham to put on an exhibition in the Gallery to be called Canadada, but, according to Skelton, Graham thought "Victoria was not yet quite ready for this, though we spent some time explaining the beauty and intricacy of a bum-printing machine which Karl intended to create."³¹

It is important to remember how different Victoria was from the

Germany and Austria where Siebner and Spreitz had grown up. Although there was a great deal of culture and artmaking in Victoria, there was not the sense of fantasy, whimsy, or merriment often found in art and life in Europe. When Siebner first came to Victoria in 1954 he "thought it was Disneyland - now [in 1988] I know it is - you shouldn't take it seriously."³² What he means is that Victoria, with its natural beauty, abundance of resources, and strategic location on an island far from the "real" world, seems like a place in a fairytale and is the perfect location to express your sense of fantasy. Siebner recalls that during the late fifties he, Jan Zach, Colin Graham, John Di Castri, the architect, and Hans Gruber, the conductor of the Victoria Symphony, had wanted to turn Victoria into a festival town with art and music everywhere. Its mild climate and scenic location on an island "where nothing happens" would have made it a popular festival location but their ideas received no support from the government.³³

Siebner's own art of the sixties retained its earlier expressionism and interest in the human figure. Although he had painted figuratively in Germany, he may in part have continued painting the figure upon his arrival in Canada because very few Canadian artists were painting in his style and it made him stand out. He cultivated himself as a personality and took pride in his unique vision. His statement for the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria exhibition Art in Victoria: 1960-1986 tells us a great deal about his emphasis on painting the human figure:

Upon my arrival in Victoria...I was surprised that the majority of Canadian artists completely ignored the human figure. This has hardly changed and landscapes done by contemporary artists are even more empty.

I studied at the Berlin Academy under strong German Expressionists and have had ever since, an inner urge to follow the tradition of Western art in expressing the shape of the

human figure.

Unlike Eastern art, with its use of symbols; like twigs, birds, flowers and fish (which have become the banal decor of the majority of Canadians), I have had both the desire and joy in putting the human figure back into the picture; using my brush to describe us for as long as we are here.

Maybe, one day, a trained dolphin will draw a little bird with the help of a twig.³⁴

In Siebner's art we see an interest in painting "humanist symbols". His creatures such as giants and giantesses, flying men, Babar the stranger, and Bella-Belle the fertility goddess are all symbols of human needs and relationships. Siebner was slightly influenced by native Westcoast Indian art when he first arrived in Victoria, specifically by its use of stylized human and animal forms. Siebner has written many stories, fables, and stream-of-consciousness letters, and one untitled story, written in 1959, may offer us some insight into his use of symbols:

searching and finding the symbols of life study
of nature - study of life.
beginning to understand the simplicity of being - to
express the meaning behind reality.
time - material changing elements, stone - dust - stone.
before the logical existence of being, dispersion.
concentration, the existence in itself.
between the creative element, life or art.
art is life between times beside material, the changing
element of creation.

like trees growing and falling.
like stones squeezed together and broken.
like beings going through life, changing rooms -
changing times, one time hard - one time soft.
like yesterday - like tomorrow and now in life or art.³⁵

For Siebner there is no distinction between art and life, and the themes he explores in his art relate to nature, creation, and human relationships.

Siebner, along with Pavelic, is one of the most prolific of all the artists we have examined, and he himself holds the philosophy that "Work is a mistake from which I learn."³⁶ Most of Siebner's characteristic images that reappear in his work, such as Babar, centaurs, Bella-Belle, flying men and giants, were first created during the sixties. The figure of Babar (alluding to Greek for "stranger") first appears in Siebner's work in 1964, (fig. 38) and its meaning for him may be analyzed on several levels. First, it clearly represents the artist's view of the human condition.³⁷ We are alienated from one another and from nature and are suffering a spiritual and cultural poverty. This is conveyed in this work by the lone figure standing in a simplified barren landscape surrounded by what appear to be hieroglyphs of a lost civilization. On a more personal level Babar is Siebner himself, a stranger in a new country having to adjust to a different language and strange customs. By 1964, however, Siebner had lived in Victoria for a decade and by all accounts had settled in and adjusted well to his new life. This painting probably refers to those difficult early years, and the script-like forms in the work perhaps represent his earlier difficulty in communicating with others. The simplified figure of Babar, on the other hand, seems to resemble a phallus, and as such could signify creation. There is a preponderance of universal sexual imagery in Siebner's work. The huge breasts and buttocks of his female goddesses and the clearly displayed sexual organs of his male giants suggest fertility.

Siebner was also interested in the duality of the centaur, half human and half horse, as an example of the duality of human beings. In 1963-64 he completed a large sgraffito mural for the Student Union Building at the University of Victoria. In this mural Siebner, with his characteristic sense of humour and rebellious spirit, depicts mostly scenes of recreation and

sport and only a few of the diligent student reading or writing at a desk. He depicts stick-figures drinking, hunting, making love, and many other forms of amusement. This reflects his lifelong distrust of authority and institutions. Although he himself taught art in several universities, including the University of Victoria in 1967 and 1968, he maintained "I dislike institutions with people being graded; therefore a University campus reminded me of an army camp with brave intellects instead of soldiers and where it is the standing in time and rank which counts more than humanity or individuality. Even professors together become a herd of sheep again."³⁸

In a section of the UVIC mural (fig. 39) Siebner depicts what Skelton interprets as a woman riding a centaur³⁹ but which could simply be a figure on a horse. Again, for Siebner the centaur represents the dual nature of human beings and, even in a learning institution such as a university, we cannot deny the conscious and subconscious, civilized and primitive sides to our personalities. His simplified stick-creatures recall prehistoric cave paintings, and Siebner consciously attempts to make his paintings, prints, drawings and sculptures appear like ancient artifacts. Works like this seem direct references to prehistoric cave paintings. They could be compared to the wall paintings in the Hall of Bulls at Lascaux, France, dated to approximately 15,000-13,000 B.C.. (fig. 40) The figures are created in a similar stick-like and archetypical manner.

Around the mid-sixties Siebner created what he called a fertility goddess image. His 1966 painting of his goddess, Bella-Belle (fig. 41) recalls the emphasized breasts and buttocks of the *Venus of Willendorf*, a prehistoric figure Siebner admired. In this work we see two reclining abstract fertility figures which again curiously take on the appearance of phalli. These

goddesses are, according to Skelton, "potently archetypal, and can be regarded as in some ways a retort to the images of sexuality rampant and tumescent upon our hoardings and in the advertisements and centre folds of our glossy magazines."⁴⁰ Skelton himself uses magazine centre-folds in his collages and may be reading a meaning into Siebner's works that is not there. Nevertheless, Siebner is a very sensual personality, and these images are part of his life as well as his art. He enjoys life fully, whether when drinking, smoking, laughing, or creating art. He has a zest for life that is evident in his work and in his personality.

Although never mentioned as one of his artistic sources, and Siebner would hesitate to admit to being influenced by American art, he has obviously been influenced by the work of the American Abstract Expressionists of the forties and fifties, both in his subject matter and painting style. We have already seen his connection with the "Matter" painters of post-war Europe, like Jean Dubuffet, who also created tactile and expressionist works in the same spirit as their American contemporaries. Members of the New York School such as Adolph Gottlieb (1903-74) and Mark Rothko (1903-70), like Siebner, dealt with mythical archetypal images in their art. These artists stated they were "concerned with primitive myths and symbols that continue to have meaning today...only that subject matter is valid which is tragic and timeless. That is why we profess kinship with primitive and archaic art."⁴¹ These artists' kinship with primitive art was partly a reaction to the horrors of the Second World War in particular and Western society in general. Siebner is of this post-war generation, and his interest in oriental philosophy and ancient art runs parallel to earlier developments in New York.


Siebner's painting style also recalls the large-scale gestural works of the New York School. Although he does not always paint large pictures, Siebner feels that if you create works nearly your size you become much more attached to the figure. He maintains that an artist should also draw life-size because "then you don't draw with your wrist but with your extended arm - you draw *yourself*."⁴² Unlike many of the Abstract Expressionists, however, Siebner never abandoned the subject in his art.

The flying man appeared in Siebner's work around 1967, usually in the medium of combined sgraffito and encaustic, or painting using wax. He often placed these works in the sun to melt the rich colours, a method used by the ancient Greeks, and these works have about them an ageless quality.⁴³ An example of this is his work The Sun Burnt Out of 1967. (fig. 42) Tony Emery commented on the figure of the flying man in 1967 and stated,

Apart from its obvious and superficial reference to the terrestrial and extra-terrestrial flight of the space age, it is clear that Siebner's airborne figures are quite literally embarked on a flight of fancy: their flat, floating forms are paradigms for the spirit of man, and the ability of that spirit to travel freely and to communicate with other spirits across the space that intervenes or interposes itself between one entity and another....⁴⁴

Siebner has certainly always guarded his own freedom, and this could again symbolize his escape from Europe to freedom of expression in Victoria. He often said that he felt that in Germany he was always under the watchful eyes of his professors and fellow artists. Clearly the flying man represents the artist himself. The Skeltons often received postcards from Siebner when he was on holiday. They were usually of his hotel and he would mark on it the location of his room and draw a flying man going out of the window and into

the air.⁴⁵

The image of the male and female giant also first emerged in 1967.⁴⁶ They can be seen in the painting Giants I of 1968. (fig. 43) The large arch-shaped legs often stride over a small town or, in this case, dominate one of Siebner's characteristic miniature suns at the horizon. The meaning of these figures, whether male or female, is hard to decipher. Skelton suggest they could be "emanations of human grossness", or destructive figures.⁴⁷ They could also represent fertility images or superhuman creatures. 

Early in his career in Canada Siebner had more success than most Victoria artists in getting commissions for murals, such as the ones for the Crown House Restaurant and the University of Victoria. During the sixties there were still few opportunities for artists to create art for display in public places. In 1966 plans were made across Canada for the celebration of the nation's centenary of Confederation the following year, and artists benefited from these plans. In 1966 the federal department of the Secretary of State sent a representative named Hermann Voaden across Canada to survey the condition of the arts in each province for the purpose of ascertaining how the government could best allocate funds for art activity connected with the centenary celebrations.⁴⁸ The report was to remain secret but somehow Colin Graham managed to get a copy. In his section on B.C., Voaden had commented that:

Sophisticated people in Ottawa and Toronto can have no idea of the complete lack of interest in the arts on the part of government and business leaders in the west. Whereas in Ontario such people are proud and flattered to be associated with arts projects, in the west they have not yet even begun thinking along those lines.⁴⁹

Graham had encountered an example of Voaden's thesis a few years earlier when he had requested more money from the Provincial Secretary in order to run the Gallery. The Secretary echoed the government's view of the arts by saying "You know, as Provincial Secretary I get all kinds of requests for grants from oddball societies: African violet fanciers, canary fanciers, art galleries...."⁵⁰ Not much had changed in the minds of some people since Emily Carr was asked by the city mayor why Victoria should require a public art gallery when it had such amenities as Oak Bay and Beacon Hill Park.⁵¹

It was federal initiative that stimulated the provincial government to start taking the arts seriously. The federal government had made an important first step in supporting the arts nationally by creating the Canada Council in 1957, a public institution which has been Canada's main patron of the arts⁵² and which awarded money to several Limners including Siebner, Ciccimarra, and Wilkinson. It was created partly because of the recommendations published in the Royal Commission Study on National Developments in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, known as the *Massey Report*, published in May, 1951 after over two years of research. The report recommended that Canada launch into public support of the arts.

The fruits of these earlier recommendations and initiatives came to Victoria in 1968 when the British Columbia Provincial Museum (now the Royal British Columbia Museum) was officially opened. It was hoped that the museum would open its doors in 1967, the centenary year, but was not completed in time. There was a large amount of public art planned for the museum, including sculpture by Elza Mayhew and Gordon Smith and murals by Vancouver artist B.C. Binning, Haida artist Bill Reid, and Herbert Siebner. Siebner's set of sgraffito murals in the lobby of the

Newcombe Theatre (fig. 44) are interesting because they depict a landscape of mountains, rivers, and forests, complete with wildlife, a theme not unusual in his smaller watercolours but not common in his large-scale murals. According to a description of the mural in the Museum's files, Siebner took as "his theme the story of evolution of life on earth..." In the left mural the artist "depicts the element of water and earth and early fossil forms of plants and animal life. In the right panel, Siebner portrays the elements of earth and air, and the existence of man from the primitive stages to his present development."⁵³ In this right panel which deals with the beginning of human life on earth Siebner includes two images that have played important roles in his life and art: the yin-yang symbol which recalls his interest in oriental philosophies, and the flying man, an artistic motif which probably represents the artist himself.

Zach's students, including Mayhew and De Castro, meanwhile continued for a time to work in their old studio on the corner of Fort and Government Streets after he left in 1958. They had all reached a maturity in their work and a point in their lives when they could continue to develop their own style using the vocabulary and love of experimentation given to them by their mentor. Mayhew's two children were grown up and going off to university in the early sixties, and she found herself on her own and free to do as she wished. In 1962 she travelled in Mexico for ten days, spending time at Mérida in Yucatán and Palenque in Chiápas. She was greatly influenced by the Mayan monuments, especially the stellae and the altars, the forms of which are reflected in many of her sculptures of the sixties. During her visit, however, Mayhew was repelled by the Mayan images of blood sacrifice and obsession with death. Although she admits to being indebted to Mayan sculpture she said that "my stuff isn't death oriented."⁵⁴ That same year

Mayhew was honoured with the Sir Otto Beit medal of the Royal Society of British Sculptors and was beginning to be recognized as an important Canadian artist.

Jan Zach, however, was not out of Mayhew's life for good. Her children had both left home by 1962, and she thought she would move into a smaller home now that she was on her own. Thinking it would probably take close to a year to sell her house she put it on the market immediately. To her surprise it sold within a couple of days, leaving her suddenly "on the loose".⁵⁵ As if by fate, Zach called her from Oregon around this time and asked her whether she could come to the University of Oregon in September to be his assistant. Since she had nothing tying her to Victoria, she agreed immediately, in the same spontaneous manner she had first agreed to study under him in 1955.⁵⁶ Mayhew spent the next twelve years working in Oregon as well as in Victoria, driving back and forth.

When Mayhew arrived at the University of Oregon she must not have been surprised to find that the enthusiastic Zach had enrolled her as a master's student in sculpture,⁵⁷ since she knew his nature. I think Zach's entire contribution to Mayhew's artistic developments is symbolized by this one act. He had confidence in her abilities and forced her to become involved in art activities she may not have otherwise taken part in. She taught sculpture there for one year and shared a hut with five other graduate students.⁵⁸ Mayhew received her M.F.A. in 1964 and speaks fondly of this period when she suddenly found herself back in school.⁵⁹ She had always loved to learn, and this time gave her a great deal of confidence. Her reputation was growing rapidly. The year she received her degree, Mayhew, together with Toronto painter Harold Town, represented Canada at the

Venice Biennale and exhibited thirteen sculptures. During this decade she also received several commissions including works for Expo '67 in Montreal, The University of Victoria, the province of B.C., and the Bank of Canada.⁶⁰

Mayhew works in several formats, but three of her favourite sculptural shapes were developed during this decade: the huge totem, the medium-sized altar, and the small devotional object, or maquette. Examples of these forms are her Coast Spirit of 1967, Black Priestess of 1961, and Ritual of 1962. She had experimented with the monumental totem shape even before she travelled to Mexico and acknowledges that she was influenced by B.C.'s huge trees and vast forests and native Indian art.⁶¹ Nevertheless, her totem sculptures show more of an influence of Mexican art than of native Westcoast art. They are intricately detailed and appear massive and block-like as seen in her Coast Spirit, commissioned for Expo '67 and later acquired by the University of Victoria. (fig. 45) There is a concern with incised decoration that refers to ancient hieroglyphics. In fact, there is very little evidence in Mayhew's sculpture that she has been directly influenced by the totem poles of B.C.'s native Indians. Her work tends to be angular and abstract, not rounded and figurative. She rarely adds colour to her sculptures except for a green patina or gold polish. Her totemic sculptures are definitely much more akin to the stellae of Pre-Columbian Meso-America, such as the Mayan stellae A and B from Copán. (fig. 46) These stellae are similar in height to Mayhew's totems and contain inscribed hieroglyphs, a popular theme with the artist. The year 1962 was not the first time she came into contact with Mayan art. She had already seen it in books, and therefore the art and architecture did not come as a shock to her when she travelled to Mexico to see it in that year.⁶²

One might have thought Mayhew would have been more influenced by Northwest Coast art, which was enjoying a renaissance in the sixties. The *Massey Report* of 1951 had also recommended increased support for native art in Canada and the sixties saw the revival of customs such as potlatches and totem carving.⁶³ Artists like Bill Reid and carvers like Mungo Martin and the Hunts were reviving the ancient art forms. Martin and the Hunts worked in the tradition of carving enormous memorial totem poles, and in general the awareness and popularity of native art was increasing, especially among white collectors. It must be remembered, however, that Mayhew spent a great deal of her time from 1962 to 1974 with Zach and his students in Oregon. There she continued to be influenced by his abstract and simplified sculpture. Also one must realize that Northwest coast art is rooted in a long tradition and is usually figural, stylized, and colourful. Elza Mayhew and her contemporaries, the Point Group and the Limners, always saw themselves as representing the outposts of modernism in Victoria, even though none of them will admit this directly. It is obvious that these artists are international and western rather than regional and indigenous in their outlook: this is clearly demonstrated in their art, their actions, and their words. Other local artists who were not members of these artists' groups, such as Jack Shadbolt and Margaret Peterson, were much more directly influenced in their work by native art, as had Carr herself been.

Mayhew's altar forms can be compared to those ritual altars of the Maya known as Chac Mools. Even though she made Black Priestess (fig. 47) before her visit to Mexico, Mayhew herself admits to having been aware of Mayan art, and it seems plausible that this common form influenced her altar sculptures. The title seems to bear out this assumption. Mayhew visualized this form as relating to a priestess and some form of ritual. This

work by its title suggests a female figure, and indeed this altar-like form does resemble a person lying on her back, her head stretched up and her arms and legs curved. This seems to validate the theory that it is influenced by the Mayan ritual altar which is usually in the shape of a reclining human figure. A Mayan Chac Mool located in front of the Temple of Quetzalcoátl in Tula shows a similar reclining figure. (fig. 48)

Also during the sixties Mayhew began to use an oval opening in her work to designate a female subject. Although this is not visible in Black Priestess it is evident in her Kore of 1962. (fig. 49) This motif represents female genitalia and recurs often in her work of the sixties and seventies. Mayhew tends to give her works titles only once they are completed. Her titles relate to her studies at university. She frequently gives her sculptures names from Greek and Roman mythology because they have great meaning for her since she was a classics student both in high school and university. Mayhew feels that "after you study Latin you become ordered," and once you have studied Greek you realize it is one of the most beautiful languages.⁶⁴ All her works have a sense of calm order in them. They also relate to her personality. Mayhew remarks that "there is an element of self-searching in it, it's self-expression too. I know I've always had more of a meditative nature, even as a child - searching, looking, wondering."⁶⁵ Mayhew is extremely attached to her sculptures. As we left her studio after our interview she looked at them fondly and commented that they were her "guardians," and would watch over the studio until she came back.⁶⁶

Skelton feels that Mayhew's sculpture Kore refers to the myth of Persephone, stolen from the goddess of agriculture Demeter by Hades, the king of the Underworld, and rescued by Hermes.⁶⁷ This is, perhaps,

however, a case of over interpretation. Clearly Mayhew was simply creating her impression of a *kore*, a standing female figure of the Archaic period in Greece. One might compare Mayhew's interpretation of this image with an original *kore* such as the Kore of Auxerre of approximately 650-625 B.C. (fig. 50) Mayhew's sculpture, although extremely abstracted, does capture the feeling of an original *kore* in its massive block-like forms of the head, shoulders, and torso. These are both images of heroic ideal women. One could suggest that Mayhew's figure is a universal image of womanhood.

Throughout her career Mayhew has created miniature-sized sculptures similar in form to her large-scale work. She often gives them to friends, sends them with a group show when sending the larger sculptures is either too difficult or expensive, or sells them as a less expensive option for collectors of her work.⁶⁸ Sometimes these small maquettes are created as studies for larger sculptures. Examples of her smaller works can be seen in a photograph taken of Mayhew at the 1972 Limner exhibit at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. (fig. 5) They resemble small extra-terrestrial creatures or some other form of life. An example of one of these is the 7.5 inch high bronze Ritual of 1962. (fig. 51) Circular forms and appendages make this resemble a human figure, perhaps again a woman. Mayhew herself felt that her work was concerned with human beings. In an unpublished essay by Kenneth Coutts-Smith, the artist is quoted as saying:

I have never made anything not closely connected with the human being and his environment. Man and his longing, his desires, his dwellings, the thresholds he passes over and his places of worship concern me; people, buildings, entrances through which people go in, come out; and the apprehension, the pleasure or the peace that accompanies these acts....Passages may suggest revelations of the unknown, and black holes refer possibly to far recesses of the mind.⁶⁹

The titles of many of Mayhew's works denote a religious or ritualistic meaning, such as Ritual, Dignitary, Place of the Oracle, Holy Man, and Guardian. When asked whether her sculptures were objects of worship Mayhew replied "I think all good art has religious associations of some sort...Good art is usually serious, I hate to say that - you don't find funny art that's great. They've got to have something in them after all or they're nothing at all."⁷⁰

Mayhew and Siebner share many themes with the New York School of the forties and fifties whose ideas reached Victoria a decade or so later. One of these is their concern with the high seriousness of art. Gottlieb and Rothko began painting myth-inspired paintings in the early forties, and the ideas they voiced in a letter to The New York Times in 1943 of what constitutes a good painting are similar to the ideas of Mayhew and Siebner. They said:

To us, art is an adventure into an unknown world...of the imagination [which] is fancy-free and violently opposed to common sense....It is a widely accepted notion among painters that it does not matter what one paints as long as it is well painted. This is the essence of academism. There is no such thing as good painting about nothing. We assert that the subject is crucial.⁷¹

Back in 1963, Mayhew, influenced by her stay in Japan years before, decided to have rubbings made of her totems and to learn this technique. She went to Graham at the Gallery and asked him to send her any Japanese person visiting Victoria who was experienced in making rubbings. Within two months Isamu Akino arrived on Mayhew's doorstep. He was an expert rubbing craftsman who had been employed in Japan to make impressions of some of the old wooden Japanese carvings that were

beginning to deteriorate.⁷² He made rubbings of Mayhew's sculpture, including Spirit of 1963-64, (fig. 52) and taught her the technique. These two-dimensional images of her sculpture came as a revelation to Mayhew. She said:

It was an extraordinary sensation when I first realised that I was seeing the sculpture on all sides at once. I was gratified to notice the integration, to see how my carvings and bronzes opened up and, at the same time, held together beautifully. I could now compare parts normally hidden from each other, normally excluded from each other. Generally you cannot see the back when you are working on the front.⁷³

Mayhew's close associate Robert De Castro continued in the sixties to explore a limited vocabulary in his sculpture to create some of his most powerful works. During the sixties his pea-pod shape began to develop into an elongated bent shape. As in an Untitled sculpture of 1963 (fig. 53) these forms were still carved in a cluster, held together by a tension created by the diagonals of the bent forms. That De Castro viewed these elements as referring to a cluster of trees seems obvious from the titles he gave similar works produced a decade later, such as Forest Ghosts of 1976. (fig. 54) Skelton argues persuasively that these forms can also be viewed as phallic symbols.⁷⁴ This seems especially likely when they appear on their own in small free-standing sculptures of the seventies such as his Untitled piece of 1976. (fig. 55) These works are beautiful and make the viewer want to touch them. If you do, however, you will probably want to wash your hands afterwards because De Castro favoured polishing his works with dark-coloured shoe polish.⁷⁵

De Castro was a meticulous worker and was never really satisfied with his work. Robin and Sylvia Skelton recounted that people who

owned De Castro's works learned not to let them out of their sight. De Castro had a habit of asking someone who owned one of his sculptures whether he could take it home to polish it for them. More than likely the piece would be returned with De Castro having found something he did not like about it and having altered it without the collector's permission.⁷⁶ He was a perfectionist and constantly wanted to push a piece as far as it could go until he was satisfied with it.

Meanwhile, in 1958, the Ciccimarras had moved to a cabin on Teanook Lake, a small lake not far from Victoria.⁷⁷ Here Ciccimarra produced most of his best works during the sixties, continuing in the two separate traditions of realistic paintings of flowers and increasingly simplified images of human beings. Ciccimarra also continued to work as a fishing guide. In a 1965 article on the Cowichan River he wrote for The Creel, a magazine published by the Fly Fishers' Club of Oregon, we sense it is the ritualistic and age-old aspect Ciccimarra admired about fishing, and in many ways this aesthetic also is seen in his art. He said,

There is a mystery about the river, as keenly felt today as it must have been felt many centuries ago, in a different element. The dividing line is the surface of the water, and there is something delightfully unpredictable in our very slight ability to penetrate the mystery.⁷⁸

Ciccimarra's manner of making art was in many ways similar to fishing: he spent a great deal of time thinking about what he was going to create but completed the work quickly and intuitively, analogous to the long patient waiting time in fishing followed by a quick reeling-in of the catch. Siebner recalls that Ciccimarra would sit down and draw or paint at an easel and the work had to be perfect with the first try or else he would destroy it.⁷⁹

During the sixties Ciccimarra began a process of simplifying his figures until they became transparent and faceless. In creating this effect he came to make rice-paper collages, a medium he continued to explore until his hospitalization in 1971 and eventual suicide in Greece in 1973. Four works of this decade that illustrate this growing simplification of the figure are his 1961 painting Regretted Evening, his 1964 mixed-media work Portrait Heads, his 1966 painting Four Attitudes of Conciliation, and finally his 1968 collage The Descent.

Regretted Evening (fig. 56) was painted in Ciccimarra's favourite medium of the fifties and early sixties: gouache paint covered in varnish. At the time he painted this picture Ciccimarra was suffering from a growing dependency upon alcohol and increasing psychological problems. The mood of works such as Regretted Evening is bleak and a death-like figure, like the levitating masked person in this painting, appears frequently. The fact that the hands of this figure are covering his genitals suggests sexual shame or impotence, as does the title of the work. According to Nowosad, Ciccimarra was not an intensely sexual person, and his drinking may indeed have caused him to have sexual problems such as the ones hinted at in this work.⁸⁰ Vibrant colour, such as seen in the bright red cocks-comb mask worn by the levitating figure, was eventually abandoned. The strange mask serves to hide the figure's features and creates an eerie mood. The mask symbolizes a gaiety and frivolity missing from the picture and seems incongruous with the rest of the scene.

In 1964 Ciccimarra began to paint gridded window-like multiple images such as the views of his wife seen in Portrait Heads, (fig. 57) a gouache, conté, and varnish painting. He had done away with any sense of a

background and completely flattened the images of these heads. He continued flattening the forms in his 1966 gouache and varnish painting Four Attitudes of Conciliation. (fig. 58) This was the year he divorced his second wife and married his third and last wife Vicky Husband. Although these were troubled years filled with drink and bouts of depression and suicidal thoughts, Ciccimarra was slowly gaining recognition as an important artist. In 1965 the Canada Council awarded him a \$4000 Senior Fellowship, and his works were selling steadily.⁸¹ Nevertheless a death figure recurs in Four Attitudes of Conciliation. Although not overly political, Ciccimarra here seems to describe the trials of a prisoner who is imprisoned, pleads for his life, and finally is killed.⁸² This figure could also be the artist himself, trapped within his own depression and addiction. Even more simplified than Portrait Heads, this work leaves out all traces of drawing or washes of colour. Although these silhouettes are still painted, the next logical step in this reductive technique is to cut the figures out of paper and glue them on to a ground.

He began making collages around 1968, usually cutting figures out of transparent rice paper and gluing them to a thick slab of deeply grained and varnished wood, as in his 1968 collage The Descent. (fig. 59) Ciccimarra's colleague Don Harvey, a member of the newly formed department of Visual Arts at the University of Victoria, expressed his criticism of the way Ciccimarra's art was developing. Harvey commented,

For Ricky to move away from the figure was a tremendous step, not necessarily a wise one. His figures did become more anonymous; the minute he took his pencil away, it became still more anonymous. To cut it out, to glue it, to make it more transparent, to place it against the heavy grain of wood, well, I thought the figure was losing out. To cut something out of paper is to deny this illusion of three-dimensionality. It is impossible to destroy. We argued about it. It becomes more soul

or spirit than figure.

When you deal with the human form you deal with an old, magical connotation - that when you draw someone, you own them; you have their spirit. In the end, because of Ricky's own depletion, he may have felt more and more frightened of dealing with the figure.⁸³

It is evident that Ciccimarra's troubled life affected the mood of his art. More than anything, it seems, Ciccimarra was afraid of growing old and becoming sick. For many years the Skeltons held weekly parties at their home for writers and artists to meet each other after the Thursday poetry readings at the University of Victoria. These were friendly get-togethers usually attended by the future Limners and other members of Victoria's artistic and intellectual community. Ciccimarra was always invited and continually promised he would attend. His fear of aging is evident in an untitled black and white drawing he sent the Skeltons shortly after having received his first invitation to attend these affairs. (fig. 60) The drawing is organized like a cartoon strip and depicts the artist coming to the Thursday parties year after year, each year growing older and more bent, until at the end only his arm is seen reaching desperately for the door. Ironically he never did attend these events.⁸⁴

Although his figures did become more anonymous with time, Ciccimarra always identified strongly with the images in his collages. He completed several works in his *Descent* series and one day in 1969 his wife Vicky came home to find Ciccimarra weeping and holding one of the paper figures and crying "I've killed that man. I've killed that man."⁸⁵

A close friend of the artist, Herbert Siebner recalls that he and Ciccimarra would often discuss art while walking in the woods around the cabin at Teanook Lake. During the mid-sixties Ciccimarra admired the work

of the German artist George Grosz (1893-1959) and the French artist Balthus (b. 1908).⁸⁶ Grosz, like Ciccimarra, was primarily a draughtsman. Unlike most of the Austrian's works, however, Grosz employed biting political commentary in his drawings, photomontages, and paintings. Balthus (Balthazar Klossowski de Rola) is closer to Ciccimarra in his pictures of alienation and loneliness. Edward Lucie-Smith comments that Balthus "broods on private obsessions; he often uses the symbolism of figures in a room which claustrophobically contains and shuts them in."⁸⁷ This is seen in his 1954 painting The Bedroom. (fig. 61) Although Balthus paints in a more naturalistic and detailed manner and often deals with erotic themes in his work, the themes he explores and moods he creates are similar to those that concerned Ciccimarra.

Back in 1966 Ciccimarra had begun to exhibit in what is considered Victoria's first private gallery, Bente Rehm's Pandora's Box which opened in its Wharf Street location in May, 1966.⁸⁸ Before Rehm occupied the Wharf St. gallery there was a man running some sort of art shop/gallery in it, but virtually nothing is known about him and he obviously did not make any impression.⁸⁹ Rehm's gallery was originally located on Pandora Street⁹⁰ (hence the name) but moved to Wharf Street because of a fire.⁹¹ She exhibited crafts as well as the fine arts and to this day is more involved in crafts, organizes the annual Christmas craft fair at the Crystal Garden, and runs a craft gallery in Cordova Bay. A gallery devoted solely to the fine arts was opened two years later by Nita Forrest.

During the sixties, Forrest says, she was always encouraged to paint by her friends Bates, Ciccimarra, and Siebner but was not disciplined enough to make art on a regular basis. She admits, "I guess part of it is a little

bit of insecurity - not really knowing the technique and not really enjoying it - it's like cooking from scratch."⁹² In spite of her modesty Forrest created some remarkable works during this decade, mostly on the theme of women and children. Her art is compassionate, symbolic, and deals with themes of creation, evolution, and motherhood. When asked whether she had been influenced by other women artists who dealt with these themes, such as American Impressionist Mary Cassatt, Forrest replied "I don't think so - I was not conscious of it at the time - my three daughters were just ready models."⁹³ Her daughters and their children were her models during this time, and they are the pregnant women, mothers, and children in her drawings and paintings. Forrest's works seldom depict the traditional family of father, mother, and children. This reflects her own life experience of raising her daughters mostly on her own. Forrest's paintings have a haunting quality about them. The viewer also tends to grow attached to them in a strange way. Myfanwy Pavelic told me that she had once stored one of Forrest's mother and child paintings for the artist. When it came time to return it she hated to give it back, so attached had she become to this particular work.⁹⁴

Forrest's paintings of the sixties were usually large oil paintings with abstracted figures set against a broad slash of horizon. An example is the painting Cycle of approximately 1968 (fig. 62) which was featured on the cover of the 1985 A.G.G.V. exhibition catalogue British Columbia Women Artists 1885-1985. A mother and child and an inset of a pregnant woman's torso are set against a painterly and vividly coloured stylized landscape. Landscape is not common in her *oeuvre*, because she feels she is not good at painting landscapes. She remarks, "Instead of going at it just like a normal painting I try to do what's there, you know, just like a total amateur. It makes me cross

beginning to deteriorate.⁷² He made rubbings of Mayhew's sculpture, including Spirit of 1963-64, (fig. 52) and taught her the technique. These two-dimensional images of her sculpture came as a revelation to Mayhew. She said:

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De Castro was a meticulous worker and was never really satisfied with his work. Robin and Sylvia Skelton recounted that people who

because there's some marvellous landscape here."⁹⁵ Her misgivings about her ability to paint a landscape are not founded, as can be seen in Cycle. It is an assured, balanced, and successful work. A painting on a similar theme is The Island of 1967, (fig. 63) which depicts a large exaggerated female form with an island in the distance. Forrest often arranges her canvas into large blocks of colour, and this is evident here.

Another example of her simplified figures set against a broadly painted background is her work White Pants, painted sometime during the sixties. (fig. 64) This painting was once owned by Bates and depicts one of Forrest's daughters.⁹⁶ The warm colours suggest a hot summer day, and the painterly dripped quality of the figure's garments indicate the humidity in the air. Forrest has obviously been influenced a great deal in her work by Ciccimarra. Her figures are simplified and featureless, like his. Forrest's work, however, is much less linear and more painterly and loose: it does not seem as controlled and calculated as the work by Ciccimarra. Her work deals with concerns of women, and there are few signs of Ciccimarra's depressing subject matter. Eileen Learoyd, Victoria journalist and friend of the artist, gives a good description of Forrest's art.

Her work is as feline, sophisticated and spontaneous as the artist herself. Languid ladies slip off her brush. They breathe femininity, and the dreamy touch of the artist never fails to add movement, as if the model were caught doing her hair, or adjusting her robe. She knows how far to deviate from the figure in the process of abstraction, without sacrificing anatomical truth.⁹⁷

In 1968 Forrest opened her Print Gallery next to Ivy's Book Shop on Wilmot Place in Oak Bay. She had saved \$500 while working for Jack Wilkinson in his art and dance supply shop on Oak Bay Avenue and decided

to open her own business. His business did not go well because he imported the most expensive brushes and paints from England and carried the finest ballet slippers in all sizes, including size 12! Wilkinson warned Forrest not to start a gallery, but she thought herself more sensible than Wilkinson and was determined to give it a try. At that time in Victoria prints did not sell well because, Forrest says, Victorians did not know the difference between original prints and mere reproductions.⁹⁸ She felt, however, that once people grew accustomed to prints they would sell because they were much less expensive than paintings. In 1970, when Bente Rehm closed her gallery on Wharf Street, Forrest relocated her Print Gallery into it. The rent was higher in the new site, and towards the end it all became "too nerve-wracking," she says.⁹⁹ She closed her gallery in 1972 after having held over fifty exhibits at the two locations.¹⁰⁰ Says Learoyd, she was "torn between survival and maintaining her high ideals and standards of what was art and what was merely saleable."¹⁰¹

An episode involving De Castro exemplifies the "nerve-wracking" experiences Forrest mentioned. He was to have a showing of his sculptures at Forrest's gallery on Wharf Street. For weeks he worked in a little studio behind the gallery, hanging up a sign that read "working" when he did not want to be disturbed, and securing it with two padlocks when he was not there. The night before the opening De Castro called Forrest and told her he had destroyed all his works and had nothing to exhibit. Forrest said, "I was livid" because everything was prepared and all the invitations had been sent. She called up Siebner "who always had masses of stuff" and asked him to fill the space where De Castro's work would have been. In a characteristic act Siebner brought a large tree, roots and all, and placed it in De Castro's corner.¹⁰² In many ways this was appropriate considering that De Castro's

own sculptures recall natural forms. Forrest thinks De Castro was not satisfied with the work he was doing. She says that he had not actually destroyed them, but he was a perfectionist and was never really satisfied with his sculptures. For two years Forrest did not see De Castro, who she says was ashamed and hiding from her.¹⁰³ Forrest, however, got over her anger and when the Limners formed in 1971 they again became great friends.

As an artist Forrest was able to keep a prestigious gallery because she had discriminating taste in what she would exhibit. She recalls she "got pestered by a lot of amateur painters to show their work, and I thought well I'm not going to show anybody's work that's worse than I am! People respected my point of view and knew I wouldn't show anyone unless they were pretty good."¹⁰⁴ She exhibited works by Shadbolt, Bates, Toni Onley, Jack Wilkinson, Pavelic, Joe Plaskett, Michael Morris, Pat Martin Bates, Jack Kidder, and Don Harvey, among others. She also took risks and during summer months showed works by unknowns, such as UVIC students, or brought in works by well-known painters she knew would not sell in Victoria.¹⁰⁵ Opening nights at her gallery were exciting parties. Siebner especially revelled in these affairs, often appearing wearing one of his crazy hats or masks from his collection. One time he brought his pet chicken to an opening and it flew up to the ceiling and scattered feathers everywhere.¹⁰⁶ Learoyd remembers these opening nights as "scintillating and packed with smoke and local wine and a circle of art lovers who hated to go home. Strangers began to come who heard the evenings were fun, and stayed to become a whole new serious art audience. For a long time hers was the only private gallery in town; it was Mecca."¹⁰⁷

During this period the Visual Arts department at the University

was producing talented young artists, and during the late sixties and early seventies they were able to exhibit in Forrest's gallery. Don Harvey and John Dobereiner founded the department which by 1986 had grown to nine instructors. Two UVIC students who have gone on to impressive careers as artists are Robert Youds, now in Toronto, and Stephen Horne, now teaching at the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design.¹⁰⁸ The department's staff and students soon became a vital part of Victoria's art scene. Canadian- and European-trained artist Pat Martin Bates became an instructor in what was to become the Visual Arts department at UVIC in 1965 and is current president of the Limners. In 1969 she was the driving force behind the creation of the Signal Hill Creative Arts Centre, located near the naval base in Esquimalt. The centre was started by the members of the Creative Centres Organization, a group of recognized local artists from various disciplines. These people were dedicated to finding heritage buildings and turning them into multi-disciplinary arts centres.¹⁰⁹ When the centre was later forced to move in 1980, it relocated in an old industrial laundry on North Park Street and changed its name aptly to Xchanges Gallery and Studio Society.¹¹⁰

Forrest's friend Myfanwy Pavelic, meanwhile, had not been involved with the Point Group because she lived in New York from 1958 to 1969 for her daughter's schooling and only returned to Victoria during the summers. She continued painting in New York, and, although she had not cared for the modern painting she had seen being produced at the Art Students' League, she did occasionally experiment with abstraction, as in her painting New York Studio of 1961 (fig. 65). Her abstract works are not Pavelic's most successful works; they tend to be contrived. Primarily a figure painter, she went through a period in New York when she hated the connotations of being a "portrait painter".¹¹¹ These experiments in

non-objective painting were perhaps a rebellion against the label she felt had been placed on her. She cannot understand why portraits are sneered at today but agrees it may be their commercial aspect.¹¹²

Today she attempts to erase this commercial aspect by only accepting one or two commissions a year, and she refuses to paint people she does not want to. Before she begins she warns the sitter that she has no idea how the painting will turn out and that she will refuse to sell it if either party is not completely satisfied with it. This way Pavelic ensures her artistic freedom by not being obligated to anyone.¹¹³

Her works of the sixties deal with relationships, inner emotions, and inner turmoil. A charcoal drawing of 1969 entitled Despair (fig. 66) seems to be a self-portrait and suggests perhaps the troubled health of the painter herself. Charcoal has always been among Pavelic's favourite media. Like Ciccimarra, Pavelic is primarily a draughtsman. She says "It's my most natural form of expression - drawing, there's no doubt about it....If I had to give up either pencil or paints I would give up paints. I don't know half enough about painting."¹¹⁴ Pavelic's assured drawing and mastery at portraying a realistic anatomy are evident in this work.

Although Pavelic was not involved with the art scene in Victoria during the sixties, she did associate with the artists and attend gallery exhibits during her summers there and was aware of the works local artists were producing. She supported them by buying their work and has amassed a fine collection of local contemporary art over the years. One artist she particularly admired was Ciccimarra. She recalls she "found his work moving, and so close to something that I would like to put into my work but I

time although she admits "I never felt I was qualified to write art reviews - there are so many different styles to be immersed in and I didn't feel I knew enough."¹²⁰ During the fifties Victoria benefited from Tony Emery's enlightened criticism. The sixties saw Colin Graham, Robin Skelton, Richard Ciccimarra, and Arthur Corry writing art reviews, and their knowledge educated a growing local art audience. The Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, in the summer of 1965, exhibited works by twelve Victoria artists. The broad range of styles shown in this exhibit made it "clear that all twelve artists were working well within the framework of mid-twentieth century artistic concerns."¹²¹ The gap between international art and local art was no longer wide.

NOTES

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- 3 Julia Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Nita Forrest," 10 December 1988.
- 4 Maxwell Bates in Retrospect, 20.
- 5 Whittaker interview with Forrest.
- 6 Maxwell Bates, Far Away Flags (Victoria 1964), 36.
- 7 Skelton, The Memoirs of a Literary Blockhead (Toronto 1988), 206.
- 8 Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Robin and Sylvia Skelton," 12 December 1988.
- 9 Skelton, Memoirs..., 206.
- 10 Ibid., 201.
- 11 Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Colin Graham," 11 November 1988.
- 12 Whittaker interview with the Skeltons.
- 13 Skelton, Memoirs..., 207.
- 14 Skelton, House of Dreams (Erin, Ont. 1983), intro.
- 15 Ibid., 4.
- 16 Nicholas Tuele and Liane Davison, Art in Victoria: 1960-1986 (Victoria 1986), n.p.
- 17 Whittaker interview with the Skeltons.

- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Skelton, "Karl Spreitz," Malahat Review XXXVII (January 1976), 61.
- 20 Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Herbert Siebner," 6 December 1988.
- 21 Skelton, "Spreitz...," 61.
- 22 Maxwell Bates in Retrospect : 1921-1971, 23.
- 23 Skelton, "Spreitz...," 61.
- 24 Frank Nowosad, Ciccimarra: A Biography (Ann Arbor 1988), 189.
- 25 Skelton, Memoirs..., 208-209.
- 26 Siebner called it the Don't Movie but the Skeltons, whose phrasing I am more inclined to trust, called it the No Film.
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- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Tom Gore, "Siebner and Spreitz," Arts West (II, No. 4 1977), 7.
- 30 Whittaker interview with Siebner.
- 31 Skelton, Memoirs..., 208.
- 32 Whittaker interview with Siebner.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Tuele and Davison, Art in Victoria: 1960-1986, n.p.
- 35 Herbert Siebner, Color, Line & Form (Sidney 1970), n.p.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Skelton, "Herbert Siebner: The Man and the Vision," Malahat Review XVII (January 1971), 61.

- 38 Siebner, Color, Line & Form, n.p.
- 39 Skelton, "Siebner...," 61.
- 40 Ibid., 63.
- 41 Gottlieb and Rothko, "Letter to the Editor," The New York Times, June 13, 1943, Sec. 2, p. 9, quoted in Irving Sandler, The Triumph of American Painting: A History of Abstract Expressionism (New York 1970), 62. For more information see Sandler, Chapter 4, "The Myth Makers,"
- 42 Whittaker interview with Siebner.
- 43 Skelton, "Siebner...," 73.
- 44 Siebner, Color, Line & Form, 15.
- 45 Whittaker interview with the Skeltons.
- 46 Skelton, "Siebner...," 73.
- 47 Ibid., 74.
- 48 Colin Graham, "Moss Street Years, or, Three Decades of Controversial Hangings," (unpublished memoirs) 1981, 158.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Ibid., 159.
- 51 Whittaker interview with Graham.
- 52 Audrey Forster, Lecture, "A History of the Arts in Canada During the Last Fifty Years," University of Victoria, 30 January 1989.
- 53 Royal British Columbia Museum, "Art Works and Applied Design," one-page description of various art commissions in and around the museum.
- 54 Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Elza Mayhew," 9 December 1988.
- 55 Ibid.

- 56 Ibid.
- 57 Skelton, "Elza Mayhew: A Language for Humanity," Malahat Review XVIII (April 1971), 64.
- 58 Whittaker interview with Mayhew.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Skelton, "Mayhew...," 64.
- 61 Whittaker interview with Mayhew.
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 For more information on the revival of native art in the sixties see Karen Duffek, "The Revival of Northwest Coast Indian Art," in The Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver: Art and Artists 1931-1983 (Vancouver 1983), 312-317.
- 64 Whittaker interview with Mayhew.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 Skelton, "Mayhew...," 83.
- 68 Mayhew's large bronze totems range in value from \$20,000 to \$50,000.
- 69 Kenneth Coutts-Smith, "Rites of Passage: the Sculptures of Elza Mayhew," n.d. (unpublished essay found in A.G.G.V. library file on Mayhew.), 12.
- 70 Whittaker interview with Mayhew.
- 71 Gottlieb and Rothko, "Letter to the Editor."
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- 73 Coutts-Smith, "Rites of Passage...," 19.

- 74 Skelton, "Robert de Castro," Malahat Review XXXX (October 1976), 61.
- 75 Whittaker interview with Forrest.
- 76 Whittaker interview with the Skeltons.
- 77 Nowosad, Ciccimarra..., 109.
- 78 Richard Ciccimarra, "The Cowichan," The Creel, July 1965, Vol. 5, No. 1, 3-10, quoted in Nowosad, 111-112.
- 79 Whittaker interview with Siebner.
- 80 Nowosad, Ciccimarra..., 123-125.
- 81 Ibid., 137.
- 82 Ibid., 155-156.
- 83 Ibid., 157.
- 84 Whittaker interview with the Skeltons.
- 85 Nowosad, Ciccimarra..., 161.
- 86 Herbert Siebner's comments during the question and answer period after Robin Skeltons' lecture on Richard Ciccimarra, A.G.G.V., 20 November 1988.
- 87 Edward Lucie-Smith, Movements in Art Since 1945 (London 1984), 67.
- 88 Nowosad, Ciccimarra..., 156. The more conservative Leafhill Galleries was operating at this time but they sold mostly reproductions. (Whittaker interview with the Skeltons.)
- 89 Whittaker interview with Forrest.
- 90 In conversation with Pat Martin Bates. The original Pandora's Box was located in a small bank on Pandora Street next to a garage where Rehm worked. She was encouraged by Siebner to start a gallery there, probably to fill the void created when Don Adams closed his furniture store and left Victoria several years before.
- 91 Nowosad, Ciccimarra..., 156.

- 92 Whittaker interview with Forrest.
- 93 Ibid.
- 94 Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Myfanwy Pavelic," 7 December 1988.
- 95 Whittaker interview with Forrest.
- 96 Ibid.
- 97 Eileen Learoyd, "Smoke and local wine," Monday Magazine (Dec. 4-10, 1981), 31.
- 98 Whittaker interview with Forrest.
- 99 Ibid.
- 100 Ibid.
- 101 Learoyd, "Smoke and local wine," 31.
- 102 Whittaker interview with Forrest.
- 103 Ibid.
- 104 Ibid.
- 105 Learoyd, "Smoke...," 31.
- 106 Skelton, Memoirs..., 207.
- 107 Learoyd, "Smoke...," 31.
- 108 Tuele and Davison, Art in Victoria: 1960-1986, n.p.
- 109 In conversation with Pat Martin Bates, 20 April, 1989. Signal Hill Creative Arts Centre occupied the building that had formerly housed the Maritime Museum. The Arts Centre received financial support from the Community Arts Council of Greater Victoria which had been formed a few years earlier.

- 110 Elizabeth Mayne, "Letter to the Editor," Times-Colonist, 7 January 1989 (re 20th anniversary of Xchanges Gallery and Studio Society.)
- 111 Roberta J. Pazdro, "Interview with Myfanwy Pavelic," 1981. P.A.B.C. Tape 3832:1-2.
- 112 Ibid.
- 113 Whittaker interview with Pavelic.
- 114 Pazdro interview with Pavelic.
- 115 Whittaker interview with Pavelic.
- 116 Ibid.
- 117 Ibid.
- 118 Ibid.
- 119 Whittaker interview with Forrest.
- 120 Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Audrey Johnson," 5 December 1988.
- 121 Tuele and Davison, Art in Victoria: 1960-1986, n.p.

1970-1979: THE LIMNERS

Several members of the original Point Group of the late fifties banded together once again in 1971 to form the Limners, a society of artists that, eighteen years and eight group exhibitions later, is still functioning. Although some original members have died and new members have been added during the intervening years, and the group's original credo has shifted to accommodate these new artists, there remains nevertheless a sense of friendship and camaraderie among the members of the society.

Siebner and Bates wanted to organize a group of artists who dealt with the human figure in their work, perhaps as a response to the popularity of landscape art. The Skeltons also note that the group was formed in part because Pavelic, who had returned to Victoria in 1969, wanted to become involved in the artistic community.¹ In the summer of 1971, Bates, Siebner, Forrest, Pavelic, and Ciccimarra gathered at Siebner's home, as they often did, and it was at this informal meeting that the idea of forming a group was first discussed. Since arriving in Victoria, Siebner has always kept guestbooks that he and his friends have written and drawn in over the years, either at exhibitions or parties. The day the Limners formed is marked by a page in the guestbook of that year. Signatures of each of the five artists surround a stick figure drawn by Bates, symbolizing their stated interest in the figure. Forrest, in the spirit of co-operative art, added what appears to be eyeglasses or a bra to the figure's torso, representing the humorous element of the group. Pavelic, also caught up in the excitement, pens the phrase "Here's to it!", announcing the birth of the Limners.

This page also contains the original proposed name of the group which was "Image West '71". They discovered, however, that there was already an artists' group in Vancouver with a similar name and so they changed it to the Limners. This new name was Bates's suggestion, and, although he never gave a reason for his choice,² it is clear that he was thinking back to his interest in naive art, developed during his years in England.

★ The word "limner" originates from the medieval manuscript "illuminer". Popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially in Britain and America, the limner was a primitive portrait painter who travelled around the country in search of customers. Whenever portrait sales dropped, these resourceful artists would earn their living by turning their brush to other things like decorative store signs. Some limners carried with them stock canvases with everything already painted in except the patron's features. Interest in limning, or "drawing," dropped during the mid-nineteenth century because of the growing popularity and availability of photographic images. The limners were soon put out of business and replaced by modern technology.³

Although Bates did not elaborate upon his reasons for choosing this name, it connotes an interest in portraiture and of painting the human figure. It recalls Bates's earlier interest in naive and unskilled art as seen in his 1934 article "Naive Painting". It represents an art form that flourished before modern innovations replaced it and may suggest Bates's misgivings about advanced technology overpowering the arts. These fears were first voiced by Bates in a 1948 poem entitled "Battle of Poets and Mechanics," written in Calgary at the beginning of the atomic age:

A lot of ladies in spectacles,
 Rode by on bicycles
 Pictures of tricycles
 Bisected by icicles
 Saint Olaf! they cried, and they did and they died.
 Fifty thousand Icons were brought up from the rear
 In scarlet and yellow.
 Why don't horsemen appear?
 Fifty thousand Icons were destroyed.
 Fifty thousand machine guns and nuclear warheads appeared.⁴

Another reason for calling the group the Limners may have been that by choosing a name from a little-known and dead art form the artists were not allying themselves with any specific artistic, social, or political ethos. They were free to express themselves without being stuck with any particular label. We must not read too much into the meaning of this word, however, since it was not even the group's first choice for a name.

During this first Limner meeting in 1971, it was decided that Robin Skelton should be asked to join to become the group's spokesman and organize its meetings.⁵ He was a natural choice because he had organized arts groups before in England; he recalls that in the fifties he had written the constitution for the Manchester Institute of Contemporary Art.⁶ He was editor of the Malahat Review, knowledgeable in publishing, and also an experienced art critic. It was Skelton who wrote the constitution for the Limners, published articles about the artists, and organized the Limner catalogues which were handed out at exhibitions.

At the time the Limners was formed Skelton was in England. He remembers meeting Siebner at Victoria Station in London, after the artist had "merrily drunk his way across the surface of the earth," and being asked

to join the newly-created group. Skelton agreed and became vice-president. Bates remained honerary president until his death in 1980, Forrest was the first secretary, and Niki Pavelic, husband of the artist and a trained lawyer, was treasurer.⁷

Very soon after the group was established Mayhew and De Castro joined. Spreitz was not to become a member until late 1972 and was not included in the first Limner exhibition in May of that year. Clearly the group from the start did not adhere closely to its original aim of depicting the human figure since the sculpture of Mayhew and De Castro did not fit into this definition. The Limners were and still are a group of friends, and their numbers grew each time a member (usually Siebner) said "Let's invite so-and-so to join us!" This thesis focuses on the nine members who made up the group in the first few years of its inception: Bates, Ciccimarra, De Castro, Forrest, Mayhew, Pavelic, Siebner, Skelton, and Spreitz. ✨

During the following years many changes took place. In 1973 Ciccimarra died, followed by Bates in 1980. Forrest temporarily left the group in 1973 and returned in 1981. De Castro left the group in 1980, the same year Pat Martin Bates joined. Jack Wilkinson and potters Walter Dexter and Jan Grove joined in 1981. They were soon joined by Grove's wife Helga, also a potter, and later by fabric artist Carole Sabiston and painter LeRoy Jensen in 1984.⁸ Each time a member of the community, often a gallery director, helped the Limners in any way they were made honorary members. Peter Pollen and Moncrieff Williamson helped the Limners with early exhibitions and were honoured by the group in 1975. Martin Segger, of the Maltwood Museum and Art Gallery at the University of Victoria, joined them in 1985, the year the Limner exhibition was held there.⁹ Colin Graham, in his capacity as Art Gallery of Greater Victoria director, was also made an honorary

member in 1973 but became a fully-fledged Limner in 1980.¹⁰

Just as the Point Group of artists had formed primarily to support each other and exhibit together, so the Limners too had the goal of promoting group exhibitions. They were already mature and accomplished artists by 1971, and their aim was not to work together, influence each other, or create a group style. They had no manifesto or articulated artistic agenda. These artists were merely long-time friends and colleagues who saw the advantages of working together. They had an obvious advantage in that it is more likely for a group to get public attention or be successful in getting exhibited.¹¹ A single artist may have to work years to become known or amass enough work for a solo exhibit, whereas a group always has enough art to make up one show. One of the disadvantages of a group is that the art of its members may not look well together in an exhibition. There is a tendency for a group show to look cluttered or mixed-up; Forrest feels that Limner exhibitions sometimes have this characteristic.¹² Another problem is that sometimes a gallery curator will want to dictate which artists in the group will be exhibited. When you are in a group, you cannot allow one or two or your members to be excluded from a particular show.¹³ Therefore the Limners usually want to curate their own exhibits.

In 1972 the Limners held their first exhibition at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. A photograph taken at the exhibition shows one of Mayhew's aluminium sculptures and gallery patrons admiring Pavelic's portraits of individual members of the newly formed group. (fig. 67) On this occasion they published the first of five small Limner catalogues, with text written by Skelton, cover designed by Siebner, photographs taken by Spreitz, and financing usually provided by Pavelic. Siebner's cover has remained

unchanged through all the different editions. (fig. 68) It is made up of three brown earth tones: the beige of the paper, the light umber of the title "The Limners" and the simple border, and the dark umber of the central image that came to be the group's logo. It is a rune, a word in an ancient language which, according to Skelton, means "mankind".¹⁴

Runic characters are an alphabet developed by the Germanic peoples around AD 200-250. The origin of this language is controversial but scholars believe it was a form of the Greco-Roman system brought to the Germanic people by the Goths of southern Russia. Runic inscriptions have been found on weapons and jewelry, primarily in the Scandinavian countries. They are most often found, however, on stones or monuments such as the 9th century runic stone from Rök, Sweden. (fig. 69)¹⁵ Upon close examination we find several runes carved on this stone that closely resemble the Limner logo, three along the bottom strip and two on the left-hand vertical band.

The choice of this symbol reflects Siebner's own interest in ancient art but also represents the Limners' interest in what Skelton calls the "depth exploration of the human creature" as put forth as the group's philosophy in the first Limner catalogue of 1972. Siebner usually designed the posters for all Limner exhibitions. This rune is also found in the upper left hand corner of the poster Siebner designed for the 1972 A.G.G.V. exhibit, along with a simplified and primitive looking human head. (fig. 70)

The invitation to the opening of the 1972 A.G.G.V. exhibit announced the Limners as the newly formed group of Victoria artists consisting of Bates, Ciccimarra, De Castro, Forrest, Mayhew, Siebner, Skelton,

and Pavelic. At that time the Limners were easily able to get a show at the Art Gallery for several reasons. In 1972 close friend of the artists Colin Graham had not yet retired as director, and he had long made it policy to support local contemporary artists. The group consisted of respected Victoria artists who were considered pillars in the art community. It must also be remembered that in 1972 the Gallery was still small and intimate and there was more time for the gallery staff to devote to local artists. This is not to say that the gallery today ignores Victoria artists, far from it, but in the fifties, sixties, and early seventies it was easier for artists to drop into the gallery and informally talk with someone about their art. Since that time the gallery has expanded and become more formal and business-like. Forrest, who has been both an artist and gallery owner, feels she understands perhaps more than others the Art Gallery's position. She notes that "it's not the intimate thing it used to be when Colin [Graham] was there. There is no time to hold the artists by the hand."¹⁶ The Limners, however, feel that they should have had another show since 1972.¹⁷ The group has attempted to get a show at the gallery but it has been impossible to arrange.¹⁸ Part of the problem is that today, with a larger gallery, exhibitions often have to be scheduled several years in advance. This does not always fit in with the spontaneous and informal style of the group. It must be noted, however, that the Limners were well-represented in the 1986 A.G.G.V. exhibition Art in Victoria: 1960-1986, with works shown by each Limner past and present. Many Limners have also had solo exhibitions at the Gallery, including Bates (1966, 1982), Ciccimarra (1958, 1974, 1988), Mayhew (1971), Pavelic (1964, 1972), Siebner (1966, 1970, 1984), Carole Sabiston (1968, 1973, 1975, 1982), and Pat Martin Bates (1965, 1971, 1984).¹⁹

The first loss the Limner Society suffered was when Ciccimarra

committed suicide in Greece in 1973. He had been ill for several years prior to that. Not only was he an alcoholic and suffering from periods of extreme depression, but in 1966 he developed stomach ulcers that erupted in frequent painful flare-ups. He was operated on that year and part of his stomach and his spleen were removed. This operation was the beginning of his steady deterioration.²⁰

Ciccimarra and Vicky Husband were married in 1966 and spent their honeymoon in Austria and Greece. Here Ciccimarra took hundreds of photographs, usually of people, and made many drawings and watercolours. His watercolours made in Greece were lively, colourful, and filled with light, similar in happy tone to his West Indies series. This optimistic mood began to disappear, however, as soon as Ciccimarra returned to Victoria and, although some remain, most of his Greek watercolours were lost or destroyed by the artist.²¹

Ciccimarra began drinking again and by 1968 was suffering from frequent insomnia. The following year he entered the Eric Martin Institute for his psychological problems, the first of several periods spent there. Ciccimarra spent most of 1972 in the hospital. He suffered from bronchial pneumonia and pancreatitis. The pancreatitis led to a spinal abscess in the lower back, and two failed operations to relieve the pain caused by the abscess left him paralyzed from the chest down. In hospital he managed to make some drawings of his fellow patients.²²

This period coincided with his growing popularity as an artist. He had an exhibition in Forrest's Print Gallery in 1971 and had a close working relationship with Paul Wong of the Bau-Xi Gallery in Vancouver.

In a 1972 letter to his half-sister Manon, who lived in Vienna, he writes: "...I have sold every picture, and naturally can't work at the moment. Exactly now I seem to be wanted, my galleries are bombing me with orders and inquiries. I hope in the new hospital to be able to make at least drawings."²³ A letter to Manon the following year, when he was planning a trip to Austria and Greece, continues in this optimistic vein and discusses how he views his life as an artist:

I have a new contract with my gallery in Vancouver for sole rights, and have a big success. What now pays off, is that I never was untrue to artist's principles, never let myself be influenced by another style, but rather slowly went my own way - although I was often laughed at - and all the others have gone in a circle and come back to me.²⁴

From this letter it is clear that Ciccimarra saw himself as one of the most original artists in Victoria who was not influenced by others. It is true that his work was admired by other artists, and Limners Pavelic and Forrest were in fact greatly affected by his shadowy figures. A journalist interviewed Ciccimarra around the time of his 1971 exhibition at the Print Gallery, and what the artist said to him about his work also revealed a great deal about how he viewed himself and his art. When asked how he created the brooding mood in his works Ciccimarra replied:

Basically they come automatically. What has to be explained is why they come the way they do. It's a great urge to communicate and this is my form of communication....By and large, as far as painting is concerned the ultimate reason for doing what I'm doing, perhaps, is because I'm lonely myself. And I'm aware of loneliness in other people....Basically I'm a commentator rather than a painter. Always loneliness, the human condition as such, is the thing that concerns me. I want to describe it to the best of my ability....I find it very necessary that one should be completely honest and do one's own thing without too much regard for previously published things.²⁵

Nowosad has connected Ciccimarra with Austrian art of the *fin-de-siècle*, especially with expressionist Egon Schiele (1890-1918), whose tortured self-portraits reflect the human condition. It is true that Ciccimarra's work was firmly rooted in the Austrian tradition, both in his realistic botanical watercolours and his anxiety-ridden figural work. Nowosad has also shown that Ciccimarra was influenced by the German artist Julius Bissier (1893-1965), with whose work he probably came in contact through a monograph by Werner Schmalenbach published in 1963. Bissier's interest in the arts of the Far East had moved him to abandon figurative painting in 1930 in favour of stark, simplified images that served as calligraphic equivalents for his poetic feelings. Although Ciccimarra never abandoned the figure in his art, Nowosad does partly credit the discovery of the work of Bissier for the increasing simplification of Ciccimarra's figures.²⁶

Ciccimarra had for a long time shown suicidal tendencies; he often threatened to shoot himself with a revolver he kept in his room. These psychological problems are illustrated in the pitiful images found in Ciccimarra's final drawings of fellow hospital patients. In the summer of 1973, accompanied by a young nurse from the Eric Martin Institute, Ciccimarra took a final trip to Austria and Greece. It was in Greece that Ciccimarra died of an overdose of pills.²⁷

Meanwhile the rest of the Limmers were planning their second group exhibit to be held at the Provincial Archives and called Music and Art: Limner Art Exhibition. Their exhibit in the archives was part of the Victoria Summer Festival, a host of festivities including musical performances and other activities in the courtyard of the Royal British Columbia Museum. The event attracted many people, as can be seen in a photograph taken of the

Symphony playing in the courtyard. (fig. 71) An invitation designed for the event was created by Siebner, (fig. 72) and in many ways this was the kind of festival affair he had envisaged for Victoria during the late fifties. Critical reaction to the Limner exhibition was positive. One article in the Daily Colonist, dated July 22, said of the festival: "This year visual arts have been added, with an exhibition of paintings and sculpture by a group of noted Victoria artists."²⁸ Another reviewer commented that "for those interested in the direction of Vancouver Island art..., it is undoubtedly one of the more significant showings to be mounted this year." He continued to note that

The strength of the group...lies in the fact that each artist has been living and working in the Vancouver Island area for many years, and thus has acquired an intimate knowledge of his or her contemporaries. There is a delightful cohesion in this group, and the way in which the show is hung.²⁹

The Limners took part in hanging their own exhibit, the results of which were captured in photographs taken at the show. (figs. 73-74) Forrest described the pandemonium that took place during the days before the opening as the Limners arranged the exhibition. She describes that on a certain day

we all came in, Herbert had dropped something on his toe, Robin had put something through a window - it was chaos. At one point I asked Bob [De Castro] to buy me a bottle of brandy because I'd been hammering on one side of the wall, Sylvia Skelton on the other side - it was all too much.

De Castro, with his macabre sense of humour, looked around the exhibit space and said "Huh, Ricky was smart to kill himself." Forrest thought this was funny and told it to Sylvia Skelton, thinking it might amuse her, but it did not.³⁰

Because of disagreements with some members of the group, Forrest decided to leave the Limners in 1973 and did not join again until 1981. In the meantime Sylvia Skelton had been an efficient secretary, and Forrest says she was happy to have someone take over the job she never felt she had been good at. There were also other reasons Forrest left the Limners. She felt that the group "was a little too structured for my taste."³¹ It had incorporated itself as a society and formally registered with the Provincial Registrar of Companies in order to be eligible for Canada Council grants.³² The society's constitution, written by Skelton, was a long legal document Forrest likened to War and Peace. One reason for leaving the group was that she

felt a bit too exclusive, too, because I'm naturally friends with all the other artists. Pat [Martin Bates] wasn't in it then, Don Harvey was never in it because he and Herbert [Siebner] don't see eye-to-eye, Flemming [Jorgensen] doesn't see eye-to-eye with Herbert - it was all Herbert's club.³³

This raises the question why other local artists like Don Harvey, John Dobereiner, and Flemming Jorgensen were not invited to join the Limners. Although these artists all associated with each other it is clear that they did not always get along. The dominant personalities of Limners such as Siebner and Skelton naturally dictated to a large extent who would or would not be "invited" to join the group. Certainly, the reason that these artists did not paint the human figure could not be cited as proof of their ineligibility since many of the Limners also do not deal with the human form in their work. It is interesting to note, however, that artists such as Harvey, Dobereiner, and Jorgensen were all much more concerned with abstraction. Although the Limner sculptors certainly work in an abstract mode the Limner painters tend not to. This may be another reason some artists were never members of the group: perhaps they would not have wanted to be.

This discussion is not meant to criticize the Limners for their choice of members. On the contrary, it serves to illustrate that the reasons for the establishment of the group were not carefully thought out or planned; it just happened. The Limners are a group of friends, their meetings are informal parties, and, although they take each other's art seriously, they do not aspire to create a structured group or art movement. Skelton describes the chaotic meetings: Bates, who thoroughly enjoyed Limner get-togethers, "would call the meeting to order, after which disorder would ensue." He would then hit the floor with his cane and laugh with delight. Skelton also describes how Siebner would suggest fantastic ideas for exhibits, such as the Limners getting their own exclusive gallery, and Sylvia Skelton would call for motions.³⁴ I witnessed this kind of thing when I attended an enjoyable Limner party in December, 1988, at Pavelic's studio in Saanich.

During the seventies, Forrest continued to paint works dealing with the theme of women and children. Much of her time, however, was spent working at various galleries in Sidney and Victoria. She was also an art teacher at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria and at two private boys' schools. Forrest's philosophy about art education was much like Zach's and her teacher Siebner's. She feels "you don't really *teach* art - you let them develop - give them ideas." She enjoyed teaching at private schools except that she hated the discipline and was frustrated by the lack of art supplies. She looked out for her students and refused to call them by their last name.³⁵ Her compassion and sense of humanity shine through in the interview I conducted with her.

In 1972 Siebner had taken a daring move with respect to his art.

In a December 9 letter directed to the official galleries such as the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, not the private ones, he wrote

this is to announce, that from the beginning of the year 1972, [1973] none of my original works of art (paintings, graphics and sculpture) are for sale, nor on loan for rental purposes in galleries, art-galleries, museum (sic) or other institutions and agencies on a commission basis.³⁶

He was rebelling against the power of the galleries and the fact that not only do artists have to cover the costs of an exhibition but they also have to give the gallery a large commission. In the closing sentence of the letter Siebner emphasizes the radical nature of his assertion:

I am one of the few artists, which has the courage, to take this step, breaking away from the common commercial way of dealing with art works - this way, my work is in more civil terms available to the many friends, which are the real support and hope for any artist.

This move is clearly part of Siebner's dislike of institutions of any kind, and, one could say, his love of attention and expressing his individuality. This letter also emphasizes the importance of friends as collectors. Patronage in Victoria had grown steadily since the Point Group formed in 1958. Most of these collectors are friends of the artists. Eileen Learoyd, for example, has a good collection of paintings by Jack Wilkinson, and Audrey Johnson collects works by Colin Graham and Pavelic, among others. The Limners themselves are buyers of each other's work, especially Pavelic who not only collects their art but also supports the Limners by holding occasional supper-meetings at her studio and financing many of their publications. Murray and Frances Adaskin, well-known in musical circles in Canada, settled permanently in Victoria during the mid-seventies. They already had an extensive collection of contemporary Canadian art and continued to add to this upon their arrival

in Victoria.³⁷ Support of people like these is what Siebner was referring to in his letter.

Meanwhile, during the seventies Siebner continued to be interested in the themes he had dealt with in the preceding decade, but in 1970 a new image emerges: the theme of the crowd. This imagery could signify Siebner's distrust of authority and the blind obedience to that authority which he had witnessed in Germany during the Nazi era. On the other hand, the individualistic people in the crowd may represent Siebner's love of personal expression and freedom. The image of the crowd first appears in his painting City Crowd of 1970. (fig. 75) The sea of faces is painted in a flat and simplified manner. Each face is depicted with two slashes, one short and one long, which stand for two eyes and a nose. Interestingly, the figures at the front of the crowd are women, their breasts bare in public. Perhaps these figures are defiantly breaking with expected behavior just as the artist himself did when he took his clothes off at parties.

Another image of the crowd is in his painting Crowd and the Personification of Love of 1973. (fig. 76) This work reflects many of Siebner's concerns. The central double-headed figure (which could also be two figures) stands on a raised platform and faces a sea of mindless-looking faces, all with the same simplified features. This monstrous-looking orator could symbolize the absolute authority Siebner loathes, but the title suggests it may be a depiction of the restrictive social conventions about love or sex, a theme which interested the artist. The fact that the faces in the crowd lack mouths could stand for the fact that they have no voice, no control over their own lives. They could also be incomprehensive of the display of love on the stage. In the same year Siebner uses the crowd image in his design for the invitation

to the Limner exhibition at the Provincial Archives. In Looking for a Friend in a Crowd of 1978 (fig. 77) Siebner speaks of his own need for friends who understand his art and his complex personality. All the figures in the crowd are identical and robot-like except for two near the front. One has a single blue eye and the other bright red lips. Perhaps this represents the human need for companionship and love, and these two figures are similar or like-minded and will find each other in this crowd.

This last theory seems to be validated in another painting, The Endless Summer, of 1979. (fig. 78) Siebner dedicated this to the Limners, and there are nine half-silhouettes representing members of the group in 1979.³⁸ The figure on the bed is likely Bates who by this time was in hospital. In one of the frames is what appears to be a white human silhouette that could possibly be the dead Ciccimarra. Within that same frame is a section of Siebner's "crowd". The combination of all these elements points to the theory that the crowd signifies the sea of humanity in which we are constantly trying to find true friends, or perhaps the humanity which gazes uncomprehendingly or disapprovingly at art or at love.

Karl Spreitz created a large amount of art during the seventies, working in the media of painting, printmaking, collage, and mixed media. Much of his work is autobiographical in nature. He deals with themes of his childhood, makes direct art historical quotations, and comments on his work as an artist/photographer/filmmaker and his role in the Limners. Fellow Limner Sylvia Skelton commented on Spreitz's art, saying he "has a wonderful surreal imagination, and a good sense of composition and form from his photography, and when he puts the two together he makes some really good pictures."³⁹

Three of Spreitz's works of the mid-seventies, Sports Day at the Boy's School, 1928 of 1973, Art Lesson #23 in 1928 of 1975, and Fine Taylor (sic) Shop of 1976 refer directly to his own childhood. In the collage Sports Day... (fig. 79) he looks back to his earlier success in sports while still in Austria. This work, like much of Spreitz's art, shows a disjointed, box-like figure attempting to steady itself. We remember how Spreitz himself had to juggle sports activities and making sketches in school because his family thought he was a full-time art student. Some of the anxiety he must have felt is evident in this collage. Ever since he arrived in Victoria Spreitz has made photocollages, and, in this work, he has added magazine cut-outs of sports jerseys.

In his collage Art Lesson... (fig. 80) we recall Spreitz's disastrous art exam administered by the sculptor Professor Gosser. Spreitz's refusal to create a sculpture to Gosser's liking cost him the chance to study art full-time, but this work indicates Spreitz would not have enjoyed the classes anyway. Here he comments on the unimaginative and disciplined nature of art education when he was young and students drew from plaster casts and were controlled by their teachers. He uses boxes made of printed wallpaper to suggest the repetitive art being produced in this class. His mixed-media work Fine Taylor Shop (fig. 81) recalls a scene of his earliest childhood: his grandfather's tailor shop in Graz, Austria. The young Spreitz had been fascinated with the shop and its dummies and half-cut suits, as if, Spreitz said later, "it were a scene arranged by De Chirico."⁴⁰

The reference to De Chirico is significant. It is obvious that Spreitz's work is greatly influenced by early twentieth century modernists,

although perhaps he is not looking so much at Giorgio de Chirico as he is at such artists as Marcel Duchamp, Paul Klee, and Francis Picabia. His collages recall the mechanical drawings and paintings of Duchamp and Picabia, and his schematized figures, the works of Klee. Spreitz leaves no doubt in the viewer's mind that he has been looking at these artists by the titles he gives his works. In many cases they are direct art historical quotations, and his titles are an important part of the work.

His work The Invisible Part of a Staircase Waiting for a Descending Nude of 1975 (fig. 82) refers to the moment before Duchamp's nude descends the staircase in his well-known 1912 painting Nude Descending a Staircase #2. (fig. 83) It is typical of Spreitz to make an inanimate object conscious and give it an awareness. This recalls his beloved hand-puppet collection and his fascination with his grandfather's tailor dummies. This collage and others made around this time are completely in the style of Duchamp and Picabia. They are machine-like forms made in a flat draftsman-like manner, complete with broken lines to suggest three dimensional construction. The Invisible Part of a Staircase... can be compared to some of Duchamp's more mechanistic works, such as his Chocolate Grinder #2 of 1914. (fig. 84)

His collages Paintbox, Never to be Used (fig. 85) and Carrying Case for Empty Space, (fig. 86) both of 1975, are again direct references to Duchamp, in this case to his works which question the nature of standards and usages. These contraptions resemble the case Duchamp made for his Standard Stoppages, for example, and like Duchamp, question our basic logical assumptions. We assume that a paintbox is made and purchased to be used, but Spreitz negates this premise with his nonsensical title. Likewise, he

creates a case for empty space, when logic dictates that space does not need to be held and this is really an empty container. Duchamp lived in New York for the latter part of his life and died there in 1968. During the sixties and seventies he influenced many young artists, especially in North America, who brought his nonsensical Dada spirit into their own work. Spreitz has obviously been influenced by this renewed interest in Dada.

When Spreitz turns to figures he is strongly influenced by the delicate, simple figures of Klee. This influence is most evident in Spreitz's mixed-media work Making Power for Himself of 1973. (fig. 87) This may be a direct reference to Klee's watercolour and pen and ink painting Twittering Machine of 1922. (fig. 88) In Klee's painting a machine-like bird with a handle attached to it suggests his apprehension that modern technology has taken over all aspects of our lives, including nature. Spreitz, on the other hand, creates a positive view of technology that allows each person to improve his or her life, like this figure who creates power for himself by turning his own handle. As a photographer and filmmaker, Spreitz is obviously in favour of advancements in technology.

In Spreitz's work of the seventies there is also a sense of introspection and self-comment, especially with respect to his career and role as an artist. In his monotype and wash of 1976, Deadline without Film Cement, (fig. 89) we see Spreitz's characteristic disjointed, simplified figure in a frenzy because he cannot meet a deadline. This sort of crisis must have been familiar to Spreitz the photographer and filmmaker. He takes a wry look at his career in an ink drawing It's a Living of 1975 (fig. 90), which depicts his personage balancing on a tightrope. This could represent Spreitz's own misgivings about having to earn a living by being a commercial photographer

while trying to pursue his avocation as an artist.

Spreitz's mixed-media work Group Discussion, not going anywhere... of 1975 (fig. 91) could be interpreted as his comment on the effectiveness of the Limner meetings. Although their gatherings start out as official meetings, with motions and vote-taking, they quickly turn into informal parties, often before they have dealt with all the items on the agenda. Here Spreitz suggests that group situations are perhaps not conducive to serious and effective decisionmaking.

It is understandable that within any group there are personality conflicts among the members. The Limners are no exception, except that their disagreements are rarely serious and their friendships withstand the storm. Spreitz painted a group portrait of the Limners (fig. 92) in which, over a period of time in the late seventies or early eighties, he vented his frustrations with individual members. This painting was made as part of an art therapy program, and it is said that Spreitz changed the features of the Limners in his painting each time he had an argument with them, until the work became a wild expressionist portrait.⁴¹ A picture he did of Robin Skelton follows in a similar biting vein. Apparently upset with the poet for some reason Spreitz painted a portrait of him reading a book that was obviously upside-down.⁴²

Siebner and Spreitz continued to stage Dada-like events during the seventies, and their enthusiasm spread to other members of the Limners. Skelton recalls the chance finding by Mayhew of a mysterious black hat. At a party the Limners took turns wearing this hat while Pavelic took Polaroids of the event. Later Pavelic turned these into watercolour sketches.⁴³ Similar in

tone to the No Movie of 1959 was an event that Bates and Siebner took part in around 1977. It was a day when Flemming Jorgensen was leaving Victoria and Michael Morris was coming home. Siebner made a sign that read "Welcome/Go Home" which they took to the airport. Bates was dressed as an R.C.M.P. officer and Siebner wore his diving suit and his daughter's riding helmet. People were naturally curious about this strange event and asked Bates what it was all about, to which he responded "I finally got my man!"⁴⁴

Siebner had always enjoyed dressing up in strange costumes or in one of his collection of hats and masks. He especially liked fancy dress balls. During an Arts Ball in the sixties, Skelton recalls, Siebner walked up to one guest and commented on his fabulous costume. As it turned out this man was the Lieutenant-Governor in full uniform!⁴⁵ It seems unlikely that Siebner did not know who this man was (although not impossible) and he was probably deliberately attempting to shock him as a joke.

In 1976, to celebrate Bates's seventieth birthday, the Limners and other friends and local artists staged a surprise party. The event was held at the Skelton's home. They managed to collect as many of Bates's works as they could, including some he made as a young man. They hung these artworks on the main floor since Bates had difficulty navigating stairs. It was agreed that everyone would attend the party dressed as one of the characters in Bates's paintings, such as scarecrows, beggar-kings, clowns, and cocktail party guests.⁴⁶ A photograph taken by Peter Pollen (fig. 93) shows the range of costumes and Bates quietly enjoying himself in an overstuffed armchair. Never one to speak at length he nevertheless had a happy time and simply said "thanks" for this show of appreciation from his fellow artists and friends.⁴⁷

Frank Nowosad has written several articles on Bates and discusses a change that occurred in his work during the seventies at the time his works began to increase in value. Nowosad notes that during this time his "Paintings looked hurriedly executed, the paint applied in blunt masses with gritty edges. Form and structure appeared to be crumbling."⁴⁸

Bates's method of working during this time seemed to baffle fellow Limner Myfanwy Pavelic, who exclaimed "I'd never seen anything like it!" Bates used to sit at an easel and use his cane to push and pull the easel back and forth so he could judge how the work was coming along. On this particular day Bates was painting a beach scene with two figures in it. As he worked he would mutter to himself "It's all wrong here - what I put here." He always had a box of magazine and newspaper clippings that he kept by his easel in case he needed visual images for his works. This day Pavelic recalls he picked out "a hideous picture of a child, with a bonnet and a cross-looking face." He got his brush and loaded it with an awful pink and painted the child so that her chin was almost at the bottom of the canvas. Then Pavelic says he painted in a "miserable little mouth." At this point Bates moved the easel back and said "that's better, now I need something on the other side." Without any concern for scale Bates painted a beach ball opposite the child. When he was finished he asked what Pavelic thought of it, and she replied "Max, when you do it it *works* - that's the thing that floors me." With that he signed the work.⁴⁹

Bates evidently enjoyed this haphazard way of working but Nowosad comments on the metamorphosis that took place in his later work. He says

The oils in particular, were becoming increasingly sketchy and roughly executed. Their images seemed to be disintegrating; the colors increasingly murky. There was a falling away from those controlled, almost formal paintings of the 1950s and '60s and I couldn't shake the ghosts of great Bates oils such as Assassin (1969) or Beggars and Scarecrows (1961) which hovered as standards over the recent work done in the same medium.

Nowosad goes on to explain that much of Bates's work from this period "stems from his prompting of technical errors - brush smears, blotchy lines - which he tames into sharp, quirky images."⁵⁰ We have seen how his method of creating images was often spontaneous, and two works of the seventies, one an ink drawing, the other an oil painting, reflect Bates's increasingly haphazard style. What Nowosad does not discuss, however, is the fact that these later works could be seen as being more personal and expressive than Bates's earlier paintings.

The cover of the 1982 catalogue of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria retrospective exhibition features Bates's ink and watercolour wash painting Man of 1974. (fig. 94) This work shows the scratchy lines and ink blotches Nowosad referred to in his article. Bates seemed to pay little attention to tidiness and technical perfection. Haphazard ink spills are integrated as part of the painting, as are what appear to be chance water marks. The line becomes increasingly irregular and fuzzy through Bates's use of water. Clearly he is recalling his earlier interest in naive and unpremeditated art. He has captured this man's contemplative personality by exaggerating his features and distorting the lines, as well as by working in a quick and spontaneous manner. When compared with the photograph of Bates taken at his seventieth birthday party this painting strongly suggests a self-portrait in the contemplative silent gaze of the figure.

This increasingly haphazard quality can also be seen in Bates's final painting, the already-mentioned Woman in Blue of 1978. (fig. 25) The woman's face is distorted and seems hastily painted. Nevertheless, it is a powerful statement about human vanity. All his life Bates had been an observer of life. He usually preferred to watch other people's actions and depict them in his art rather than take part in them himself. His works are sometimes disturbing in their honesty, directness, and crudeness, but "If they are difficult to look at it is because reality is often unattractive."⁵¹

Bates was clearly seen as a mentor by the Limners although his unassuming nature did not take easily to that role. He thoroughly enjoyed the meetings, especially the comic elements provided by Siebner and Spreitz.⁵² Towards the end of his life, when he began to experience difficulty getting around, Bates enjoyed being visited by his fellow Limners. Niki Pavelic, for example, came once a week to play chess with Bates. In December 1978 he suffered a second stroke which left him almost totally paralyzed and from which he never fully recovered.⁵³ Skelton and Siebner used to visit him in the hospital and remember that he would scribble notes but not speak. He was able to draw in hospital but chose not to. Toward the end, just before his death in 1980, he did not want any visitors.⁵⁴ Bates died on September 14, 1980 at the age of seventy-four. In his Times-Colonist obituary Paul Kyle, of Kyle's Gallery, described Bates "as a man of very deep feeling and understanding of humanity, whose compassion and sensitivity were often reflected in his work."⁵⁵

During the mid-seventies the Limners had two exhibitions in eastern Canada: one at the Confederation Art Gallery in Charlottetown, P.E.I.,

in 1975 and another at the Shaw-Rimmington Gallery in Toronto in 1977. Although this would seem to indicate an increased interest in the Limners by eastern galleries, the group remains relatively unknown east of Edmonton. The artists published their second Limner catalogue for the Charlottetown exhibit to reflect the fact that by that time Spreitz was a fully-fledged member, Ciccimarra had died, and Forrest had left the group.

Critical reaction to the art of the Limners in the 1975 exhibit was mixed. Charlottetown art reviewer Peter Bell commented on the fact that the works by the Limners were generally small, low-key, lacked gimmicks, and used traditional media. He opened his article with "The Limners! I sensed that among the art gallery staff there was disappointment in this exhibition and I suppose it is easy to see why." He continued to praise the works of Ciccimarra, Bates, Mayhew, Siebner, (he said "I always think of him as the Wild Man of Victoria") and Pavelic. He spoke with less enthusiasm about the works by Spreitz, De Castro, and Skelton, saying De Castro's sculpture looked like "a wooden horizontal squeeze-box-like form", and Spreitz's and Skelton's works seemed derivative of earlier twentieth century art. Bell admits, however, to not having heard of De Castro and Spreitz before and says that he may be expressing a biased view.⁵⁶ The exhibition contained only Mayhew's miniature sculptures, and the fact that none of her large works were shown may have added to a feeling of disappointment at the small-scale nature of the exhibit.

This critic's reaction to the work of the Limners does, however, bring up an important point. Clearly these artists were retaining an interest in traditional subject matter, styles, and media. As we have seen, none of the Limners worked in an abstract mode for any length of time. They were not

affected by the movements of the sixties such as hard-edged Op Art or by the images of mass commercialism seen in Pop Art. Although Siebner and Spreitz were influenced by Dada in their nonsensical activities and in Spreitz's collages, they seem to have been recalling the original Dada movement of the 1910s and 1920s instead of being affected by the renewed interest in the movement on the part of North American artists during the 1960s and 1970s. Spreitz's work looks more like a Picabia or a Duchamp in its style and medium and has nothing in common with the Conceptual, Performance, Video, and Earthwork art created by his contemporaries. While other artists, such as the Baxters N.E. Thing Company in Vancouver, for example, were creating installations and keeping up-to-date with the latest art trends, the Limners seem to have remained faithful to a style and aesthetic developed decades before. Siebner's and Mayhew's interest in mythical subject matter, personal expression, and belief in the high seriousness of art ally them to the postwar Abstract Expressionist generation. Maxwell Bates continued for the rest of his life to work within an expressionist framework developed in 1950 under the influence of German Expressionist Max Beckmann. The other Limners have likewise held to traditional media and subject matter, Pavelic, Forrest, and Ciccimarra in their depictions of the human figure, and Skelton and De Castro with their abstract and highly personal sculptures.

During the seventies Mayhew continued to create her monumental totems, altars, and votive figurines. One innovation Mayhew developed was making prints from a carved roll of cement, probably influenced by her earlier rubbings. She had often made sculptures of poured concrete because it was inexpensive and readily available. She does not do as much now, however, because it is physically strenuous. De Castro used to

help her with any physical jobs she had around the studio but since his illness and death Mayhew has avoided these laborious tasks. When she worked in poured concrete Mayhew would sometimes have some of the mixture left over at the end of the day. She thought of a way of avoiding wasting this material by pouring it into long cardboard tubes, carving a design in them, (fig. 95) and using them to make prints. (fig. 96) She laid paper out on a ping pong table and rolled the heavy inked cylinders onto it to create a print.⁵⁷ The prints made by this method are very similar in appearance to the rubbings of Mayhew's totems because the forms she carves are variations on the same theme. In many ways these cement rollers resemble Sumerian cylinder seals in appearance.

Mayhew related how she creates her free-standing totem sculptures. She carves her designs into large blocks of polystyrene which have been cut into the basic shape and size she wants her finished sculpture to be. She continually revises her work and invents as she goes along. Once she has finished her design Mayhew then puts clay or plaster on top of the polystyrene to make a mould. One problem Mayhew faces is the fact that there is no foundry near Victoria, and she is forced to transport her moulds to foundries in Oakland, California, and England.⁵⁸

De Castro continued to work for the rest of his life within the limited sculptural format he had arrived at during the late fifties. The seventies, however, were a productive time for him and he experimented with variations on his basic vocabulary. During the late fifties and early sixties his pea-pod form had started as a cluster of repetitive shapes designed as a wall relief. Gradually this form began to be simplified, and in his Forest Ghosts of 1976 (fig. 54) we see a relief of two of these characteristic shapes.

Around this time De Castro began to conceive of his pod form as a free-standing object and did away with the relief format. His Untitled piece of 1976 (fig. 55) illustrates how he visualized his image in completely three-dimensional terms. Skelton describes these sculptures as phallic images.⁵⁹ There is certainly an erotic element to these organic smooth shapes.

It seems possible that De Castro's sculpture was influenced by ancient artifacts such as arrow heads or axe-heads. The notched centre of De Castro's works is similar to the notches in implements created by the native peoples of British Columbia, which he would have seen in the British Columbia Provincial Museum after it opened in 1968. Clearly De Castro was thinking of his work as referring to ancient artifacts as early as 1958 when he entitled the only print he ever made Fossil Men.⁶⁰ Skelton feels that De Castro was influenced by Northwest Coast Indian art in his attraction to wood sculpture and that he was influenced by the driftwood and forests of this province. He comments "while none of his work shows the slightest trace of being influenced by the traditional vocabulary of the Indian carvers, it does have the same feeling for tensions and pressures basic to human existence, and for the inescapable images of our darkness." Skelton goes on to link De Castro with the Linnier interest in depicting the figure by saying that De Castro's "images are allusions to the world of sensation and to the fundamental rhythms and stresses of human life."⁶¹

Another development in De Castro's sculpture of the seventies is also linked to an erotic theme. Alongside his vertical phallic images, suggesting maleness, De Castro was also developing a similar horizontal form, suggesting femaleness. Even though no one has commented on this specific male/female duality in De Castro's sculpture, it seems clear that his

work is concerned with human sexuality. The tall vertical pieces appear much more masculine and the squat horizontal ones more feminine. In an Untitled and undated work (fig. 97) made during the seventies, De Castro flattened his notched vertical form to create a wide boat- or whale-shaped image. This can also be seen in an Untitled piece of 1974 (fig. 98) and another of the mid-seventies. (fig. 99) These horizontal works usually have small drill-holes in them which Skelton has read as "an allusion to sexual penetration."⁶² None of his vertical pieces show evidence of these holes, which could symbolize female genitalia. It is interesting that De Castro, for the first time, introduces a mechanical element into his work in the mid-seventies. The holes are clearly made by a modern tool and break with his earlier more roughly-hewn and obviously entirely hand-made sculpture. Skelton describes the holes and the rest of the sculpture as the duality of "thrust and stress", nature and man, and "intuition and intelligence".⁶³ Even though these holes are neatly drilled, however, De Castro always avoided producing slick and highly finished sculpture.

We have already commented on the fact that De Castro was a meticulous worker and a perfectionist. He spent a long time on each sculpture and, if given the chance, would continually revise and improve his works. According to the Skeltons, he wanted his art to be appreciated, and sometimes despaired that no one recognized what he was doing. He himself said very little about his art although, in an artist's statement for an exhibition at Whale's Gallery in 1983, De Castro did discuss some of his influences:

At the beginning I did not have any particular ideas that influenced me. These forms, I believe, are psychological in origin and I find what viewers have to say about them more interesting, opposite and revealing than anything I have to say, which is very little. I am not much interested in the wide

variety of art forms and styles and art movements and even less in the politics of the art world and find aesthetic discussion and comment arid and uncongenial. I used to talk or think of forest and lake and the ocean, that is British Columbia, as a factor in my work but gradually these notions came to seem pretentious and I was happy to let them fade away as irrelevant.⁶⁴

After De Castro's death in 1986 Colin Graham commented that he was "perhaps the most sensitive sculptor this province has produced."⁶⁵

The Limners, meanwhile, were still planning group exhibitions. Not far from Pavelic's home in Saanich there used to be a gallery owned by a friend of the Limners called Windsor Utley (1920-1989). The group held their fifth exhibition at the Utley Gallery in 1978. California-born Utley was himself an artist, having studied with Mark Tobey in Seattle. He had also worked in New York and Italy, and his colourful, rhythmic, and largely abstract works were within the framework of Abstract Expressionism, the dominant art movement of the forties and fifties.⁶⁶ Utley's artistic tastes ran parallel to those of the Limners, and he supported them while he operated his gallery by giving them exhibitions.

Just as Siebner designed the Limner catalogues, Skelton wrote the biographies, and Spreitz took the photographs, so Pavelic, as the group's portraitist, painted each of the artist's likeness to be illustrated in the catalogues. Many of her portraits of the nine charter members of the Limners were created during this time. They are warm, friendly pictures which reflect both the sitters' personalities and the friendship of the painter with her subjects. Her portraits of Bates, Ciccimarra, and Mayhew (figs. 100-102) are depictions of solitary moments and capture each artist deep in thought. Her paintings of Siebner and De Castro (figs. 103-104) illustrate their

personalities by showing them doing everyday things. Siebner is caught in his characteristic pose of smoking and talking while gesticulating with his hands, while De Castro is quietly working on one of his sculptures. Portraits of Robin and Sylvia Skelton, Forrest and her daughter Fairlie, and the artist and her husband Niki (figs. 105-107) are characteristic of Pavelic's *oeuvre* because they are warm depictions of happy relationships. In her acrylic painting of Spreitz (fig. 108) Pavelic experiments with fragmented form and an abstract block-like arrangement of shapes. Half of Spreitz's head is painted in a realistic manner but the other half is surrounded by line drawings of fellow Limners, among them the Skeltons in the upper right hand corner and Pat Martin Bates in the lower left hand side.

Although primarily a figure painter, Pavelic also drew and painted the rocks, shells, grasses, and driftwood of Vancouver Island, as in her charcoal drawing Five Shells of 1971. (fig. 109) These organic forms are often depicted in an isolated space so that the artist can concentrate on the minute details of her subject. Skelton considers these lone objects "images of solitude",⁶⁷ and they do strangely resemble some of Pavelic's other works of despairing figures or expressive hands. It is no accident that Pavelic treats natural forms in the same isolated manner as she does her human figures. She has never wanted to paint B.C.'s vast landscape because, she says, "it is limitless - I can't limit it on a canvas." She enjoys painting people because "they have an outside edge which fits in a canvas....it's just as limitless inwards, and that's what I try to capture - occasionally I do."⁶⁸ Interestingly, on rare occasions when Pavelic does paint a landscape, she sometimes treats it as an experiment in abstraction, recalling her earlier essays in non-objective painting in New York. An example of this is a 1971 oil

painting called Landscape. (fig. 110)

Pavelic is the only Limner who has come close to reflecting the original meaning of the group's name. When she travelled across Canada during the war accepting commissions she came closest to the itinerant artists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries after whom the Limners are named. However, instead of being replaced by the advent of photography Pavelic has actually used photographic images to create her commissioned portraits. Her 1973 painting of Colin Graham was painted in this way. (fig. 111) She explains that she does not work directly from one photograph but takes a lot of Polaroid studies. She would rather work from photos than have people sit for a portrait because she prefers to paint alone and undisturbed. When Graham came to her studio Pavelic asked him to walk around while she took Polaroid photos of him. It was not a good picture she was after; some were in fact blurred or cut the figure in half. Pavelic has an ulterior motive behind her picture-taking. She states that "when I'm behind my camera, I can stare at them - they think I'm focussing but I'm really looking - it's hard to do straight-on." By doing this she is able to capture previously unnoticed psychological or physical aspects about her subject. Graham, she discovered, had a shoulder that leans slightly to one side. While working on his portrait she continually consulted her snapshots which she had scattered around her studio.⁶⁹ This way she was able to capture Graham in his characteristic stance with his hands in his pockets. Pavelic has aptly placed Graham, one of the fathers of modern art in Victoria, in front of a Mondrian-like abstract painting.

In 1977 Pavelic completed a series of drawings and paintings of the female nude. In her paintings, such as Autumn Dream, (fig. 112) she is

clearly influenced by Forrest's depictions of the female figures set against a simplified landscape, created in the sixties. The nude is large and voluptuous and fills the picture plane. In her drawings, however, Pavelic is much more original. This is not surprising since she herself claims to be primarily a draughtsman. In her pencil drawing Two Circles in Motion (fig. 113) we see the influence of her earlier collages. The nude is seen in various poses. The line and details are skillfully depicted and the mood is serene and quiet. Pavelic's works are more than merely realistic portraits. Skelton said her work

is much more than a portrayal of individuals seen as representative human beings; it is also a statement of the validity and importance of the individual's own spiritual universe. Her paintings, like the self-portraits of Rembrandt, are comments upon the whole of the human condition.⁷⁰

It is true that Pavelic always strives to depict a person's character, or his or her "inside", as she puts it, in her portraits. Her painting of Colin Graham, painted in the year of his retirement, is a successful study of the A.G.G.V. director in a contemplative mood. The viewer feels that Graham is perhaps reminiscing about the many years he had spent at the Gallery.

The seventies continued to see increased opportunities for Victorians to experience original local art. Following in the footsteps of early galleries like Pandora's Box and the Print Gallery were new ones like the Backroom Gallery, Utley's Gallery, Kyle's Gallery, and Winchester Galleries. The Limners do not have an official gallery, but Winchester Galleries comes closest to it, representing several of the Limners including Graham and Wilkinson. The Art Gallery of Greater Victoria also continued to expand and update their premises, and the Signal Hill Creative Arts Centre was still active. Art students likewise benefited from the formation of the Victoria

College of Art in 1973. Many of the early private commercial galleries were short-lived, but Open Space Gallery, an experimental non-profit gallery founded in 1971, is still an important venue for the local contemporary arts. Conceived by Gene Miller, Open Space is a multi-faceted gallery. Not only does it exhibit contemporary art but it also sponsors poetry readings, performances, plays, and other avant-garde art forms.⁷¹

Colin Graham retired as director of the Art Gallery in 1973, after twenty-two years of dedicated service. He had fostered the gallery's commitment to exhibit local art and had brought Victoria's public in touch with international contemporary artistic concerns. He had introduced lectures, films, art classes, workshops, gallery tours, and the art rental service, and his aims were continued and expanded by subsequent directors. Graham's successor, Richard Simmons, launched on an exciting program of bringing to the Gallery current art forms such as performance art and experimental film and video. In the mid-seventies he organized popular events such as the Royal Canadian Aerial Theatre's creation of a helium balloon sculpture. During the seventies the Gallery's exhibition and storage capacities were increased thanks to federal funding. A curator of contemporary art was hired and an annual exhibition of local art started. Art education also improved at this time. In 1973 the Victoria College of Art opened its doors. It was founded by Bill Bartlett and originally called the Northwest Coast Institute of the Arts. Today the school, which offers an intensive two-year non-credit program in visual art, is headed by artist/teacher Joseph Kyle and trains many young Victoria artists.⁷²

The seventies were filled with expansion and growth in the local art scene and increased experimentation among its artists. Although

this decade was a period of inflation and economic uncertainty in B.C., it seems to have been a prosperous time for the arts. Some Victorians were beginning to realize that art was a good investment and started collecting Northwest Coast Indian art as well as works by the Linnners and other contemporary artists.

NOTES

- 1 Julia Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Robin and Sylvia Skelton," 12 December 1988.
- 2 Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Myfanwy Pavelic," 7 December 1988.
- 3 Pictorial Folk Art: New England to California (New York and London 1949), 7-11.
- 4 Maxwell Bates, Far Away Flags (Victoria 1964), 50.
- 5 Whittaker interview with Pavelic.
- 6 Whittaker interview with the Skeltons.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 In conversation with Pat Martin Bates, 20 April, 1989. Some of the information contained in the 1986 issue of the Limner catalogue is incorrect. Forrest left the group in 1973, not 1972, and rejoined in 1981, not 1980. Pat Martin Bates joined in 1980, not 1981. Jack Wilkinson joined in 1981, not 1978. Colin Graham became a proper member in 1980, not 1981. Siebner became president in 1982, not 1983, and Graham in 1983, not 1985.
- 9 The Limners (Victoria 1986), n.p.
- 10 Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Colin Graham," 11 November 1988.
- 11 Whittaker interview with the Skeltons.
- 12 Whittaker interview with Forrest.
- 13 Whittaker interview with the Skeltons.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Bernard S. Myers, ed., McGraw-Hill Dictionary of Art, Vol 5 (New York 1969), 20-21. For more information on runes see H. Shetelig and H. Falk,

Scandinavian Archeology, Oxford, 1937.

16 Whittaker interview with Forrest.

17 Siebner and Pavelic feel most strongly that the Limners should have had an exhibition at the A.G.G.V. since 1972.

18 Whittaker interviews with the Skeltons, Pavelic, and Siebner.

19 Nicholas Tuele and Liane Davison, Art in Victoria: 1960-1986 (Victoria 1986), n.p.

20 Frank Nowosad, Ciccimarra: A Biography (Ann Arbor 1988), 149.

21 Ibid., 151-152.

22 Ibid., 160, 170.

23 Ibid., 172.

24 Ibid., 188.

25 D. Gain, "Body Gives Mood," Daily Colonist, July 13, 1971, 17, quoted in Nowosad, 168-169.

26 Ibid., 147-148.

27 Ibid., 150, 195.

28 Erith Smith, "Year of the Limners," Daily Colonist, July 22, 1973, 18.

29 John Hespeler, "Cohesion is Limners' Strength," Victoria Times, July 30, 1973, 13.

30 Whittaker interview with Forrest.

31 Ibid.

32 Whittaker interview with Graham.

33 Whittaker interview with Forrest.

34 Robin Skelton, The Memoirs of a Literary Blockhead (Toronto 1988), 213.

- 35 Whittaker interview with Forrest.
- 36 Herbert Siebner, letter dated December 9, 1972, found in the A.G.G.V library file on the artist.
- 37 For more information on the Adaskins see Kathleen Niwa, For Frances and Murray: The Adaskin Art Collection, Victoria: University of Victoria, 1988.
- 38 There were only seven Limners at this time.
- 39 Whittaker interview with the Skeltons.
- 40 Skelton, "Karl Spreitz," Malahat Review XXXVIII (January 1976), 57.
- 41 In conversation with the painting's owner. Private collection, Victoria.
- 42 Skelton, Memoirs..., 219.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Herbert Siebner," 6 December 1988.
- 45 Skelton, Memoirs..., 211.
- 46 Whittaker interview with the Skeltons.
- 47 Skelton, Memoirs..., 215.
- 48 Nowosad, "The enigmatic Maxwell Bates," Monday Magazine (Oct. 1-7, 1982), 17.
- 49 Whittaker interview with Pavelic.
- 50 Nowosad, "The metamorphosis of Maxwell," Monday Magazine (March 16-22, 1979), n.p.
- 51 Ian M. Thom, Maxwell Bates: A Retrospective (Victoria 1982), 36.
- 52 Whittaker interview with the Skeltons.

- 53 "Art World loses one of its greats," Times-Colonist, Sept. 17, 1980, 15.
- 54 Skelton, Memoirs..., 216.
- 55 "Art World loses one of its greats," 15.
- 56 Peter Bell, "An exhibition with a difference," The Evening Telegram, Charlottetown, P.E.I., Sept. 13, 1975, 14.
- 57 Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Elza Mayhew," 9 December 1988.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Skelton, "Robert de Castro," Malahat Review XXXX (October 1976), 62-63.
- 60 Ibid., 61.
- 61 Ibid., 62-63.
- 62 Ibid., 63.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 Robert De Castro, statement on Whale's Gallery invitation, 1983.
- 65 Nowosad, "An odd anonymity," Monday Magazine (Dec. 2-8, 1985), n.p.
- 66 The Portland Art Museum, Paintings and Sculptures of the Pacific Northwest: Oregon, Washington, British Columbia (Portland 1959), 67.
- 67 Skelton, "Myfanwy Pavelic: Perception & Solitude," Malahat Review XXIII (July 1972), 62.
- 68 Whittaker interview with Pavelic.
- 69 Ibid.
- 70 Skelton, "Pavelic...," 64.
- 71 Tuele and Davison, Art in Victoria: 1960-1986, n.p.
- 72 Ibid.

1980-1989: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Although the remaining core members of the Limners are getting older, they remain active artists working very much within the idiom developed during the fifties, sixties, and seventies. New members have added life to the group and offset the losses of Ciccimarra, Bates, and De Castro. Jack Wilkinson, a fellow student of Mayhew and De Castro at Zach's studio and long-time friend of the artists, became a Limner in 1981, and first exhibited with the group in the Limner exhibition of that year at the Horizon Gallery in Edmonton.¹ His work fits into the early Limner program because he primarily paints the human figure. Like fellow Limners Bates, Mayhew, Pavelic, and Siebner, Wilkinson is a member of the Royal Canadian Academy. When asked whether the group placed importance on membership in the Academy, Siebner cryptically replied "yes and no - the public thinks it's important."² Although the Limners have always viewed themselves as the vanguard of art in Victoria, they retain an interest in traditional media and subject matter, and are in tune with what the Victoria public wants, since many of the collectors are personal friends. The Limners have thus come full circle, or rather the tastes of the public have caught up with them. No longer is their art considered strange and daring: the Limners now represent the art establishment. This is evident in the respectful, awed tones in which people speak and write about them.

When Times-Colonist art critic Robert Amos, for example, reviewed Mayhew's exhibit at the Port Angeles Fine Arts Centre in August, 1988, he said "In 1988 art is often cynical, fragmented, bound up in its own psychoses. Mayhew's works stand above all that: patient, engaging,

composed." The Fine Arts Centre occupies a modern-style home built in 1951 which Amos noted was the perfect setting for the work of a sculptor trained in the fifties. He compared this Centre to the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria:

It reminded me of what Victoria's Art Gallery must have been in 1955...its splendid house, given to the city by a generous patron, Sara Spencer...a highly motivated new director, Colin Graham, sharing the heady thrill of modernism with Victoria's young and restless...a developing art, positive and confident, continuing an unbroken tradition going back millennia.³

These nostalgic reminiscences by young artists and writers of an earlier period of art in Victoria are fairly common.

Forrest rejoined the group in 1981 after an eight year absence.⁴ Her work of the eighties continues to be concerned with human relationships and with a compassionate representation of the human condition. She depicted friends of hers in a work entitled Father and Daughter in 1981. (fig. 114) The death-like figure of the father and the lonely mood of this painting owes a great deal to Ciccimarra. Forrest said of this work that she had left the mother of the child out of the picture for no apparent reason. A short while later the couple ended their relationship, and Forrest feels there is a premonition of this in her work, even though she had not consciously been aware of it while painting.⁵

One of Forrest's daughters is married to a man of Middle Eastern origin, and she painted her daughter and olive-skinned grandson in her work Love of approximately 1982. (fig. 115) Like Ciccimarra but unlike Pavelic and Bates, Forrest tends to leave out facial details in her paintings. Like Siebner's, her works are symbolic representations of human emotions and desires, as illustrated in the title of this work Love. She rarely specifies

who the subjects are but rather treats them as archetypal figures.

During a trip to Mexico in 1987 Forrest, like Ciccimarra before her, took snapshots of what she saw there. She was moved by the poverty she witnessed and, on her return to Canada, painted a work based on a photograph she had taken of a starving dog.⁶ The work, *Solo Pero*, (fig. 116) is loosely painted in shades of grey, blue, and green. The dog's suffering is rendered through its despondent pose and emaciated frame. Forrest's compassionate nature is seen in her life-long subject matter - relationships and loneliness - and in her strong friendships with fellow artists.

Forrest had always felt the Limner group to be too exclusive, and this was partly the reason she temporarily left it in 1973. In the early eighties Forrest and Pavelic, supported by Pat Martin Bates, suggested that the Limners disband the structured element of the group but remain as friends. They felt that the last few Limner shows had been too mixed looking. Skelton and Siebner, strong figures in the Society, argued to stay together, fearing that if they disbanded they would lose the name *the Limners*. Siebner, meanwhile, continued to call for a Limner gallery to be established. Said Forrest, the situation of the group "was worse than before."⁷ This clearly indicates the casual nature of the group and the fact that many members feel they are simply supportive friends instead of a formal society.

Bates had remained honerary president of the group until his death in 1980, and various Limners had held the position of chairperson during the seventies. During the eighties the positions of president and chairperson were combined into one position and held by Pavelic (1980-81), Siebner (1982-83), Graham (1983-84), and since 1985 by Pat Martin Bates.⁸

Martin Bates joined the group in 1980, the same year De Castro left the fold, and was instrumental in getting Forrest to rejoin. She convinced Forrest that it was important for her to be part of the large exhibition in Edmonton planned for the following year.⁹ Potters Walter Dexter and Jan Grove were asked to become Limners in 1981, partly to increase the numbers of the society. Later, Grove's wife Helga, also a potter, was added. A new catalogue was printed in 1981 to announce the changes in membership. Again, Siebner designed the poster for this exhibit, which featured the Limner logo, a rune symbolizing "mankind". (fig. 117) The figures on this poster represent the members of the group and are a tribute to the late Bates. The artists are painted as kings and queens, recalling the beggar-kings in Bates's paintings.

Pavelic had earlier exhibited her portraits at the Horizon Gallery, and the group probably got their exhibit as a result of this connection. During the eighties Pavelic has continued to paint portraits of fellow artists and other friends. A special series of family portraits of local Victorians were exhibited at the North Park Gallery in 1985 under the title *Relationships*. In the exhibition catalogue Pavelic describes why she enjoys painting fellow Limners and other friends. She said

I do fewer commissions now because I can't risk as much as I would like to. But with fellow artists there is the fun of experiment and adventure. They are so individual and spontaneous that they allow me more freedom since we are all involved in the creative process.¹⁰

A few years before, in 1983, however, Pavelic completed what could be considered her most important commission: a portrait of renowned violinist and conductor Sir Yehudi Menuhin to be hung in the National Portrait Gallery in London. Because of her interest in music Pavelic is acquainted with many important musicians. Menuhin and Pavelic had

known each other for many years, and he had been impressed with the studies Pavelic had made of him over the years. One 1976 collage captures Menuhin in a contemplative mood. (fig. 118) When, in 1983, Menuhin was asked if he would sit for a portrait for the National Gallery he agreed on condition that Pavelic be the painter.¹¹ The Gallery, according to Pavelic, would have preferred the portrait be painted by a well-known British artist but Menuhin was adamant about his choice. She worked on the project for a year, creating 34 paintings and about 40 drawings, including some informal sketches of the musician in his dressing room. "I enjoyed it", recalls Pavelic, "I like the man and knew what I wanted to catch of him". In the end Pavelic narrowed it down to five portraits she felt were suitable to hang in the Portrait Gallery. Menuhin and his family chose the one Pavelic herself had felt was the best.¹²

In a 1987 article Menuhin praised Pavelic's work. He said "Her art is not only to see and to observe, but to see through a person, to bring a compassionate sympathy to her subject, and to remain uncompromising in the standards of technical integrity she sets herself."¹³ At the 1984 unveiling of the portrait in London, Menuhin commented that Pavelic had "captured the hands most marvellously...and my mood and feeling." This was a great honour for a Victoria artist who is little known east of Edmonton. She became the first Canadian woman, and only the third Canadian in history, to have a painting hung in the National Portrait Gallery in London.¹⁴

A few years earlier she had completed several portraits of Katharine Hepburn. Pavelic had always admired the actress, and, when she discovered one day during the early eighties that Hepburn was being interviewed by American talk-show host Dick Cavett in five consecutive

half-hour television programs, she immediately seized upon the idea of painting her television image. Pavelic completed several sketches and paintings but hesitated to hang them in her home because she felt she was invading the actress's privacy by possessing portraits Hepburn had no idea existed. Finally Pavelic sent her a photograph of one of the works along with a letter saying that she would be happy to send it if the actress liked it. One day Pavelic received a call from Hepburn who exclaimed in her deep throaty voice "I don't know how you say that goddamn name of yours - I love it !" Thus began an enduring friendship between Pavelic and Hepburn that has included several visits to each other's homes.¹⁵ Since then Pavelic has made several paintings of Hepburn including an acrylic called Katharine Hepburn of 1987-88. (fig. 119)

The story of how the original painting Pavelic had offered Hepburn finally reached the actress is amusing. It had been delayed enroute because each time the parcel reached an airport or customs office loyal fans of the actress had wanted to write messages on it like "we love you Kate." One message actually said "What the hell are you doing having something sent to you from some God forsaken place called Sidney!"¹⁶ When the portrait did finally arrive Hepburn wrote Pavelic a letter of thanks. She said:

Dear Myf, It's so damn good and you're so damn talented and I'm the lucky woman who's pictured by you. I can't get over those two things, your sensitivity to a person's "sort of" imaginings of themselves and the things that mean something to them. Just great. I do envy you so much. Kate.¹⁷

Hepburn understood that Pavelic was painting her from the "inside out". The admiration was mutual. Said Pavelic of her friend Hepburn, "She's a sweet person. Sweet - no, that's not the right word. She's a *real* person."¹⁸

In 1985 the Limners held a group exhibition at the University's Maltwood Art Museum and Gallery. The previous year Pavelic had been awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Victoria. In that same year the Limners were joined by new members Carole Sabiston and LeRoy Jensen. These younger artists have ensured that the Limners will continue to prosper for many more years. Wilkinson, Martin Bates, Dexter, the Groves, Sabiston, and Jensen are what could be termed second-generation Limners. Like the charter members, these new Limners have as their goal to support each other as artists and friends and arrange group exhibits. Current president Martin Bates, who has connections with galleries around the world, has been especially diligent in attempting to organize Limner exhibitions. Future shows in London, England, and Japan are in the planning stages.¹⁹ These younger artists have also added an important element of organization to the group and its meetings. The Skeltons have commented on the efficiency and organization of members such as Martin Bates and Dexter. Bates, they said, was "hopeless as a chairman - he enjoyed stirring people up and then listening to what was said - basically he liked to get together."²⁰

The Limners had their most recent group exhibit in 1986 at the Atelier Gallery in Vancouver. For this show they produced an updated Limner catalogue to reflect the many changes that had taken place in the group since their last catalogue in 1981. Since then their ranks had increased considerably. Although De Castro had left the group in 1980 he continued to be featured in the booklets. When the 1986 catalogue was being produced he was in hospital dying of cancer. On the inside cover of the 1986 catalogue is featured a photograph of the artists assembled in Mayhew's studio in March of 1986. (fig. 120) They surround a portrait of the absent De Castro. From this photo it is clear that the Limners are a group of friends who enjoy each

others' company. Their tribute to De Castro illustrates that, even when artists leave the group, they remain friends with their past associates.

The year 1986 was important for both Mayhew and Siebner: Mayhew was given a commission for a sculpture to be exhibited at Expo '86, and Siebner had a major solo exhibition in Berlin. Mayhew had completed two sculptures for Expo '67 in Montreal and, as a result of her national reputation, was invited to create a work for Expo '86 in Vancouver to be placed near the B.C. Pavilion. She spent eighteen months making Zong I, a seven foot high, 600 pound bronze with a green patina. (fig. 121)²¹ Cast in a single pour at the Nordhammer Art Foundry in Oakland, California, Zong I reflects Mayhew's earlier concerns with ancient civilizations and archetypal imagery. Unlike the titles of most of her work, this title does not carry a specific meaning. In a handout of definitions of Mayhew's sculpture titles that accompanied her recent solo exhibition at the Port Angeles Fine Arts Centre, Port Angeles, Washington (Aug. 18-Sept. 17, 1988), the meaning of "Zong" was given as "Just a title, Zong." It could refer to the clanging resonant sound of bronze being struck. The name could also suggest ancient Chinese artifacts. We know that the bronze Chinese bell in Beacon Hill Park had been a favourite object of Mayhew's since she was a child. The weathered-look and green patina of the surface of her sculpture Zong I certainly recalls ancient Chinese bronzes. The Chinese connection is also hinted at by Mayhew herself when she described this sculpture. She notes "Connected as Zong is with the totem, the pagoda, and certain contemporary architecture, the sculpture tends to be universal in its references. It is a generational piece. It has a past."²²

The inclusion of contemporary architecture in her list of

influences is interesting. She herself was friends with the architects who transformed Victoria's architecture in the fifties and sixties and, in fact, hired Alan Hodgson to build her studio. The design of the modern flat-roofed building fits her particular needs. A high-ceilinged workspace can be entered through a sliding garage door to facilitate moving her large sculptures. The studio also features a main-floor den where she can entertain fellow artists and other friends, and a top-floor one-bedroom suite for evenings when she works late on her sculpture and decides to stay the night. She does not use this suite as much as she has in the past.²³

On the subject of local architecture we should also examine the link between the Limners and architects such as John Di Castri, John Wade, Peter Cotton, and Alan Hodgson. These men set about in the fifties and sixties to transform the architecture of Victoria from the traditional buildings of Maclure and Rattenbury to a more modern style influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright and the Bauhaus. In many ways they had aims similar to those of the Limners during this time. The growing numbers of patrons who appreciated modern art were not merely content to have it hanging on their walls: they also wanted to live in homes that reflected twentieth century tastes. We have seen that the Limners themselves patronized these architects. Mayhew had her studio built by Hodgson, and Pavelic had her studio and home in Saanich designed by Wade.²⁴

Mayhew is specific about her preferences in the types of locations in which her sculptures are placed and feels her works are best seen from below. She is not pleased with the fact that two of her major totem-sculptures in public collections in Victoria, one at the University of Victoria and the other at the Provincial Archives of B.C., are both displayed in a sunken

setting.²⁵ Mayhew was happy that Zong I would be placed in an elevated location on the Expo grounds. Said she "there's only one little hill on the whole sea-level Expo site and that's where it will stand."²⁶ Unfortunately the Expo organizers did not place Zong I in the agreed-upon location. What followed illustrates Mayhew's determination, strong will, and attachment to her sculptures. According to Skelton, Mayhew requested that Zong I be moved. When it was not Mayhew threatened to remove it from the site. The officials must not have believed that any artist would miss the opportunity to have her work seen by millions of people and took no heed of her threat. When no action was taken to move her work, Mayhew came and took it back to Victoria.²⁷

Throughout the years Mayhew has invented what she calls her "special new recipes" to give her sculptures colour and patina. Earlier, when she worked in poured concrete, she often mixed in things like lampblack powder to make it black. She also enjoys giving her bronze sculptures patinas. For Zong I she used two or three coats of a "special recipe", which included copper nitrate, to give it a green surface. This was difficult work because the solution needed to be applied to a hot surface in order to be effective. Mayhew had to heat Zong I with torches at both ends while she poured the mixture on it.²⁸

At seventy-three Mayhew is showing few signs of slowing down. She still works in her studio regularly and continues to explore the totem, altar, and figural forms she developed in previous decades. Siebner, similarly, is as productive now as ever. The walls of his Prospect Lake home are covered with his oils and watercolours, and prints and small sculptural reliefs abound in his basement studio. Siebner holds annual exhibitions at

his home which eventually turn into parties. All his friends, as well as the artist himself, have got older and mellower, however, and I suspect the parties are not as daring and unconventional as they once were. Pavelic also holds annual exhibitions and art sales in her studio in Saanich, which similarly are friendly get-togethers for her fellow artists and collectors.

Siebner has had several retrospective exhibitions of his work, most notably his 1984 Art Gallery of Greater Victoria exhibit Dualities, which celebrated 30 years in Victoria, and his 1986 exhibition 40 Years of Painting the Human Landscape held in Hausam Luetzowplatz in Berlin. His work of the eighties continues to deal with human relationships and depicts giants and giantesses, centaurs, and couples. His painting Giants in Stormy Weather of 1984 (fig. 122) illustrates his continued interest in depicting simplified nude figures against a brightly coloured landscape. In this work we can also see Siebner's practice of painting over layers of older images in order to produce a richly textured pattern under his painting.

Of all the Limmers, Siebner the artist and Skelton the writer have been the only two to collaborate on art projects other than films and Dada-inspired events. Their collaboration began in 1966 when Skelton gave Siebner some of his poems and asked him to make illustrations for them. The result was the book Inscriptions, published in 1967 after being in production for a year. Siebner explained that the illustrations began to take on a life of their own and eventually related less and less to the poetic images.²⁹ Their second collaborative venture Siebner and Skelton approached differently. They had both been producing works dealing with the theme of love and erotica and decided to choose poems and images that could accompany each other. The result was Musebook of 1972. Their third

book is currently in the making. This time Siebner, around 1981, gave Skelton a set of woodcuts and asked him to write the accompanying verses. According to Siebner, the book may be published around 1990 and will be simply called Woodcuts.³⁰ In the meantime Skelton wrote a major work on Siebner's life and art, entitled Herbert Siebner: A Monograph, published in 1979.

Siebner's friend Spreitz has continued to create his whimsical paintings and collages in his spare time but remains primarily a freelance filmmaker and commercial photographer. Spreitz is the official Limner photographer. Whenever the group needs photos taken for exhibition catalogues, articles, or monographs, Spreitz is always available.

No one knows what the future will hold for the Limners, but it looks promising. In 1991 they will celebrate their 20th anniversary together. An exhibit at the Maltwood Art Museum and Gallery is planned for January 1990, and others are in the planning stages. When some members were asked what they thought the future of the group would be the responses were optimistic. When Pavelic was asked whether she saw the Limners continuing for a long time she replied "Well there have been many times when I didn't think it would go on 'til next week. I would hope [it would continue], but then we're all getting on...."³¹ The Skeltons concurred that the group had benefited from the life injected into it by the new younger members. They felt it would continue but that it might undergo some changes. Robin Skelton added at the end of our interview, "I think quite simply we would miss it."³²

What were the Limners' aims when they formed the Society

besides organizing exhibitions and supporting each other as friends? Pavelic, who modestly considers herself the "small speck in the group"³³ because of her lack of any real formal art training, had hoped when the Limners first formed "that we would get together, we were all very different, and talk about our work. I'm not good at talking about my work. I'm not a good critic." She had hoped the meetings would have been an opportunity for them to bring a work and have others "tear it apart", but they were entertaining social gatherings that "didn't get down to critiquing."³⁴ She recalls the first time an artwork was discussed in any depth at a meeting. Early in 1981 Pavelic had completed a portrait of Bates which she brought to one of the meetings. She said that she found the critical evaluation given by her fellow artists to be extremely useful. "We all paint alone", she says, "but I wish we could meet and talk about it, but we don't seem to."³⁵

Siebner adds that once in a while the group would talk about someone's work and that some members were influenced by seeing what their fellow artists were producing. They did not, however, work together. Siebner feels that "you have to ignore your individual style in order to work together."³⁶ Clearly this was not the aim of the group. Each member was a mature, experienced artist who would have objected to any attempts made at producing a group style. There is some evidence that the artists influenced each other in certain ways, but it is safe to say that each member treasured his or her unique style and avoided copying the works of other Limners. As Skelton puts it in his autobiography Memoirs of a Literary Blockhead, "It was and is a splendid group of artists, and every member of the group could be reasonably described as just a touch eccentric."³⁷

We have seen that the artists who formed the Limners in 1971

played an integral role in the development of modern art in Victoria. Their enthusiasm and friendship have enlivened the local scene. Skelton describes this era and feels that "one of the most striking things about the Limners, and indeed about the whole of Victoria's art scene in the sixties and seventies, was the gaiety and the exuberance of the artists, and their generosity." One incident involving Limners Skelton and Siebner illustrates the friendly and co-operative spirit which characterizes the group. One day, Skelton recalls, he was admiring a small work by Siebner which the artist said he could have for nothing. Skelton refused to accept it, so Siebner named a nominal price. Skelton again refused this show of generosity. The friends finally arrived at a price agreeable to both. Skelton says, with surprise, that this was the only reversed auction he had ever encountered.³⁸

During the eighties Victoria has continued to grow in terms of its art scene. The major 1986 Art Gallery of Greater Victoria exhibition Art in Victoria 1960-1986 featured the work of seventy-five outstanding local artists, among them members of the Limners, instructors at the Visual Arts department at the University and the Victoria College of Art, and some of the many working artists in Victoria. The UVIC Visual Arts department and the College of Art continue to produce professional artists and visually-literate people each year.

During the mid-eighties the Victoria College of Art started running its own student art gallery near the corner of Yates and Government Streets. This is only one of the many new galleries that have sprung up in the city during this decade. One recent gallery (of sorts) is worth mentioning by name because it humorously recalls the unusual locations early local artists were forced to exhibit their work. The place is Squekey's Laundromat,

and it affords young contemporary artists the chance to receive exposure. Unlike those working in the forties, fifties, and sixties, however, artists now have a broad range of venues at which to exhibit their art.

Art criticism in Victoria's newspapers has also improved during the eighties. Ciccimarra's biographer Frank Nowosad, now living in Vancouver, continues to write periodically about local artists. Artist/critic Robert Amos, formerly at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, wrote art reviews for Monday Magazine until 1986 when he began writing his weekly art column for the Times-Colonist. Amos is an effective critic who deals with the broad spectrum of the arts in Victoria, from works by the Limners to crafts and native art. The future for art in Victoria is exciting. The city's population is growing quickly and it should benefit not only from an increase in the number of visual artists moving here, but also from the continued diversification of art styles and concerns that will come with that growth.

When we first began our study of the Limners in the early twenties the population of Greater Victoria was 38,727.³⁹ By 1986 it had grown to 255,547.⁴⁰ The reason for this growth is to be found in the number of immigrants who have made Victoria their home over the years. We have seen that in the twenties and thirties there was an influx of people from the British Isles. Later, from the end of WWII to the sixties, there was a large amount of European immigration. Among these people were Kearley, Zach, Siebner, Spreitz, Ciccimarra, and Skelton, who transformed art in Victoria. Lately the city has seen a growth in the Asian community which has added to its diverse population. Somewhere along the way, during the post-war years, Victoria evolved from a "teacup and sketchbook" society into its present stage as an exciting contemporary art centre.

NOTES

- 1 In conversation with Pat Martin Bates, 20 April, 1989.
- 2 Julia Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Herbert Siebner," 6 December 1988.
- 3 Robert Amos, "Mayhew works displayed perfectly in idyllic setting," Times-Colonist, Aug. 27, 1988, C2.
- 4 In conversation with Pat Martin Bates.
- 5 Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Nita Forrest," 10 December 1988.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 North Park Gallery, Relationships: Myfanwy Pavelic Spencer (Victoria 1985), n.p.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 In conversation with Pat Martin Bates.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Myfanwy Pavelic," 7 December 1988.
- 13 Yehudi Menuhin, "Myfanwy Spencer Pavelic," World Link (Feb. 1987), 23.
- 14 Grania Litwin, "Artist wins fame abroad," The Review, June 6, 1984, B1.
- 15 Whittaker interview with Pavelic.
- 16 Litwin, "Artist wins fame...," B1.
- 17 Katharine Hepburn's letter to Pavelic, viewed during interview.

- 18 Whittaker interview with Pavelic.
- 19 Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Robin and Sylvia Skelton," 12 December 1988.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 "Zong's the name," Times-Colonist, March 6, 1986, n.p.
- 22 Port Angeles Fine Arts Centre, "One-page biography for Elza Mayhew exhibition." (Aug. 18 - Sept. 17, 1988)
- 23 Whittaker, "Personal taped interview with Elza Mayhew," 9 December 1988.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Amos, "Untitled weekly art column," Times-Colonist, March 22, 1986, n.p.
- 27 Robin Skelton, The Memoirs of a Literary Blockhead (Toronto 1988), 218.
- 28 Whittaker interview with Mayhew.
- 29 Whittaker interview with Siebner.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Whittaker interview with Pavelic.
- 32 Whittaker interview with the Skeltons.
- 33 Whittaker interview with Pavelic.
- 34 Roberta J. Pazdro, "Interview with Myfanwy Pavelic," 1981. P.A.B.C. Tape 3832:1-2.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Whittaker interview with Siebner.

- 37 Skelton, Memoirs..., 214.
- 38 Ibid., 221.
- 39 Census 1921, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Ottawa, 1921, 540.
- 40 Census 1986, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Ottawa, Sept. 1987, 9-1.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has been a study of the development of modern art in Victoria as seen in the life and work of nine of its senior artists: Maxwell Bates, Richard Ciccimarra, Robert De Castro, Nita Forrest, Elza Mayhew, Myfanwy Pavelic, Herbert Siebner, Robin Skelton, and Karl Spreitz. The original five members who formed the Limner Society of artists in the summer of 1971 were Bates, Ciccimarra, Forrest, Pavelic, and Siebner. Skelton was soon asked to join as their spokesman. Bates wanted to organize local painters who dealt with the human figure in their work. This loose criterion was not adhered to, however, since soon others were added, including sculptors De Castro and Mayhew, Spreitz, and later Jack Wilkinson, Pat Martin Bates, Colin Graham, LeRoy Jensen, potters Walter Dexter and Jan and Helga Grove, and fibre artist Carole Sabiston. Not all these artists work in a figurative mode. Although several of the charter Limners have died in the last few years, those remaining have been joined by several younger artists who have brought increased organization and vitality to the group.

In Parts One and Two we set the context for a study of the original nine members of the Limner Society by surveying Victoria's art scene from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. In the early part of this century, the conservative Island Arts and Crafts Society (1909-51) played an important role. But a series of events, such as the 1932 modern art exhibit in the Modern Room, undermined the Society's dominance in Victoria and gradually led to an increased interest in modernism. Artist and teacher Ina D.D. Uthoff was a key figure in developing Victoria's first public gallery, the Little Centre, which eventually became the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. Four men who actively worked to make modern art popular in Victoria were

the Honourable Mark Kearley, who helped establish the Little Centre, Colin Graham, who became the Art Gallery's first director in 1951, Jan Zach, a Czech artist who arrived in Victoria in 1951 and revolutionized art education in the city, and Herbert Siebner, who became an important artist and teacher upon his arrival in 1954.

The history of art criticism, private art galleries, and art schools in Victoria is also examined. It was because of the lack of exhibition space that the Point Group of artists, a precursor to the Limners, formed in 1958. Siebner organized these artists, and their works were hung in Don Adams's modern Scandinavian furniture store for several years. Most of the artists who later formed the Limners had known each other for decades before the group was officially created and had been present during the most exciting years of the history of art in the city.

In our detailed look of the art of the Limners from 1920 to the present, we find that the artists are unified by many common elements of subject matter and style. Most depict the human figure, and all of them deal with some aspect of the human condition in their work. Even abstract sculptors Mayhew and De Castro create archetypal images of human forms or make reference to the human need for ritual and religion. Several of the Limners are influenced in their work by the art and artifacts of ancient cultures and produce works which contain archetypal symbols. De Castro, for example, creates potent images of maleness and femaleness and also recalls the forms of ancient tools and relics in his sculptures. Mayhew and Siebner are more influenced by myths and, like the American Abstract Expressionists of the forties and fifties, emphasize the high seriousness of art. Mayhew looks to Japanese, Pre-Columbian Meso-American, and ancient Greek art

forms, while Siebner draws upon prehistoric cave art as well as oriental philosophies like Taoism and uses the traditional technique of sgraffito. Bates was also interested in old art traditions but was influenced by naive and folk art. Spreitz, similarly, had grown up in a folk art tradition in Austria and continued to express his sense of whimsy and adventure in his later work. The subjects of Pavelic and Forrest, however, are present-day human relationships, and Pavelic is concerned with representational portraiture.

These artists also share many similar elements of style. Except for the sculpture of Mayhew, De Castro, and Skelton, the art of the Limners is predominantly concerned with a recognizable subject, however simplified or exaggerated. Interestingly, almost all of the Limners, including Bates, Siebner, and Pavelic, experimented with pure abstraction at one time but always returned to recognizable forms in their work. Bates and Siebner, more than any of the other artists, were greatly influenced by German Expressionism, and Siebner and Spreitz by Dada and Surrealism. Ciccimarra looked to the Austrian tradition of botanical watercolours and early twentieth century expressionism. Clearly the predominant artistic influences on the Limners were international rather than regional. This was fostered by early art teachers Zach and Siebner, who brought European modernism to Victoria in the early fifties. Only Mayhew, De Castro, and Skelton in their sculptures have been noticeably influenced by the indigenous art tradition of the Northwest Coast native Indians.

The Limners' emphasis on artistic skill is also a common thread that binds them together. Siebner and Pavelic in particular feel that it is important for an artist to have a solid grounding in correct drawing. This conservative view of an artist's education could be seen as connected to the

fact that several are members of the Royal Canadian Academy. The Limners certainly did influence each other and, although they rarely critiqued each others' art and rarely worked together, there are similar elements in their work. Forrest was a student of Siebner and inherited his love of colour and painterly brushstroke. Spreitz also studied under Siebner and with him strengthened his interest in Dada and Surrealism. Although the sculpture of De Castro is quite different from that of his friend Mayhew, she clearly encouraged him to make art by supporting him and setting an example of an active artist for him. They were both influenced by their teacher Zach. Pavelic and Forrest owe a great debt to Ciccimarra in their depictions of lonely and despairing figures.

Like many artists the Limners have not always managed to make a living simply from the proceeds of their work. We have seen how a group of appreciative and enthusiastic art collectors was slow to form in Victoria. This condition led Jan Zach to leave Victoria to teach art at the University of Oregon. Like Zach, Siebner, Forrest, and Mayhew taught art for a time. Siebner also periodically worked as an art restorer, and Forrest operated and worked in art galleries for many years. Pavelic, we have seen, has not needed to worry about income since she is heiress to the Spencer fortune. Ciccimarra managed to get by with odd-jobs and allowances from his wives. De Castro, likewise, did odd-jobs and at various times was a construction worker, handyman, and gravedigger. Skelton, primarily a poet, has made his living through his teaching and writing. Spreitz, also not a full-time artist, has supported himself as a free-lance commercial photographer and filmmaker. The only one who was able to live from the proceeds of his art was retired architect Bates, the best-known of the Limners.

As a group, the Limmers are not well-known outside of western Canada. How then do they view themselves and their art? These artists see themselves as the defenders of modern art in Victoria. They are among the first generation of local artists to develop purely modern concerns in their work and, more important, they are the first modern artists to be accepted by the majority of the city's population. A change has come over Victoria since the fifties. The work of the Limmers is no longer considered daring and new: many young artists are replacing them in the city's vanguard. Because of increased art criticism in the local papers, improved art education, and access to private galleries, the public's taste in art has come far since the mid-century. This cultural development occurred at the same time as the artistic development of the core group of Limmers.

Perhaps as a result of the fact that they are not extremely well-known as a group, the Limmers, in their writing and art, often publicize each others' work or depict some or all of the Society's members in their art. Skelton has written articles on several of the Limmers in the Malahat Review, as well as on other local artists, and has tended to glorify their work and their stature and at times has over-interpreted the meaning of their art. Mayhew and Pavelic, for example, remarked in their interviews with me that they had been somewhat embarrassed by Skelton's lofty praise in his articles on them. Pavelic, as official portraitist of the group, has painted likenesses of all the Limmers. Some of them, like her portrait of Ciccimarra and a large painting of Bates made shortly after his death, tend to monumentalize and immortalize the subject. In his photographs and films Spreitz has also captured his fellow artists for posterity. Siebner, likewise, often depicts members of the group in his works or dedicates paintings to his friends, and we have seen that even Bates occasionally depicted his friends in his satirical

paintings. The Limmers, although they sometimes paint a too glowing or complimentary picture of each other, cannot be faulted for the support they have given each other over the past eighteen years as a group and for many years before that. The images they create of each other are rooted in their interest in the "depth exploration of the human creature" and serve to illustrate the strong bond that remains between them.

Interest in art made in Victoria in the latter half of this century, especially by members of the Limmers, is growing rapidly. The Art Gallery of Greater Victoria has recently held several important exhibitions of local art, including the 1985 exhibit B.C. Women Artists 1885-1985 and the 1986 exhibit Art in Victoria: 1960-1986. This last show exhibited the accomplishments of seventy-five local artists including the works of seventeen current and past Limmers. Ciccimarra was the subject of a 1988 biography by Frank Nowosad as well as a major 1988 retrospective at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria that grew out of Nowosad's research. Bates is currently the subject of a yet-to-be-published biography by the wife of his fellow Calgary artist Jack Snow. The Limmers are planning a group exhibition at the Maltwood Art Museum and Gallery to be held January, 1990. In 1988 the Limmers were also the subject of a video created by a UVIC graduate with the help of a Job Development grant.

It is a very exciting time to be studying this group of artists because they are finally starting to attract the recognition they deserve, and many of them are still alive to relate personally their experiences. They have played an integral role in the development of Victoria's visual arts scene and their important contribution should be documented so that all people in Victoria come to realize the talented artists they have in their own city.

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fig. 1. Maxwell Bates, c. 1972. Photograph.

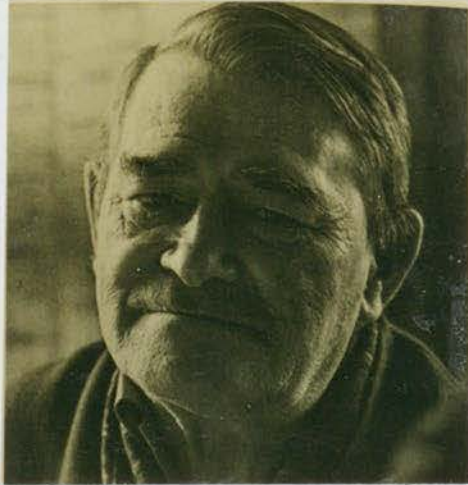


fig. 2. Richard Ciccimarra, 1964. Photograph by Karl Spreitz.

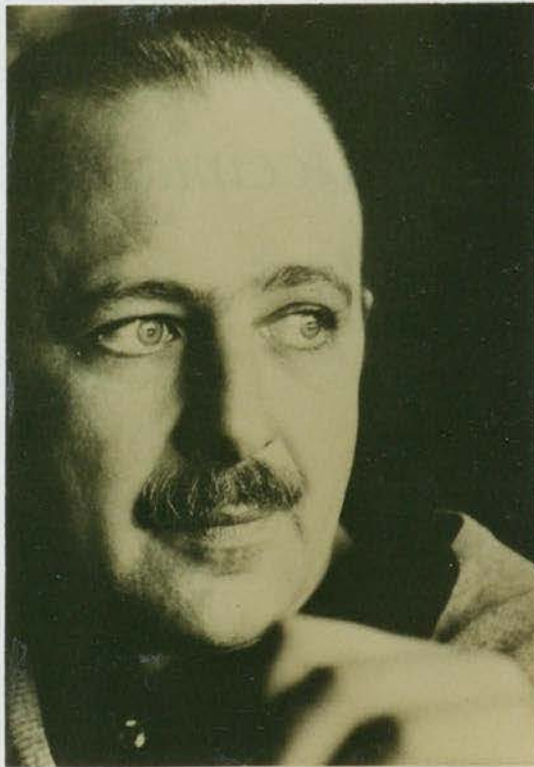


fig. 3. Robert De Castro, 1972. Limner exhibition, A.G.G.V. Photograph.



fig. 4. Nita Forrest and Sam, December 10, 1988. Photograph.



fig. 5. Elza Mayhew with small sculptures, 1972 Limner exhibition, A.G.G.V. Photograph.



fig. 6. Myfanwy Pavelic, December 7, 1988. Photograph.



fig. 7. Herbert Siebner, 1984. Photograph by Karl Spreitz.

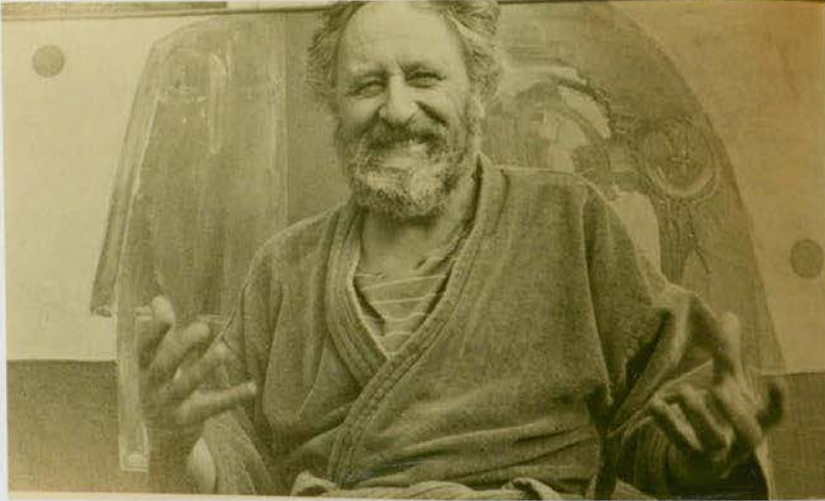


fig. 8. Robin Skelton, 1986. Photograph by Marcia McNeill Willis.

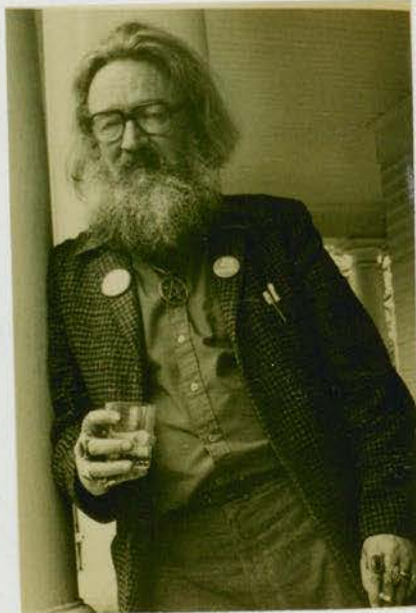


fig. 9. Herbert Siebner and Karl Spreitz, 1977. Photograph by Tom Gore.

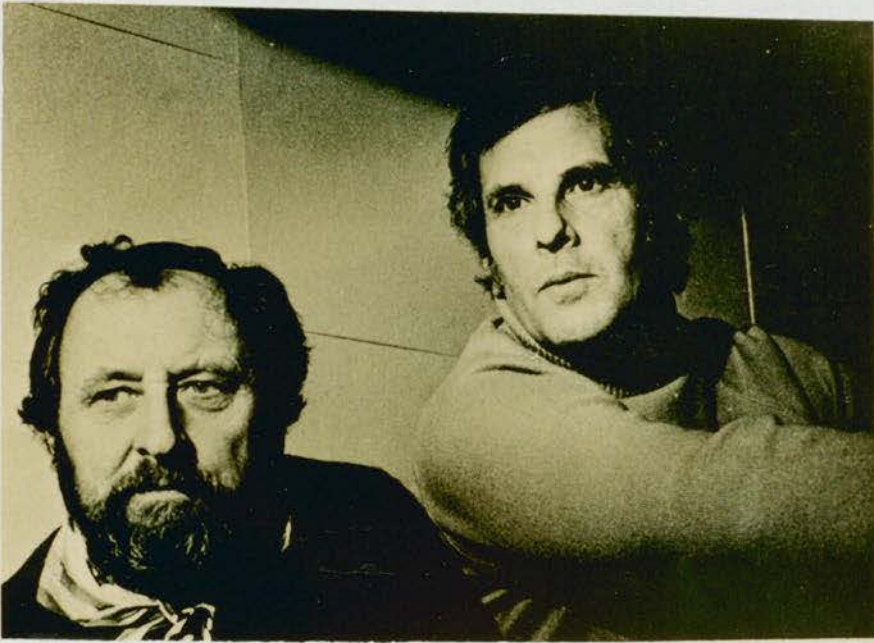


fig. 10. Maxwell Bates, Male and Female Forms, 1928. Pencil and crayon.



fig. 11. Maxwell Bates, Working Man, 1933. Oil on canvas.



fig. 12. Richard Ciccimarra, Trillium, Pink Easter Lilies, c. 1962. Watercolour.



fig. 13. Elza Mayhew, Mask, n.d. (mid-1950s) Cast iron.



fig. 14. Jan Zach, Crowd, 1959. Compound stone.

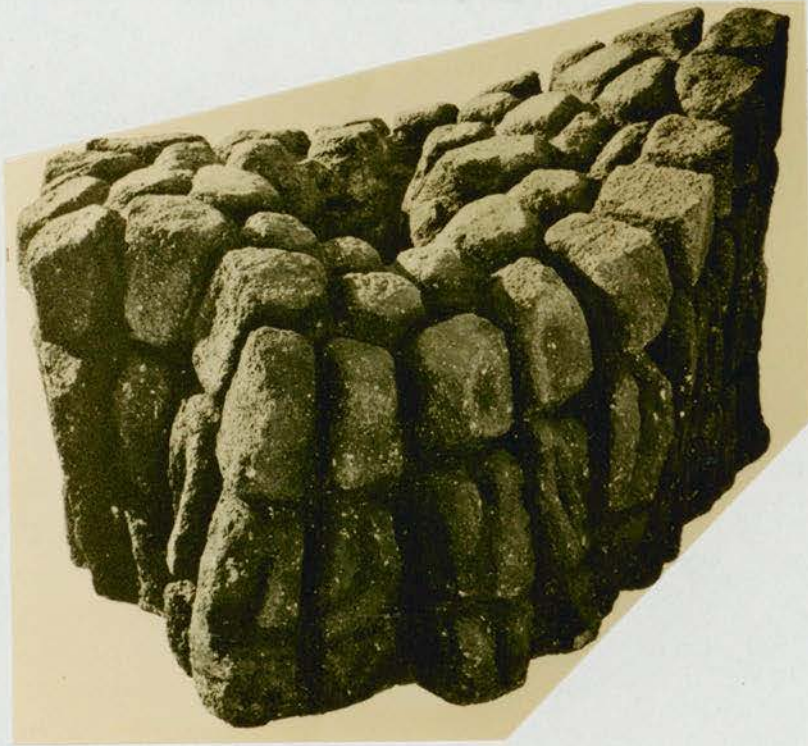


fig. 15. Jan Zach, Wrestlers, c. 1956-57. Compound stone.



fig. 16. Robert De Castro, Untitled, n.d. (c. mid-1950s) Wood.



fig. 17. Robert De Castro, Untitled, 1950s. Wood.

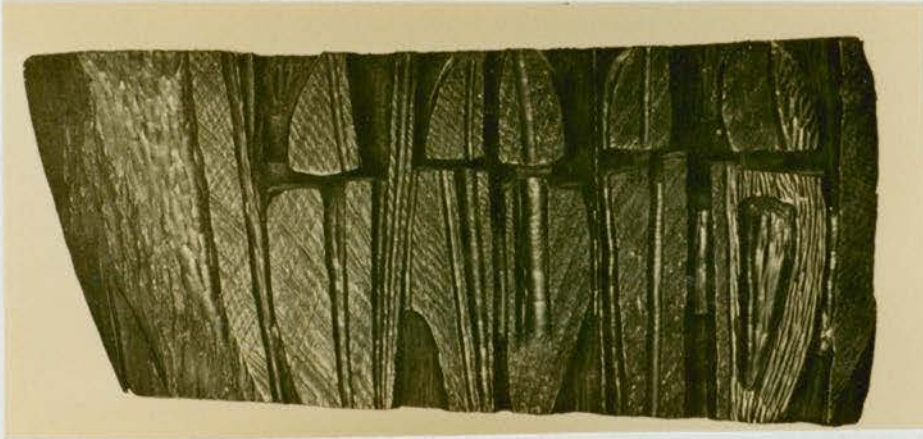


fig. 18. Herbert Siebner, Mural for Crown House Restaurant, Victoria, 1959-60. Sgraffito.



fig. 19. Jean Dubuffet, Woman in High Heels, 1946. Oil on canvas.



fig. 20. Jean Dubuffet, Corps de Dame, 1950. Watercolour.



fig. 21. Antonio Tapiés, Black with two lozenges, 1963. Oil on canvas.

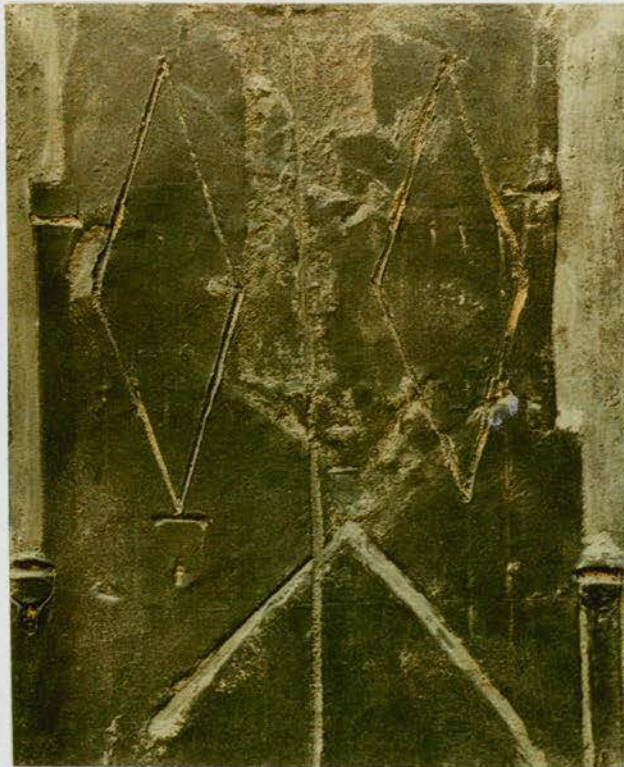


fig. 22. Richard Ciccimarra, Laughing Woman, 1956. Gouache/varnish.



fig. 23. Richard Ciccimarra, The Clown, 1958. Gouache/varnish.



fig. 24. Max Beckmann, Columbine, 1950. Oil on canvas.



fig. 25. Maxwell Bates, Woman in Blue, 1978. Oil on canvas.



fig. 26. Maxwell Bates, "Departure," 1955. Linocut.



fig. 27. Max Beckmann, Departure, 1932-33. Oil on canvas.



fig. 28. Maxwell Bates and A.W. Hodges,
St. Mary's Cathedral, Calgary,
1954-57.

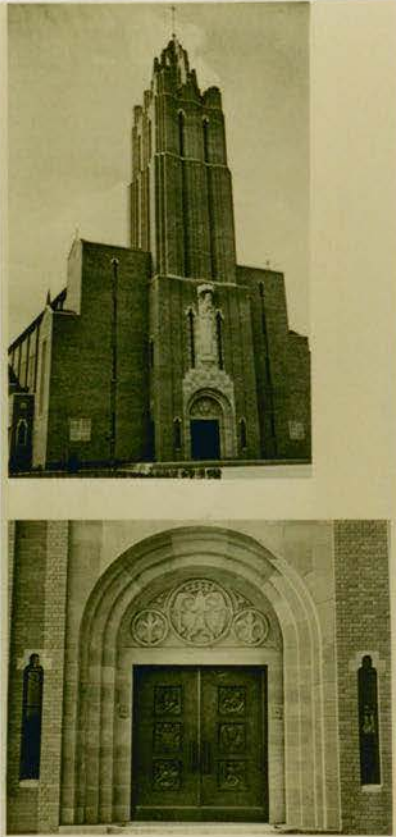


fig. 29. Maxwell Bates,
"Showgirls," 1957.
Lithograph.



fig. 30. Maxwell Bates, Alberta, 1957. (Study for a mural, never executed)
Watercolour.



fig. 31. Maxwell Bates, Girls at the Cafe Congo, 1963. Oil on canvas.

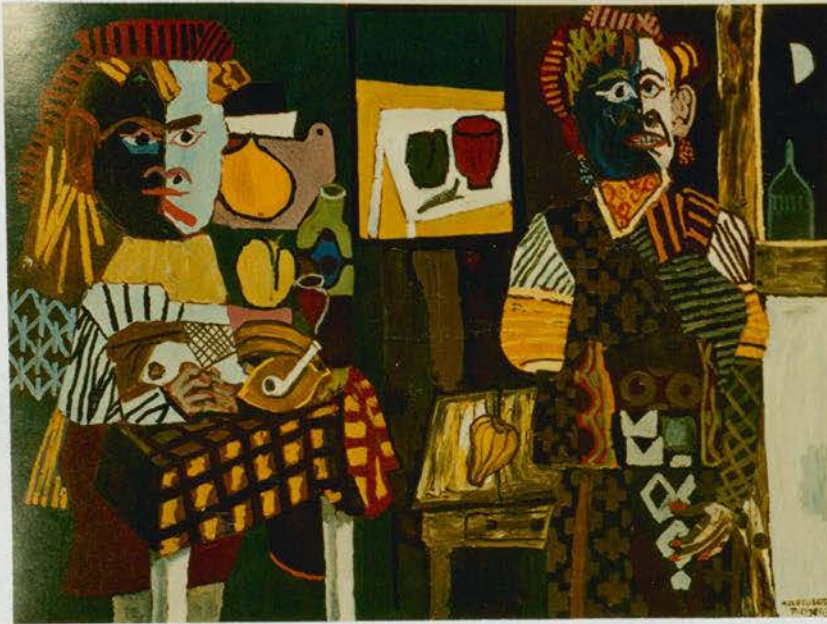


fig. 32. Maxwell Bates, Cocktail Party #1, 1965. Oil on canvas.



fig. 33. Maxwell Bates, Self-Portrait, 1965. Oil on canvas.



fig. 34. Maxwell Bates, Kindergarten, 1965. Oil on canvas.



fig. 35. Maxwell Bates,
Assassin, 1969.
Oil on canvas.



fig. 36. Robin Skelton,
AB OVO, n.d.
Collage/photomontage.

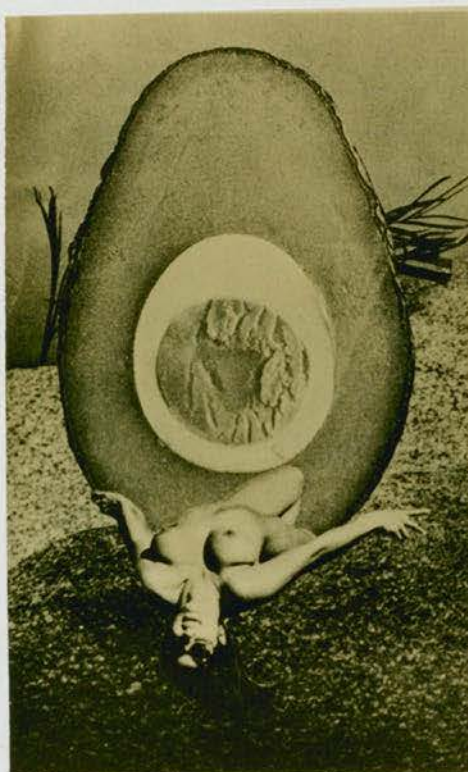


fig. 39. Herbert Siebner, Section of mural, University of Victoria, 1963-64. Sgraffito.



fig. 40. Hall of Bulls, Cave painting at Lascaux, c. 15,000-13,000 BC, Dordogne, France.



fig. 41. Herbert Siebner, Bella-Belle, 1966. Acrylic.

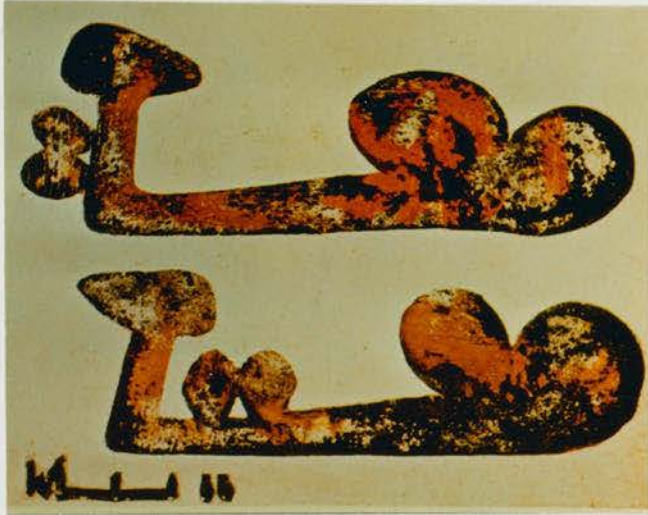


fig. 42. Herbert Siebner, The Sun Burnt Out, 1967. Sgraffito and encaustic.



fig. 43. Herbert Siebner, Giants I, 1968. Acrylic.



fig. 44. Herbert Siebner, Mural for the Provincial Museum, 1967-68.
Sgraffito and encaustic.



COLONIAL



BOND

THE CONSTRUCTION CANADA

fig. 45. Elza Mayhew, Coast Spirit, 1967. Bronze.



fig. 46. Mayan stellae A & B at Copán, Honduras, AD 731, Classic Period.



fig. 47. Elza Mayhew, Black Priestess, 1961. Bronze.



fig. 48. Chac Mool in front of the Temple of Quetzalcoátl, Tula, Hidalgo. Toltec, c. AD 800-1000.



fig. 49. Elza Mayhew,
Kore, 1962.
White compound
stone.



fig. 50. Kore, formerly at Auxerre,
c. 650-625 BC, Greek,
Early Archaic Period.



fig. 51. Elza Mayhew,
Ritual, 1962.
Bronze.

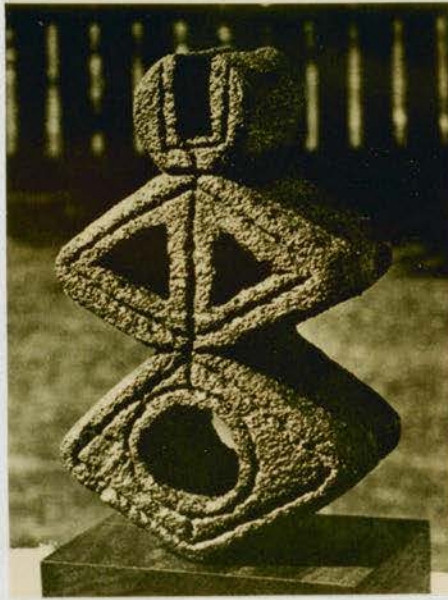


fig. 52. Elza Mayhew
and Isamu Akino,
Three rubbings of
Mayhew's sculpture
Spirit, 1963-64.

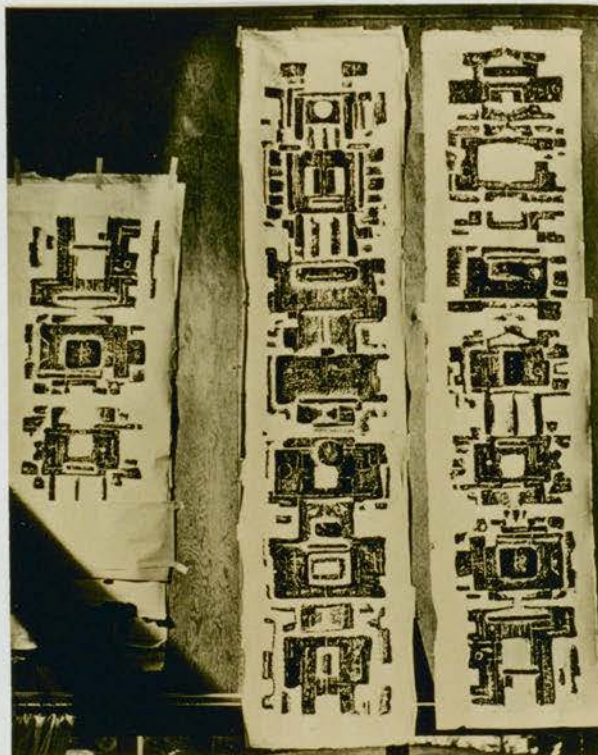


fig. 53. Robert De Castro, Untitled, 1963. Wood.



fig. 54. Robert De Castro, Forest Ghosts, 1976. Wood.



fig. 55. Robert De Castro, Untitled, 1976. Wood.



fig. 56. Richard Ciccimarra, Regretted Evening, 1961. Gouache/varnish.



fig. 57. Richard Ciccimarra, Portrait Heads, 1964. Gouache/conté/varnish.

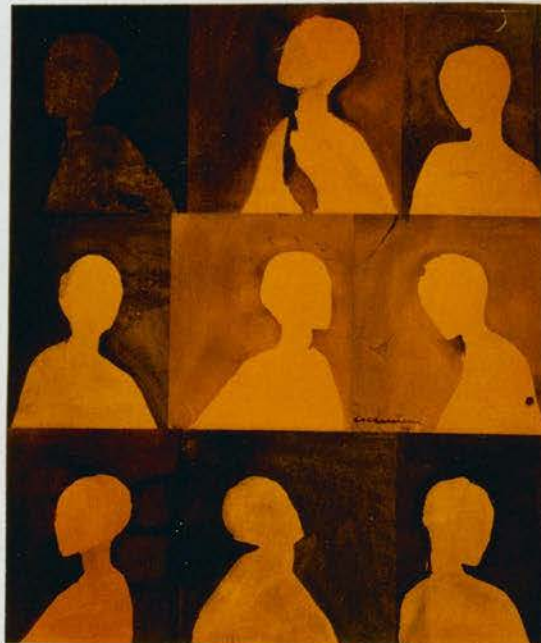


fig. 58. Richard Ciccimarra, Four Attitudes of Conciliation, 1966. Gouache/varnish.



fig. 59. Richard Ciccimarra, The Descent, c. 1968. Rice paper on wood collage.



fig. 60. Richard Ciccimarra, Untitled, n.d. Ink drawing.



fig. 61. Balthus, The Bedroom, 1954. Oil on canvas.

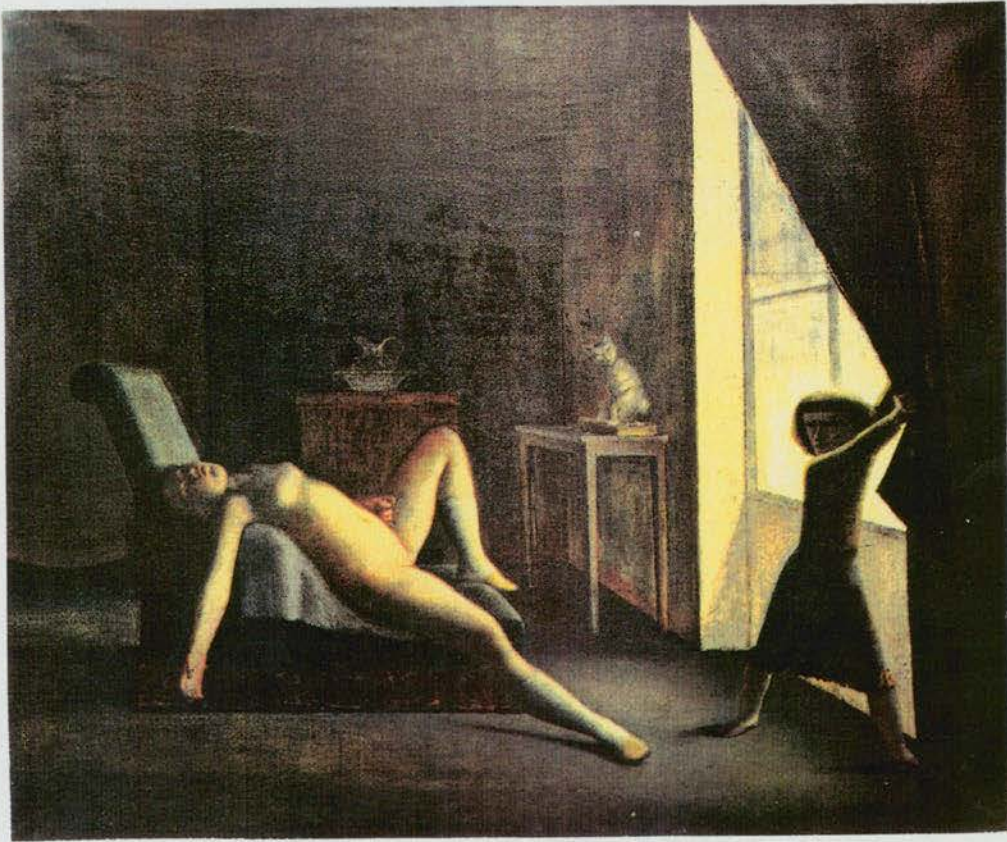


fig. 62. Nita Forrest, Cycle, c. 1968. Oil on canvas.



fig. 63. Nita Forrest, The Island, 1967. Oil on canvas.



fig. 64. Nita Forrest, White Pants, 1960s. Oil on canvas.



fig. 65. Myfanwy Pavelic, New York Studio, 1961. Mixed media.



fig. 66. Myfanwy Pavelic, Despair, 1969. Charcoal.



fig. 67. Limner exhibition, A.G.G.V., 1972. Photograph.



fig. 68. Herbert Siebner, Cover for 1986 Limner catalogue.

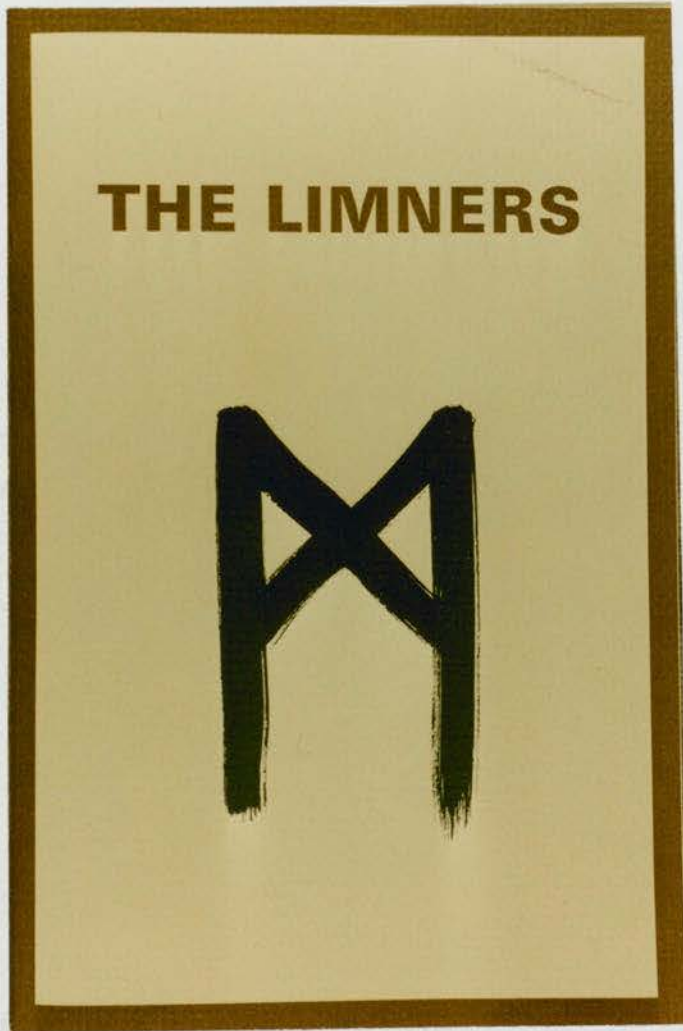


fig. 69. Runic stone from Rök, Sweden, 9th century.

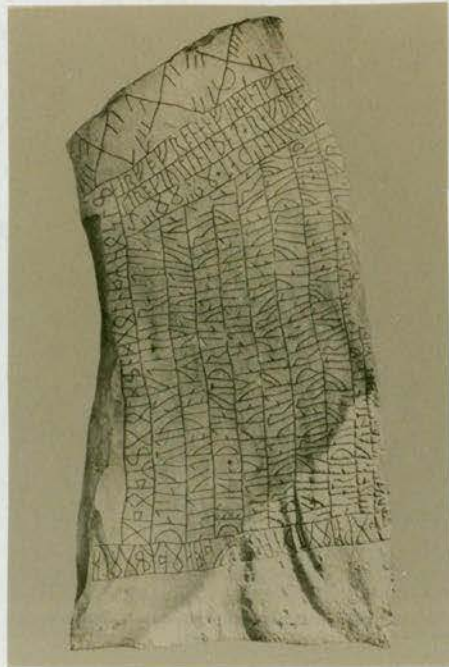


fig. 70. Herbert Siebner, Poster for the 1972 Limner exhibition, A.G.G.V.



fig. 71. Courtyard, Provincial Archives, 1973 Music and Art: Limner Art Exhibition. Photograph.



fig. 72. Herbert Siebner, Invitation for 1973 Archives Exhibition - Music and Art: Limner Art Exhibition.



figs. 73 & 74. Limner exhibition, Provincial Archives, 1973. Photographs.



fig. 75. Herbert Siebner,
City Crowd, 1970.
Acrylic.



fig. 76. Herbert Siebner,
Crowd and Personification
of Love #5917, 1973.
Acrylic.



fig. 77. Herbert Siebner, Looking for a Friend in a Crowd, 1978.
Acrylic on canvas.



fig. 78. Herbert Siebner, The Endless Summer (Dedicated to the Limmers),
1979. Acrylic.



fig. 79. Karl Spreitz, Sports Day at the Boys School, 1928, 1973. Collage.

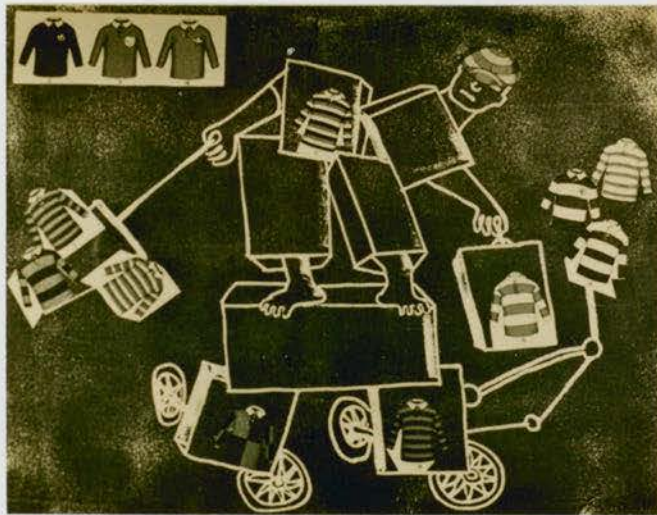


fig. 80. Karl Spreitz, Art Lesson #23 in 1928, 1975. Collage.

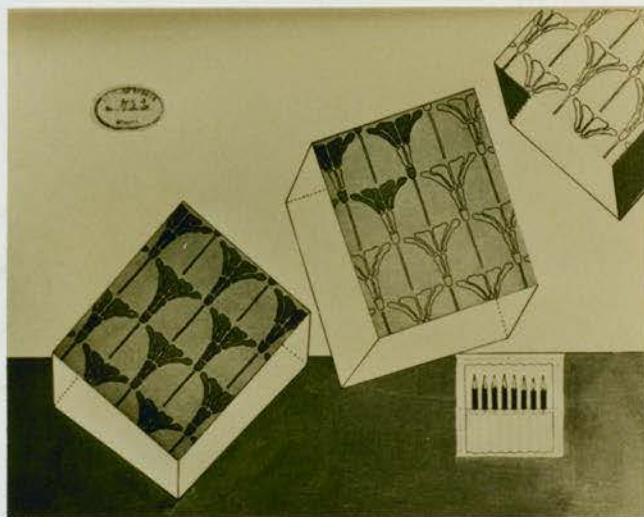


fig. 81. Karl Spreitz, Fine Taylor (sic) Shop, 1976. Mixed media.



fig. 82. Karl Spreitz,
The Invisible Part of a
Staircase Waiting for a
Descending Nude, 1975.
Collage.



fig. 83. Marcel Duchamp,
Nude Descending a
Staircase #2, 1912.
Oil on canvas.



fig. 84. Marcel Duchamp,
Chocolate Grinder No. 2,
1914. Oil, thread, and
pencil on canvas.

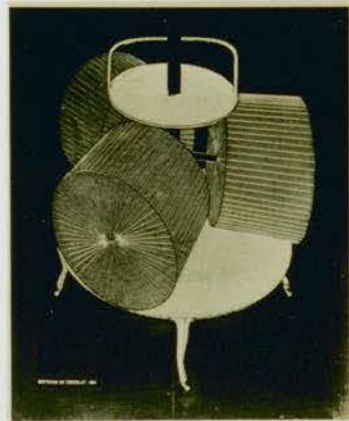


fig. 85. Karl Spreitz,
Paintbox, Never
to be Used, 1975.
Collage.

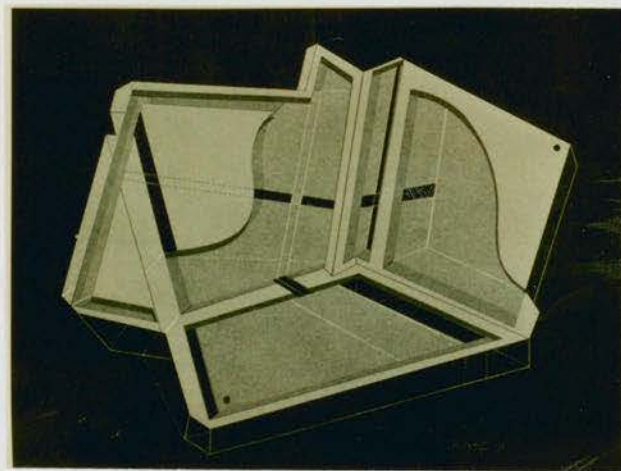


fig. 86. Karl Spreitz,
Carrying Case
for Empty Space,
1975. Collage.

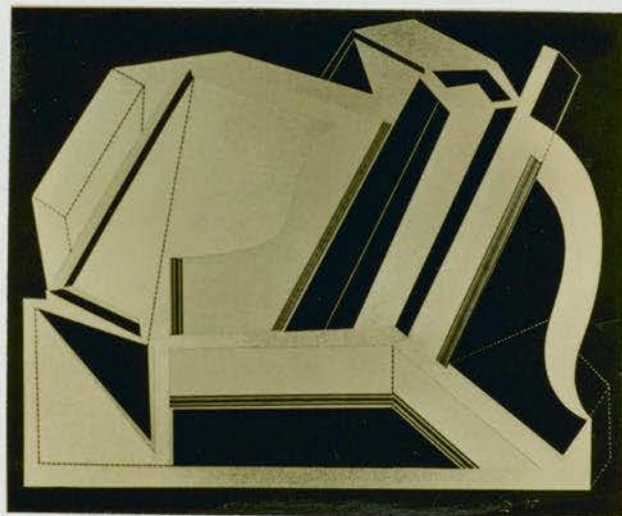


fig. 87. Karl Spreitz, Making Power for Himself, 1973. Mixed media.



fig. 88. Paul Klee, Twittering Machine, 1922. Watercolour and pen & ink.



fig. 89. Karl Spreitz, Deadline Without Film Cement, 1976. Monotype and wash.



fig. 90. Karl Spreitz, It's a Living, 1975. Ink.



fig. 91. Karl Spreitz, Group Discussion, Not Going Anywhere..., 1975. Mixed media.

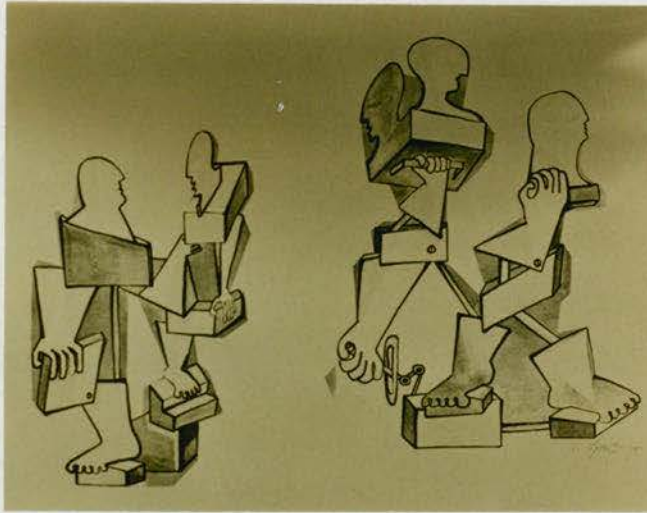


fig. 92. Karl Spreitz, Untitled (The Limners), late 1970s-early 1980s. Oil on canvas. (From l.-r. back row: Pavelic, Skelton, Forrest, Spreitz, Ciccimarra; front row: De Castro, Mayhew, Siebner, Bates.)



fig. 93. Maxwell Bates's
seventieth birthday party
at the Skeltons, 1976.
Photograph.



fig. 94. Maxwell Bates,
Man, 1974.
Ink and
watercolour.

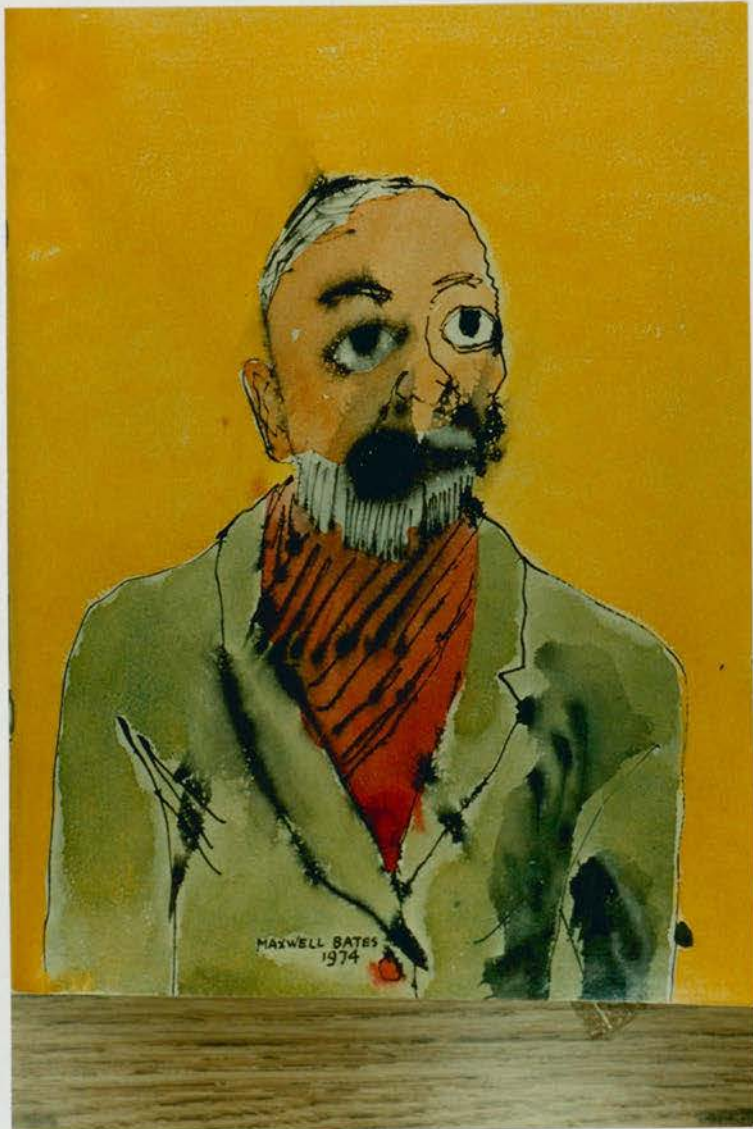


fig. 95. Elza Mayhew, Carved roller, n.d. Poured cement.



fig. 96. Elza Mayhew, Print made from carved cement roller, n.d. Ink on paper.



fig. 97. Robert De Castro, Untitled, n.d. (1970s) Wood.



fig. 98. Robert De Castro, Untitled, 1974. Wood.

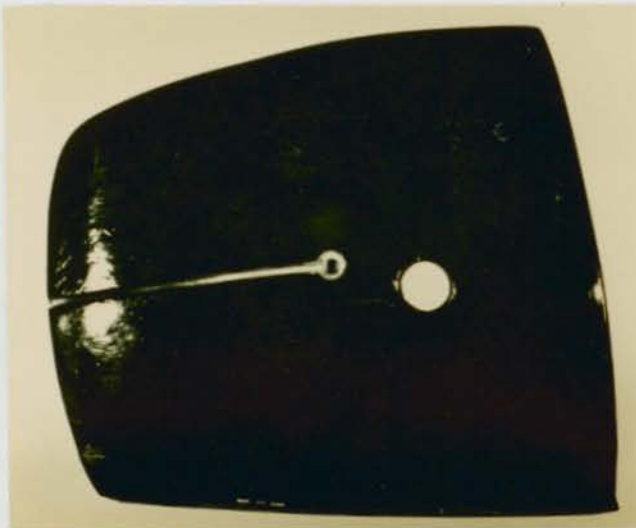


fig. 99. Robert De Castro, Untitled, n.d. (mid-1970s) Wood.



fig. 100. Myfanwy Pavelic, Maxwell Bates, n.d. Charcoal.



fig. 101. Myfanwy Pavelic, Ricky, 1971. Charcoal.



fig. 102. Myfanwy Pavelic, Elza Mayhew, n.d. Charcoal.



fig. 103. Myfanwy Pavelic, Herbert Siebner, 1971. Acrylic.



fig. 104. Myfanwy Pavelic, Bob De Castro, 1972. Acrylic.



fig. 105. Myfanwy Pavelic, Robin and Sylvia Skelton, 1984. Acrylic.

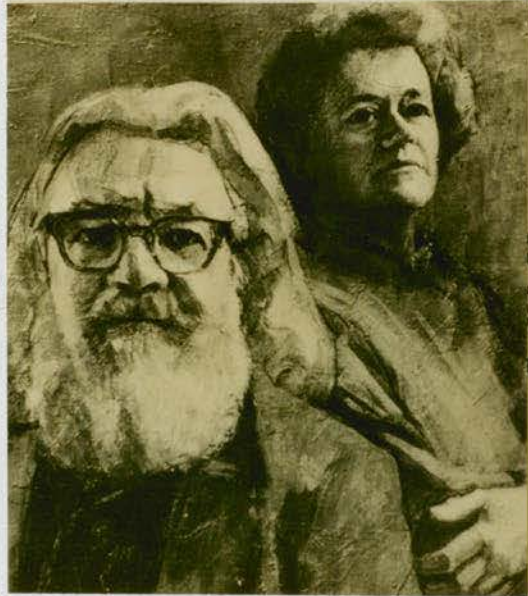


fig. 106. Myfanwy Pavelic, Forrest and daughter, 1983. Acrylic.



fig. 107. Myfanwy Pavelic, Myfanwy and Niki, 1985. Acrylic.



fig. 108. Myfanwy Pavelic, Karl Spreitz, 1985. Acrylic.

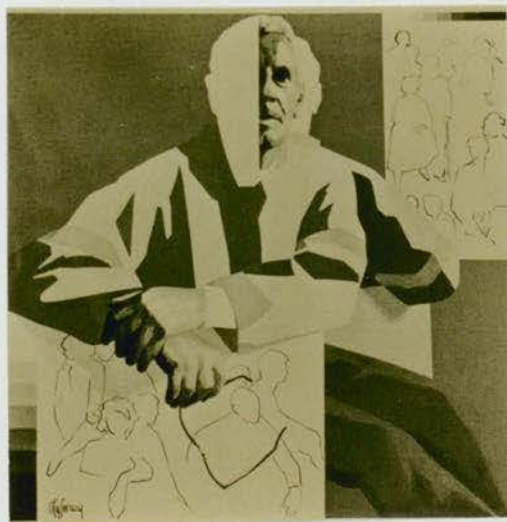


fig. 109. Myfanwy Pavelic, Five Shells, 1971. Charcoal.



fig. 110. Myfanwy Pavelic, Landscape, 1971. Oil on canvas.



THE COLLECTION OF CANADA

fig. 111. Myfanwy Pavelic, Colin Graham, 1973. Acrylic on canvas.

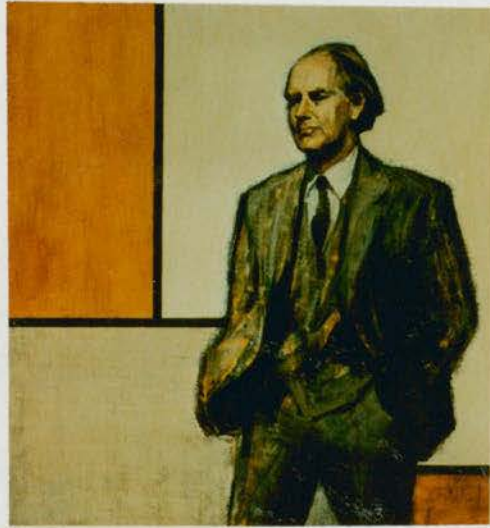


fig. 112. Myfanwy Pavelic, Autumn Dream, 1977. Acrylic on canvas.



fig. 113. Myfanwy Pavelic, Two Circles in Motion, 1977. Pencil.

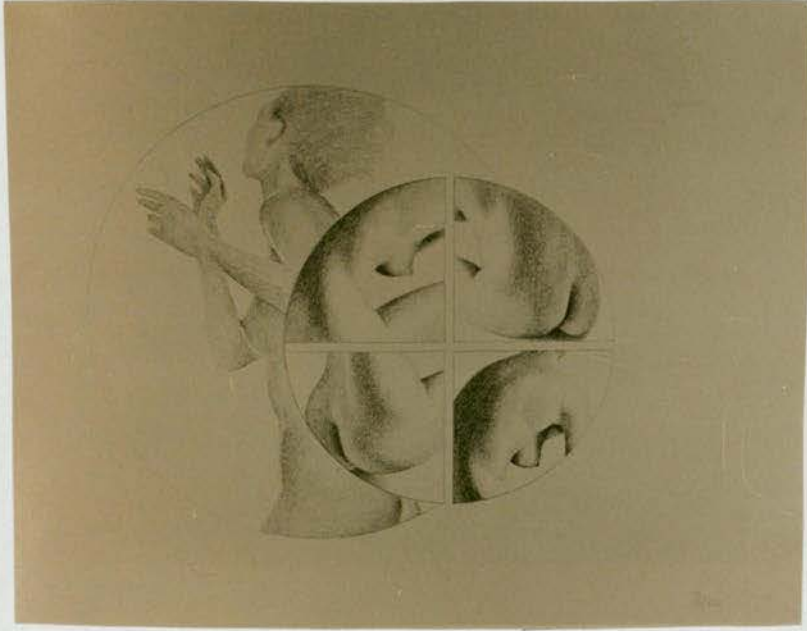


fig. 114. Nita Forrest, Father and Daughter, 1981. Oil on canvas.



fig. 115. Nita Forrest, Love, c. 1982. Oil on canvas.



fig. 116. Nita Forrester, Solo Pero, 1987. Oil on canvas.



fig. 117. Herbert Siebner, Poster for 1981 Limner exhibition, Horizon Art Galleries, Edmonton.

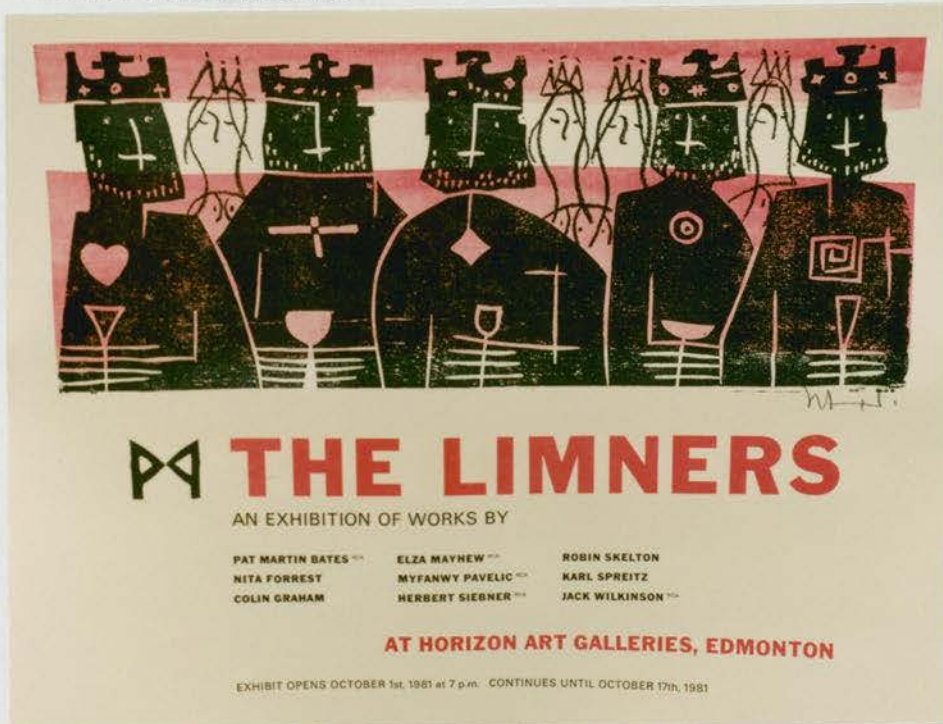


fig. 118. Myfanwy Pavelic, Yehudi Menuhin, 1976. Collage.

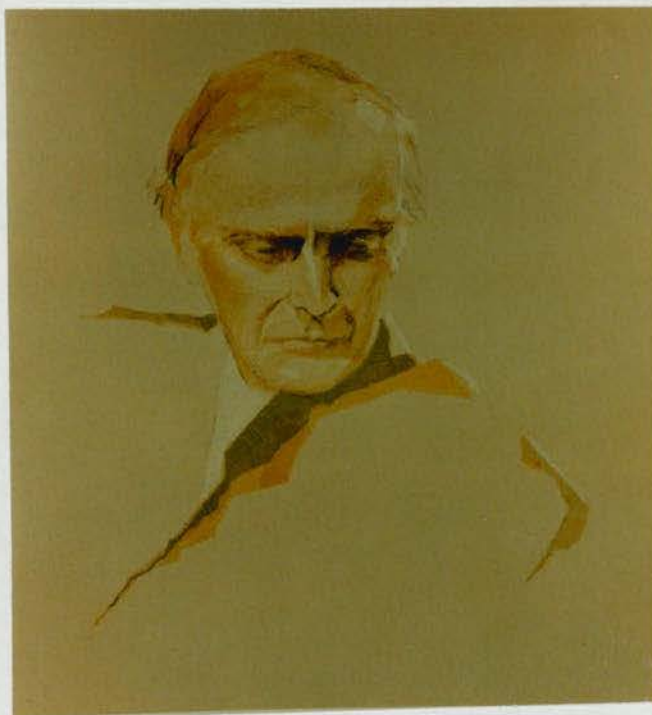


fig. 119. Myfanwy Pavelic, Katharine Hepburn, 1987-88. Acrylic on canvas.



fig. 120. The Limners in Elza Mayhew's Studio, March, 1986.
Photograph by Alex Barta.

(l.-r. around a portrait of De Castro: Robin Skelton, Walter Dexter, Carole Sabiston, Karl Spreitz, Myfanwy Pavelic, Colin Graham, Helga Grove, Herbert Siebner, Pat Martin Bates, Jan Grove, LeRoy Jensen, and Elza Mayhew. Absent: Nita Forrest, Jack Wilkinson.)



fig. 121. Elza Mayhew, Zong I, 1986. Bronze.



fig. 122. Herbert Siebner, Giants in Stormy Weather, 1984. Acrylic.



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"Conversation with Nita Forrest," 30 January 1989.

"Personal interview with Anthony Emery," University of
Victoria, 19 October 1988.

"Personal taped interview with Colin Graham," Sidney,
B.C., 11 November 1988.

"Personal taped interview with Audrey Johnson,"
Victoria, B.C., 5 December 1988.

"Personal taped interview with Herbert Siebner,"
Victoria, B.C., 6 December 1988.

"Personal taped interview with Myfanwy Pavelic,"
Saanich, B.C., 7 December 1988.

"Personal taped interview with Elza Mayhew," Victoria,
B.C., 9 December 1988.

"Personal taped interview with Nita Forrest," Cowichan
Bay, B.C., 10 December 1988.

"Personal taped interview with Robin and Sylvia
Skelton," Victoria, B.C., 12 December 1988.

Nb. I tried for several weeks to interview Karl Spreitz but
unfortunately it could not be arranged.

APPENDIX 1LIMNER EXHIBITIONS

1972	<u>The Limners</u>	Art Gallery of Greater Victoria Victoria, B.C.
1973	<u>Art & Music: The Limners</u> (Part of the Victoria Festival)	Provincial Archives of B.C. Victoria, B.C.
1975	<u>The Limners</u>	Confederation Art Gallery Charlottetown, P.E.I.
1977	<u>The Limners</u>	Shaw-Rimington Gallery Toronto, Ontario
1978	<u>The Limners</u>	Windsor Utley Gallery Sidney, B.C.
1981	<u>The Limners</u>	Horizon Galleries Edmonton, Alberta
1985	<u>The Limners</u>	Maltwood Art Museum & Gallery, University of Victoria
1986	<u>The Limners</u>	Atelier Gallery Vancouver, B.C.
1990, Jan. (Proposed)	<u>The Limners</u>	Maltwood Art Museum & Gallery, University of Victoria

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1985-86

Excellence '86 Award, 1986-87

Graduate Studies Award, 1988-89

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