

**Make Way for Tomorrow:  
New Brunswick's Visual and Cultural Modernity, 1930-1967**

By  
John Leroux

B(Arch), McGill University, 1994  
MA, Concordia University, 2002

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Supervisor: Donald Wright, PhD, History

Examining Board: Gregory Kealey, PhD, History

Chantal Richard, PhD, French Studies

Brian Foss, PhD, History, Carleton University

External Examiner: Andrew Nurse, PhD, History, Mount Allison University

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## **Abstract**

A notion that visual modernism essentially passed New Brunswick by contradicts the broader reality of the province's productive and worldly twentieth-century past, the distinction of its culture, its urban sophistication, and the impact of its artists and designers.

Current scholarly literature rarely acknowledges the full extent to which New Brunswick's visual art, design, architecture, and material history from the early 1930s to the end of the 1960s were interwoven, nor its cultural value. This research will show that in the mid-twentieth century the province's modern artists, architects, designers, and allied cultural producers/advocates were aligned with powerful and widely accepted progressive socio-political developments. The acceptance of modernism as a collective aesthetic movement is key to situating the cultural temperament of the province. Through specific and often unheralded creative examples, this thesis will reveal a society that sought to be an equal and progressive partner in a rapidly changing post-war Canada. Modern visual expressions were key to that shift.

My subject is the exploration of modernism in New Brunswick's visual and built culture between 1930 and 1967. This investigation is situated in context of the era's social, political, and economic policies, ethnic and linguistic stances, educational practices, and artistic dialogue. During this time, New Brunswickers' outlooks and expectations became increasingly aligned with policies of change and growth, and reflected an optimism not seen in the province since the late nineteenth century when shipbuilding and railway expansion flourished. The era's extensive modernist visual and



tactile practices, which attained their apex during the 1960s, concurrently demonstrated this mid-twentieth century confidence. Individual chapters will specifically explore the fields of visual art and fine craft, architecture, industry, infrastructure, and design, in addition to their allied cultural and political advocates. Finally, their complete synthesis will be examined through the 1967 Centennial Building in Fredericton.

This project aims for a more accurate measure of New Brunswick's recent past. It will examine how the province's society, artists, and leaders once felt about its visual and cultural reach. It will investigate the breadth and interconnectedness of the province's material and social culture during a global period of shifting modern visual practice, and how the aspirations and offerings of individual artists/creators were given concrete voice.

## **Dedication**

To Meghan, Tait, and Ana, for their faith and support shown to me, and for their kindness shown to each other. Their love of this place and their engagement with its history and culture is a most precious gift.

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## Introduction

**“It happened here long ago”:**

**New Brunswick’s overlooked cultural reach during the modern era**

In the thick of what some historians deem a culturally dynamic “golden age” of visual art in New Brunswick,<sup>1</sup> Fredericton painter Lucy Jarvis feared an imminent cultural amnesia. While she witnessed the growing public interest and participation in the arts during the 1930s-40s and was selected to spearhead the new Art Centre at the University of New Brunswick with Pegi Nicol MacLeod, in a 1947 *Canadian Art* article, “Notes from a Benighted Maritimer,” Jarvis lamented that the recent wealth of cultural and artistic initiatives could all die a sudden death. She inferred that this surge might not only be forgotten, but ultimately questioned altogether: “Unless, of course, we heard of a similar adventure being well publicized in some other part of Canada, to which we would say in our contrary way, ‘It happened here long ago,’ and nobody would believe us.”<sup>2</sup>

Was Jarvis justified in her cynicism that important things were considered by Maritimers to only happen elsewhere? Her assumption was that cultural progress in New Brunswick could be fleeting, perpetuating fundamental impressions of a timid artistic landscape “out East.” So why did this mid-century cultural progress and comprehensive buy-in by wider society occur, and did it indeed last? What had New

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<sup>1</sup> See Kirk Niergarth, *“The Dignity of Every Human Being”: New Brunswick Artists and Canadian Culture between the Great Depression and the Cold War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015); and Karen Herring, “Creating a Centre/Recreating the Margin: Ted Campbell and his Studio, Saint John, New Brunswick, in the 1930’s and 40’s” (Master’s thesis, Carleton University, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Lucy Jarvis, “Notes from a Benighted Maritimer,” *Canadian Art* 4, Summer 1947, 164.



Brunswickers achieved of an enlightened artistic and cultural nature in the immediate pre- and post-war periods? Although elusive at times, a modern artistic sensibility was palpable between the early 1930s and the early 1970s in New Brunswick. It was widely supported and expanded by not only the cultural, political, and business leaders, but by substantial period media. A plethora of mid-century newspaper and magazine articles (and associated advertising) heralded the arrival and instances of modern change, along with numerous works of art, architecture, design, and industrial/transportation infrastructure that gave its physical form. At specific instances, a widespread sensibility of “progress” encapsulated the beleaguered region that saw itself not only deserving, but capable of structural change.

New Brunswick’s population habitually found itself on the periphery of Canada’s political and economic engines during the twentieth century, but there were notable exceptions that reflected the region’s wider contribution to Canadian nation-building and public sensibility towards modernization. Scholarly literature of the past few decades challenges regional Maritime stereotypes of inaction and conservative leanings, although the public typecasting often remains.<sup>3</sup> While established historiography makes a solid case that the federal government’s economic and political neglect of the Maritime provinces was commonplace between the late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth

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<sup>3</sup> For an example of this, see Tony Tremblay, “What the New Liberal Government Should Know About One-Term Governments and the Cultivation of Backwardness in New Brunswick,” *Journal of New Brunswick Studies* 5 (2014), accessed January 7, 2020, <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/JNBS/article/view/22335>. See also “Prof studies ‘backwardness’ perceptions about New Brunswick,” CBC NB News, November 12, 2018, accessed on August 8, 2019, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/tony-tremblay-negative-new-brunswick-professor-research-1.4902132>.

century,<sup>4</sup> the region generated numerous episodes of confidence, optimism, and potential that rang loudly and triggered profound change and national attention at critical moments. In New Brunswick's case, beyond sweeping socio-economic and political changes, enormous cultural, artistic, and material reforms radically shifted the provincial landscape during the mid-twentieth century. These latter initiatives began in the 1930s and reached their apex in the late 1950s and 1960s, and were closely connected to the acceptance of modernisation and modernism.

I submit that New Brunswick's cultural reach and artistic accomplishment grew widely in those years; these reflected and led change in social and political attitudes and policies. Not only did Jarvis's "it" indeed happen here long ago, a great deal took place of an extraordinary, transformative nature. Historians of the 'Acadiensis School' have rightly challenged the "regional stereotype" of the backwards Maritimes since the founding of the journal *Acadiensis* in the early 1970's. They helped put the Atlantic region into its proper place in twentieth-century Canadian history and noted numerous instances where the character of the region showed a modern, reformist path.<sup>5</sup> While their studies examine social and political history, economics, labour history, women's rights, and historiography, the creation and public reception of modern visual culture and material history are infrequently tackled, even though they form one of the more

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<sup>4</sup> See E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, eds., *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993); and S. A. Saunders, *Economic History of the Maritime Provinces*, second edition (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1984).

<sup>5</sup> See D.A. Muise, "Organizing Historical Memory in the Maritimes: A Reconnaissance," *Acadiensis* XXX, no. 1 (Autumn 2000): 50-60.

significant and visceral reflections of the era – how New Brunswickers lived, what they surrounded themselves by, what they cared about, and what they hoped to be.

This dissertation focuses on modernism in New Brunswick's visual culture from 1930 to 1967, and its apex which was reached during the 1960s. It reveals the multiple aspects of New Brunswick's modern cultural life and their closely associated achievements in art, design, architecture, fine craft, and infrastructure. Numerous examples are shown where New Brunswick modernism dovetailed with the era's political and economic conditions, as well as the era's dominant material/aesthetic/philosophical/social objectives. Public and private patronage is considered, with period media and correspondence used to substantiate the ascendancy of modernist visual modes that elicited confidence and connection to national and international communities and developments. As Tony Tremblay posits, this realization fuelled the pursuit of modern cultural exploration, through "the realization that New Brunswick, though culturally isolated, could also participate in larger aesthetic movements while meeting its own needs for self-expression."<sup>6</sup>

### **Modernism and modernity in New Brunswick**

Although there are important differences between the oft-confused terms *modern*, *modernism*, *modernisation*, and *modernity* – academic/philosophical definitions of each individual term are varied and far from assented to – for this dissertation I am targeting

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<sup>6</sup> Tony Tremblay, ed., *New Brunswick at the Crossroads: Literary Ferment and Social Change in the East* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2017), 103.

a distinct meaning and definition for the individual terms as they relate to twentieth-century New Brunswick.

The Tate Modern Gallery's *Modernism* text expresses a suitable, though broad, definition for modernisation and modernity:

Modernisation refers to a range of technological, economic and political processes associated with the Industrial Revolution and its aftermath; modernity to the social conditions and modes of experience that are seen as the effects of these processes.<sup>7</sup>

Ian McKay posits modernity as relating to the broader wave of civilization's fundamental changes that have occurred since the late eighteenth century:

Modernity is the lived experience of this unremitting process of rapid change and its social consequences. We are modern because we have learned to expect constant and radical transformation, dramatic growth, development at an ever more rapid rate.<sup>8</sup>

Likewise, Anthony Giddens considers modernity as a complex sociological condition, where "modern institutions differ from all preceding forms of social order in respect to their dynamism, the degree to which they undercut traditional habits and customs, and their global impact."<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Giddens states:

The 'world' in which we now live is in some profound respects thus quite distinct from that inhabited by human beings in previous periods of history. It is in many ways a single world, having a unitary framework of experience (for instance, in respect of basic axes of time and space), yet at the same time one which creates new forms of fragmentation and dispersal.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Charles Harrison, *Modernism* (London: Tate Publishing, 2011), 6.

<sup>8</sup> Ian McKay, "Introduction: All that is Solid Melts Into Air," in *The Challenge of Modernity: A Reader on Post-Confederation Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1992), x.

<sup>9</sup> Anthony Giddens, "Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age," in *Art in Modern Culture: an anthology of critical texts* (London: Phaidon Press, 2011), 17.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

Modern globalizing elements began to transform the Maritimes during the late nineteenth century in the form of advances in transportation, communication, and industrialization. In New Brunswick's case, the 1930s witnessed the beginnings of a deeper, more radical modernizing change to the focus of the provincial economy and its ensuing affairs. The decade saw the dawn of the pulp and paper industry, massive hydroelectricity projects, transportation and infrastructure changes, the emergence of K.C. Irving and others as major business players, and the vast mobilization of the province for the Second World War. New Brunswick was a jurisdiction both seeking modernity and having it thrust upon itself.

Modernism, as I am defining it here, is a cultural and artistic manifestation of modernity. On a basic level it delineates a philosophical approach to creativity in the new world order of speed, communication, technology, industry, and urbanity. Modernism was a reaction to the traditional and conventional forms of art, architecture, literature, religion, philosophy, and science. It self-consciously challenged these creative disciplines through new modes and techniques of representation and production that responded to economic, social, and political environments that were unimaginable only a generation before. It is not a style per se (although the modern period entails dozens of *'ism'* artistic styles), but more the quality of being 'modern,' of stylistically and intentionally embodying a break from past practices, materials, and forms, and being exceedingly conscious of its particular time. It was often defined as being 'universal', but it was very often grounded in the local. As Charles Harrison puts it, "modernism may fruitfully be thought of as a form of tradition, but one maintained in a kind of critical

tension with the wider surrounding culture.”<sup>11</sup> In the same way that a Jackson Pollock painting and a Degas portrait are completely different in form, intention, and content, yet equally modern, so should we look to the processes and experiences as much as the object itself. To this end, Nigel Blake and Francis Frascina affirm:

By ‘modernism’ we refer to those new social practices in both ‘high art’ and ‘mass culture’ which engage with the experiences of modern life, with modernity, by means of a self-conscious use of experiment and innovation. Their engagements are sometimes critical, sometimes celebratory, sometimes ironic.<sup>12</sup>

While the macro industrial, economic, and social changes reflected New Brunswick’s collision with modernity, its micro/tactile manifestation came from the rise and acceptance of modernism in the spheres of cultural expression and artistic production. The state, business, education, and much of the population accepted it. The growth of the post-war provincial state in New Brunswick was enormous, akin to the rest of North America. Where Benedict Anderson sees the “instilling of nationalist ideology through the mass media, the educational system, administrative regulations, and so forth” as related to post-war nation states,<sup>13</sup> these “nation-building policies” can be similarly equated to the modernizing courses of action within the margins of smaller jurisdictions such as New Brunswick. A string of New Brunswick premiers amended taxation and revenue streams, greatly improved the transportation network, multiplied the size of the provincial bureaucracy, and deeply reformed and centralized the

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<sup>11</sup> Harrison, 14.

<sup>12</sup> Nigel Blake and Francis Frascina, “Modern Practices of Art and Modernity,” in *Modernity and Modernism: French Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Francis Frascina et al. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press in Association with the Open University, 1993), 127.

<sup>13</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1983), 104.

education system. This connection of peripheral regions to the capital city of Fredericton for educational and administrative pilgrimages created a less separated linguistic/regional divide and encouraged the conception of a bilingual province.

From the Great Depression to the opening of the Centennial Building in 1967, New Brunswick accepted and expected modernism in many forms. These were buoyed by the policies and modes of expression of the provincial government, a deep commitment of the province's artists and design professionals, a tangible boost to educational facilities and institutional infrastructure, a confrontational (but ultimately empowering) joining of its two main linguistic communities, and the energetic flowering of the second Acadian Renaissance of the 1960s. Culture and the province's economy were connected through student rolls at New Brunswick's various universities, the industrial and related graphic design of manufactured products coming out of Saint John, Moncton, Sackville, and Fredericton, the burgeoning tourism industry throughout New Brunswick, and the architectural design of the province's post-war churches and new industrial megastructures that dammed the rivers and processed natural resources.

### **A modern sensibility**

From the 1930s to the late-1960s, New Brunswick frequently embraced technological, industrial, and visual-material aspirations through a persuasive modernist course, evidenced through voice and action. These measurements of cultural production are complex and multifaceted, but demonstrate profound instances (if not extended

periods) of public enthusiasm and hope for change – modern expressions of a brighter future.

That such an image of New Brunswick may be difficult to fathom for many is the result of several factors: a widespread generational ignorance of New Brunswick's modern cultural history (especially compared to its modern industrial and economic history);<sup>14</sup> a return of the regressive, but longstanding, conceits of Maritime impotence and pessimism within the Canadian federation that many of the province's political and cultural leaders of the twentieth century fought tooth and nail to overcome;<sup>15</sup> and most notably, the recent making of imagined folk histories and traditions. These issues closely align with a tourism imperative, tangible since the mid-1970s, that is evidence of a romanticized longing for what Ian McKay labels a calculated and pursued commercial

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<sup>14</sup> Although the "Acadiensis School," centred around the history department of UNB, has established the appearance and spread of modernity in select realms (William Parenteau's work on the forest industry and Margaret Conrad's research into the "Atlantic Revolution" of the post-war era sit at the top of the list), an understanding of where the province's wider culture dovetailed with modern tenets is tentative at best. Outside of monographs of individual artists, studies of the region's modern anglophone visual art are still sporadic, with the recent work of Kirk Niergarth, Michael Maynard, and Sandra Paikowsky being notable exceptions to the pattern. Although Claude Roussel has been studied and lauded at length, these analysis have been tightly focused on his Acadian influence and less on his broader regional and cross-cultural influence. In reference to architecture and design, there was little research to speak of before the author's publications starting in the mid-2000s. A recent instance of modern cultural amnesia towards New Brunswick is the mammoth 544-page book by Princeton Architectural Press, *Canadian Modern Architecture: 1967 to the Present*, published in 2019. It claims to be a measure of the full spectrum of post-1967 architecture in Canada, yet fails to mention or illustrate a single building from New Brunswick.

<sup>15</sup> For an example of this, see Jane Jenkins, "Diagnosing Collective Memory Loss: Integrating Historical Awareness into New Brunswick's Health Care Policy Debate," *Journal of New Brunswick Studies* 8 (2017), accessed January 7, 2019, <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/JNBS/article/view/25882>. See also Tony Tremblay's aforementioned research, "Prof studies 'backwardness' perceptions about New Brunswick."



antimodernism, such as in neighbouring Nova Scotia.<sup>16</sup> Compare this to the province's early 1960s tourism literature, where the region's history and its rural-coastal nature are front and centre, albeit with a first page that boasts of a material progress narrative before it goes back into conventional images:

If the visitor here feels the fascination of the past, New Brunswick unfolds for him the colourful story of three centuries...

Yes, New Brunswick is many things to many people. To the industrialist it means pulp-and-paper, commercial fisheries and untapped mineral resources, plus a growing awareness of its water power potential. To the farmer it means potatoes, poultry, livestock and apples. To the angler it means the Atlantic silver salmon and the speckled trout.<sup>17</sup>

Numerous media features, advertisements, and political messages from the late 1940s to the late 1960s corresponded to this position, where the province's modernizing account was the dominant message. A 1951 issue of *Saturday Night* magazine featured a cover article labeled "New Brunswick: Progress Weds Tradition."<sup>18</sup> A routine full-page advertisement for a new commercial building opening in downtown Moncton in 1953 used the word "modern" no less than six times, and labeled the admittedly standard structure "another step forward in Moncton's Progress."<sup>19</sup> A full issue of the nationally-circulated *Star Weekly* magazine in 1963 was dedicated to New Brunswick in the midst of impending change, the issue titled "Majestic Beauty and a

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<sup>16</sup> See Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994). Akin to the pioneering work of McKay, while there may be a less discernible sense of the folkloric and traditional in New Brunswick as compared to Nova Scotia, the end results have manifested themselves along a shared road. The entertainment-driven Pays de la Sagouine attraction (1991), the faux lighthouse in the landlocked NB Casino in Moncton (2010), the trinket-selling roadside 'villages' at Moncton (1987) and Miramichi (1992), and the early 1960s-designed 'Loyalist Man' smiling symbol in Saint John are among such post-war pursuits.

<sup>17</sup> *New Brunswick, Canada: Motourland* (Fredericton: New Brunswick Travel Bureau, c. 1964), 2.

<sup>18</sup> Stuart Trueman and Melwyn Breen, "New Brunswick: Progress Weds Tradition," *Saturday Night*, February 20, 1951, 8-29.

<sup>19</sup> *Moncton Daily Times*, November 11, 1953, 11.

Battle for Progress.”<sup>20</sup> A graphically confident full-page feature by the New Brunswick Department of Finance and Industry from 1964 posted the headline “Here’s What We’re Doing in New Brunswick Now” [underlines in original]; like industrious bees, a honeycomb of images depicts New Brunswickers working, building, and creating, from craft industries to product design/manufacture, shipbuilding, technology, fishing, processing, mining, and refining (fig. 1).<sup>21</sup> Messages flaunting the terms “progress,” “new,” and “modern,” were so ubiquitous in period media that it becomes overwhelming to take them all in.

Divided along linguistic, urban/rural, financial, and educational lines, a Canadian master-narrative of the twentieth century recognizes the massive social and cultural changes of the years 1930 to 1967, but only to a lesser degree does it acknowledge the active and modernizing forces that stemmed from marginalized areas such as New Brunswick and the rest of the Maritimes. The impetus for post-Depression/post-war change and a better, modern life came as much from within as it did from beyond the province.<sup>22</sup> While New Brunswick’s traditional political loyalties (Liberal vs. Conservative) remained divided during those years, a tangible and profoundly shared commitment to evolution and reform permeated all levels of society.

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<sup>20</sup> “New Brunswick issue,” *Star Weekly*, October 26, 1963.

<sup>21</sup> *The Daily Gleaner*, March 6, 1964, 8.

<sup>22</sup> For instances of this, see Margaret Conrad, “The Atlantic Revolution of the 1950s,” in Berkeley Fleming, ed., *Beyond Anger and Longing: Community and Development in Atlantic Canada*. Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1988, 55-98; Robert A. Young, “The Programme of Equal Opportunity: An Overview,” in *The Robichaud Era, 1960-70: colloquium proceedings* (Moncton: The Canadian Institute for Research on Regional Development, 2001), 23-35; Lisa Pasolli, “Bureaucratizing the Atlantic Revolution: the ‘Saskatchewan Mafia’ in the New Brunswick Civil Service, 1960-1970,” *Acadiensis* XXXVIII, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2009): 126-150; and James L. Kenny and Andrew G. Secord, “Engineering Modernity: Hydroelectric Development in New Brunswick, 1945-1970,” *Acadiensis* XXXIX, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2010): 3-26.

The narrative of Canadian modernity is cemented in certain sections of the country more than others. Most scholars recognize urban centres and central-Canadian provinces for their modern contributions over those of regional and rural areas. While larger populations and increased levels of economic activity explain this, the result is that New Brunswick and much of the Maritimes have been ignored. One can consider the still stinging comment by former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper who, when leader of the opposition in May 2002, said that the Atlantic Provinces were trapped in "a culture of defeat" that "will be hard to overcome as long as Atlantic Canada is actually physically trailing the rest of the country."<sup>23</sup> While many prominent politicians condemned the remark as patronizing and insensitive, it embodied a widespread attitude, both outside and inside the region, that places like New Brunswick haven't been tied neatly to the national story, their successes notwithstanding.

Many of Quebec's cultural and political leaders during the 1960s were closely bound to a modernizing ethos, and the vast economic growth and intellectual flowering of such provinces as British Columbia and Ontario saw their cultural and technological destinies become manifest during the modern age. The dominant story of Canada's modernist, post-war visual and technological culture has been largely focused on episodes and individuals like these in Central and Western Canada. Of deep significance to the Canadian sense of self were the allied cultural leaps and socio-artistic movements such as the founding of the National Film Board, the Automatiste *Refus Global*, and Quebec's Quiet Revolution. Design-wise, the reinvention of civic space via Viljo Revell's

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<sup>23</sup> "'Defeatists' Hurt Alliance Gains," *Telegraph Journal*, May 29, 2002, A8.

award-winning Toronto City Hall competition was groundbreaking, as was the spatial and structural freedom of modern “West Coast” architecture in and around Vancouver. Expo 67 saw international attention and admiration flood to Montreal and Canada during what was hailed as one of the finest world’s fairs in history. Sophisticated scientific advances such as the Avro Arrow, the Alouette satellite, Bombardier’s winter vehicles, and the neurological work of Wilder Penfield were global innovations. While these incidents are certainly valid, there are other concurrent narratives that have yet to be investigated in depth.

The 1960s in particular were witness to the full-bore advancement of New Brunswick in many respects: socially, politically, economically, culturally, and linguistically. Evidence was mounting in mass media of the broad appeal of the public’s embrace of the modern, from lifestyle, to artistic expression and to technological changes. While perhaps not an equal counterpart to the international avant-garde, the cultural upsurge of New Brunswick and its artists was persuasive, and it often connected intimately with the political reformation of premier Louis Robichaud. Aspects of this advance included the modern Acadian Renaissance and the formation of the Université de Moncton, the growth of the province’s four university campuses related to the baby boom, student protests at those same campuses, the emergence of modernist art practices and higher education, successes in literature/music/drama, the new generation of younger professional artists in New Brunswick, increasing connections to the rest of North America through television and transportation, a renewed empowerment of Indigenous culture and rights, the redrawing of the social map

through the Equal Opportunity program, the emergence of modern architecture, as well as new collaborations between the Maritime provinces in infrastructure, inter-provincial economic and political union, and Expo 67. The fusion of broad national-provincial development with cultural mindfulness was increasingly borne by Robichaud, understanding that they were important measures of a shared path. Speaking at McGill University's fall convocation in 1967 (where he and seven other Canadian premiers were awarded honorary Doctor of Laws degrees),<sup>24</sup> Robichaud told the audience:

On behalf of my fellow-citizens in New Brunswick, I affirm our devotion to the cause . . . not of Canada's survival, for that is too faint-hearted . . . but rather, the cause of Canada's maturity, the achievement through partnership of our tremendous cultural and social potential.<sup>25</sup>

Although the urban modernisms of Montreal/Toronto/Vancouver often dictate the conceptions of what constitutes mid-century Canadian culture, the foundations of Canadian art and cultural change are in fact regionally specific. Because modernism is a dominant cultural form that is regionalized, gendered, racialized, and class-based, the nuances of New Brunswick's linguistic, economic, and social boundaries are key to a proper understanding of its cultural spread. New Brunswick's mid-century culture wasn't merely a reflection of social, political, and economic life, it helped shape it.

This dissertation observes that a parallel modernism must be understood as having a geographical and temporal scope, as well as being modulated along linguistic and economic lines – especially in a place such as New Brunswick with its complexities of political/economic marginalization within Canada, bilingualism challenges, economic

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<sup>24</sup> Judi Seidman, "Premiers See Future in Confederation," *The McGill Daily*, October 12, 1967.

<sup>25</sup> "Editorial," *The Moncton Daily Times* ("New Brunswick Today" insert), October 19, 1967, 2.

disparity, rural/urban divergence, and simply being on the periphery of an enormous country in the midst of radical change.<sup>26</sup>

While it is usually left out of Canadian historiography, I propose that New Brunswick's constituent modernism was inclusive and enlightened, evolving in a different way for different people in a different place. The world was changing, and New Brunswick artists, politicians, and policy makers sought the elusive goal of "progress," eager to be an equal partner, if not occasional leaders, in an evolving Canada. Notwithstanding, there were significant missteps and negative modernizing initiatives that soured the positive energy of New Brunswick's encounter with modernism and modernity. These entail labour unrest, environmental degradation, social-racial marginalization, and the devastation of 1960s "urban renewal" in the heart of Saint John. They have become justifiably tainted in hindsight, as social and cultural elements of the disenfranchised, the poor, the uninformed, or the overpowered were rarely taken into account or understood during the rush for change.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> New Brunswick academic Tony Tremblay has examined New Brunswick's nuanced entry into the modern world, its hybridity, and the resistances modernism found in a socially conservative province. See Tremblay, ed., *New Brunswick at the Crossroads*; and Tony Tremblay, *The Fiddlehead Moment: Pioneering an Alternative Canadian Modernism in New Brunswick* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019).

<sup>27</sup> See John Leroux and Ian MacEachern, *The Lost City: Ian MacEachern's Photographs of Saint John* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2018); Peter C. Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom: The 1968 Strax Affair at the University of New Brunswick* (Halifax: Formac, 2012); Mark McLaughlin, "Green Shoots: Aerial Insecticide Spraying and the Growth of Environmental Consciousness in New Brunswick, 1952-1973," *Acadiensis* XXXX, no. 1 (Winter/Spring, 2011): 3-23; and "Chapter four: The New Unionism, 1957-1975" in David Frank, *Provincial Solidarities: A History of the New Brunswick Federation of Labour* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2013), 101-146.

## **A provincial/regional modernism**

Beyond the nationally admired social reforms of Louis Robichaud's Equal Opportunity program and the concurrent modern Acadian Renaissance, there were a plethora of physical manifestations of modernity popping up throughout the province that were far from outliers. In the artistic vein, New Brunswick witnessed a deep transformation in the acceptance and promotion of visual arts, architecture, and design during the modern era, and it certainly punched above its weight for a small province with a small population. In the 1930s and 1940s, Miller Brittain, Jack Humphrey, Julia Crawford, Fred Ross, and Ted Campbell gave Saint John the reputation of a city "which, size for size, probably contains more serious artists than any other in Canada."<sup>28</sup> In the following decades, the "magic realists" of Mount Allison University (Alex Colville, Tom Forrestall, and Christopher and Mary Pratt) were fast becoming admired throughout Canada. Around the same time, Claude Roussel became an esteemed pioneer of modern Acadian art and an advocate for innovative sculpture. He was a multi-disciplinarian enabling an entire cultural/linguistic group to find their artistic voice through avenues and opportunities that essentially didn't exist before 1960.<sup>29</sup> The concurrent arrival at the dawn of the 1960s of the modern Beaverbrook Art Gallery and the husband-and-wife team of Molly and Bruno Bobak to Fredericton transformed the artistic reach of the capital city.<sup>30</sup> Other fresh artistic émigrés, like the sculptor and painter pair John and

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<sup>28</sup> Graham McInnes, "Painter of Saint John," *Canadian Art*, Spring-Summer 1948, 170.

<sup>29</sup> See Herménégilde Chiasson and Patrick Condon Laurette, *Claude Roussel* (Moncton: Les Éditions d'Acadie, 1985).

<sup>30</sup> Michael Wardell, "The Beaverbrook Art Gallery," *The Atlantic Advocate*, September 1959, 48-68; Stuart Trueman, "An Enduring Gift to New Brunswick: The Lord Beaverbrook Art Gallery,"

Kathy Hooper in Hampton, built on the achievements of older émigrés like the modern ceramicists Kjeld and Erica Deichmann. The New Brunswick Art Bank was initiated in 1968 — several years ahead of the foundation of the Canada Council Art Bank.<sup>31</sup> At the Mi'kmaq Big Cove (Elsipogtog) reserve in Kent County, the “Micmac Indian Craftsmen” artist collective produced what may have been the first modern Indigenous art in Atlantic Canada. Modern household design with equal commitment to function and aesthetics found success in Kinghorn and Dickie plastic ware in Fredericton, and through one of the most influential early Canadian industrial designers, Saint John native Sidney Bersudsky.<sup>32</sup> Architectural firms such as Bélanger and Roy in Moncton were as much on the cusp of progressive modern architecture in Canada as more celebrated architects in the larger centres. Two oceanfront national parks were created as emblems of tourism progress, although one of these (Kouchibouguac) was laden with owner displacement

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*Canadian Art*, September 1959, 278-283; Bernard Riordon, ed., *Bruno Bobak* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2006), 71-110.

<sup>31</sup> A key part of New Brunswick's 1960s provincial government initiatives was the establishment of a department of cultural affairs and the foundation of a groundbreaking new art bank — one of the first in Canada. Founded in 1968, with a small amount of funds left over from the construction of the modern Centennial Building in downtown Fredericton, the idea for a provincial art bank took root by virtue of the insight and action of a small group of civil servants and art professionals. The overall idea was borne by Richard Palmer and put into action by the team of Robert Pichette and Stuart Smith (then Deputy Minister of Public Works, Director of Cultural Affairs and Curator of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery, respectively). That first year, the team assembled a collection of fifteen paintings and works on paper that read like a *Who's Who* of eastern Canadian art at the time: Alex Colville, Fred Ross, Romeo Savoie, Lawren P. Harris, Jack Humphrey, Tom Forrestall, as well as Bruno Bobak and Molly Lamb Bobak, in addition to others. Beyond periodic exhibitions, most of the pieces are loaned to government offices for display. Upon this foundation the art bank has grown to where now, over fifty years later, the collection totals around nine hundred works. In 1972 the Canada Council Art Bank was founded, as a branch of the Canada Council for the Arts. With a similar mandate as the New Brunswick Art Bank, but with a national scope, it holds the world's largest collection of the contemporary Canadian art. It now includes 17,000-plus paintings, prints, photographs, and sculptures by over 3,000 emerging and established artists.

<sup>32</sup> See Rachel Gotlieb and Cora Golden, *Design in Canada: Fifty Years from Teakettles to Task Chairs* (Toronto: Design Exchange, 2004).



issues.<sup>33</sup> Car-friendly family attractions like sculptor Winston Bronnum's "Animaland" theme park near Sussex made countless station wagons pull over for a visit during the family car vacation roadtrip explosion of the 1960s.<sup>34</sup>

Canadian Forces Base Gagetown, the Trans-Canada Highway's Hugh John Flemming Bridge, Beechwood Hydroelectric dam on the upper St. John River, the wartime CBC Radio International towers at Sackville, and the art and architectural fusion at Fredericton's Centennial Building were design trailblazers in eastern Canada. They expanded the built evidence of a region on the move, along with new mills, mines, and military infrastructure constructed during what Margaret Conrad has dubbed "the Atlantic Revolution" of the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>35</sup> By the 1950s, widespread print media

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<sup>33</sup> Alan MacEachern, *Natural Selections: National Parks in Atlantic Canada, 1935-1970* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 98-125; and Ronald Rudin, *Kouchibouguac: Removal, Resistance, and Remembrance at a Canadian National Park* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).

<sup>34</sup> "Animaland," *The Atlantic Advocate*, April 1963, 38-41. While perhaps deemed kitschy following its closing at the turn of the twentieth century, in retrospect the Animaland theme park was quite different from the concurrent folk- and historically-based tourist initiatives throughout the Maritimes. Bronum was a professional artist, and his creations ranged from accurate physiological depictions of animals to modernist sculptural elements that embraced structure and modern materials such as steel and concrete. Entering into his park, the public was greeted by a large partially finished donkey-like figure which showed the stainless steel interior skeleton frame. Hence, the idea of gaining an understanding of the construction and design of the fantasy illusion was front and centre. It did not try to hide its commercial, modern, car-based nature.

<sup>35</sup> Conrad, "The Atlantic Revolution of the 1950s." Conrad's colleague Ernest Forbes reinforces this assessment: "The transformation in people's living standards during the period of the Atlantic Revolution was spectacular. For a few it brought a belated first acquaintance with electricity, indoor plumbing and other conveniences of a consumer society. For many it meant hard surface roads, expanding job opportunities, a modicum of independence and security in old age, access to health services, and education for their children beyond junior levels. For the first time the Maritime provinces were able to give their general population access to modern high schools, hospitals and universities. Meanwhile, the universities themselves changed from tiny, financially-starved feeder colleges to institutions capable of training locally the professionals needed for the mushrooming social, educational and industrial developments within the region." Ernest Forbes, "Looking Backward: Reflections on the Maritime Experience in

and radio/television linked the country, but it also united the Maritime Provinces. The Fredericton-based CFNB radio station was one of the most powerful in Canada, its signal strong enough to be heard throughout most of the Maritimes and New England.<sup>36</sup> The *Atlantic Advocate* magazine (published in Fredericton by the University Press) had a wide distribution throughout Atlantic Canada, and it never shied away from determined regional advocacy or the pursuit of modernisation in all aspects of its readers' lives.<sup>37</sup> University Press was a leader in publishing children's literature by contemporary Canadian authors and artists, and due to the advanced nature of its presses, their books' technical quality was comparable to what any major Canadian city could produce at the time.<sup>38</sup> These media reinforced a broad public enthusiasm for modernisation during a critical time of shifting socio-economic realities and political loyalties.

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an Evolving Canadian Constitution," in Donald J. Savoie and Ralph Winter, eds., *The Maritime Provinces: Looking to the Future* (Moncton: Canadian Institute for Research on Regional Development, 1993), 25.

<sup>36</sup> "Modern Building Houses New CFNB," *The Daily Gleaner*, March 18, 1947, 10.

<sup>37</sup> *The Atlantic Advocate* was the leading regional monthly news magazine for Atlantic Canada during the post-war years, and was originally published and edited by Michael Wardell, who was also at the head of Fredericton's *Daily Gleaner* newspaper and the owner of University Press in Fredericton. As the successor to the *Maritime Advocate and Bust East* magazine, which was published out of Sackville, NB, the *Atlantic Advocate* ran from 1956 to 1992. The New Brunswick Literary Encyclopedia reflects the following on the reach of the magazine: "The original subtitle to the magazine, 'The Voice of the Atlantic Provinces,' heralded the intention of the publication. In the introductory issue, the Editor's Note declares that 'The Atlantic Advocate is launched to fight the battles of the Atlantic Provinces which will win for them a fair place in the life of Canada.' The magazine lived up to this ideal by becoming a critical voice for the history, geography, travel, trade, and literature of the region. The magazine was comprised mostly of opinion pieces, articles of local interest, and news. It also dealt with political issues, as well as observations of life in the Atlantic provinces." For information on the University Press, see [http://stu-sites.ca/nble/b/brunswick\\_press.html](http://stu-sites.ca/nble/b/brunswick_press.html).

<sup>38</sup> Susan Fisher, "Junior Gleaners and Beaver Books: The colourful children's books of Fredericton's Brunswick Press in the 1950s and 60s," (Milham Lecture, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, October 27, 2016).

The recent history of the Maritimes helps explain why the legacy of visual modernism in the region has been largely neglected until recently, lying more or less disregarded in the current popular memory. Antimodern tendencies have often overtaken the public's view of the recent historical narrative, whether as a reaction to rapid, unsettling change, or as an exercise in nostalgia for a time when the region was less marginalized. Anti-modernism, as Ian McKay demonstrated in *The Quest of the Folk*, was influential in directing Nova Scotia-supported tourist promotion and cultural production from the early twentieth century onward, a pursuit he labels as "tartanism."<sup>39</sup> From the 1920s to the 1950s, when Nova Scotia was pursuing a calculated, state-sponsored revision of a mythologized homogenous ethnic past, embracing and promoting all that was imagined to be ancient and Scottish in the province (authenticity and appropriateness notwithstanding), it presented itself and its history as parochial enclaves. The enormous Scottish population of other Maritime provinces was left out of the narrative.<sup>40</sup> While McKay remarks that New Brunswick embraced similar post-war historical myth figures such as the sharply dressed "Loyalist Man" tourism icon in Saint John (fig. 2) and the romanticized "pioneer settler" along the St. John River Valley at Kings Landing, they were less omnipresent and less tied to the overall state identity as tartanism was in Nova Scotia.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ian MacKay and Robin Bates, *In the Province of History: The Making of the Public Past in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2010), 253-316.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. Note that PEI actually had a larger per capita percentage of Scottish immigrants than Nova Scotia.

<sup>41</sup> Ian McKay, interview by author, July 20, 2015. "Loyalist Man" was conceived by Saint John commercial artist Jim Stackhouse in the 1950s as a smiling tourism figurehead for the city,

However well intentioned, the identity at manufactured “living history” tourist sites such as Kings Landing, Village Historique Acadien, and Pays de la Sagouine promote a carefully calculated provincial identity rooted in the distant past and populated by the same “simple folk” that, according to McKay, were sought and celebrated in Nova Scotia.<sup>42</sup> As Dawson, Gidney, and Wright argue in their study of the symbols of Canada, “symbols often serve an integrative and defensive function, uniting an imagined ‘us’ against an imagined ‘them’.”<sup>43</sup> Recent scholarship relative to New Brunswick’s modern literary, economic, social, and political histories have emerged, building on the continued presence of *Acadiensis*,<sup>44</sup> but the history of New Brunswick’s engagement

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appearing widely in billboards, advertisements, and city maps. Saint John historian Harold Wright noted that “this man was the stereotypical Loyalist – white, male, well dressed, and well off.” Harold E. Wright and Joseph Goguen, *Bridging Saint John Harbour* (Charlston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2013), 87. The Loyalist Man character was ubiquitous with Saint John promotional materials until 2005, when the municipal government replaced it with a more stylized generic explorer figure that was still based on the old persona of the pioneer settler.

<sup>42</sup> Kings Landing is a recreated New Brunswick village on the banks of the St. John River at Prince William, northeast of Fredericton. It was initiated as a tourist attraction project to save historically significant structures that needed to be relocated to make way for the imminent flooding of the Mactaquac headpond in the late 1960s. Opened to the public in 1974, its buildings, material history, and costumed site animators entail a period ranging from the 1780s to the late nineteenth century. It is primarily considered a representation of the history of the United Empire Loyalists along the St. John River valley, as well as Scottish, Irish, and English immigrants, although several years ago an effort has been made to impart the stories of black Loyalists. Sympathetic to a political and economic connection between contemporary arts/culture and industry, George Yúdice stresses that culture is no longer understood as transcendent or disinterested, but is “used as an attraction for capital development and tourism... and as an inexhaustible kindling for new industries dependant upon intellectual property.” See George Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 4. In the inter-war period in New Brunswick, this view may not have been as omnipresent (nor as cynical) as of late, but it existed nonetheless.

<sup>43</sup> Michael Dawson, Catherine Gidney and Donald Wright, eds., *Symbols of Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2018), 4.

<sup>44</sup> Recent studies in New Brunswick’s modern literary history include several volumes either authored or edited by Tony Tremblay: *The Fiddlehead Moment: Pioneering an Alternative Canadian Modernism in New Brunswick*; Fred Cogswell: *The Many Dimensioned Self*, accessed September 24, 2018, <http://vre.lib.unb.ca/cogswell/>; and *New Brunswick at the Crossroads*:

with modernism within the full sweep of visual culture has been comparatively understudied. The erosion of dialogue relative to modern visual aspirations has run for almost two generations in New Brunswick, thereby pushing the province's historical narrative askew relative to other jurisdictions where mid-twentieth century cultural progress is embraced as bedrock. One can think of Quebec and Ontario in Canada, and certainly California and New York for that matter, where their visual identity is tied to physical and artistic innovation, while still acknowledging their older pre-modernist histories.

Akin to what Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger labeled "the invention of tradition,"<sup>45</sup> New Brunswick's faux mythmaking and memory revision during the late-twentieth century is part of a broader pattern witnessed throughout the Western world. A legitimizing of all that is (or was imagined to be) ancient and traditional was often embraced, but less through rigorous research and recovery than through cherry-picking from "well-supplied warehouses of official ritual, symbolism and moral exhortation."<sup>46</sup>

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*Literary Ferment and Social Change in the East* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2017). *Acadiensis* and the more recent online *Journal of New Brunswick Studies* have increasingly undertaken research into aspects of the modern era in New Brunswick, but have rarely delved into visual or artistic history. The studies on Maritime artists and advocates by Kirk Niergarth in *Acadiensis* and Gemey Kelly in the *Journal of Canadian Art History* are exceptions, although their focus typically concentrates on a limited time and place (Saint John in the 1930s and 1940s), and less on the broad interdisciplinary relationships and multi-generational aspects of modern visual culture (visual art, design, architecture, and industrial production, among others). Also, since 2008 John Leroux has produced a number of publications dealing with New Brunswick's modern architectural history, but these have only begun to expand their reach into the broader disciplines of visual culture.

<sup>45</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>46</sup> Hobsbawm, "Introduction," in *The Invention of Tradition*, 6.

Looking deeper into the meaning and origins of some of Europe's seemingly well-established nationalist traditions and public rituals, Hobsbawm states that:

A powerful ritual complex formed round these occasions: festival pavilions, structures for the display of flags, temples for offerings, processions, bell-ringing, tableaux, gun-salutes, government delegations in honour of the festival, dinners, toasts and oratory. Old materials were again adapted for this.<sup>47</sup>

The careful analysis and comparison of similar "invented" histories within British and Canadian culture are valuable analogies, making the existence of such local rituals seem legitimate, historical faithfulness be damned. New Brunswick has more than its fair share, such as the constructed "Changing of the Guard" in Fredericton (during the summer only, when tourists take it in), and the "Landing of the Loyalists" at Market Square in Saint John,<sup>48</sup> although it should be noted that neither invented tradition acknowledges Indigenous presence. Visually appealing and loaded with pomp, the hidden text of these rituals is often the staging of a deliberately constructed claim of timelessness and past glory. Such pageantry becomes burdened with a Janus-faced implication where they can be measured as expressions of pride (confident and constructive) but equally perform as tonics to declining influence and self-esteem (desperate and burdened by marginalized narratives). It is important to explore how these equally challenge and relate to the current account of New Brunswick's history.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Recently, the militaristic and colonial-based mythologizing is beginning to give way to groups that are emerging from their marginalization, such as the New Brunswick Black History Society's annual "Tomlinson Lake Hike to Freedom," a loose reenactment that has taken place since 2013 commemorating the last legs of the Underground Railroad journey at Carlingford in Northwestern New Brunswick.

I suggest that during the mid-twentieth century, while Nova Scotia consistently looked to the past to define itself, and Prince Edward Island was subjugated to a red-haired character from a 1908 novel, New Brunswick certainly engaged in similar pastkeeping, but it equally pursued initiatives that transcended mythical pre-modern folk ties. These progressive energies witnessed links between the arts, education, industry, and politics, and were periodically at the cusp of Canadian progressive action. While the post-war cultural and historical record of Central- and Western-Canadian regions acknowledges its complex layering of past and present – an era of technological and cultural leaps that revolutionized Canada’s social and visual landscape<sup>49</sup> – the present historiography of New Brunswick does not adequately do so. While they consciously broke free from the conservatism of the past, many Canadian cultural and political leaders of the years 1930 to 1967 strove for a world of promise and new benchmarks, such as Marshall McLuhan, Lester Pearson, Paul-Émile Borduas, Joseph-Armand Bombardier, and Arthur Erickson. The distinct disciplines of media, politics, art, architecture, and design also had and have champions and innovators in New Brunswick – although they have been seldom discussed concurrently within the auspices of visual modernity.

This research will build on the recent cultural writing and research of Kirk Niergarth, Tony Tremblay, Margaret Conrad, and Ian McKay. While they have all

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<sup>49</sup> See: Ian Thom, *A Modern Life: Art and Design in British Columbia 1945-1960* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2004); France Vanlaethem, *Patrimoine en devenir: l’architecture moderne du Québec* (Québec: Les Publications du Québec, 2012); Christopher Armstrong, *Making Toronto Modern: Architecture and Design 1895-1975* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2014); and Gerald L. Forseth, *Calgary Modern, 1947-1967: Architecture – Urban Planning – Art in the Everyday* (Calgary: University of Calgary, 2000).

thoroughly examined the twentieth-century history of New Brunswick (and Nova Scotia, in the case of McKay), their work focused on very specific aspects of the region.

Niergarth's study of the Saint John art environs of the 1930s and 1940s, while admirably exploring the artists' works and the individuals' wider Canadian relationships, focuses chiefly on the societal and aspirational aspects of their personal and professional lives, and it is clearly bound by a particular city's time and place. It is also centred on a small group of visual artists (and one academic), and does not venture into other visual-cultural fields. Tony Tremblay's work into cultural modernism in New Brunswick overlaps with aspects of my research, but his is almost entirely concerned with New Brunswick's modern literary history. He references the same visual art practitioners as Niergarth, but with some conclusions that I consider problematic. Similarly, Conrad's research on the "Atlantic Revolution" was key to my situating the era's visual culture within the larger socio-economic environment, but her investigations rarely touch on the artistic and the cultural. In McKay's case, his research doesn't cross into the adjacent provincial border past Amherst, Nova Scotia. My analysis focuses directly on New Brunswick, and situates it by taking into account the province's heterogeneous and often diverging cultural groups. A homogeneous notion of Canadian modernity obscures the depth and complexity of its regional development, as well as the erratic nature of modernism in such places as New Brunswick. This pluralistic sensibility of Anglophone, Francophone, and Indigenous social groups/communities and visual practices/manifestations, is key to a sounder understanding of modern visual culture in the province. With respect to Niergarth and Tremblay's work, this dissertation will take



a deeper view into the formal and cross-disciplinary aspects of the work of not only the Saint John artists of the 1930s and 1940s, but of a much wider scope of the province's visual creators from more regions, right up to the 1960s. Challenging Tremblay's work, this dissertation will more precisely situate the artistic leanings, intentions, and successes of the Saint John artists of the 1930s and 1940s, and it will delve into important associated visual fields that are not covered by his research of New Brunswick modernity (architecture, design, and infrastructure). Similarly, Conrad's work rarely mentions the visual sphere of society/culture/politics, nor of the built environment – the latter being one of the most tangible legacies of the "Atlantic Revolution."

### **Challenging identity and modernity**

Although modernity is a widespread condition with countless commonalities throughout the world, there is indeed a multiplicity of modernities. An analysis needs to be empathetic and understanding of the ecology of place and the breadth of human urges and social changes. A deep look into the cultural roots of a disenfranchised or outlying region/culture occurs at times in the historiography of modernism, although researchers such as Partha Miller demonstrate that these can sometimes be selective and ignorant of the breadth of avant-garde achievement (and inspiration) that lay outside what were considered geographies of central control and influence. Recognizing that many artists "tend to come off as bit players in the master narrative" of modernism, the majority of publications and studies on art history that espouse faith in the universal tend to follow "a well-trodden path that equates Western norms with global values, having the

unintended consequence of excluding the art of the periphery.”<sup>50</sup> This hegemony tends to discount the potential of cultural and formal hybrids that are rich in modern inspiration and integrity.

Modernist progress narratives typically want things ordered, catalogued, made rational and justified, but sometimes events don't work out that way. This is especially true when we approach history and the analysis of groups with a wide net. In the New Brunswick context, such “overlapping and sometimes unrealistic terminologies of such contemporary classification”<sup>51</sup> are often applied to groups such as Acadians, First Nations, sub-divisions of Anglo-Saxon/Anglo-Celtic societies such as the Irish or Scots, and groups such as the Jews, Lebanese, Indo-Canadians. In the case of say, the late nineteenth-century Acadians, they were often spoken of as a single monolithic entity who are more often than not rural, devoutly Catholic, and tillers of the soil or fishers of the sea. While the first Acadian Renaissance occurred in the 1880s, its political, educational, cultural, and urban development are often far more sophisticated and grounded than many realize.<sup>52</sup>

There is a cautionary tale of getting mired in the tricky framework of “regionalism,” an often pejorative term that has been at the centre of much of New Brunswick's history over the past few decades. I am reminded of Alex Colville's thoughts on the matter, where being outside the bookends of attention is not only liberating, it

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<sup>50</sup> Partha Mitter, “Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant-garde Art from the Periphery,” *Art Bulletin* 90, no. 4 (2008): 531.

<sup>51</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, “From Social History to the History of Society,” in Eric Hobsbawm, *On History* (London: The New Press, 1997), 87.

<sup>52</sup> See Robert Pichette, *Le Pays Appel   l'Acadie: R  flexions sur des Commemorations* (Moncton: Universit   de Moncton, Centre d'  tudes Acadiennes, 2006).

can be the most progressive spot to find genuine advancement. At the height of his creative output and living in Sackville, Colville deemed that “universality comes from the particular... and by immersing oneself in the particular, it is possible to be universal.”<sup>53</sup>

Rob Shields advocates for such an alternative reading of places on the margin, where the view from such places can overcome their suggestion of nostalgia and become a “determinant of universally-binding truth”:

Margins, then, while a position of exclusion, can also be a position of power and critique. They expose the relativity of the entrenched, universalizing values of the centre, and expose the relativism of cultural identities which imply their shadow figures of every characteristic they have denied, rendered anomalous or excluded.<sup>54</sup>

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first, “Hope and cultural development in visual art and fine craft” focuses on the stages of modern influence and interconnectedness in the visual arts in New Brunswick from the 1930s to the end of the 1960s. The work of a number of Saint John artists is key to understanding the early adoption of modern forms and outlooks in the region’s visual art, and how it dovetailed with socio-economic identity and initiatives. Specific attention will be given to Miller Brittain, Jack Humphrey, Ted Campbell, Fred Ross, and Kjeld and Erica Deichmann, their significant critical successes, and their embrace by Central Canadian advocates as agents of modern artistic and cultural change. Their choice to settle in or near the city of Saint John was critical to their growth and attention, as it was also the major industrial and business centre of New Brunswick. This urban authority notwithstanding, educational

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<sup>53</sup> Alex Colville, “The Visual Arts,” *Canadian Art*, Sept./Oct. 1961, 309.

<sup>54</sup> Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1991), 277.

and social advancements in Moncton, Fredericton, and Sackville also opened up opportunities for artists and cultural professionals, as exemplified by the energies of Acadian artists at the newly established Université de Moncton, the reach of institutions such as Mount Allison and the UNB Art Centre, and the early promise of an Indigenous art collective at Big Cove/Elsipogtog. This latter instance was a rare occurrence for First Nations communities in mid-century New Brunswick, making this study all the more important given the lack of accolades or attention typically shown to Indigenous visual culture in New Brunswick until quite recently. Following careful exploration and research by the author, the Big Cove collective appears to be one of the few pre-1967 episodes where Indigenous artists in New Brunswick consciously used modern idioms in artistic works for commercial or personal use. The chapter will also take into account the concurrent international artistic landscape that was rapidly changing its outlook and execution of formal modes and modern cultural ideas. These were often challenging to a province such as New Brunswick that was on the periphery of a nation that was itself on the periphery of western currents of modernism in visual culture. This peripheral situation notwithstanding, the modern art accomplishments by a select group of creative professionals during this era was remarkable by any measure, and should be seen as a vital aspect of Canada's search for visual identity during the mid-twentieth century.

The second chapter, "Modern architectural growth on the periphery" speaks to New Brunswick's architectural legacy as an agent for citizens to find voice during a turbulent and expansive time. This occurred despite the province being all but left out of

the written and illustrative canon of Canadian post-war architecture and its narrative of progressive design. Beginning with the achievements of early modern projects in the province's urban centres and on the outskirts of Sackville, the chapter leads into the sweeping social and cultural confidence physically expressed by the modern architecture of Acadian ecclesiastical buildings throughout New Brunswick. Ensuing sections examine the province's architectural response to changing demographics, economic opportunities, and international forms. These include the growth of university campuses related to the baby boom, the arrival of the International style to the province, new modes of organizing progressive worship and educational practices via modern church architecture, and new school designs throughout New Brunswick.

The third chapter, "Optimism and cultural expression through industry, design, and infrastructure" will investigate the considerable (although greatly overlooked) design goals and innovations throughout New Brunswick from the mid-1930s to the late 1960s. While the province was still on the margins of Canada's centres of economic, political and cultural power, the region's innovations related to design, industrial production, and infrastructure flourished – often with a national audience. These not only helped fuel the dynamism of post-war New Brunswick socio-political life, they reflected deep expansions in economic development offered to a region on a journey towards modernity. Instances of industrial design and domestic goods reaching wide acclaim and the buying public were due to strong technical and visual standards that embraced modern design principles. A number of these production and design facilities were outside of the province's larger urban centres, attesting to the broad sweep of

post-war modernism. The chapter will also consider New Brunswick's transformative infrastructure of the 1950s and 1960s. It will scrutinize the rarely studied visual direction and design factors carefully made by those in charge of industrialization and effectively, nation-building. These visual aspects imparted confidence, excitement, and buy-in by the public, a populace often unserved by such utilities up to the mid-twentieth century.

Chapter four, "New Brunswick's modern political, literary, and cultural advocates," examines the individuals often considered outside of the visual and artistic realm who played a major role in championing cultural renewal in New Brunswick, and its pursuit as part of an integral national voice. Central to this movement were the writers and academics that made up UNB's "Fiddlehead School," the cultural groups' leaders who presented to the cross-country sessions of the Massey Commission (itself, with a strong New Brunswick awareness), and post-war premiers Hugh John Flemming and Louis Robichaud. The latter's hard-fought program of Equal Opportunity pursued a reformist sensibility that evened out provincial disparities, often along linguistic and geographical lines.

The fifth and final chapter, "Social, political and cultural synthesis in 1967: the Centennial Building" weighs the impact of the aforementioned chapters' pursuits (art, architecture, design, infrastructure, politics and literary/cultural advocacy) and determines that their preeminent alignment occurred at the conception, design, construction, and occupancy of the Centennial Building in downtown Fredericton in 1967. The Centennial Building was a tangible physical manifestation of the "Atlantic Revolution," and one of the key symbols of New Brunswick's modern economic, social,

and cultural progress. Upon its opening early in the nation's centennial year, the structure was lauded by not only the provincial and federal governments as a functional symbol of the workings of New Brunswick's civil service, but by the wider media as a beacon of formal cultural achievement. This sensibility was expressed most tangibly by the six examples of public art throughout the structure. These six murals, all but one still in situ, speak to the era's artistic language that was not only a metaphor for the essence of the province and its place in the cultural maturity of Canada, but of the post-war articulation of the creative individual in society.

Together, these chapters consider the overlap between creative cultural action (production) and public dissemination (reception), how one influenced the other, and how thorough these correlations were. Collectively, the research will show that the modern artistic ferment and progressive reach in New Brunswick was tangible, multidisciplinary, and transformational – not only within its provincial borders, but to many areas and aspects of Canada as well.

The province's marginalization within Canada has hampered its participation in the national narrative of modernity, but in the case of New Brunswick from the 1930s to the 1960s, its cultural and artistic achievements and actions were innovative and substantial. The smaller region more than succeeded in its own distinct way within the developments of the nation. As Lucy Jarvis observed, modern cultural enlightenment undeniably "happened here long ago," and yes, it should be believed, understood, and explained.

## Chapter 1

### Hope and cultural development in visual art and fine craft

The hard economic times that followed the stock market crash of 1929 deeply challenged New Brunswick. The debilitating fact of the provincial government having to dole out 55 percent of its revenue to service its debt in 1933 made matters desperate, if not hopeless, for New Brunswick's poorest counties, which were often left to their own devices to scrape together funds for critical services such as health and education.<sup>1</sup> The disparity between the Anglophone and Francophone areas of New Brunswick was palpable at this time, as the educational success rate of Acadians was about half that of the English-speaking population.<sup>2</sup> There is little argument that the Maritimes, and New Brunswick in particular, had been deeply affected by the economic adjustments of the previous decade, where a significant loss of population and manufacturing operations led many towards Central Canada and the Western provinces.<sup>3</sup> However, it was paradoxically these very events of economic despondency that opened the door for a number of significant cultural aspects to occur. The innovators of modern art in New Brunswick forged a path as much out of necessity as through dedication to their convictions, and a number of socially and economically marginalized groups found their voice through collective cultural action.

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<sup>1</sup> E.R. Forbes, "Depression and Retrenchment," in E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, eds., *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 275.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 283.

<sup>3</sup> David Frank, "Class and Region, Resistance and Accommodation," in *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation*, 234-235.



This chapter will focus on the various stages of modern influence in the visual arts in the province, such as in the work of Miller Brittain, Jack Humphrey, Fred Ross, Ted Campbell, and the Deichmanns in the Saint John area, Alex Colville and Lawren P. Harris in Sackville, the Bobaks in Fredericton, Claude Roussel and Roméo Savoie in Moncton, and the “Micmac Indian Craftsmen” group in Big Cove (Elsipogtog). I will explore their significant critical successes, and their embrace by Central Canadian advocates for modern socio-cultural change. The choice to settle in their respective municipalities throughout New Brunswick was critical to their growth and attention.<sup>4</sup> For instance, the Saint John artists were deeply connected to their native city not only due to family ties, but for the opportunities it offered as the major industrial and business centre of the province. Educational and social advancements in Moncton and southeast New Brunswick were opening up opportunities for Acadian artists and cultural professionals, and the relative seclusion of Sackville offered the art professors and students at Mount Allison University freedom to discover their own path. The depth of change throughout the province relative to the rest of the country will be explored, and while often marginalized by Central Canada, there was still optimism to build one’s career in New Brunswick and offer consequence to national artistic circles.

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<sup>4</sup> All the aforementioned artists lived in cities or towns, with the exception of the Deichmanns, who lived in rural New Brunswick in the Kingston Peninsula just north of Saint John. While on the periphery of the city, they – and their studio – were often considered part of the Saint John art community.

New Brunswick may not have been regarded as a fecund landscape of cultural creativity during the first decades of the twentieth century,<sup>5</sup> but things would soon change during the Great Depression as artists trained in modern approaches were forced back home to New Brunswick for economic reasons. Much of the progressive nature burgeoning in the province focused on Saint John, its largest and most economically productive community. From technology to manufacturing, transportation, communications, and banking, Saint John was the provincial epicentre of modernizing forces. As the industrial capital of New Brunswick, the city was severely paralyzed by the effects of the Great Depression. Nevertheless, this plight did little to hinder the onset of what Fred Ross, as well as academics such as Kirk Niergarth and Karen Herring, regard as Saint John's "golden age" of artistic creativity in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>6</sup>

Three highly respected artists, Miller Brittain (1912-1968), Jack Humphrey (1901-1967), and Ted Campbell (1904-1985), all born and raised in Saint John, fostered this

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<sup>5</sup> See John C. Webster, *The Distressed Maritimes: A Study of Educational and Cultural Conditions in Canada* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1926), 13. It should be noted that it was not so long before Webster wrote his declaration that New Brunswick was robust insofar as professional artistic pursuits and achievements. Culturally, the late nineteenth century was a vibrant era in New Brunswick as public and private architecture was at its peak of opulence, as drama and music thrived (mainly in Saint John), and as Bliss Carman and Charles G.D. Roberts began to publish their poetry and prose to international acclaim. Mary Agnes Fleming, born and raised in Saint John, became one of the most prolific and highly paid authors of fiction in Victorian North America and the United Kingdom. Serious fine art education was afoot, as were the careers of professional visual artists such as E.J. Russell, John C. Miles, Charles Caleb Ward, and John Hammond. Serious studio photography came of age in the province with the business establishment of William Notman in Saint John and George T. Taylor in Fredericton, while the era also saw the start of the photographic careers of Ole Larsen in Miramichi and Isaac Erb in Saint John.

<sup>6</sup> Fred Ross, interview by author, December 13, 1997. See also Niergarth, *The Dignity of Every Human Being*; and Herring, "Creating a Centre/Recreating the Margin."

stimulating creative and social scene. They rose to national prominence and attention through articles, exhibitions, and publications that lauded their staunch commitment to a gritty realism that stemmed directly from observing their immediate surroundings. This vision often depicted the daily lives of blue-collar workers and the impoverished through a modern lens. Fred Ross (1927-2014) was a student under these three, and upon graduation would join their ranks as the youngest member of the group, and he too would gain national accolades.<sup>7</sup>

At times these artists criticized the decaying economic and physical state of the city, along with what they perceived as their insularity and relative disconnection to the rest of Canada. The question arises as to whether it was these conditions, and perceived insularity, that permitted and encouraged their particular view of the world around them to thrive. While there was admittedly a challenge in being outside the major art centres of Canada, the formal inspiration and focus of Saint John's artists was very much aligned to concurrent modern art practices in the United States and parts of Canada from the late 1920s to the 1940s. In Saint John's case, this often resulted in conflicting relationships between its artists and their city, as well as to each other.

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<sup>7</sup> Ross would be hired shortly after his graduation as a full-time instructor at the SJVC. In the 1950s and 1960s, he would be part of group exhibitions at the National Gallery in Ottawa, he had work displayed at Expo 67, and he was one of six New Brunswick artists featured in the 1963 NFB documentary *Painting a Province*. Later in his career, he would be awarded the Order of Canada for his artistic achievements.

### **Saint John – an urban economic and cultural engine**

Modernism was a compulsion laden with complexities and conflicts that drove far past the desire for material and structural change in society. Fuelled by political and economic capital, the pervasive modernizing wave of “progress” was profoundly nurtured by one of the greatest human shifts in recent history: the massive explosion of urban populations under industrial capitalism in the Euro-American world during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>8</sup>

Modernism shared a common thread in relation to the metropolitan: dazzling developments in technology, commerce, planning, transportation, engineering, culture, state power, and socio-political movements, all fuelled by the collective energies of the city. Repeatedly marked by collisions between civic inhabitants and their leaders, metropolitan modernism embodied the potential, the achievements, the tensions, and the tragedy of a world that seemed to be spinning increasingly fast. While exceptions can be found where modern aesthetic and social changes were conceived or manifested in rural areas,<sup>9</sup> Raymond Williams asserts that urbanism and immigration/mobility were at the heart of most radical advances in cultural modernism. Large cities were where population density encouraged an amplified exchange of ideas, and metropolitan areas drew those who were attracted to transformation. Even the impoverished, the

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<sup>8</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (London and New York: Verso, 1989), 45.

<sup>9</sup> Twentieth-century North American instances include: Marsden Hartley in inter-war era Maine; Alex Colville perfecting his restless “magic realist” approaches in post-war Sackville, New Brunswick; Nova Scotia’s Antigonish movement that empowered small resource-based communities through the development of credit unions, adult education, co-operatives, and microfinance; and Frank Lloyd Wright’s Taliesin studios in rural Wisconsin and Arizona, where communal living and architectural design work coexisted in restorative natural settings.

alienated, and outsiders could often find kinship in a community of like-minded spirits who shared creative practices.<sup>10</sup> The metropolis created potential to dissent against its orthodoxies, outdated social norms, and bourgeois power. As Williams notes, the city's sheer density and miscellany of social groups and institutions could foster meaningful creative potential:

The metropolis housed the great traditional academies and museums and their orthodoxies; their very proximity and powers of control were both a standard and a challenge. But also, within the new kind of open, complex and mobile society, small groups in any form of divergence or dissent could find some kind of foothold, in ways that would not have been possible if the artists and thinkers composing them had been scattered in more traditional, closed societies.<sup>11</sup>

The illuminating nature of the city was more than simply a metaphor of metropolitan vitality, variety, and “the liberating diversity and mobility.”<sup>12</sup> It was a concrete and palpable instance of technological and physical change that manifested itself in the visual and architectural, thus shifting the social. In Canada's case, Montreal and Toronto were the main urban centres during the early twentieth century where industry, politics, economy, and culture were at their most dynamic, although the Maritime provinces equally looked towards Boston for employment opportunities, urban connections, and ideas at the time. The historical north-south connection was well established, going back to Loyalist family ties and a more porous border.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Williams, 45.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>13</sup> Hermnégilde Chiasson, “Four Generations of Visual Arts in Acadie” in Phil Comeau ed., *Acadie Then and Now* (Opelousas, LA: Andrepont Publishing, 2014), and Stuart Smith, interview by author, Keswick Ridge, N.B., December 19, 1998. This Maritime exodus to New England also reached late nineteenth-century/early twentieth-century Acadian artists and craftspeople, such

In New Brunswick's case, Saint John was the main provincial city (and a Maritime equal to Halifax until the 1960s). By the mid-twentieth century, Moncton joined its ranks as a major centre that became a magnet for modern progress. However, throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Saint John was the New Brunswick city of economic promise and dynamism. In 1899 it had a population of almost 50,000, an electric streetcar system, a downtown filled with notable new architecture, and a robust manufacturing, financial, and transportation environment.<sup>14</sup>

The early- to mid-twentieth century urban surroundings of Saint John were the *genius loci* where New Brunswick's social, economic, and cultural relations formed at brisk speed compared to generations before. Inter-war Saint John saw itself as a modern city, but it was multifaceted and economically stratified. The social conditions of the shabby working-class housing only a short walk from the port were rarely presented publicly as compared to the city's industrial prowess, and it would be up to artists to visually fuse these two worlds to create a modern aesthetic.

As Canada reached its half-century mark, the nature of what constituted meaningful "national" visual art was complex and partially obscured, often in the hands of rigid academies or parochial bureaucrats who controlled the National Gallery of

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as architect/church builder Léon Léger (1848-1918) and artist Jeanne Léger (1895-1978) who went to Boston for training before returning home as professionals. See Betsy Beatty, "The Boston States: Region, Gender, and Maritime Out-Migration, 1870-1930," in Stephen J. Hornsby and John G. Reid, eds. *New England and the Maritime Provinces: Connections and Comparisons* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 130.

<sup>14</sup> *The City of the Loyalists and Gateway to the Pleasure and Health Resorts of the Maritime Provinces* (Saint John: Globe publishing/N.B. Tourist Association, 1899).

Canada (NGC).<sup>15</sup> In contrast to Canadians who subscribed to the notion of a universal canon of art that best represented Canada (i.e. the Group of Seven),<sup>16</sup> New Brunswick's professional artists of the 1930s challenged the authority of landscape, honing their eyes and skills more often than not on the city and its people.<sup>17</sup> This transformation away from a landscape focus concurred with the disbanding of the Group of Seven and its members' inclusion in the larger "Canadian Group of Painters" (formed in 1933). Membership stretched across the country – including Humphrey who was officially welcomed to the Group in 1939.<sup>18</sup> Upon their first Canadian exhibition in 1933, critic Robert Ayre noted the new group's shift in subject matter and intention:

The younger men and women have brought a new energy and a new vision... [W]e are still invited to look at pines and polls and lakes and rocks, but the revolutionary spirit remains revolutionary by moving away from extra-human landscape ... toward human life ... to show the effects of the profound disturbances in human affairs which have shaken the world; social implications are creeping in.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See Leslie Allan Dawn, "Canadian Art in England," in *National Visions, National Blindness: Canadian Art and Identities in the 1920s* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 6-30.

<sup>16</sup> While Lawren Harris and Arthur Lismer painted some notable works in Nova Scotia during the Group of Seven tenure, they, and the other members, never had any episodes of painting in New Brunswick. The only member of the Group to have ever done so was A.Y. Jackson, who painted on the outskirts of the Fredericton region many years after the Group had disbanded.

<sup>17</sup> A number of recent scholarly histories of New Brunswick visual art during the early twentieth century have been written, making headway into challenging this centrist national narrative. Key instances include: Niergarth, *The Dignity of Every Human Being*; Sandra Paikowsky, "'From Away': The Carnegie Corporation, Walter Abell and American Strategies for Art in the Maritimes from the 1920s to the 1940s," *Journal of Canadian Art History* XXVII (2006): 36-72; and Gemey Kelly, "Regionalist or Canadian Modern: Jack Humphrey's Claim to Fame," *Journal of Canadian Art History* XXVII (2006): 76-91.

<sup>18</sup> Alicia Boutilier, ed., *A Vital Force: The Canadian Group of Painters* (Kingston, ON: The Agnes Etherington Art Centre and the Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 2013), 133.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Ayre, "Canadian Group of Painters," *Canadian Forum*, December 1933, 98-100. Robert Ayre was a keystone to early twentieth-century Canadian art criticism, primarily through his role as the resident art critic at the *Montreal Gazette* and *Standard*. He also contributed to the early issues of *Canadian Art* magazine. He advocated for the place of art in the community and the integral role that artists should play in society and culture.

Both Brittain and Humphrey were schooled under modern formal artistic influences in New York before their return to Saint John in the 1930s. The principal American artists of that time were often labeled as “American Scene” artists, employing urban and social subjects at the core of their work. Humphrey studied for five years at the National Academy of Design, while Brittain attended the Art Students League. The latter’s faculty included teachers Kenneth Hayes Miller, Thomas Hart Benton, and Harry Wickey (the latter became a close friend of Brittain) (fig. 3). Kenneth Hayes Miller belonged to a group of so-called “cool” urban realists named the Fourteenth Street Group, which also included artist Reginald Marsh, who is most closely identified with the urban realism of the 1930s (fig. 4). Marsh’s paintings often depict scenes of tired and lonely city dwellers, both young and old, shuffling through their daily lives, and Bowery street bums barely subsisting on the outskirts of polite society.

Brittain captured Saint John scenes in a detached and composed fashion, similar to many of Marsh’s New York canvases. In fact, J. Russell Harper's speculation that "Brittain's little Saint John world was a microcosm of the bigger New York street crowds of Reginald Marsh and others" is accurate.<sup>20</sup> Brittain's studies of the alienated nature of the modern urban citizen, surrounded by the buzz of activity yet isolated within themselves, embody a detachment that, while often focused on those on the lower end of the socio-economic ladder, also includes portrayals of the upper class. We can infer that Brittain's Depression-era Saint John, perhaps characteristic of most cities, generated some level of despair at all social strata. One need only look at the socio-

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<sup>20</sup> J. Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 308.



economic range of figures in his 1941-42 *Cartoons for the Saint John Tuberculosis Hospital Mural*, where a formally dressed woman dangles her pearls, seemingly bored and disconnected, while nearby, the tuberculosis-ridden poor await their tragic fate (fig. 5). Stark depictions of these distressing disconnections (one with too much and one with too little) are placed squarely in the viewer's face, with the artistic subject's malaise ever-present.

In addition to the American Scene influences, Jack Humphrey was acutely exposed to modern art from 1924 to 1929 under the tutelage of Charles Hawthorne at the National Academy of Design in New York City. Humphrey's period sketchbooks (now in the collection of the NGC) are rife with accomplished cubist figure sketches in pencil and charcoal. Hawthorne lauded Humphrey's young talent, writing that he came "as near being a genius as any student I have ever seen" in a letter to his father C. Percy Humphrey,<sup>21</sup> when he encouraged young Jack to travel to Europe. The advice was taken as Jack Humphrey would study under renowned modern painter Hans Hofmann in Munich in 1930.

Humphrey had a rather withdrawn, even melancholy temperament, and moved in more solitary means within the Saint John art scene compared to Miller Brittain.<sup>22</sup> As the avowed formal modernist in Saint John, Humphrey's attitude often compromised his public perception among colleagues and critics in Canada. Akin to the innovative works

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<sup>21</sup> Charles W. Hawthorne to C.P. Humphrey, Sept. 4, 1928, Jack Humphrey fonds, Charles Hawthorne file, NGC Archives.

<sup>22</sup> Stuart Smith, interview by author, and Fred Ross, interview by author.

on paper of the American watercolourist John Marin from a decade earlier,<sup>23</sup> Humphrey's Cubist-like sensibility in his watercolours and canvases not only captured the energy and colour of the Saint John vernacular and environs, they were considered groundbreaking insofar as use of the watercolour medium went at the time in Canada for capturing urban scenes (fig. 6). Ted Campbell recalled that "[Jack] was always concerning himself with what, for instance, Marin was doing."<sup>24</sup> In a consoling letter sent to Humphrey in 1947, Pegi Nicol MacLeod actually compared him to Marin, writing "We think of you very warmly as a producer of fine, sensitive fresh modern things – you are our Marin... you fulfill a function that he fulfilled in the American scheme."<sup>25</sup>

The desire to celebrate the multidisciplinary cultural wealth of Saint John was equally embraced during the 1930s and 1940s in the uptown studio of artist and educator Ted Campbell. It was a magnet for artists, poets, performers, patrons, and lovers of the arts, both professional and amateur, and his studio is recalled as an important cultural crossroads, meeting place, and erstwhile gallery for painters.<sup>26</sup> Campbell's life was essentially a work of performance art in itself, and his studio loft was

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<sup>23</sup> John Marin (1870-1953) was an influential American modern artist who is best known for his abstract landscapes and fluid, loose watercolours - the latter often depicting the burgeoning cityscapes of urban America. While fascinated by architecture, he also painted the rocky coastline of Maine during his annual summer sojourns there, beginning in 1914. He was greatly admired by Humphrey, and Marin's chosen subject matter and stylistic/medium choices were of great influence to the Saint John artist.

<sup>24</sup> Ted Campbell, interview by Charles Hill, October 29, 1973, transcript, NGC Archives collection, accessed August 8, 2019, <http://shopngc.ca/cybermuse/servlet/imageserver?src=DO97-1000&ext=x.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> Pegi Nicol MacLeod, quoted in Joan Murray, ed., *Daffodils in Winter. The Life and Letters of Pegi Nicol MacLeod, 1904-1949* (Moonbeam, Ontario: Penumbra Press, 1984), 172.

<sup>26</sup> See Herring.

called “a brilliant theatrical oasis”<sup>27</sup> that sustained much of Saint John’s modern cultural energy. It was also an innovator in uptown Saint John that effectively fused living space and a working studio, pioneering the urban reclamation of open industrial spaces.

In a 1969 article, Jean Sweet described the 48 feet long by 24 feet wide loft, with its row of tall windows filling the west wall overlooking the harbor, as virtually unprecedented in the Maritimes: “From the beginning it was different, and hinted at the shape of things to come... . The view from the now polished windows was magnificent with harbour lights so close you could have been on the bridge of an ocean liner at dock.”<sup>28</sup>

A gifted draughtsman, Campbell became best known as an art teacher and cultural advocate, training hundreds of students at the Saint John Vocational School where he introduced young minds to contemporary practices in modern art. A visual art instructor and mentor at the school from 1934 to 1965, Campbell encouraged his students to formulate their work and subject matter, as his celebrated local artist colleagues did, from their daily lives and surroundings.

### **Location vs. isolation**

A struggle emerged within the artistic community between the value of Saint John's substance versus its geographical and economic obstacles. Humphrey expressed most vocally and consistently the love/hate relationship with Saint John. Although he was a

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<sup>27</sup> Jean Sweet, “Memories of a Colourful Era Sparked by Fire. Old Globe Pyre Recalls ‘The Studio’ Days,” *Saint John Times-Globe*, April 27, 1963.

<sup>28</sup> Jean Sweet, “Ted Campbell’s Studio,” *The Atlantic Advocate*, March 1969, 31.

member of one of the most prominent art alliances in the country, included within the permanent collection of the NGC since the early 1930s, and consistently exhibited throughout Canada and abroad, he claimed his environment and its isolation from the rest of the country was consistently suffocating his art:

In the 1930s it was unthinkable to choose a place as isolated and artistically inert as Saint John then was in which to begin to build a career in painting. To return from surroundings of apparently great possibilities (New York and Provincetown) and from many months in Europe to one's unawakened native city was not a chosen course. It was an enforced retreat. The youngest painters of today happily do not know the long years of attrition and the infamous depression of the thirties.<sup>29</sup>

It was a matter of financial choice for many Saint John artists to stay put, as the familiar settings, people, and conditions promoted the sustaining of roots rather than flight to potential greener pastures in Central Canada or the United States. Writing of Humphrey's continued presence in his "unappreciative" city, Graham McInnes claimed that "the fundamental fact is that he loves Saint John, and is really not at home when away from it."<sup>30</sup> The subtext in this notion is clear, when not in his element or a familiar environment, Humphrey's work suffered. Saint John provided that element.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Jack Humphrey, "The Problems of the Artist in the Maritimes," *Canadian Art*, Winter 1955, 71.

<sup>30</sup> Graham McInnes, "Painter of Saint John," *Canadian Art*, Spring-Summer 1948, 171.

<sup>31</sup> If one were to take Humphrey's words as gospel, the artistic temperament of Saint John would have been decidedly unsophisticated; yet a tremendous creative and progressive aura enveloped the city both before and after the Second World War. Avery Shaw, former art curator of the New Brunswick Museum, and a respected artist in his own right, wrote the following in *Canadian Art* magazine in 1947: "On the writer's first visit to Saint John, some years ago, the impression of especial activity in art was remarkably strong, and has remained so. The problem: why should this city, deplorable in its economic and physical conditions, produce so much creative vitality is still unanswered, but the fact of this vitality remains as obvious as ever. Painting is accepted as a lifetime pursuit." Avery Shaw, "Looking Forward in Saint John," *Canadian Art*, Summer 1947, 167.

Brittain, although as much a victim of economic and situational hard times as Humphrey, took solace in his environment. Descended from an original Loyalist family who settled in Saint John, Brittain had a more conservative temperament decidedly fused to this place, and one could hardly imagine his work being produced anywhere but Saint John. Brittain stated that: "A picture ought to emerge from the midst of life and be in no sense divorced from it... And I think that artists should be rooted in their native heath, not self-consciously but naturally. And they will be so if their life and work are one and the same."<sup>32</sup> Pegi Nicol MacLeod goes so far as to equate Brittain's vision with the very essence of modern Saint John, and that his potential of capturing a tangible sense of place should be imported into the rest of the nation:

The gap is being filled so far as concerns Miller Brittain's scene. When the younger painters broaden it to include Vancouverness, Ottawaness, Torontoness, etc., as we have Saint Johnness, Canadian art has some future... . The first Miller Brittain came as a therapeutic shock, setting free the spring of my wish. Man at last. Not archaic man, but present-day man; complicated and modern. Just like all of us.<sup>33</sup>

The work of Brittain and Humphrey during the 1930s and 1940s is representative of a new subjectivity within Canadian art which emerged during the decade: the need to reflect the faces, workplaces, and lives of all levels of Canadians, and particularly those in urban centres. Saint John was fertile ground in which to foster a contemporary artistic environment, where a modern vision revealed the Canadian citizen, both rich and poor, as its subject (fig. 7). The foil was often the city, and in its depiction could be found

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<sup>32</sup> As quoted in Pegi Nicol, "Miller Brittain," *Maritime Art*, April 1941, 17-18.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

either the pessimism of urban squalor and poverty, or the promise of civic monumentality and vitality.

### **Art and industry**

In the 1930s, the commercial core of Saint John was centred on its port, which continued to be tied to the city's self-image, its potential to draw capital, as well as its international connections. This vision was shared by its artists, for the harbour was a busy gateway to the rest of the world. It was the primary location for observing the vibrant activity of visiting ships, hardworking longshoremen unloading steel steamers, and the landing of new immigrants, all within a stone's throw of some of the wealthiest people in Eastern Canada in one direction and nearby slums in the other. With cheap downtown rents and upper-floor studios, the area created an ideal setting for Saint John's artists to establish close studios, forming what was described in 1947 by *Canadian Art* magazine as a "distinctive artists' quarter" near the port.<sup>34</sup>

For the city to live and prosper, the leaders of Saint John understood that the municipality had to look seaward and landward, and "keep her fingers on the pulse of trade flowing east and west." Her citizens were encouraged to "think in terms of ships and railroads, of docks and elevators, of all those technical matters."<sup>35</sup> By the mid-1930s, public sentiment, fuelled by an optimistic hope for better times ahead, approvingly considered its rebuilt port and modern facilities:

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<sup>34</sup> "Coast to Coast in Art: A Distinctive Artists Quarter," *Canadian Art*, Christmas 1947, 85.

<sup>35</sup> Ian Sclanders, "The Port," in *The Romance of a Great Port: The Story of Saint John New Brunswick*, ed. Frederick William Wallace (Saint John: The Committee of the Transportation Festival on the Occasion of the Silver Jubilee of His Majesty King George V, 1935), 35.

... the port breathes a new romance. It is not the romance of wooden ships and iron men, nor of picturesque shipyards, but the romance of twentieth century trade – of farm and factory and forest and mine, of speed and mass production. In sheds piled high with freight each commodity has its story. There is the story of rubber made into tires, the story of steel, the story of automobiles, of tea, of a gigantic packing industry. There are stories of flour mills and the lumber woods and a thousand and one things – stories of great individuals and great enterprises.<sup>36</sup>

Humphrey, Campbell, and Brittain were consistently drawn to the activity and humanity of the port. Brittain himself once worked there as a longshoreman. This influenced his best known work, *Longshoremen*, now in the collection of the NGC (fig. 8).<sup>37</sup> While *Longshoremen* focuses on the energy, character, and implied interpersonal relationships of the blue-collar workers who manned the city's port, a little known drawing of Brittain's that was prominently published in the *Telegraph-Journal* on November 30, 1936 visually expresses the role of the longshoreman as a key and commanding part of the physical modernisation that was taking place in New Brunswick (fig. 9). A second related drawing appeared several months later in 1937 in the *Telegraph-Journal* as well. The earlier drawing was the frontispiece for a multi-page "Shipping Supplement" that boasted of the progress and construction of port infrastructure. The artwork made plain the zeitgeist (or hopes therein) of the port and the city of Saint John. A headline promoting "Saint John, Port of Opportunity, Beckons To Commerce Of The Seven Seas," along with bursting warehouse photos captioned by "Trade – life blood of the nation – as it flows through the big steel and concrete sheds of

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<sup>36</sup> Ian Sclanders, "The Port To-Day," in *The Romance of a Great Port*, 51.

<sup>37</sup> Niergarth, 95-97 & 174.

Saint John's modern harbor facilities," used Brittain's singular image to consolidate the intended message.

In analyzing Brittain's drawings, I diverge from the formal implications of Kirk Niergarth where he states "Miller Brittain illustrated the tension between the city's glorified Loyalist past and, during the Depression, its class-divided present as a crippled and failing industrial centre in two drawings published on the front page of the *Telegraph Journal* in the spring of 1937 [sic]."<sup>38</sup> I posit that Brittain's two 1936-37 newspaper drawings were anything but intended illustrations of a fading present as compared to the emotional glories of the Loyalist past. These drawings overtly present a vibrant and energetic industrial centre that is aspirational in its form, making it a distinct connection to the Loyalist hopes for the region.

In the foreground of the first black and white draughted image, Brittain depicts a muscular and confident male figure clothed in a longshoreman's coat and cap, ready for work with his lunchbox in one hand (subtly monogrammed with a MB) and a longshoreman's hook atop his other shoulder.<sup>39</sup> Behind the man is a middle ground filled with masses of similarly capped workers, pickup trucks going in all directions, and a billowing steam engine with a throng of boxcars. In the background are a series of

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<sup>38</sup> Kirk Niergarth, "Art and Democracy: New Brunswick Artists and Canadian Culture Between the Great Depression and the Cold War" (PhD dissertation, University of New Brunswick, 2007), 142.

<sup>39</sup> An *Evening-Times Globe* column which ran shortly after the drawing appeared, spoke of the identity of the longshoreman and the attempt to track him down. While it turned out that no one in particular had posed for the face, "Mr. Brittain did have a model for the body. He had, it seemed, caught in his drawing a waterfront type common at this port – a fine type of rugged, industrious labor. Miller Brittain has seen enough of the waterfront to be able to typify its characters with his pencil, for he's a West Sider." "The Man on the Street," *The Evening-Times Globe*, December 1, 1936, 13.



ships (a tanker, tugboat, and a huge passenger liner) and a very geometric concrete terminal grain elevator with its repetitive cylindrical silos.

Brittain used the grain elevator as a formal compositional device that not only offers a bright minimalist counterpoint to the darker grittiness of the workers and trains, but it also clearly connects to avant-garde European Modernists who derived inspiration from the functional engineering forms of Canadian terminal grain elevators, famously illustrated by Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier in his seminal *Vers une architecture* of 1923, which was translated into English in 1931 as *Towards a New Architecture*.<sup>40</sup> North American terminal grain elevators were also a formal model for the avant-garde Russian Constructivist architecture of the 1920s and 1930s. The elevators' design of unadorned platonic volumes and soaring building planes that actively revealed their structural bones was cited by Moisei Ginzburg in his seminal 1924 Russian architectural manifesto *Style and Epoch* as the very essence of modern monumentalism during the machine age:

Indeed, in [factories, grain elevators and industrial structures] we can analyze features that are known to us: true monumentality; the purely contemporary dynamism of this monumentality; asymmetry of forms; an emphatic direction of movement which increases towards a clearly felt external axis and creates the feeling which is typical of the mechanized city; a composition which is strong and indestructible... and, finally, the special richness and acuity of texture of the materials in the alternation of the expressively silhouetted dynamism of iron and steel with the

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<sup>40</sup> Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (London: John Rodker, 1931), 25-31. Unlike Europe, New Brunswick relegated almost all Modern design to functional industrial structures until mid-century, when Modernism would finally prevail. The prominent grain elevator and storage structures that anchored the Saint John waterfront for generations would have made the European Modernists proud, yet they were hardly considered architecture by the local populace and were gradually demolished with no public outcry. The CNR Grain Elevator, built at the south end of Water Street in about 1914, handled grain exports through the port, and its bold reinforced concrete form was echoed by several other similar structures around the city's harbour.

strenuously resisting stability of stone and reinforced concrete, and the glinting of glass which connects it all....

Such is the role of industrial architecture – the role of a binding link whose principal value for us consists in its everyday sobriety and quotidian reality, the bringing of the creative quest down to the firm soil of the present day, and in the confinement of our above-the-cloud dreaming to the bounds of the possible, realizable and truly necessary.<sup>41</sup>

Brittain's grain elevator as a symbol of industrial dynamism and architectural change in Saint John had parallels throughout concurrent art practices in Canada and the United States. Canadian painters Adrien Hébert, Charles Comfort, and Marion Scott used port grain elevators as central imagery in their art (fig. 10), while south of the border, a group of modern artists known as the Precisionists embraced the structures in many paintings and photographic works. Some of Charles Sheeler and Charles Demuth's most acclaimed Precisionist canvases presented these concrete and steel behemoths, such as Demuth's *My Egypt* (1927) and Sheeler's *Classic Landscape* (1931) (fig. 11). Sheeler appreciated and admired their functional, mechanical forms that communicated both modernity and efficiency, connecting them with a spiritual, communicative depth:

Every age manifests itself by some external evidence. In a period such as ours when only a comparatively few individuals seem to be given to religion, some form other than the Gothic cathedral must be found. Industry concerns the greatest numbers – it may be true, as has been said, that our factories are our substitute for religious expression.<sup>42</sup>

Embracing the heroic and emotional aspects of the concrete siloed form, Canada's national pavilion at the 1937 World's Fair in Paris was modeled after a terminal grain elevator with its grouping of concrete silos (fig. 12):

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<sup>41</sup> Moisei Ginzburg, *Style and Epoch: Issues in Modern Architecture* (1924; repr., London: Ginzburg Design, 2018), 133.

<sup>42</sup> Charles Sheeler quoted in Barbara Rose, ed., *Readings in American Art 1900-1975* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975), 81-82.

The industrial symbol that evolved in the early twentieth century, and which was specifically identified with Canada, both nationally and internationally, was the terminal grain elevator. It symbolized wheat, the West, and Canada's role as the 'bread-basket of the world.' For artists, the grain elevator, both as a built form and as a working industrial operation, became a powerful and erudite symbol of 'modernism' and the massive scale of industrial architecture.<sup>43</sup>

Through the smoke, the movement, the overtly "workingman" male figures, and modern engineering structures, the message of Brittain's longshoreman drawing seems clear: Saint John considered itself as a cog in the gears of a new modern world. To thrive as an industrial and commercial powerhouse, the city needed a public embrace of architectural and transportation infrastructure. In addition to the importance of capital, the individual worker was given full respect as a heroic figure who effectively fuelled the engine of progress. This recalls the period's quixotic notion of the "huge machines of modern construction" and the engineering thrust that "massed their men for the battle against time" during the 1931 waterfront port rebuild that was necessary to maintain the city's lifeblood:

In the Harbour Commission's drafting rooms.... engineers pored over plans, gave orders.... In factories, sweating labourers fabricated steel. The activity was electric.... Concrete wharves took shape, wharves of the most modern type. Sure-footed structural steel workers, who walked nimbly and fearlessly over narrow beams at dizzy heights, strung girders. Rivet-hammers bat a pizzicato. White hot rivets sizzled through the air, tossed from tongs to bucket. And there grew a new skeleton, not the black desolate skeleton left by fire, but the steel framework of a new hope.<sup>44</sup>

Several months after Brittain's drawing appeared in print, Ontario sculptor Elizabeth Wyn Wood echoed the optimism of the new technical engineering/art world

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<sup>43</sup> Rosemary Donegan, *Industrial Images* (Hamilton, ON: The Art Gallery of Hamilton, 1988), viii.

<sup>44</sup> Sclanders, 53, 55-57.

that connected Canadians (and in Brittain's case, New Brunswickers) to the globe:

"Modern communication and the continuing peace of our land have made us at least continental. The pulse beat behind American architecture, Mexican murals, Canadian painting, and all the North American engineering arts is our life force."<sup>45</sup>

Brittain repeated a kindred approach to his port drawing, both compositionally and thematically, six months later when he submitted another artwork to the *Telegraph-Journal*. His "Loyalist Day" drawing was on the front page of the May 18, 1937 edition. Here, a stately male Loyalist wearing a long coat embraces a female figure to his right (fig. 13). The middle ground features tall masted ships and the harbour with hills beyond, while the upper background sports a modern harbourside skyline with industrial buildings, smokestacks, and church spires set tightly together, with a concrete grain elevator matching the 1936 drawing in the middle. The caption adheres to the allegory of the "enlightened" Loyalists of Saint John:

They came not as beaten refugees seeking sanctuary but as resolute pioneers determined to overcome rugged wilderness and claim for themselves a home where they could live as they choose-under the British flag... In this picture Miller Brittain depicts a Loyalist couple on that May day of long ago looking up from the shore at the rocky hills on which they would build a city, envisioning the future... Perhaps they were enunciating the words of Ward Chipman uttered when he first entered the harbor – the words that became Saint John's motto: "O fortunati quorum jam moenia [sic] surgunt" – "O fortunate people whose walls are already rising." In the background is the artist's conception of their vision - the skyline of the city which was to be.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Elizabeth Wyn Wood, "Art and the Pre-Cambrian Shield," *Canadian Forum*, February 1937, 13-15.

<sup>46</sup> *Telegraph-Journal*, "1783 – Loyalist Day – 1937," May 18, 1937, 1.

The trope of a heroic figure bound by the Canadian landscape and a conglomeration of industry had period precedents. Centrepieces that were young, virile, and metaphorically ready to take on the weight of the world laid bare the message that the land (and its resources) was here for the taking. It is worth noting that such figures during this period are almost always white, and Indigenous figures/subjects (and certainly instances of First Nations dispossession) are seldom depicted. Such “white savior narrative” tropes and images of heroic Euro-American Loyalists/settlers have racist and colonial undertones, pushing messages of Anglo-centric and Euro-centric ethnic morality and superiority, where the landscape and its riches are the spoils for the consumption of the colonizers.<sup>47</sup> A notable likeness is the poster for “On the Tide of Prosperity,” published in 1927 by the Ontario government to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Confederation (fig. 14). Curator Andrew T. Hunter notes that the poster’s young figure raising his arms in a “V” for victory is a fitting analogy to the inter-war pursuit of resource extraction and the heroism of industry. Myopic in retrospect to environmental and social costs of such sweeping transformation, it was a familiar approach depicting the imminent changes hitting the western world.<sup>48</sup>

Taking a shot at the period’s neglect of artists from the Maritimes in the national narrative, columnist Graham McInnes labeled Brittain as “one of Canada’s forgotten

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<sup>47</sup> See “Controversial Charles Comfort Mural will no longer be displayed at SFU,” accessed April 12, 2020, <https://the-peak.ca/2019/06/controversial-charles-comfort-mural-will-no-longer-be-displayed-at-sfu/>. The depth of such depictions are best explored by those who have focused on the subject, including those listed at the online “Whiteness” research entry on the “Oxford Bibliographies” website, accessed November 12, 2018, <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199791286/obo-9780199791286-0125.xml>.

<sup>48</sup> Andrew T. Hunter, *The Other Landscape* (Edmonton: The Edmonton Gallery, 2003), 21-22.

men, from east of Maine,” adding that the country needed to heed the new art coming out of Saint John: “there are ties, in pictures such as these, more enduring than the steel ribbon over which the Ocean Limited travels, uncaringly, across the provinces which were once Canada’s greatest.”<sup>49</sup> That Brittain’s drawings had meaningful connections to such nation-building elements as the railway was remarkable, and demonstrated how eager Canadian critics were for socially conscious modern art and culture to take a leading role.

Saint John supported a modern artistic vision during the Great Depression and World War II, transcending its perceived financial and critical shortcomings. Miller Brittain and Jack Humphrey, whether professionally conflicted or collegially aligned depending on the day, were in the midst of a modernist path of artistic development that was analogous with artists in any other “progressive” area of Canada at the time. Niergarth carefully reflects this in his study of the artists of Saint John in the inter-war years:

... Brittain and Humphrey were far from isolated from contemporary trends in the years of the Depression and war. They were actively engaged by contemporary debates about aesthetic modernity and the role of art and artists in society. They attempted to synthesize aspects of the art of the past – drawn from a selective tradition: Rembrandt, Cézanne, Blake – with modern developments – Picasso, Matisse, Rivera – in pursuit of a new realism, a new renaissance, a social modernism. Humphrey and Brittain were neither ahead of their time nor behind their time: they were *of* their time.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Graham McInnes, “Contemporary Canadian Artists: No. 11 --- Miller Brittain,” *The Canadian Forum*, December 1937, 312.

<sup>50</sup> Niergarth, 164.

The Saint John artists' concerns were not simply ones of aesthetic style and social voice, but also of formally expressing the spirit of modernity in subjects that were local, but also formally and functionally connected to international waves of modern architecture, design, commerce and philosophy. These connections have not been given due scrutiny, as they have been habitually eclipsed relative to the art's tangible social messages and stylistic modes. In New Brunswick's case such considerations of modern international precedents fused with regional sensibilities and clients also found voice in the works and explorations of a ceramicist couple that set up base outside of Saint John.

### **The modern ceramic art of the Deichmanns**

Friends and colleagues of Brittain, Humphrey, and Campbell, Kjeld and Erika Deichmann were pioneers of modern studio pottery in Canada, having set up their handmade ceramics practice in 1935 at Moss Glen on the rural Kingston Peninsula just north of Saint John. The Deichmanns were of Dutch descent, trailblazing the acceptance of minimalist Scandinavian-styled ceramics in their field (fig. 15). The pair were celebrated in their desire for formal design,<sup>51</sup> with Kjeld running the wheel and Erika perfecting the chemistry for countless glazes which became a Deichmann trademark. They represented Canada at numerous World's Fairs and international exhibitions, and their studio was considered a bucolic utopia for visiting artists and cultural figures from across the country. The couple embodied ideas of simplicity and a self-sufficient artistic practice

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<sup>51</sup> Gail Crawford, *Studio Ceramics in Canada* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2005), 35-37; and Sandra Alföldy and Rachel Gotlieb, eds., *On the Table: 100 Years of Functional Ceramics in Canada* (Toronto: Gardiner Museum, 2005), 35.

that was modern and anti-modern all at once, working with local clay that was fired in kilns they hand-built themselves. Near the beginning of their career, *Saturday Night* magazine suggested their work would soon become a springboard for Canadian visual art, far outside just the ceramic realm:

Mr. and Mrs. Deichmann are artists with an ever-widening vision that is going to affect Canadian art in the near future... Already others, artists and humbler folk alike, are being drawn into the circle of their friendship, and all will be playing their part in forming what Moss Glen – now a little known spot in New Brunswick – will give Canada in the future.<sup>52</sup>

Art historian and cultural writer Walter Abell was a champion of the Saint John artists, and his appointment as a Carnegie-funded professor of art at Acadia University in the 1930s and 1940s gave him the means to spread the word. In a letter to Jack Humphrey, he was aware of the quality of the Deichmann's output, but also of their ability to broaden the public acceptance of modern Canadian visual art:

The Deichmanns are on track of something vital in integrating art with modern life... If those of us who see the problems of art and artists can formulate a policy and work at it shoulder to shoulder we can probably gradually affect the inert mass.<sup>53</sup>

Kjeld Deichmann understood the precarious nature of the craftsperson in the mid-twentieth century amidst global change. Around 1945, he lyrically stated his opinion of the modern artisan being hurtled increasingly forward, with tradition beckoning from a distant yesterday:

It seems to me we are like a company of travellers who have been sailing for a long time on a big sturdy ship, not always in the same direction but

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<sup>52</sup> Faith D. MacLean, "Adventure in Pottery," *Saturday Night*, September 4, 1937.

<sup>53</sup> Walter Abell to Jack Humphrey, May 26, 1941, Jack Humphrey fonds, Walter Abell file, NGC Archives.



tacking back and forth, seemingly, at least, with an ultimate goal in mind. Then suddenly, the big vessel is going to pieces and we find ourselves in a small boat, tossed and buffeted by winds and waves, exposed to all kinds of quick impacts from outside, and not really knowing where we are going.

The only sure thing is we cannot go back – we cannot recreate the atmosphere or even the physical environment of the traditional craftsman.<sup>54</sup>

Living an “off the land,” antimodernist life in rural New Brunswick in a partially thatched roof house, the Deichmanns were considered innovative and creative visual artists – not to mention lay chemists, engineers, and researchers (via Erica’s pioneering glaze experiments and Kjeld’s kiln constructions). They jointly penned a “how to” article in *Maritime Art* magazine in 1942 where Kjeld submitted a breakdown of materials, plans, and construction instructions for a homemade wood-fired ceramic kiln, while Erica listed the chemical components of several of her favourite glazes. She spoke of the fusion of the cerebral and the emotional in glaze-making: “A glaze is first conceived in the mind. There it might grow or die. If it grows, it is written down.”<sup>55</sup> In an address given to the National Arts Club in New York on March 21, 1945, Canadian sculptor Elizabeth Wyn Wood made mention of the Deichmanns, considering them “ceramists to whom pottery is a very high art – experimenting always with glazes and pastes, trying ancient formulae and producing rare new ones, calling to their aid whatever help modern chemistry and techniques can give them.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Kjeld Deichmann quoted in Stephen Inglis, *The Turning Point: The Deichmann Pottery, 1935-1963* (Hull, Quebec: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1991), 11.

<sup>55</sup> Kjeld Deichmann and Erica Deichmann, “Experiments in Pottery,” *Maritime Art*, December-January 1942-43, 52.

<sup>56</sup> Elizabeth Wyn Wood, “Canadian Handicrafts.” *Canadian Art*, Summer 1945, 191.

Whether meager finances made for a sparse household or not, the Deichmanns consciously made a choice to fill their physical environs with little clutter or excess. The Canadian media was tuned in to this unusual European way of living, making them illustrated examples of progressive design tendencies in a region that was often depicted in the pages of national magazines as humble and shackled by a decaying architecture of a bygone era. The 1953 *Maclean's Magazine* picture essay by Yousuf Karsh, "Youth and Age in a Timeless Seaport," has an opening caption line that pulls no punches: "To the logical adult eye, much of Saint John is ugly and tumbledown." Of the eleven scenes photographed in sharp black and white, only one strays from the antique, aged, or moldering: the final image of the article that shows the Deichmanns in a studio that is white, bright, and clean (fig. 16). Set opposite a photo of a smiling eighty-year-old sailmaker working by hand in a dark shed packed with ropes and wares from the days of sail, an elegant smock-dressed Erica Deichmann lounges in a simple wood chair. A small square window on the bare white wall behind frames the beret-wearing Kjeld, looking in. Unlike the sailmaker shop, the Deichmann space is ordered, the floor is cleared, and two chests of drawers hold a series of their beautiful glazed ceramic vessels and figures.<sup>57</sup> With a caption reading "The contrast between their studio and William Holder's shop seemed an apt accent and punctuation mark to Yousuf Karsh's most lasting impressions of Saint John,"<sup>58</sup> the pairing is clear. Through the calculated closing

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<sup>57</sup> "Karsh's Saint John: Youth and Age in a Timeless Seaport," *Maclean's Magazine*, January 15, 1953, 10.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

of the article with the Deichmann shot, Karsh saw Saint John as mired in the old ways, but with glimmers of hope in the contributions of artists like the Deichmanns.

Considering the national fascination with the Deichmanns and their craft, it was no surprise the National Film Board (NFB) gave them their own short film. Pursuing an internationalist mandate that sought to build citizenship and educational opportunities, the documentary leanings of the NFB aligned with British approaches.<sup>59</sup> By the early 1950s, the NFB was aware of the value of film to the growing number of baby boom children throughout the country. A number of successful NFB short educational films came from this era, such as the 20-minute *Peter and the Potter* (1953) featuring the Deichmanns in craft-making action.<sup>60</sup> The New Brunswick production became one of the most frequently-shown and longest-running NFB classroom films,<sup>61</sup> having been viewed by 800,000 Canadians (mostly schoolchildren) by 1960.<sup>62</sup> In the story, a young boy named Peter is walking alone in a busy, unnamed city (obviously Saint John) to buy his mother a birthday present. He chooses a glass bowl for 65¢ but trips over a tree on the way home and breaks it. Lucky for him, Anneke, a young daughter of the Deichmanns, brings him to her parents' studio to have them make him a replacement handcrafted plate – now worth certainly more than the money he spent. Throughout the film, the Deichmann's make him one of their designs over several days while Peter watches.

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<sup>59</sup> Zoë Druick, "Nationalism and Internationalism at the National Film Board," in *Projecting Canada: Government Policy and Documentary Film at the National Film Board* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 76.

<sup>60</sup> *The Story of Peter and the Potter*, directed by Donald Peters (National Film Board of Canada, 1953), DVD (National Film Board of Canada).

<sup>61</sup> Inglis, 16.

<sup>62</sup> Brian J. Low, *NFB Kids: Portrayals of Children by the National Film Board of Canada, 1939-1989* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), 78.

Every stage of the ceramic process, from the potter's wheel to the final glazing and baking, is shown and described (sometimes irreverently) by the narrator, the only voice in the film.

The film's narrative style and script are dated by today's standards, although there are moments within the mid-century production that transcend its educational nature. For a few moments, the scenes of Kjeld and Erica focusing on the tactile work thrusts the "actors" into modern artisans – a far cry from the bucolic scenes around the outside of the studio with its Scandinavian design and grass roof, or the folkish cartoon credits at the onset. Most striking is the first time Peter sees Kjeld working. As the boy climbs a ladder and essentially spies on him through a window, Kjeld, wielding a huge flaming kiln torch, turns to Peter (i.e. the camera) and appears as a heroic alchemist, or even a near god-like presence, as he commands energy with his hands. His black goggles create an ominous visage, casting horn shadows on his sweaty forehead (fig. 17). The implication is that here was a figure that had control of both technology and magic at his fingertips. Modernity was what lay inside the traditional cabin walls. Erica's role was more reserved in the film, but the moment a plain unglazed clay plate is given to her, the skill is immediately apparent. With a thin brush and only a few curving dark lines, she creates one of her elegant long-necked "goofus" animals in a stroke of modern artistic inspiration.

The Deichmanns became icons of modern Canadian craft and design during the inner- and post-war years, and their regular travels and working demonstrations throughout North America point to the strong interconnectedness of New

Brunswick/Maritime artists and professionals to wider audiences outside the region.

Cultural evolution would come from such exchanges, and the professional artists of New Brunswick were closely linked to these episodes.

### **Models and leaders of cultural change**

The convergence of Canadian artists and society occurred at a seminal event in Canada's cultural history: the 1941 Kingston Conference of Canadian Artists – a project supported financially and pedagogically by the Carnegie Foundation.<sup>63</sup> Walter Abell, one of the conference organizers, was complimentary, if not envious, of the recent American development programs such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) that revitalized not only visual culture south of the border, but its ability to act as a catalyst for supporting professionalism in the visual arts during a challenging economic time.

One of Abell's greatest achievements was his founding of *Maritime Art* magazine in 1940 – the first periodical on modern Canadian art in the country. Belying its regional

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<sup>63</sup> See Paikowsky. The conference aim was to discuss the place of the artist in society and to investigate the technical concerns of the painter. The meeting also resulted in a resolution to form the Federation of Canadian Artists that would unite all Canadian artists in a common cause, to advance the role of the artist in society, yet still respect regional identity. A broad scope of professional Canadian artists were represented at the Conference: women and men, young and old, and those from the Atlantic, Pacific and parts in between. Five New Brunswickers took part: Saint John artists and educators Miller Brittain, Jack Humphrey, Julia Crawford, and Ted Campbell, along with Lucy Jarvis of Fredericton. By today's standards, the conference was noticeably Euro-centric with no artists of colour, First Nations artists, or visible minorities present. In many ways this was a measure of the cultural backgrounds of most professional artists in Canada during the war, but this would begin to be challenged in the 1950s with the resurgence of west-coast First Nations art under Mungo Martin and Bill Reid, the explosion of Inuit printmakers and carvers in the North-West Territories, and painter Kazuo Nakamura and ceramicist Wayne Ngan in Ontario and British Columbia, respectively. For additional studies on the Carnegie connection, see Jeffrey Brison, *Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Canada: American Philanthropy and the Arts and Letters in Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005).

title, *Maritime Art* was the precursor to *Canadian Art* magazine. Though grounded in Maritime districts, artists, and practices, it quickly gained a national reach and subscription/advertising base.<sup>64</sup> Although Abell oversaw the editorial work out of Wolfville, covers of the first issues were produced by Saint John Vocational art students under art department head Vi Gillett.<sup>65</sup> Predicting a change that was soon to pass (it became *Canadian Art* in 1943), Graham McInnes felt the magazine was “a blueprint for other regional publications, and even, let us hope, for a national magazine devoted to art in Canada.”<sup>66</sup> While New Brunswick’s visual artists formed as much of a nucleus as any region during those first years, Abell’s vision was for a widely-circulated journal that was multidimensional in its conception of what included “art,” from the tactile to the technical, and from the traditional to the modern. The fertile nature of the Maritime artistic landscape was further confirmed by Abell’s sustained organization and support of the Maritime Art Association (MAA), which he helped found in 1935.<sup>67</sup> In a letter to Humphrey, Abell maintained that the MAA would be “a constructive force by working in the right direction of promoting increased interest in art and educating public opinion to an understanding of the aims of the modern painter.”<sup>68</sup>

The growing attention to art’s role in society and the concurrent interest in community art centres across Canada was a catalyst for the founding of the Observatory

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<sup>64</sup> Steven McNeil, “Maritime Art: Canada’s First Art Magazine, 1940-43” [Library and Archives Exhibition no. 13], (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2002).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Graham McInnes quoted in Walter Abell, “Editorial Comment, First Returns on *Maritime Art*,” *Maritime Art*, February 1941, 6.

<sup>67</sup> For a more detailed history of the MAA, see <http://maa.concordia.ca>

<sup>68</sup> Walter Abell to Jack Humphrey, May 24, 1935, Jack Humphrey Papers, NGC Archives.



work from this series is a rare period example of a professional artist in New Brunswick depicting an Indigenous figure via modern art and fine craft. MacLeod's *Indian Girl* is a loose and fluid watercolor study featuring a sensitive and pensive female figure with braided dark hair, surrounded by a thick field of ferns and branches, all in earthy colours (fig. 18). MacLeod painted Indigenous subjects more than many in Canada at the time, however most of her depictions are of First Nations people and environments from a late 1920s trip to British Columbia. MacLeod was intimately aware of the handiwork of the local Maliseet/Wolastoqiyik basket weavers as her Fredericton friend and gallerist, Madge Smith, sold artworks by New Brunswick artists such as Brittain, Humphrey, the Deichmanns and MacLeod, as well as locally crafted ash baskets.<sup>72</sup> In the case of the *Indian Girl* rug study, the more serious mood of the Indigenous subjects in her 1920s paintings is exchanged for a decorative and fanciful treatment. The central idyllic human figure graphically meshes with the patterns and brushstrokes of the plants surrounding her, an intention likely considered at the time a romantic and fitting meeting of 'Indian' with the natural realm, but one that today has a considerably more complex and loaded representation. The nostalgic 'ecological Indian' stereotype was used to frame Indigenous figures as different, the other, or even less civilized. Brigit Däwes and Marc Maufort assert that:

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<sup>72</sup> In a letter sent from New York to Smith on January 6, 1942, MacLeod show obvious affection and visual admiration for a collection of Maliseet baskets she would have received from Smith as a Christmas present. She writes "So many presents, so many and so beautiful. The carol will be changed to Deck the halls with 'Indian Baskets'. And that's what I've done and they are sort of plaid like my curtains and sort of belong like sisters and brothers in my home and scheme." Murray, 175.



The “ecological Indian,” or the keeper of a planetary spirituality, have proven tenacious and difficult to overcome.... Indigenous people are presented as noble custodians of their environment; instinctively harmonious with their environment, yet unable to meet the challenges of technology and civilization.<sup>73</sup>

In addition to UNB’s Art Centre, another important artistic educational institution in New Brunswick was the Saint John Vocational School (SJVS). Located on Douglas Avenue in West Saint John, the SJVS was a dynamic institution that played a key role in the development of artists in New Brunswick.<sup>74</sup> During the early 1940s, the SJVS Art Department stated in its syllabus that the trained artist was not a “frivolous” person, but a fully employable individual that had a useful role in society within the fields of industry, commerce, transportation, literature, dramatics, and the home: “the good designer, the creative artist, the clever cartoonist, and the effective decorator and advertiser are in constant demand. They have a big contribution to make in the life and development of our country.”<sup>75</sup> The Art Department offered the only outlet for serious studio art study and certification in New Brunswick outside of Mount Allison University. Ted Campbell became a full-time art instructor there in 1945 and head of the department in 1947. Campbell rigorously instilled a groundwork of traditional drawing techniques,

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<sup>73</sup> Brigit Dawes and Marc Maufort, “A Chorus of Ecological Voices: Enacting Nature in Contemporary Indigenous Performance,” in Dawes and Maufort, eds., *Enacting Nature: Ecocritical Perspectives on Indigenous Performance* (Brussels: P.I.E.-Peter Lang S.A., 2014), 12.

<sup>74</sup> Located on Douglas Avenue in the city’s west side overlooking the harbour, the Saint John Vocational School was a dynamic institution that played a key role in the development of artists and tradespeople in New Brunswick. Founded by the provincial government in 1926, the school was created to develop a skilled technical workforce to support regional industries and businesses. The School offered programs in Home Economics, Industrial Education, Technical Education, Commercial Design, and Fine Art; the latter’s mission being to satisfy both the aesthetic needs of an art education and the practical needs of finding work within the community.

<sup>75</sup> “Department of Fine and Applied Art,” in *Prospectus: Saint John Vocational School* (Saint John: Saint John Vocational School), 1943. Collection of the author.

introducing his students to old masters like Michelangelo, Raphael, and Dürer, but also modern artists such as Picasso, Rivera and Tchelitchev.<sup>76</sup>

Fred Ross enrolled in the SJVS's Art Program in 1944 with the intention of becoming a commercial designer.<sup>77</sup> As a student, Ross benefited tremendously from Campbell's tutelage. Ross remembers him having a genuine esteem for contemporary muralists in his classes: "Ted felt that the Mexican mural paintings were the greatest murals since the Renaissance, so he was encouraging us to look at them."<sup>78</sup> Inspired by the great public murals, Ross resolved to abandon a future in commercial art and concentrated instead on becoming a mural artist.<sup>79</sup>

The SJVS placed a good deal of emphasis on muralism in the 1940s, evident through its monthly advertisements in *Canadian Art* magazine which cite "mural painting" and "old master techniques" as fields of visual art study. One of the earliest *in situ* murals remaining at the school today are the four glazed doors to the School's auditorium, decorated in 1940 with panels by Betty Sutherland, an art student at SJVS from 1936 to 1940 (fig. 19).<sup>80</sup> Sutherland's slender tableaux of modern life and industry

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<sup>76</sup> Fred Ross, interview by author.

<sup>77</sup> "Mural Artist: Freddie Ross, Untrained 18-Year-Old, Paints School Wall in Saint John, N.B.," *Montreal Standard*, June 21, 1946, 14.

<sup>78</sup> Fred Ross, interview by author. During this period, one of the most admired art movements in North America was the Mexican mural movement. Propelled to international acclaim it inspired thousands of Depression-era murals throughout the United States, but to a much lesser extent in Canada. Seen as for the benefit of all and not simply the rich or privileged, the movement's artists produced large-scale murals that embellished public buildings, the most notable of which were those painted by the celebrated Diego Rivera, Jose Clementé Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Sutherland, a half-sister to actor Donald Sutherland, would later marry the poet Irving Layton and become a notable graphic designer and editor in Montreal. In 1942, she moved to Montreal

depict from left to right: 1) a woman getting fitted for an outfit by a mother and child in a residential setting, with an electric sewing machine in the foreground; 2) cap-wearing workmen on a construction site, with a steel truss bridge being erected above; 3) an office scene, with a suit-clad male figure giving dictation to a female secretary; 4) a pair of chemists in an industrial lab, their glazed rear wall facing onto a flying pipe and building scene akin to a Precisionist painting. Sutherland's suite of scenes are skilled in composition and execution, with hints of the mood of Thomas Hart Benton's *America Today* mural suite of 1930-31 (fig. 20). Both of these mural projects fused the heroic with the mundane, showing the subjects' moods ranging from concentrated technical pursuit to workplace tedium. It was life, pure and simple.

Sutherland's themes and her successful use of the vertical panel recall a collection of murals that would have been familiar, Charles Comfort's *Toronto Stock Exchange murals* (1937) (fig. 21). Considered a critical achievement of late 1930s Canadian art, Comfort's murals were nationally published and embraced the modern heroic ideal of the North American economy that was starting to break the shackles of the Great Depression. His eight murals were similar in proportion to Sutherland's later doorway murals, but were much larger at 11.2m in height. His series depicted Canadian industries that were traded at the Toronto Stock Exchange: construction and engineering, mining, smelting, refining, oil, pulp and paper, agriculture, transportation

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and co-founded *First Statement*, an avant-garde Canadian literary magazine. A photograph of her Saint John Vocational School murals appeared in *Saturday Night*, November 16, 1940, 26.

and communications.<sup>81</sup> Like Comfort's approach, Sutherland uses a strong vertical emphasis and dynamic movement to visually unite the panels.

Furthering student-led murals at SJVS, in 1945-46 Campbell encouraged Ross to permanently install his full-scale mural design entitled *Annual School Picnic* around a 12-foot-high window within one of the school's stairwells (fig. 22). An unusually accomplished artwork for a high school student, on June 21, 1946, the nationally circulated *Montreal Standard* magazine profiled "Freddie Ross, untrained 18-year-old" in a multi-page feature that reproduced numerous photographs of him working on *Annual School Picnic*.<sup>82</sup> This led to the Fredericton High School student government commissioning Ross to undertake a large World War II memorial mural that would be the focal point of the school's auditorium. Ross accepted and worked full-time on the diptych panels from 1946 to 1948. Unveiled on May 21, 1948, the two murals measured 16 feet high by 10 feet wide each, likely the largest paintings in New Brunswick at that time (fig. 23).

In the spring of 1949 Ross won a traveling scholarship and was determined to immerse himself in the modern artistic environment of Mexico. Upon arrival he began a month-long study under the expatriate American artist Pablo O'Higgins who worked with Rivera as an assistant on many murals in and around Mexico City in the late 1920s. Under the guidance of O'Higgins, Ross produced a mural entitled *Mexican Silver Miners* for a hotel in the famed silver mining town of Taxco. This episode was as close as almost

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<sup>81</sup> Mary Jo Hughes, *Take Comfort: The Career of Charles Comfort* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery 2007), 37-39.

<sup>82</sup> "Mural Artist: Freddie Ross, Untrained 18-Year-Old, Paints School Wall in Saint John, N.B.," *Montreal Standard*, June 21, 1946, 14.

any Canadian artist would get to working in direct contact with the modern Mexican mural movement. Ross's Mexican experiences and a short but significant meeting with Diego Rivera in Mexico City in 1949 gave added stimulus to his developing career as a muralist. Upon returning to Saint John in 1950, he began painting the *City Slums* mural in the main hallway of the SJVS – the work a direct indictment of the anguish in modern Saint John caused by poverty, squalor, and economic uncertainty (fig. 24).<sup>83</sup>

These successes notwithstanding, attention would soon dwindle for Ross's heroic murals and be directed at more commercial and less socially challenging forms of art.<sup>84</sup> Art as a vehicle for social change was replaced throughout 1950s North America with art as a decorative commodity. The Cold War ushered in an era where works employing social realist modes were potentially associated with communist allegiances. The American-led fostering of the "freedom" articulated in Abstract Expressionist canvases was actually used at times as a political weapon, even financed and promoted by the CIA.<sup>85</sup> Admittedly distanced from this level of international intervention, murals

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<sup>83</sup> Ross makes allusion to significant local unrest in *City Slums*. He portrays a group of picketing workers in the background, and a young child in the foreground with a Saint John *Evening-Times Globe* newspaper hat with the clearly delineated May 12, 1949 headline "Fishermen Predict Fear" (note that this is in the mural cartoon only – the hat is all white in the final mural). This coincides with widespread labour conflicts in Saint John surrounding the Canadian Seamen's Union on Canadian merchant vessels, whose events involving strikes, police, and substantial incarcerations came to a head on May 11, 1949. Several years later, and as a full-time art department staff member, Ross began his last mural at SJVS. Showing the potential positive outcome of youth if social conditions were conscientious and civilized, the mural *Humanistic Education* was completed in 1954, on the opposite side of the main auditorium doors to *City Slums*.

<sup>84</sup> Kirk Niergarth, "Memorial of War, Memorial of Hope: Contemplating the creation, destruction, and re-creation of Fred Ross' mural *The Destruction of War / Rebuilding the World Through Education*, 1948, 1954, and 2011," *Labour/Le Travail* 72 (Fall 2013).

<sup>85</sup> Louis Menand, "Unpopular Front: American Art and the Cold War," *The New Yorker*, October 17, 2005.

like Ross's Fredericton High war memorial and his 1950s SJVS works were seen as vestiges of a bygone era, and even their very existence could be fleeting.<sup>86</sup>

### **Painterly evolution**

In the years following World War II, Jack Humphrey intensified his explorations into colour and the two-dimensional abstraction of his subjects. By the late 1950s and early 1960s, for personal and professional reasons, Humphrey sought an elusive target that sought to be "more essentially visual, less of mood."<sup>87</sup> He pushed the bounds of abstraction, but never completely lost sight of the human or natural framework.

By the mid-1950s, Humphrey's new style used flat areas of raw colour, with strongly delineated outlines defining the shapes. Figures and objects were still apparent, but greatly simplified and subservient to the overall field of colour and lines. While he still painted natural forms and plein-air subjects, inspired in his own words as practicing like Thoreau and Monet, he felt compelled to treat them as a radical, abstract artist:

I also paint from my own inward nature following the various laws of contrast and the growth of free invention, truly a more radical exploration. I am glad to do both. As an artist, I like my experiments to surprise me. I also like to search out nature: landscape for its color and selected structure.<sup>88</sup>

Humphrey's c.1948-1950 watercolour "South Wharf with Three Boats" of Saint John's Market Slip demonstrates his increasing gestural looseness and loyalty to the

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<sup>86</sup> See William Forrestall, ed., *Redeemed: Restoring the Lost Fred Ross Mural* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2013).

<sup>87</sup> Jack Humphrey to Robert Ayre, [n.d.] 1967, Jack Humphrey fonds, Robert Ayre file, NGC Archives.

<sup>88</sup> *Bates-Humphrey exhibition catalogue [Canadian Artists, Series I]* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1958).

thick black bounding line, their white voids infilled with planes of pure colour (fig. 25). At the start of the 1950s, his shapes and subjects were recognizable, but the relationships of the delineated forms and their hue/colour values were shifting, their decipherability almost disappearing by the end of the decade. Humphrey seemed to adhere to the course of such artists as the Dutch painter Piet Mondrian, whose famed multi-year evolutionary depiction of a single tree in the late 1900s-early 1910s was testament to the artistic breaking down of nature into bare elements of line, plane, and colour.

By 1958, Humphrey's oil painting "Shore of Night" was nearing pure non-objectivity (fig. 26), with minute visual elements and a title giving away the thematic root. The canvas's upper half is occupied with a field of flat black punctuated by two thin cloud-like wisps, hovering over a lighter coloured foreground of organic forms in primary and secondary colours, all punctuated by the same black bounding brush lines. Are the colored forms abstracted sea forms, animal or plant shapes, or human-made structures? There's no way to know, but the work was a tremendous success for Humphrey. It was purchased by the NGC in 1960 and praised by Clement Greenberg during his visit to the NGC in 1962. At a cocktail party on September 10<sup>th</sup>, J. Russell Harper, the NGC's curator of Canadian Art, recalled Greenberg calling the painting "Marvelous, without a doubt one of the very finest contemporary paintings I have seen in Canada."<sup>89</sup> At the time it was hanging alongside a large black and white painting by

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<sup>89</sup> J. Russell Harper to Jack Humphrey, September 11, 1962, Jack Humphrey fonds, NGC Archives.

Paul-Émile Borduas, and Harper told Humphrey “it takes a powerful picture to hold its own completely in company with something as large as that.”<sup>90</sup>

The aforementioned NGC purchase notwithstanding, Humphrey was unceasingly resentful that his newer abstract works were often met with indifference.<sup>91</sup> Through what he felt was a lack of dialogue and professional support (few local artists experimented with non-objectivity in the mid-1950s), he continued producing his more typical, realistic canvases and watercolours, which he felt were generally expected of him by a local public who “insist on having a large measure of objectivity.”<sup>92</sup> These psychological pressures manifested themselves in his continued contempt for the public, which he sensed was an obstacle to his artistic growth, and posed “a problem in relation to survival.”<sup>93</sup> Harper feels that this perception of figuration should come as no surprise, as “traditionalism dies slowly when the artist works in a milieu far removed from the great cities.” Harper, perhaps unknowingly, reinforces this continued association of Maritime art with the ever-present traditional viewpoint, as he deems Humphrey’s brooding black sky abstractions as analogous to “the insecurity present in the twentieth-century Maritimes.”<sup>94</sup> While Humphrey’s abstracts may not seem as bold as other Canadian artists of the time, such as the Automatistes or Painters Eleven, they were courageous for post-war New Brunswick. In a lengthy 1966 letter to J. Russell

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> “Eastern galleries, particularly the Beaverbrook Art Gallery in Fredericton, have promoted local artistic interest but until recently have been particularly partial to traditional painting. Jack Humphrey’s experimental painting has interested only a few local devotees but it is accepted readily in Winnipeg and Montreal.” Harper, 115.

<sup>92</sup> “Jack Humphrey interviewed by Louis Rombout,” *Canadian Art*, April 1966, 36.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Harper, 308.



Harper, Humphrey avowed that “I have in most cases substituted some other word for ‘abstract’ or ‘abstracted,’ because these are dirty words in the average Canadian’s mind!”<sup>95</sup> Humphrey had achieved solid recognition within the canon and upper echelons of Canadian art by the end of his life, supported by a 1967 retrospective at the NGC.

During the post-war years, Brittain’s ungrudging disposition would shift as he began to feel strong apathy to the “Upper Canada Art Establishment,” and in particular to the National Gallery, who were not interested in his later mystical works of the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>96</sup> During the following decades, his paintings and works on paper, which were decidedly different from such earlier works as *Longshoremen*, were almost universally met with disregard and very little press attention outside of New Brunswick. In reference to the beginnings of non-representational art in Canada, Stuart Smith suggested that “you can document equally valid abstract ideas and activities in Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal in the 1940’s and in Saint John in the late 1930’s,”<sup>97</sup> although realism and figurative painting continued to hold their sway in the Maritimes.

By the late-1950s, Fred Ross’s figurative art frequently placed him on the periphery of the era’s artistic temperament. Abstract and non-objective works were the fashion of the age, but the Renaissance-era figure remained Ross’s language of choice. This position was central to period critiques of Ross’s work. In a 1956 *Toronto Star* review, Hugh Thomson says that “Fred Ross will have none of this abstruse ‘doodling’ that often

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<sup>95</sup> Jack Humphrey to J. Russell Harper, June 6, 1966, Jack Humphrey fonds, Elizabeth & Russell Harper file, NGC Archives.

<sup>96</sup> Alex Mogelon, *Miller Brittain. In Focus* (Toronto: Simon Dresdnere Publishers, 1981), 16.

<sup>97</sup> Stuart A. Smith, “Saint John Painting of the 1930s,” in *Art and Music in New Brunswick Symposium [proceedings]*, ed. Margaret Fancy (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 1986), 75-84. The lecture was presented at Mount Allison University in 1984.

passes as abstract art; nor is he one to get off hazy impressions of scenes and dreams. Everything he draws or paints is bright and clear.”<sup>98</sup> As non-objective art became widely accepted, Ross was actually seen as a dissident by critic Robert Fulford, who remarked that same year that the artist of today “who is also a realist is by the nature of things a rebel — art has arrived at a point where the abstract and non-objective are the orthodox.”<sup>99</sup>

As the battle between figurative and non-figurative art raged, Ross rigorously continued exploring the human form. Nevertheless, in a little-known suite of large murals painted between 1957 and 1967, he created some courageous and remarkable modern images that shattered many expectations of what a Fred Ross painting could be. In 1957, Ross won a mural competition to adorn the Saint John Tourist Office on downtown Sydney Street. The large eight-foot-six-inch tall by six-foot-four-inch wide oil-on-canvas mural depicted a standing athletic couple surrounded by children and a kneeling tennis player (fig. 27). The naturalism of the people and the rear foliage were juxtaposed by slightly Cubist surroundings: a hovering bare tree and landscape elements faceted in simple planes of colour, with even a group of flattened Cézanne-like fruit in the foreground. Described by Ross as “semi-abstract,” the mural conjured a travel theme through the leisure activities of the figures, but also via the raw landscape and the white triangles in the upper right corner that suggested a sailboat. The final mural is a rare

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<sup>98</sup> “Art Review: His Deathbed Drawings Led Killer to Gallows,” *Toronto Daily Star*, November 27, 1956, 9. Curiously enough, this review barely mentions Ross’s exhibition in Toronto, but expounds at length about Ross’s involvement as a police ‘sketch artist’ for a Saint John murder investigation in which “His drawing was used in the east coast newspapers, and helped in the capture of the murderer, who was hanged a week or so ago in St. John (sic).”

<sup>99</sup> Robert Fulford, as quoted in Jean Sereisky, “Five Points of View,” *Atlantic Advocate*, March 1965, 38.

instance in New Brunswick of a fusion of bold abstract elements and classically posed traditional figures.<sup>100</sup>

New Brunswick's recurring struggle between figuration and abstraction would persist throughout the post-war decades, and one of its most prominent arenas would be outside the urban environment of Saint John, at Mount Allison University in Sackville.

### **Mount Allison**

The 1950s were witness to the rise of Alex Colville's painting career, which also saw Mount Allison's Fine Arts department gain a widespread reputation under his watch. Many have widely and critically covered Colville's reputation and artistic account, but the same does not hold true for his Mount Allison colleague and sometimes professional rival Lawren P. Harris – the son of Group of Seven namesake Lawren S. Harris.

A professional tension existed between the representational Colville and the abstract Harris. Perhaps this led to some of the success of the institution during the decade, as institutional pluralism of form and content existed. To his end, Colville wanted "to declare the value and significance of the objective world" through representational painting:

Depending, I suppose, upon a painter's personality and environment, he will reject the world and produce a pure and spiritual art of the mind, or he will accept the world and draw his art from earthly reality. Few artists have followed either extreme course of action but many, with personalities formed by great culture, finding themselves in an environment to which they could not be sympathetic and which perhaps

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<sup>100</sup> The mural was removed after a decade to accommodate renovations and was long assumed lost, but it was miraculously salvaged from a dumpster and is now in a private collection. Two further 1960s non-objective murals by Ross are discussed in chapter five.

filled them with despair, have understandably turned toward a pure and unerathy art form. Such a course would be unnatural, and in fact impossible, for me.<sup>101</sup>

Lawren P. Harris, a former official Canadian war artist (and wartime colleague of Colville) became the Director of the School of Fine and Applied at Mount Allison University in 1946. While his 1940s and early 1950s works showed a disciplined and precise figurative style influenced by Charles Sheeler and Georgia O'Keeffe, soonafter he would become an abstract painter, concentrating on simple compositions that held the power of straight lines and geometric forms at their core (fig. 28).<sup>102</sup> As the head of the university's art department until 1975, his influence was profound in the institution, as well as throughout the Maritimes.<sup>103</sup> Over the past forty-five years, however, this condition has been eclipsed, partially due to the wider reputation of Colville, but more so to fluctuating judgement towards his austere modern aesthetic.<sup>104</sup>

In 1954, Harris was one of eighteen Canadian artists commissioned by the Canadian Pacific Railway to paint interior murals on the new *Canadian* transcontinental train, each one depicting a distinct national or provincial park. Appropriately, as the only New Brunswick artist chosen, Harris was given Fundy National

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<sup>101</sup> Alex Colville, *Canadian Art*, Summer 1951, 163.

<sup>102</sup> Ernest W. Smith, "Lawren P. Harris 37/72" [introduction], in the exhibition catalogue *Lawren P. Harris 37/72* (Halifax: Dalhousie Art Gallery, 1972).

<sup>103</sup> Ghislain Clermont, "Lawren Phillips Harris: 40 Years of Painting," *Vie des Arts*, Summer 1976, 42-44.

<sup>104</sup> Establishing the level of public admiration, or lack thereof, of an artist is challenging. One reliable facet is comparing exhibition and auction results of the two over the past few decades. Harris has had negligible exhibition attention since the 1970s, and his abstract paintings sell for several thousands of dollars. Colville, on the other hand, has had numerous major exhibitions, including a solo exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada, and his larger painted panels can fetch prices of over \$1M dollars.

Park (fig. 29).<sup>105</sup> The final “Park Car” mural represents a transitional period in his work, where his canvases from only a few years earlier, such as the psychologically dark, facial close-up painting *Immigrants* (1951) had given way to his more cubist and illustrative panels such as *Bathers* (1953). The CPR mural adheres to a somewhat illustrative approach akin to 1940s/50s travel posters with its graphic simplicity and formal simplification on the large boat-bay-landscape panel representing the coastal village of Alma, New Brunswick. What is telling of his soon-to-come approach is the rest of the mural that undulated around the railcar windows, perpendicular to the main panel. Here at the base, a line of circles with bright colours in concentric and radial patterns evoke a naturalistic detail of beach umbrellas, but more importantly, they are pure geometry and pattern, foreshadowing his 1960s-1970s compositions that would embrace complete non-objectivity.<sup>106</sup>

In the late 1950s, Harris designed and installed five abstract murals at Mount Allison, with two in academic buildings and the other three installed at the entrances of new men’s residences (fig. 30a). Created with a matrix of small ceramic mosaic tiles, the murals were a unique series as individualistic as they are related, giving distinct visual identity to the entries of the campus buildings. In the case of the residences, the structures were identical save for the Harris murals: Bennet House (floating rings of varied colours on a grey and black toned background, fig. 30b), Bigelow House (thin triangles that evoke shards of broken glass on a grey and green background, fig. 30c),

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<sup>105</sup> Ian Thom, *Murals from a Great Canadian Train* (Montreal: VIA Rail Canada, 1986), 172-179.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

and Hunton House (a composition of thick black vertical lines with coloured rectangles and squares between, akin to a Piet Mondrian-like *de Stijl* painting, fig. 30d).<sup>107</sup>

Harris' purist, geometric art stood at a different polarity to his regional contemporaries, and more aligned with prevalent trends in larger North American centres:

Different parts of Canada have, very generally speaking, produced "schools" of painting, implying, of course, that in such cases the painters produced work which in some measure reflects the common philosophies and interests among them. In New Brunswick, this is true to a certain extent in the works of Brittain, Colville, Humphrey and Ross, who have shown, in different degrees, an affinity with nature and subsequent preference for the representational or, at most, semi-abstract idioms.... Of the New Brunswick artists, only Harris has probed the possibilities of the non-representational to almost its fullest extent and he has sought this form with intense fascination, if not devotion.<sup>108</sup>

Luke Rombout showers almost Greenberg-to-Pollock praise on Harris, framing him as being at the cusp of the era's modern avant-garde and freed from the shackles of representation as compared to his aforementioned New Brunswick colleagues: "His is an art of balance and of tension, mathematical and intellectual, in which the artist has freed himself completely of earthly realities."<sup>109</sup>

Colville and Harris were instrumental as educators, and their impact on fine art graduates from Mount Allison would be felt nationwide. The trio of Christopher Pratt (class of 1957), Mary (West) Pratt (class of 1957), and Tom Forrestall (class of 1958) owe an enormous debt to the pair as disciplined, technically rigorous mentors. While the

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<sup>107</sup> All of Harris's residence murals were unceremoniously destroyed during substantial renovations and alterations to each of the buildings in 1981-82.

<sup>108</sup> Luke Rombout, "Lawren Harris: Profile of a Painter," *Atlantic Advocate*, December 1964, 56.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

careers of the Pratts and Forrestall are well documented,<sup>110</sup> a unique evolution was Forrestall's 1960s "shaped paintings." Pushing against the formal conventions of the time, Forrestall was a forerunner of being freed from the conventions of the rectangular canvas for paintings.<sup>111</sup> His hyper-realist Andrew Wyeth-like style rarely strayed from rural subjects of the Maritimes, but beginning in 1962 Forrestall began a lifelong battle against painterly convention. He energized his customary subjects and the viewer's experience through the dimensionality of the physical work itself (fig. 31). Douglas Scott Richardson, the author of a 1971 exhibition catalogue of Forrestall's shaped paintings, wrote:

The relationship between contour and content organizes not only what we see but how we see it. The trompe l'oeil tradition dies hard and there is a tendency to read a flat painting in its frame as if it were a fragment of the three-dimensional world seen through a window in the wall. The artifice of peculiarly shaped panels challenges this convention, then

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<sup>110</sup> Key publications include: Tom Smart, *The Art of Mary Pratt: The Substance of Light* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 1995); Mireille Eagan, Sarah Fillmore, Caroline Stone, et al., *Mary Pratt* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2013); Tom Smart, *Tom Forrestall: Paintings, Drawings, Writings* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2008); Christopher Pratt, *Christopher Pratt: Personal Reflections on a Life in Art* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1995); Josée Drouin-Brisebois and Jeffrey Spalding, *Christopher Pratt: All My Own Work* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2005),

<sup>111</sup> American painter Frank Stella was a pioneer in the use of irregularly shaped canvas forms, starting in 1960, while Quebec Plasticien painter Fernand Toupin had begun executing irregularly shaped canvases in 1956. With regards to the evolution of Forrestall's shaped forms, illustrated notation sheets from the collection of the artist recall that "Early shapes [1962-63] were cropped out of larger rectangular oil paintings. The cropping was done to cut out the 'good parts' of these larger works that had not worked out entirely well. These shaper were irregular and impossible almost to frame (with my limited budget) so a hole was punched into one end and the work hung up with a string. The next shapes [1963-65] were very simple and kept the 90° corners. I then moved in to the standard shapes of circles, ovals, triangles. [From 1965-1968] the shapes then moved into a much broader scope, including tryptics [sic] and combinations of shapes. The point that can be made at this stage of the shape is that they are for the most part symmetrical and balanced one side similar to the other."

points away from itself and draws attention to the art – rather than the craft – of the painter.<sup>112</sup>

Although Forrestall rarely abstracted his subjects, he consciously drew attention to the surface upon which it was contained. This aligns with Greenberg's judgment of the roots of modern art, which he saw as being concerned as much with the painted surface as the subject. For instance, Greenberg felt that "Manet's paintings became the first Modernist ones by virtue of the frankness with which they declared the surfaces on which they were painted..."<sup>113</sup>

Mount Allison and its graduates almost single-handedly steered visual arts advancement in southeastern New Brunswick, until a francophone transformation took place during the early 1960s with a pioneering artist and educator at the helm. The results altered the artistic landscape of New Brunswick and gave visual voice and material pride to Acadian society – a group that was concurrently benefitting from massive socio-economic changes prompted by the provincial government.

## **Acadie**

Visual expressions of Acadian identity began to embrace modernist configurations in the 1940s through such disciplines as architecture and graphic design. The fine arts would have to wait another generation to advance to the forefront of the region's cultural

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<sup>112</sup> Douglas Scott Richardson, *Shapes of the paintings interest me as an integral part of the work: Tom Forrestall* (Fredericton: Beaverbrook Art Gallery, 1971), 3. The exhibition catalogue was designed with a very modern, almost Bauhaus-like, cover design with angled type and coloured geometric forms.

<sup>113</sup> Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," in C. Harrison and P. Wood, *Art in Theory, 1900-1990*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 755-6.



agenda, but soon great strides were evident in many disciplines: the visual and plastic arts, architecture, graphic design, industrial design, landscape design, publishing, theatre, recorded music, broadcasting, and film.

To this end, Claude Roussel's extensive work as an artist, educator, and activist brought a modern consciousness to Acadian and francophone art in New Brunswick, and had a profound influence on the growth and development of the province's cultural landscape. Born in Edmundston in 1930, he graduated from the École de Beaux-Arts in Montreal in 1956. In the mid-1960s, Roussel would greatly expand the visual culture world for Acadians by helping create the Université de Moncton (U de M) visual arts department. Five years later, Roussel reflected back with great satisfaction and palpable results in hand:

depuis la fondation de la Galerie d'art de l'Université de Moncton en 1963, il y a eu un grand changement. Nos artistes y ont vu un débouché, et ce stimulant les a incités à travailler avec acharnement au développement de leur œuvre. C'est dans cette optique que nous trouvons un progrès immense depuis les cinq dernières années....<sup>114</sup>

In 1958, New Brunswick Museum officials expressed that Roussel's sculptures, along with his imagination and idealism, "mark[ed] the greatest advance in New Brunswick sculpture since the passing of the finest of the province's old ship-carvers."<sup>115</sup> From the late 1940s until the early 1960s, he was also the only professional sculptor working in New Brunswick. As one of the province's most prolific artists, Roussel

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<sup>114</sup> Claude Roussel, "Au Nouveau-Brunswick: Réflexions en marge de l'exposition Sélection 67," *Vie des Arts*, Summer 1968, 74.

<sup>115</sup> Claude Roussel solo exhibition pamphlet, April 1958, accessed at the New Brunswick Museum research library.

pioneered contemporary Acadian art, encouraging a younger generation to pursue a calling in visual art and design. While the visual and plastic arts flourished in French Canada “on the shores of the St. Lawrence,” curator of the U de M art gallery Ghislain Clermont claimed in 1967 that it took many years for the same to be said for francophone artists in the Maritimes. He added “in fifteen years, these Acadian artists have achieved what they lacked for three hundred years. French-Canadian artists in New Brunswick now identify themselves with the cultural dynamism apparent in other parts of Canada.”<sup>116</sup>

Roussel worked with almost every medium, including wood, stone, steel, bronze, canvas, plastic, clay, plaster, and even newspaper pulp. His work emerged in the post-war years when the Modernist aesthetic dominated the arts, as well as in public and private buildings (fig. 32). He was the first Acadian to pursue a full-time career in modern visual art, and while he was an avowed multi-disciplinarian comfortable with smaller works, his passion was in fusing sculpture and fine art with modern architecture.<sup>117</sup>

The foundation of his early 1950s success was a series of sculptural commissions from Catholic churches throughout New Brunswick and Quebec, including such items as the carved wood Stations of the Cross (1953) and carved wood statues of St. Joseph and St. Anne (1955) at Edmundston’s Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs Catholic Church, and the competition-winning maquette for the monument to the fishermen who died in the

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<sup>116</sup> Ghislain Clermont, “curator’s message,” *Sélection 67* (Moncton: Université de Moncton 1967), 20.

<sup>117</sup> Claude Roussel, interview by author, Cap-Pelé, N.B., July 19, 2016.

Escuminac disaster (1959) (fig. 33).<sup>118</sup> While the sacred jobs kept coming for decades, secular commissions were soon to overtake his attention.

Between 1959 and 1963 Roussel lived in Fredericton where he was the assistant curator at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery until 1961. In 1959 he sculpted his first major public work, *Les deux castors* or *The Two Beavers* (fig. 34). The provincial government commissioned the grey limestone sculpture as their official gift to Lord Beaverbrook on his eightieth birthday.<sup>119</sup> Hefty and symbolic, the sculpture stood beside a circular wading pool at Officers' Square, in the city's downtown. "The forms are simplified and stylized to convey an idea of the strength of these industrious animals," he said.<sup>120</sup> These values of simplification and implied strength would be at the core of his creations for decades.

Roméo Savoie was the same age as Roussel, but arrived later to the visual arts world. Born in Moncton in 1928, Savoie graduated from the Université de Montréal in 1956 with a Bachelor of Architecture degree. He practiced as a professional architect in New Brunswick before deciding to paint full-time in 1970 (fig. 35). Among the first wave of modern Acadian artists, Savoie's early work experimented with "action painting" and loose, dark line forms on bright grounds, simmering with emotion, energy and colour (fig. 36). Savoie, Roussel, emerging Acadian painters such as Herménégilde Chiasson, Georges Goguen, Claude Picard, and Edward Leger, and three academically-trained nuns

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<sup>118</sup> The full-sized limestone sculpture for this was completed a decade later in 1969. It is now a New Brunswick Provincial Historic Site.

<sup>119</sup> The piece was carved from a 5,300-pound block of Quebec limestone. Seven hundred hours of labour spaced over four months were needed to scale the finished product down to about 3,000 pounds. The rough work was done with hand tools and the help of Roussel's two younger brothers, aged 15 and 16, while the final finish was completed with pneumatic gear.

<sup>120</sup> Fred H. Phillips, "Sketch of a Sculptor: Claude Roussel of Edmundston, New Artist on the Scene," *The Atlantic Advocate*, August 1959, 105.

Hilda Lavoie, Eulalie Boudreau, and Gertrude Godbout, took part in the “Sélection 67” Centennial art exhibition at the U de M art gallery in 1967. A defining event in the history of New Brunswick visual art, the exhibition has earned the status as the moment that modern art touched down in Acadie and made a difference in what was possible for young francophones in the region.<sup>121</sup> The scope of works was mainly non-objective abstract paintings with a few stylized landscapes and some figurative pen and ink works. Claude Roussel stated in the catalogue introduction that:

Until now, our artists, with some rare exceptions, have seldom been chosen to participate in art exhibitions of national scope. Yet, in the last several years, our artists for the first time in Acadian history, have made great strides in developing works which are both original and contemporary. It is our fondest hope that this exhibition will awaken enthusiasm [sic] and a new pride in our artists.

In this exhibition, nine artists have been invited to show six works each. The creative vitality evidenced by these works promises an artistic development as dynamic and avant-garde as any in Canada.<sup>122</sup>

Ghislain Cleremont echoed this sentiment. He felt that contemporary confidence in the visual arts had finally arrived in their community: “Since a modern, dynamic and intriguing art now flourishes in French New Brunswick, we can confidently look forward to a place in the national art scene.”<sup>123</sup> Artist and retired provincial government cultural manager Edward Leger recalls the reaction to the exhibition as “kind of mind blowing because there was like an explosion of things that people were not used to seeing; particularly contemporary art... It came as maybe a shock... to see all this all this

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<sup>121</sup> Herménégilde Chiasson, interview by author, October 2018.

<sup>122</sup> Claude Roussel, “director’s message,” *Sélection 67*, 1.

<sup>123</sup> “54-Piece Acadian Art Exhibit Set for University of Moncton,” *Moncton Transcript*, October 10, 1967, 17.

contemporary art when they'd be used to seeing landscapes and portraits and still lifes, and so on, in an academic way."<sup>124</sup>

### **The Bobaks in Fredericton**

As Roussel and Savoie were to Moncton, the arrival of the husband and wife team of Bruno and Molly Lamb Bobak to New Brunswick in 1960 radically changed the visual arts milieu of Fredericton. The city's painting energy had slowed since the late 1940s with the death of Pegi Nicol MacLeod and the inherent loss to the leadership of the UNB Art Centre, which was shared with Lucy Jarvis since its 1941 founding. On the West Coast the Bobaks were stars of the burgeoning modern art and design scene since the late 1940s, and coming to New Brunswick was not without its costs. Once East, they were further from the artistic innovation and media attention centres that existed in larger Canadian cities, but they now had time, freedom, and the ability to follow their own creative paths.<sup>125</sup> They would become de facto leaders of the Anglophone side of the provincial art scene, as its Saint John focus would shift with the deaths of Brittain and Humphrey in the late 1960s.

A consummate craftsman, Bruno Bobak was a creative polymath, equally adept at drawing, watercolors, printmaking, oil painting, mural-making, sculpture, jewelry, ceramics, furniture, and even architecture. With a deep urge to create and backed by the security of a teaching position at the Vancouver School of Art, Bobak found himself

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<sup>124</sup> Edward Leger, interview by author, Moncton, N.B., December 15, 2017.

<sup>125</sup> Molly Lamb Bobak, *Wildflowers of Canada* (Toronto: Pagurian Press, 1978), 85-96; and Marjory Donaldson, "The Fredericton Years," in Bernie Riordon, ed., *Bruno Bobak* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2006), 71-110.

in the epicentre of a thriving modern art and design scene at the western edge of Canada during the late 1940s and the 1950s.<sup>126</sup> Strongly inspired by British Columbia's natural environment (fig. 37), it was during the 1950s that his work was first purchased by the National Gallery in Ottawa. He was awarded multiple honours at numerous national and international art exhibitions, including the 1958 Brussels World's Fair.<sup>127</sup> All of this brought him to the attention of University of New Brunswick president Colin B. Mackay who was looking for individuals to fill the university's annual visiting artist appointments. In 1960, he was given a one-year tenure as artist-in-residence at UNB. This one-year stay turned out to last a lifetime. From 1962 until his retirement in 1987, Bruno was full-time director of the UNB Art Centre.<sup>128</sup>

Following his move to New Brunswick, Bruno's artistic style changed dramatically from semi-abstracted nature-themed works into a more expressionistic, colourful vein. His earlier scenes with their linearity and stark palette of greys and browns soon morphed into deeply emotive and colourful portraits done in thick impasto oil paint (fig. 38). He became a master of the figure study, from introspective individuals to tight groupings, as well as the creator of loose cityscape drawings in pencil or charcoal on paper (fig. 39). This interest in the urban landscape with the graphic fluidity of water, trees, and people as compositional elements would stay with him for the rest of his life.

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<sup>126</sup> Modernism was the clarion call of the era in Vancouver, and together with such artistic trailblazers as B. C. Binning, Jack Shadbolt, Don Jarvis, and Gordon Smith (and Molly, of course) in the visual arts, and Ron Thom as architectural collaborator, Bobak was a keystone of Vancouver's progressive cultural energy at that time.

<sup>127</sup> Gordon Smith, "The Vancouver Years," in *Bruno Bobak*, 59.

<sup>128</sup> Donaldson.

One of Canada's most celebrated female artists,<sup>129</sup> Molly Lamb Bobak was born and raised in British Columbia. While serving in the Canadian Army, she was appointed an official Canadian war artist in 1945, the first woman to receive such a distinction. Following the war, Molly taught part-time at the Vancouver School of Art and began to exhibit her work widely, gaining significant national attention in the 1950s.<sup>130</sup>

Molly loved flowers and crowds, as she saw them not only as beautiful entities, but as a microcosm of our personal lives (figs. 40 & 41). Developing a looser version of the linear semi-realism in her works of the 1940s and 1950s, her post-1960 move to organic exhilaration and stabs of colour depicting lively groups allowed her to be completely in the moment, portraying the buzz of social gatherings or celebrations through minimal, fluid brushstrokes and vibrant colours. Although subject to myriad influences, Molly Bobak's rootedness in the organic and her gestural application of pigment ally her to the British Neo-Romantic school and the work of such modern Scottish artists as Joan Kathleen Harding Eardley and Anne Redpath.<sup>131</sup>

Bruno's large 1962 Expressionist canvas "Departure" shows him and Molly in the lower left corner, with the Fredericton cityscape below (fig. 42). Church spires pierce through the tree canopy while the old Carleton Street Bridge spans the blue St. John River. A conscious choice was made to use the same colour palette and brushwork for

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<sup>129</sup> Molly Lamb Bobak was accorded a major travelling retrospective exhibition by the MacKenzie Art Gallery in 1993. She has received honorary degrees from UNB (1983), Mount Allison University (1984) and St. Thomas University (1994) and was a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, the Order of New Brunswick, and the Order of Canada.

<sup>130</sup> Cindy Richmond, "Molly Lamb Bobak," in Cindy Richmond and Brian Foss, *Molly Lamb Bobak: A Retrospective* (Regina: MacKenzie Art Gallery, 1993), 43; and Brian Foss, "Molly Lamb Bobak: Art and War," in *Molly Lamb Bobak: A Retrospective*, 98-99.

<sup>131</sup> Richmond, 46-50.

the figures as with the city behind, making the duo physically and metaphorically blend in with the locale. The work evokes a deep sense of serenity and belonging, visually articulating that they were not only connected to this place, they were rooted here as much as the trees.

Although Bruno Bobak's work with fine craft media such as clay, wood, and metal/jewelry fell out of favour compared to his easel works after his move to New Brunswick, he would execute some large-scale compositions in woodblock and welded metal during the mid- to late-1960s, a time when the Arts and Crafts revival was taking root in the province.

#### **Ivan Crowell initiatives: fine craft and modern Indigenous voices emerging**

The Arts and Crafts movement, as well as the post-war modern craft revival (and certainly the counterculture hippy craft awakening), supported an affinity and love of nature, natural forms and materials, and of bucolic natural areas. Their meeting in 1950s New Brunswick at its first national park was a promising arrangement.

Fundy National Park is an admired natural area in New Brunswick, and the park's history is intimately connected with the ideals of the modern Arts and Crafts movement, and its idealized connection to nature. The park's development after the Second World War says much about the admitted supremacy of post-war planning with nuclear families at the centre. Fundy's amenities included a golf course, amphitheatre, bellcast-roofed cottages with modern conveniences, campgrounds, swimming pool, and a handcraft school near the picturesque entrance area of the park (fig. 43).



The Fundy handicraft school was one of the main cultural tourism draws of New Brunswick during the summers of the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>132</sup> Conceived by the provincial government's Director of New Brunswick handicrafts, Ivan Crowell (1904-2003), as a summer extension of the Handicraft School in Fredericton, 1950 was its first season in Fundy.<sup>133</sup> Under the leadership of Crowell, the school was simply named the "The New Brunswick School of Arts and Crafts."<sup>134</sup> Focusing on weaving, woodcraft and jewelry, the school acted as a democratic link to the professionalization of fine craft in Eastern Canada and the new post-war leisure time of many families. The school was considered positively by the media as a generator of measurable creativity and wealth for New Brunswick. A *Telegraph-Journal* editorial from July 1952 wrote:

Its work is reflected all through the province where native handicrafts are offered for sale. Those who can compare what is now on display with what there was three or four years ago notice a very marked improvement. We must not give credit for this exclusively to the school in Fundy Park, but it is impossible to reach any conclusion other than to trace much of the advance to that source.<sup>135</sup>

The New Brunswick School of Arts and Crafts would soon morph into another post-secondary art institution in New Brunswick: the New Brunswick Craft School (later to become the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design). Another Ivan Crowell craft initiative was a federal/provincial collaboration involving one of New Brunswick's

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<sup>132</sup> MacEachern, 123. The school is specifically mentioned and described at length in almost every New Brunswick tourist booklet issued by the provincial government or by Fundy National Park between 1950 and the early 1970s.

<sup>133</sup> Michael Maynard, *Passion and Persistence: An Inaugural History of the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design* (Toronto: Seneca College Press, 2019) 40-46.

<sup>134</sup> This was founded the same year as the influential Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in nearby Maine.

<sup>135</sup> "School of Arts and Crafts," *Telegraph-Journal*, July 8, 1952, 4.

principal First Nations communities. Widely celebrated during the mid-1960s, it was a parallel exercise to the Inuit collective workshops of the Canadian Arctic. Unlike the latter, however, New Brunswick's version soon faded away in both execution and memory.

Canada's Indigenous population and culture of the early twentieth century were victims of calculated assimilation by the federal government, and thus their relationship to the canon of Canadian art was complex and often hypocritical. From the late nineteenth century to the immediate post-war era, the Canadian state would often limit Indigenous visual culture, or label a group's visual culture as unworthy; hence, the group themselves would become unworthy.<sup>136</sup> The difference between such an early-twentieth century construction and the 1960s awakenings of Canadian First Nations artists such as Bill Reid in British Columbia, Alex Janvier in Alberta, and Shirley Bear in New Brunswick is palpable.<sup>137</sup> Offering a counterpoint to the 'official public memory,' a renewed truthfulness to Indigenous ancestry and authenticity of people, place, and narrative were seen as central to the effectiveness of fostering modern First Nations culture.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> An adjunct to the 1876 Indian Act, the 1880 'Potlatch Law' made the celebration of cultural practices, dances, and gift-giving in British Columbia Indigenous communities illegal. This law of intentional assimilation was repealed in 1951, and Mungo Martin in Victoria hosted the first legal potlatch in 1952. See "Government Policy – The Indian Act," accessed July 2, 2020, [https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/the\\_indian\\_act/#origins](https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/the_indian_act/#origins).

<sup>137</sup> See Greg A. Hill, "Where the Land Begins," in Greg A. Hill, ed., *Alex Janvier* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2016), 10-25; Terry Graff, "Once, There Lived a Woman...," in Terry Graff, ed., *Nekt wikuḥpon ehpit: Once there lived a woman* (Fredericton: Beaverbrook Art Gallery, 2009), 10-25; and Doris Shadbolt, *Bill Reid* (Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1986), 29-60.

<sup>138</sup> For an Atlantic Canadian example, see Angela Robinson, "Being and Becoming Indian": Mi'kmaw Cultural Revival in the Western Newfoundland Region," *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 32, no. 1 (2012): 1-31.

Under these circumstances, a cooperative studio grounded in New Brunswick's Indigenous culture and geography was formed in 1962, and it achieved notable success. The "Micmac Indian Craftsmen" (MIC) operation at Big Cove (Elsipogtog), New Brunswick, overseen by Crowell and led by Indigenous artists Michael Francis and Stephen Dedham, was a major commercial focus during the mid-1960s. Regrettably forgotten at present, with little evidence in the contemporary canon of New Brunswick visual art or Indigenous studies, the studio rapidly garnered accolades in its time, such as the eponymous feature article in the July 1964 issue of the *Atlantic Advocate*.<sup>139</sup> The article describes Big Cove chief Anthony Francis approaching Ivan Crowell in 1961 for assistance in nurturing what he saw as untapped artistic potential in his community. By late 1962, a successful handicraft instruction course was set up on the reserve, with classes in weaving, silkscreen printing, woodturning, pottery, and jewellery, all under the supervision of Mrs. Iris Long. By early 1963, a commercially viable studio was making silkscreen cards at a rate of 200,000 per year that were sold across the country (fig. 44). They soon explored etched glass, tapestry weaving, and even bone china patterns printed on English porcelain. Using modern designs in a semi-industrial model of production, the Craftsmen collective employed up to a dozen men and women on the reserve in a converted schoolhouse studio.

The admiration for the studio's modern approach is evident in this 1963 description of MIC in the Community Handicrafts Groups section of the provincial craft booklet:

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<sup>139</sup> Vera L. Daye, "Micmac Indian Craftsmen," *Atlantic Advocate*, July 1964, 29-32.

This is a most progressive group of craftsmen. It is definitely worthwhile to see their products and them at work on their reserve at Big Cove, near Rexton...

They are outstanding artists whose craft designs are based almost entirely upon their legends, of which they have many hundreds.

The group is so active that they acquired an old schoolhouse, moved it to a better site and built a large addition to it. Here they do designing, silk screen printing of hasti notes, weaving, ceramics, jewelry and wood turning.

This is one of the very few places in Canada where Indians are doing the most modern of crafts based upon designs from legends that are centuries old.<sup>140</sup>

One of the MIC note cards illustrates “the Legend of the Tidal Bore.” On an aqua background highlighted by white bubbles and stylized geometric water plants, a green lobster battles a black eel to return it to the Petitcodiac River, creating the famous tidal bore that still occurs twice a day (fig. 45). The screenprinted design was by Francis, but it has a spare compositional sophistication and dynamism that reminds one of Matisse cut-outs. The fact that in 1960s New Brunswick, local Indigenous stories were fused with sophisticated modern graphics and superior production, and found a wide North American commercial audience, is significant. Equally ambitious were their public tapestries. A woven tapestry depicting vignettes of the Wabanki “little people” origin story was designed by Michael Francis with stylized figures and geometric treatment of the landscape. Measuring 22 feet long by 4 feet tall, the sizeable modern tapestry was hung on a wall of the New Brunswick Teacher’s College in Fredericton in 1965.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> *New Brunswick Handcrafts: The Blue Book of New Brunswick Craftsmen and Handicrafts Shops*, (Fredericton, N.B.: Department of Finance and Industry, 1963), 3-4.

<sup>141</sup> “Indian Tapestry is Featured at College,” *Moncton Daily Times*, March 20, 1965, 3. The long tapestry and a series of other smaller ones by the MIC still hang in the same building (now the Education Department of the University of New Brunswick) within the university’s Mi’kmaq-Wolastoqey Centre. Seeking them out during research, the author discovered that the history,

Considering the success and wide dissemination of the MIC artworks, it is surprising that it all came to an abrupt end only a few years after the collective was formed. The federal funding grant, though relatively slight, did not last, prompting the eventual closure of operations.<sup>142</sup>

That the works themselves, along with the artistic achievements and story of the MIC are hardly to be found in the public eye – especially at this time of renewed focus on Indigenous culture, art, and language – is an unfortunate instance of Indigenous cultural erasure.<sup>143</sup>

As these instances illustrate, New Brunswick artists played key roles in the adoption and acceptance of a modern visual language in Canadian society. Through their chosen themes, styles, and visual principles, as well their decision to remain in New Brunswick, these professionals were pivotal in the expansion of modern visual culture and its support of socio-economic ideals of progress. As the post-1930s leadership in New Brunswick was aiming for a return to prosperity, the visual and material evidence of a region on the move was key to communicating this drive. Visual

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significance, and authorship of the tapestries was not known at all to the Indigenous educators and administrators in the centre, some that had worked there for years.

<sup>142</sup> For initial funding discussions, see: MEMORANDUM – F.B. McKinnon to Indian Affairs Branch, re: Big Cove Handicraft Project, April 21, 1965, accessed at Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, file: RG10, vol. 8815, file 271/14-1, pt. 4.

<sup>143</sup> To this end, the author and Wolastoqiyik artist/curator Emma Hassencahl-Perley are researching and co-curating an MIC retrospective exhibition and publishing a quadrilingual book (in English, French, Wolastoqey, and Mi'kmaq), planned for 2021-2022 at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery.

artists provided this underpinning, but another tangible testimonial was through what Frank Lloyd Wright labeled “the great mother-art,” architecture.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Essential Frank Lloyd Wright: Critical Writings on Architecture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 367.

## Chapter 2

### Modern architectural growth on the periphery

New Brunswick's architectural scholarship is a field that, until very recently, had only scattered inclusion in surveys of nineteenth-century building styles or government studies.<sup>1</sup> When surveying popular and scholarly Canadian published books and media, it is as if New Brunswick hardly existed as a place where architects and creative builders worked – at least as far as the twentieth century was concerned.<sup>2</sup> A testament to this outlook is the pair of architectural chapters in *Arts in New Brunswick*, a large illustrated government-sponsored book published in 1967 to honour the breadth of New Brunswick culture up to that point. The "Architecture in New Brunswick" chapter concentrates almost exclusively on nineteenth-century buildings and the colonial settler narrative.<sup>3</sup> Only a handful of twentieth-century buildings are (briefly) mentioned in the

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<sup>1</sup> See John Leroux, *Building a University: The Architecture of UNB* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2010); John Leroux, *Building New Brunswick: An Architectural History* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2008); John Leroux and Thaddeus Holownia, *St. Andrews Architecture: 1604-1966* (Kentville, NS: Gaspereau Press, 2010); John Leroux and Thaddeus Holownia, *A Vision in Wood and Stone: The Architecture of Mount Allison University* (Kentville, NS: Gaspereau Press, 2016); Steven Mannell, ed. *Atlantic Modern: The Architecture of the Atlantic Provinces, 1950-2000* (Halifax: TUNS Press, 2004); Robert Pichette, *La Cathédrale Notre-Dame-de-l'Assomption: Monument de la Reconnaissance* (Chaire de recherche en études acadiennes / Université de Moncton, 2012). See also footnote 5 in the introduction.

<sup>2</sup> Shane O'Dea, "Architecture and Building History in Atlantic Canada," *Acadiensis* X, no. 1 (Autumn 1980): 158-163. Peter Ennals, "Of Data Sets and Mind Sets — A Critical Review of Recent Writing on Canadian Architectural History," *Acadiensis* XVI, no. 2 (Spring 1987): 129-137.

<sup>3</sup> In a passively dismissive manner, *Arts in New Brunswick* also does not acknowledge the traditional building forms or breadth of history of the Mi'kmaq or the Wolastoqiyik, focusing only two pages on "handicrafts" (birchbark baskets, vessels, and beadwork/quillwork) in Huia Ryder, "History of Handicrafts," in *Arts in New Brunswick* (Fredericton: Brunswick Press, 1967), 231-233. Given scant, and at best trivializing, mention at the beginning of only a few thematic chapters, pre-contact Indigenous are labeled in the book's pages as "primitive," and having "not developed the larger community and the degree of specialization needed to support a

book, and the Centennial Building in Fredericton is the only post-war edifice cited.<sup>4</sup> The second chapter “Architecture in Eastern New Brunswick” fares only slightly better, with a similar concentration on nineteenth-century architecture. It contains a short section on the 1939-40 Moncton Cathedral, but only gives passing mention to the monumental 1930s Moncton High School and nearby inter-war churches, as well as several modern buildings in Moncton, Sackville, Atholville, and a few Dom Bellot-inspired francophone Catholic churches.<sup>5</sup> This aligns with the design and construction of many notable structures and planning ventures that garnered little attention beyond their official openings due to their peripheral siting to central Canada.

While the 1920s and 1930s saw sparse development insofar as major architectural initiatives in New Brunswick, the Second World War and the subsequent growth during the “Atlantic Revolution” prompted noteworthy projects of great cultural and design value. To consider architecture as a barometer for the economic, social, and cultural evolution within New Brunswick between the 1930s and 1960s is not only fitting, it is one of the most tangible reflections of public and political confidence in the region.

The 1940s saw the earlier Art Deco style of the 1920s and 1930s become more simplified, curved, and streamlined, developing into a style commonly known as “Moderne” or “Streamlined Moderne.” The Late Deco and Moderne styles, synonymous

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civilization” (19). “The Indians, who strode on moccasined feet through the quiet forests and verdant valleys of New Brunswick” (231), “From all accounts [the Micmac and Malecite Indians] were a light-hearted people who led a nomadic existence and pursued a culture of the stone age level” (122).

<sup>4</sup> W.W. Alward, “Architecture in New Brunswick,” in *Arts in New Brunswick*, 205-218.

<sup>5</sup> Yvon LeBlanc, “Architecture in Eastern New Brunswick,” in *Arts in New Brunswick*, 219-228.



with speed, mechanical technology, and the jazz age were prevalent between the late 1920s and the late 1940s throughout North America. They were underrepresented in New Brunswick, although several buildings are noteworthy and occasionally of national importance. The confident and playful Deco form was used for commercial properties such as the Town Hall in Dalhousie (1939) and the massive Hôtel-Dieu hospitals in Bathurst (1942) and Edmundston (1946), where an expression of modern technology, cleanliness, and efficiency was necessary.<sup>6</sup> There was also the buff brick and grey stone Sanatorium in Saint-Basile with its curved stone entry portico (1946), and two demolished icons in Uptown Saint John: the Saint John General Hospital (1931) (fig. 46) and Robbins Drug Store (1939) (fig. 47).<sup>7</sup> The latter, with its theatre-like marquee and structural pigmented glass tiles, was a fine execution of this animated, almost sensual mode of architectural expression as compared to the stoicism of the previous classical revivals. Robbins prided itself on being as up-to-date on the inside as its streamlined Vitrolite glass-tiled exterior, with a coffee shop, soda fountain, cosmetic counter, and automatic doors. A 1942 postcard of the Charlotte Street storefront boasted (albeit with poor grammar) *Magic 'Electric Eye' Doors say 'Welcome' is the word at Robbins – Eastern Canada's most modern Drug Store.*<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Tim Morawetz, *Art Deco Architecture Across Canada: Stories of the Country's Buildings Between the Two World Wars* (Toronto: Glue, Inc., 2017), 77.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 108, 189.

<sup>8</sup> Said postcard is in the collection of the author.

A Moderne masterpiece and the last major work of Toronto architect John Lyle,<sup>9</sup> the 1939 Bank of Nova Scotia building in Saint John faces King Square with a restrained elegance (fig. 48). Its clean, stripped-down design exhibits what Lyle considered “the essentials of the modern movement — that is, simplification of form, the elimination of meaningless ornament and release from the strictly historical styles.”<sup>10</sup> The building reflects the evolution of his work from a decorative style to the cleaner, more severe mode that would be a springboard for much of the new Canadian architecture that followed the Second World War. Its box-like exterior is characterized by an extreme flatness; the bright space of the two-storey banking hall is reflected on the exterior by tall windows divided by fluted pilasters stripped of base and capital. With its detailed bas-relief figures representing the history and people of New Brunswick dotting its facades, it is a keystone structure from the 1930s and 1940s. With little horizontal emphasis and only the barest remnants of Classically-inspired ornamental schemes, Lyle’s approach to ornament and design language was influential in creating a distinct Canadian architectural sensibility. He actively promoted the use of a Canadian iconography that would speak directly to its audience, making architecture a compelling revelation of the regional psyche rather than yet another European or American copy:

[The designer] is being reborn and there has not been a movement in the last one hundred years so pregnant with vitality. This new movement is not a historical revival, nor is it restricted to any particular form, nor any

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<sup>9</sup> John Lyle (1872–1945) was an Irish-Canadian architect and urban planner who was active in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. A leading Canadian practitioner of the Beaux Arts style, Lyle was involved in the City Beautiful movement in several Canadian cities, and is known for his cross-Canada designs for the Bank of Nova Scotia and Union Station in downtown Toronto.

<sup>10</sup> John M. Lyle to Willa Cather, September 27, 1940, John M. Lyle fonds, Archives of Ontario.

particular tradition – it is rather, a spirit of design. . . . every Canadian designer should be alive to the possibilities of this new freedom – it offers for the first time an opportunity to strike a national note in our architecture.<sup>11</sup>

Striking this “national note,” the series of nine two-and-a-half-metre tall bas-relief figures carved on the Saint John branch’s facades depict characters familiar to New Brunswick and Canadian folklore and social mythology. These Art Deco-inspired figures include a fisher and a hunter above the main entry, and on the side façade a woman holding a sheaf of grain (farming), a shirtless man clutching a pneumatic rock drill (mining), a capped sailor with a loop of rope (marine history), a cloaked female holding a crown (allusion to the Royal Family), a muscular figure holding a jacket and sledgehammer (industry), a lumberman with a peavey (forest industry), and a woman holding an electric generator above her curved rippling dress folds (an allusion to hydroelectricity). These symbols were meaningful beyond ornamentation; they evoked the connection of the financial-banking sector with working citizens of various vocations and social classes, and promoted the socio-cultural-economic history of New Brunswick as a connector to the future.<sup>12</sup>

A unique instance of New Brunswick architecture pushed beyond Lyle’s decorative assertions and expressed itself in minimalist functional volumes that reflected wartime nationbuilding, the nature of an exceptional site, and modern

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<sup>11</sup> John M. Lyle, *Toward a Canadian Architecture*, Letter for Press, 18 February 1931, John M. Lyle fonds, Archives of Ontario.

<sup>12</sup> Lyle’s Saint John sculptural program has period equivalents in other Canadian art deco architecture with kindred decorative schemes, such as Charles Comfort’s 1936-37 carved stone frieze at the Toronto Stock Exchange street façade and his sprawling interior arrival hall’s bas reliefs at Montreal’s 1942-43 CNR Central Station.

technology: the short lifespan of the 1939 Radio Canada International Transmitting Building erected on the outskirts of Sackville. A headquarters for the worldwide broadcasting of Canada's shortwave radio programming, the original Streamlined Moderne style red brick and glass block building was completed just in time for Canada's entry into the Second World War (fig. 49).

It was a scant three years old when the war created the need for a powerful worldwide short-wave radio broadcasting facility, prompting the full overhaul and enlargement of the original facility. Designed by the CBC Engineering Department in Montreal with D.G. McKinstry as chief architect, the Transmitting Building's new unadorned exterior along the marshlands started operation in 1944 (fig. 50). It hinted at the spare, surface-oriented Modernism that eventually hit the province in the 1950s. An article in the March 1945 issue of *Radio* magazine reported, "The modernistic white stucco building, with its tentacles of copper wires winding out into the vast field and finally to the huge antenna curtains, houses, in its million cubic feet, two 50-kilowatt shortwave transmitters and their associated equipment."<sup>13</sup> The entry and main control room featured a carefully laid roman red brick with alternating thin light buff brick courses and green raked grout joints for horizontal emphasis – a motif that was well-versed in the Moderne style but also connected with the flatness of the surrounding Tantramar Marsh and the metaphorical long reach of radio waves (fig. 51).

The broadcasting station and its sinewy radio towers of light trusses and steel cable would be a landmark for the entry point of New Brunswick from Nova Scotia. It

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<sup>13</sup> "Canada's New Voice," *Radio* [CBC Staff Magazine] (March 1945), 4.

indicated a wider national and international presence for the province, where modern architecture, engineering, and technology became a car passenger's first impression of New Brunswick's built form.

The elegant wartime construction of the Transmitting Building was an anomaly during the 1930-1945 era. The massive mobilization caused by the Second World War stimulated largely military construction throughout New Brunswick, with most of it ranging from the thoroughly functional to the cold and mundane.<sup>14</sup> Saint John harbour fortifications were strengthened,<sup>15</sup> while new air bases, among them the RCAF Station in Chatham, were quickly created in response to training requirements under the burgeoning British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. Pennfield, Sussex, Moncton, and Scoudouc also saw considerable military base construction.<sup>16</sup> Several of the massive open-span aircraft hangers and drill halls remain in situ, although those have all been repurposed into non-military uses, such as industrial or storage facilities.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Paul Ozorak, *Abandoned Military Installations of Canada – Volume 3: Atlantic* (s.p., 2001), 54-73, 108-113, 188-190, 193-198, 207-210, 214-223, 225-248, 296-299, 339-347, 385-388, 390-391, 403-414.

<sup>15</sup> Harold E. Wright and Byron E. O'Leary, *Fortress Saint John: An Illustrated Military History, 1640-1985* (Saint John: Partridge Island Research Project, 1985).

<sup>16</sup> Built in 1940 by the Department of National Defence, the Scoudouc RCAF aerodrome was a Second World War repair depot for aircraft flying on long range anti-submarine patrols, including Liberators or B-24 American-built four-engine bombers. Decommissioned after the war, the station was revived for several years during the 1950s and early 1960s. A number of the remaining original hangars remain for industrial use as a key part of the Scoudouc Industrial Park.

<sup>17</sup> The Scoudouc Air Force base near Shediac has been turned into a relatively successful industrial park, with many of the hangars retained as factories, workshops and storage buildings. Other bases labeled as redundant after the end of the war had their hangars sold to the private sector. Framed with a series of heavy timber trusses, the outside walls were easily removed and the structure disassembled. A prominent example was a pair of Pennfield hangars stripped into large sections and transported to Devon, on the northside of Fredericton – one being purchased by Diamond Construction Ltd. as their operations base and vehicle depot, and a few hundred

With all of this architectural development, it was evident that New Brunswick was starting to come out of its construction lull, though far more focused on English-speaking regions of the province as compared to the French-speaking areas. This would quickly begin to change in the 1940s, with a sacred symbol acting as the keystone at the start of the Second World War.

### **Acadian New Brunswick finding architectural voice**

To fully understand the roots and impact of modern architecture in Acadian New Brunswick, it is essential to examine the social conditions that enabled the movement to not only arrive, but thrive. At strategic instances, architectural modernism dovetailed with transformational socio-economic initiatives, the former being a physical and visual bedrock for the building of a modern Acadian citizenry.<sup>18</sup> Akin to Benedict Anderson's definition of a "nation," during the 1930-1967 era, a case can be made for New Brunswickers, and certainly Acadians, acting as an "imagined political community" within the boundaries of Canada.<sup>19</sup> The Maritime Provinces' sense of themselves as a collective "Maritime" community began to be overtly understood during the Maritime Rights movement of the 1920s.<sup>20</sup> While the general population of New Brunswick may not have fundamentally considered themselves a separate and distinct nation, there is a case to be made that the federal government policies that repeatedly overlooked the

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meters away was the site of the other, reconstituted as the York Arena, which became Fredericton's main ice hockey rink.

<sup>18</sup> Gerald Gaudet, interview by author, Moncton, N.B., October 29, 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Anderson, 15-16.

<sup>20</sup> E.R. Forbes, "The Origins of the Maritime Rights Movement," *Acadiensis* V, no. 1 (Autumn 1975): 54-66.

interests of the region created a deep sense of isolation from the bounty of a growing country.

By the early twentieth century the Maritimes' Acadian population was largely centred in northern and eastern New Brunswick.<sup>21</sup> While not *sovereign* per se, it fits Anderson's definition of an imagined political community.<sup>22</sup> In contrast to Anderson's cases where he establishes a natural evolution from religious belief to rational sectarianism, the pervasive Acadian religious community was never abandoned in favour of their community's modernization and growth in self-esteem. The Catholic Church was a cornerstone of their collective awakening that morphed into remarkable political, economic, educational, and cultural development during the twentieth century. Contrary to the romantic aura of Nova Scotia's Grand Pré being Acadia's emotional heart (as "the Land of Evangeline"),<sup>23</sup> the modern Acadian Renaissance and twentieth-century growth in pride and power were concentrated in New Brunswick due to the size of the francophone population. The soaring new Catholic Cathedral in Moncton, the expansion of the Université St.-Joseph into the eventual Université de Moncton, and the establishment of Assomption Vie as a major Acadian-controlled financial institution were evidence of the new dynamism. In addition, dedicated French print media in the form of the *Évangeline* newspaper created not only cultural status

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<sup>21</sup> In 1930, 10% of Nova Scotia was Acadian (approx. 50,000 Acadians), 30% of New Brunswick (approx. 135,000 Acadians), and 14% in PEI (approx. 12,000 Acadians). Bona Arsenault, *Histoire des Acadiens*, (Montreal: Éditions Fides, 2004), 400.

<sup>22</sup> Anderson, 20.

<sup>23</sup> MacKay and Bates, 71-129.

and political awareness, but the possibility of an enlarged Acadian community.<sup>24</sup> These factors were key in setting the foundation for an emerging micro-nationalism and modernizing spirit to develop within twentieth-century Acadian society.

Evidence of Acadians gaining political and cultural sway was the foundation of a French archdiocese and an appointed bishop in 1936. This initiated more than symbolic waves for the population. A cathedral soon appeared in Moncton not only as a towering symbol of Acadian survival, it equated their current renaissance as acutely connected to modernity. It would also be one of the first expressions in the province of modern architecture for religious use.

Educational and social advancements in Moncton and southeast New Brunswick opened up opportunities for Acadian artists and cultural professionals, as exemplified by the energies of St. Joseph's College and the new Cathédrale Notre Dame de l'Assomption in Moncton whose cornerstone was laid in 1939 (fig. 52). Beyond the courage and conviction it took to earn their own French bishopric, the completion of Notre Dame de l'Assomption was a coming-of-age for Acadian society. While the English-speaking areas of New Brunswick still had almost complete control over provincial politics and finances during the 1930s and 1940s, they were more cautious and conservative than their Francophone neighbours in one area: the design and execution of religious buildings.

On November 21, 1940, throngs of Monctonians, both curious and devout, lined the streets for the official cathedral opening. A packed crowd worshipped at a grand

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<sup>24</sup> Founded in 1887 in Nova Scotia, the *Évangeline* operations moved to Moncton in 1905.



consecration mass to celebrate the achievement.<sup>25</sup> It was a poignant ritual as the ensuing decade would see few construction projects of this scale in the province. The war years made it difficult, if not impossible, to obtain the funds and manpower, while the initial post-war era construction efforts concentrated on infrastructure and veterans' housing.<sup>26</sup> In any case, the Cathédrale Notre Dame de l'Assomption was the last great architectural work in New Brunswick until the late 1940s when a climate of design confidence appeared, manifesting itself in a vigorous wave of new structures.

What the architect, clergy, and builders created at the corner of Moncton's Lutz and St. George streets was an inclusive instance of inter-war architecture in New Brunswick. Embodying a transitional approach towards modern design, the exterior, and particularly the steeple, is an eclectic fusion of Neo-Gothic and Art Deco, while the smooth olive sandstone interior is pure Romanesque Revival. Although the Cathedral exterior is far from pure Art Deco, it is rife with Art Deco inspiration, such as the simplified geometrical ornament, the faceted carved figures of the four Evangelists guarding the entry, and the lofty spire stepped back along its height like a textbook 1930s Manhattan skyscraper. The skyscraper analogy is not far from the truth as the Cathedral was by far the tallest building in Moncton until the early 1970s. Former Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick Herménégilde Chiasson has called it:

the most important and the most significant building of [the Acadians'] presence on this land... . It has been built by a generous will and by the modest means of people who also wanted to leave a trace of their faith. Architecture in those cases becomes a prayer of sorts – a blind trust to be

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<sup>25</sup> Pichette, *La Cathédrale Notre-Dame-de-l'Assomption*, 171-174.

<sup>26</sup> Jill Wade, "Wartime Housing Limited, 1941-1947: Canadian Housing Policy at the Crossroads," *Urban History Review* 15, no. 1 (June 1986), 40-59.

part of the future by leaving in the present a testimony that coming generations will be able to see and be handed.<sup>27</sup>

The building was designed by renowned Sherbrooke architect Louis-Napoléon Audet (1881-1971), who executed a number of monumental churches throughout Quebec and New Brunswick during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>28</sup> Audet integrated the traditional while remaining open to the modern, drawing inspiration equally from the medieval Gothic to the mannerist modernism of his architectural contemporaries such as French architect-monk Dom Bellot and his Quebec disciple Edgar Courchesne. Architecturally connected to one of the greatest icons of French-Canadian Modernism, Moncton's cathedral shares the design language of the setback tower used by architect Ernest Cormier for the Université de Montréal's Main Pavilion, a mammoth structure built between 1928 and 1943 that symbolized a coming of age of French Canadians in Montreal's social and academic circles.<sup>29</sup>

The internal cathedral space is striking in its dual sense of weight and overall loftiness, and it features a high barrel-vaulted ceiling supported by arched colonnades

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<sup>27</sup> Herménégilde Chiasson, "Place à l'Architecture – Making Architecture Matter" (lecture, Théâtre l'Escaouette, Moncton, N.B., October 14, 2015).

<sup>28</sup> Through a prolific career spanning over sixty years, Audet designed a wealth of important hospitals, schools, and over fifty churches including the Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré Basilica, the Saint-Michel cathedral in Sherbrooke, the Cathedral of Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, and the Bathurst Cathedral, among many others.

<sup>29</sup> See: Isabelle Gournay, ed., *Ernest Cormier and the Université de Montreal* (Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1990). The choice of a Quebec architect for the Moncton shrine is significant. New Brunswick's francophone regions consistently looked to Quebec for their architects and architectural models until the mid-twentieth century, whereas the English-speaking areas of the province were by and large satisfied to use the professionals in Saint John. It represented a deprived state of affairs within the Acadian community, who had few professional architects at that time, but it was also a rational reaching out to established designers and skilled artists who possessed a solid track record of conceiving large houses of worship for the Catholic church.

with ornate carved capitals. Designed and carved by several Acadian stonemasons, the capitals form a collection that varies from skillful foliated decoration to folk art-like vignettes related to the local region – embodying once again the modern/anti-modern dialectic of New Brunswick material design. These vignettes include scenes of a farmer, carpenter, fishermen, oysters, and a lobster. Further to the symbolic use of local seafood, modern effigies tightly aligned with the Moncton region as a transportation hub also found their way onto the carved capitals, for instance as a locomotive and a twin propeller airplane (fig. 53).<sup>30</sup> The latter was more than fitting for a structure that aimed skyward, and concurrently airport and air services in Moncton experienced massive development between 1939 and 1941.<sup>31</sup>

Empowered by the precedent of the Moncton cathedral, other large-scale Catholic building projects initiated shortly after the Second World War led to significant new sacred structures. These were often in smaller francophone communities of admittedly lesser means. The resulting churches are some of New Brunswick's most

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<sup>30</sup> Flight technology represented one of the apexes of human ingenuity, but it also had a very local connection. At neighbouring Shediac only a few years before, a massive flying armada led by Italian General Italo Balbo landed at Shediac Bay. On July 13, 1933, Balbo, an aviation pioneer and Minister of Aviation in Benito Mussolini's cabinet, led a flotilla of twenty four Savoia Marchetti S-55 flying boats that flew across the Atlantic from Italy en route to the Century of Progress Exhibition in Chicago. This was the first massed flight of aircraft ever to cross the Atlantic Ocean and it gained wide international media attention. A regional newspaper bragged "experts have declared that Shediac is destined to become the chief North American terminal for transatlantic air travel." *The Moncton Transcript*, "Ideal Facilities for Seaplanes Reason for Choice of Shediac," July 13, 1933, 6. The protected harbour was set to become a regular landing ground for similar flotillas and marine planes, and it initiated the establishment of the bay as a Pan-American overseas air base, but the excitement and actuality of air traffic only lasted a few years. Safer long-range aircraft with reliable wheeled landing gear were quickly developed, and a large tarmacked airport was developed in Gander. The need had simply passed the town by. For a brief moment though, Shediac was a key corridor of modern world aviation.

<sup>31</sup> T.M. McGrath, *History of Canadian Airports* (Toronto: Lugus Publications, 1992), 144.

memorable and important works of architecture and hold tremendous symbolic power for their parishes. Not only are they the largest structures within view, but typically they are the first realizations of modern design in their region. By the 1960s, the vast transformations initiated by Vatican II were at least partially responsible for such choices,<sup>32</sup> but the buildings erected between the late 1940s and the late 1950s are nothing less than monuments to the optimism and cultural faith that paved the way for the Acadian cultural renaissance of the 1960s.

The distinctive yet sometimes overlooked churches that adorn the Francophone areas of New Brunswick customarily reached to Quebec for their inspiration. Other than a pair of single practitioners in Caraquet and Moncton before the Second World War,<sup>33</sup> there was little in the way of francophone-Acadian architecture professionals in New Brunswick. The wave of architectural self-determination would begin in the mid-1950s when university-trained Acadian architects set up practices in Moncton, but until then, Quebec would be the community's source of designers – not Saint John, where the province's English architects congregated.

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<sup>32</sup> The Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, commonly known as the Second Vatican Council or Vatican II, addressed relations between the Catholic Church and the modern world. The Council was initiated by Pope John XXIII in 1962 and closed under Pope Paul VI in 1965. It was a broadly reformist initiative, driven by the political, social, economic, and technological changes around the globe at that time. Beyond philosophical and liturgical changes adopted by the Church, significant aesthetic and physical evolutions resulted from the Council. These included using vernacular languages during the mass instead of Latin, the ability to celebrate the Mass with the priest facing the congregation, and various other modern aesthetic changes such as welcoming contemporary music and art. These all had widespread effects on architects being given more freedom in the design of sacred spaces. Before the Council convened, John XXIII claimed that it was time to "open the windows [of the Church] and let in some fresh air."

<sup>33</sup> These were Nazire Dugas in Caraquet and René-Arthur Fréchet in Moncton.

Dom Bellot (1876-1944), a Benedictine monk-architect who had trained at the École de Beaux-Arts in Paris, was instrumental in bringing a contemporary aesthetic and rational structural design to Quebec's religious buildings after his move to Canada in the mid-1930s.<sup>34</sup> Bellot was renowned for designing a series of churches and abbeys across Europe that, though Gothic-inspired, were distinctly modern and his own.<sup>35</sup> These designs have since been labelled the "Dom Bellot Style" or "Bellotisme." With their substantial masonry exterior walls, simplified geometric window forms, repeating parabolic arches and colourful patterned interiors, the churches exude a fusion of Gothic radiance and Modern exuberance. This fusion is magnificently achieved by setting brightly-painted walls in palettes of complementary colours against the intrinsic tones of contrasting patterned brickwork. Bellot remained in Quebec until his death, having completed several notable structures including Montreal's Oratoire St-Joseph and the Abbaye de Saint-Benoît-du-Lac in the Eastern Townships.

Bellot directly influenced several Quebec disciples, including Edgar Courchesne (1903-1979), a former apprentice,<sup>36</sup> who designed a number of significant buildings in New Brunswick in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Edmundston's Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs Catholic Church is one such example (fig. 54). Completed in 1953, the pink and grey granite church fuses a traditional cross-shaped plan and centre aisle arrangement with a combination of colourful open spaces, visible parabolic structure, and clean

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<sup>34</sup> Nicole Tardif-Painchaud, *Dom Bellot et l'architecture religieuse au Québec* (Quebec, QC: Les Presses de l'université Laval, 1978), and Peter Willis, *Dom Paul Bellot: Architect and Monk* (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, UK: Elysium Press, 1996).

<sup>35</sup> Maurice Culot and Martin Meade, eds., *Dom Bellot: Moine - Architecte* (Paris: Éditions Norma, 1996).

<sup>36</sup> Tardif-Painchaud, 82-99.

geometrical ornament.<sup>37</sup> Of note in Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs is the first significant public art commission for a young Claude Roussel, who was tasked with creating a series of Art Deco-like carved wood panels as Stations of the Cross.<sup>38</sup> Courchesne's religious work was consistently executed with the finest of stone, copper, stained glass, and brick of various colours. His other buildings include large churches in Petit-Rocher and Bouctouche, as well as the main building for Edmundston's Collège Saint-Louis. Northwestern New Brunswick also saw the construction of the Dom Bellot-inspired Très Saint-Sacrement Catholic Church in Saint-Quentin during the late 1940s, designed by Quebec City architect Charles-A. Jean (fig. 55). With its stone catenary arch entrance, detailed spire and rows of gable-roofed pointed windows marching down the side elevations, Jean's composition is pure "Bellotisme" and a little-known modern masterpiece of immediate post-war sacred architecture in Canada.

Allied to the religious-led growth in post-war Acadian modern buildings, new institutional and business structures proudly sported their associations with the Catholic Church and their combined social reach. The new streamlined headquarters of Assomption Vie in Moncton on one of the main commercial avenues is a case in point. The 1953 Société l'Assomption building on St. George Street sat directly aside the Notre-Dame de l'Assomption Cathedral (fig. 56). With its horizontal lines, flat roof, smooth dressed stone, and continuous pedestrian level overhang, the Assomption building was an ornamentally restrained counterpart to the nearby federal Dominion Public Building

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<sup>37</sup> Robert Pichette, *Bâtie sur le Roc: Mgr Numa Pichette – Témoin d'une époque* (Moncton: Éditions d'Acadie, 1995), 129-134.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 137-140.

of only twenty years previous, which sported Beaux-Arts pilasters and a surplus of carved decoration. The Assomption location and design combined the sacred, the secular and commerce/communications: beyond Assomption Vie the building housed CBAF, Moncton's first French-language radio station, which launched in 1954. Channelling the fusion of modern surroundings with the prevalent philosophy of material progress that was sweeping the populace, a Quebec magazine article's photo caption of the new building aside the still recent Cathedral called the pair "symboles des affirmations religieuses et économiques des Acadiens."<sup>39</sup> It is also worth noting a swaggering full-page newspaper ad of the pharmacy that opened in the new building. The ad implied that the future of Moncton had not only arrived, it was centered here in this architectural gem, embodying a moral and technological implication with great responsibility to the public:

Announcing Opening of Moncton's Most Modern Pharmacy  
Acadia Drug, 232 St. George Street, in the new l'Assomption building.

A cordial invitation is extended to you to visit our modern pharmacy on St. George Street. Here... we will proudly serve the people of our community.

Pharmacy, one of the oldest profession (sic), devoted to the physical well-being of mankind, will be found at the Acadia Drug Stores dedicated to the high purpose of its conception.

Here shall we act as standard bearers for the truly great men of science who, step by step, have added to our own store of knowledge in the fight against disease, and who, in so doing, replaced despair with hope, hope with assurance, and assurance with certainty.

God Grant, We May Prove Worthy Of That Trust.<sup>40</sup>

Nearby, the opening of the l'Assomption Youth Centre in January 1956 was a major achievement for the Cathedral congregation and the youth of Moncton. Built to

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<sup>39</sup> Jean-Louis Laporte, "La Renaissance Acadienne," *La Revue Moderne*, Juin 1954, 21.

<sup>40</sup> *Moncton Daily Times*, December 14, 1953, 7.

accommodate the growing recreational and social needs of the expanding Cathedral population, the project was one of the first major structures designed by the recently formed Moncton architecture and engineering firm LeBlanc and Gaudet, a pioneering studio who were among the first wave of modernist-trained design Acadian professionals. As an arm's length wing to the Cathedral, the minimalist Youth Centre was a simple and functional flat-roofed brick building – almost school-like in its repeating punched window openings along the main façade. At its official opening, the “gleaming” centre was called “sturdily and beautifully built” and “the most modern [youth centre] in the Maritimes. This is another step forward for a better Moncton.”<sup>41</sup> With some embellishment (but sincere enthusiasm), a local newspaper article describing the building claimed: “This modern recreation centre is, in the estimation of many, the most advanced architectural job of its sort east of Montreal.”<sup>42</sup>

An important decorative detail is inset in the main lobby's terrazzo floor: a large round medallion sporting a large “Stella Maris” yellow star (the symbol of the Virgin Mary and the Acadian national symbol) on a white background, with a white profile of the memorial stone church at Grand Pré in front of a larger dark silhouette of the Notre-Dame de l'Assomption cathedral towering behind (fig. 57).<sup>43</sup> These sit above three undulating blue lines, representing either the local Petitcodiac River or the Bay of Fundy that bounded the pre-Deportation settlements of l'Acadie. Graphically stark and modern, the visual confirms the conscious alignment of modern Acadian society with its

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., January 6, 1956, 9.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> The famed memorial church at Grand Pré was designed by Moncton architect René Fréchet and built in 1922, resulting in a double Moncton-Acadian history symbol.



religion, landscape, and architecture, both past and present. That such intentional modern visual signals were front and centre in egalitarian structures such as the Youth Centre is symptomatic of a wider push to combine modern visual idioms with what was one of the most important socially-conscious or communal architectural exercises in New Brunswick: designing the wave of new post-war schools.

### **Modern architecture realized**

After the post-war return to a peacetime way of life, New Brunswick's provincial government initiated extensive educational building projects that embraced a modern aesthetic. In accordance with up-to-date educational theories, the province encouraged consolidation rather than maintaining the sizeable number of antiquated urban schools and rural one-room schoolhouses. In a 1946 report entitled "The Building Problem," the City of Saint John School Board Superintendent said:

The greatest problem we are faced with is that of poorly designed, unsanitary, obsolete school buildings. Of the sixteen school structures owned by the Board, nine are more than forty years old while only five are less than thirty years old. . . . Within three months the recommendations made by our Administrative staff will be used to lay down a definite, effective replacement program, operative over a period of ten years. Our program will take into account pupil distribution, Town Planning accommodations, Department of Education policies regarding school curricula, Junior high schools, playground space, and other related matters.<sup>44</sup>

Hundreds of schools of all sizes and types were built in the late 1940s and 1950s, many of them in a fusion of Art Deco-Moderne with a simplified Classical style. Some of

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<sup>44</sup> "The Building Problem," City Superintendent's Reports to the Board of School: 1930-1946; File 1946, p.1; RS 285 A7/2, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick (PANB).

the notable instances included the new consolidated high school at Port Elgin with its vertical Art Deco entry, the two-classroom Westfield school with its early adoption of a monopitch shed roof and continuous glazed wall, and the prototypical school designs of long horizontal classroom wings around a tall central gymnasium, such as those at Centreville, Rothesay, and Devon on the northside of Fredericton (fig. 58). As a 1951 article in *Saturday Night* magazine confirmed, “Large modern regional schools are mushrooming everywhere” across the province.<sup>45</sup>

In a 1952 portfolio of the new schools, J.W. Brittain, the provincial Minister of Education, declared “New Brunswick is more education conscious than ever before. The truth of this statement is shown by a contrast between the schoolhouses of ten or more years ago and the new and modern buildings which have been erected and which are being erected in both urban and rural areas.”<sup>46</sup> Thrift was still very much a concern: construction costs were kept lower than the cost of similar schools in other provinces by using standard units of construction, avoiding complicated construction methods, eliminating “needless architectural embellishments,” and designing to meet fundamental functional needs.<sup>47</sup> It was a regional response to the Mies van der Rohe dictum of “form follows function,” and also a case of form follows finance.

Reducing ornament and allowing function to govern became a firmly entrenched modernist rule. Architects in the modern era rejected ornamentation almost completely, at the same time embracing innovative technology and dramatic materials

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<sup>45</sup> Trueman and Breen, 8.

<sup>46</sup> J.W. Brittain, “Introduction,” in *Modern School Buildings in New Brunswick* (New Brunswick: [n.p.], 1952), iii.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

such as steel, aluminum, plate glass, concrete block, and plastics.<sup>48</sup> While North American architects of the 1930s and 1940s began to let go of convention by using new materials and structural systems, this attitude only became firmly entrenched in New Brunswick in the 1950s.<sup>49</sup> The approach coincided with new post-war political and social values and marked a tangible and conscious break from the past.

As in any transitional period, many of New Brunswick's structures from the early 1950s pursued modern expression cautiously, though with clear intention. Prominent developments such as new federal buildings in Fredericton and Grand Falls, as well as the Newcastle Town Hall and Theatre, maintained a similar masonry palette to that of previous decades, but were almost spartan in their outlook. Windows, evenly and modestly treated throughout the exterior, had little or no ornament. They served the function of letting in light rather than being frames for external embellishment.

In their 1943 manifesto *Nine Points on Monumentality*, architectural historian Sigfried Giedion, artist Fernand Léger, and architect José Luis Sert sought to clarify how monumentality could be attained. As "the expression of man's highest cultural needs," they considered it one of the most critical new tasks of modern architecture. The authors encouraged contemporary architects to overcome their "functional" label to achieve both lyrical freedom and civic value in their structures, as they felt that the

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<sup>48</sup> Kenneth Frampton, "Mies van der Rohe: Avant Garde and Continuity," in *Studies in Tectonic Culture* (Boston: MIT Press, 1996), 159-207; Matt Gibberd, "The Modern House," in Matt Gibberd and Albert Hill, *Ornament is Crime* (London: Phaidon Press, 2017), 7-11; Rhodri Windsor Liscombe and Michelangelo Sabatino, "Modernism with a Punch, 1945-67," in *Canada: Modern Architectures in History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016), 171-229; and Harold Kalman, "Modern Architecture and Beyond," in *A Concise History of Canadian Architecture* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2000), 535-568.

<sup>49</sup> Leroux, "A Tentative Modernism, 1945-1980," in *Building New Brunswick*, 173-247.

attempts made during the previous hundred years to build lasting monuments “in no way represent the spirit or the collective feeling of modern times.”<sup>50</sup> True monumentality could be achieved, in the view of the three authors, through collaborative design and planning, open settings and sites, the use of modern materials and lighting systems, and the relationship between buildings and nature.

At a local level, these sensibilities were also committed to the public through lectures and articles that were meant to appease and inform it of the new style that was such a radical departure from what was produced as recently as a decade before. Fredericton architect Neil Stewart performed such a presentation to the local Y’s Men’s group on March 3, 1954, where he spoke of modern architecture, the profession, and how truth to form was necessary:

The speaker defined architecture as “design in building” and defined the word design as “a synthesis of purpose, material and technique.” From this definition he went on to show how the forms of architecture and purpose – the needs, aspirations and cultural level of a people, and the freedom of limitation imposed by the available materials and the development of technique.

Mr. Stewart stressed the point that these examples were in every case an expression of the purpose, materials and techniques of the period and so were great architecture, but that the transplanting of the structural and decorative forms evolved by one set of conditions to other times and materials inevitably resulted in bad design.<sup>51</sup>

Moncton-based Gerald Gaudet, one of the early architects practicing in a modern style in New Brunswick, remembers travelling throughout the province early in

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<sup>50</sup> J.L. Sert, F. Léger and S. Giedion, “Nine Points on Monumentality,” in *Architecture Culture 1943-1968: A Documentary Anthology*, ed. Joan Ockman (New York: Rizzoli International, 1993), 29.

<sup>51</sup> “Y’s Men’s Supper Meet Hears Architect Describe Profession,” *The Daily Gleaner*, March 6, 1954, 12.

his career to educate the public, school boards, service groups, and churches on the role of the architect; that they weren't merely adjuncts to contractors: "I tried to do it afterwards, when I started to get more experience and time that I could spare, to educate the people; to go to schools and tell them – especially the colleges. I'd go to Bathurst and St. Joseph to tell them what the role of the architect was."<sup>52</sup> He remembers the consciousness of the public changing about a decade after he started practicing, around the time he designed the structurally bold Église Christ-Roi in central Moncton, which featured a large hyperbolic paraboloid concrete shell roof (fig. 59). Before that building, if someone saw his name on a construction site sign they thought he worked for the builder, but once such a revolutionary form as Christ-Roi appeared, the locals understood it simply couldn't have been conceived by a local contractor, and Gaudet became the virtuoso.<sup>53</sup>

Akin to Christ-Roi, the openness to structural audacity and modern architectural spaces during the 1950s and 1960s was internationally borne by religious buildings. These would have a palpable bearing on New Brunswick's architectural landscape and growing population. One of the most prominent contemporary religious projects in the Western world in the 1950s was the reconstruction of England's Coventry Cathedral, its medieval gothic predecessor destroyed by Second World War bombing raids. After one of the largest architectural competitions in history, Scottish-born Sir Basil Spence won the commission in 1951, based on a scheme that maintains the adjacent dark ruin connected to an intervention of a forward-looking cathedral. Spence's masterpiece is

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<sup>52</sup> Gerald Gaudet, interview by author, Moncton, N.B., October 29, 2015.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

acutely modern, with shallow gable roofs and a smooth stone exterior finish. Spence believed that the duty of contemporary architects was not to copy but to “think afresh.” He insisted that the enduring churches of the Middle Ages contained a basic truth that “architecture should grow out of the conditions of the time, should not be a copy of past styles, and must be a clear expression of contemporary thought.”<sup>54</sup> Spence also felt that the fusion of the old and the new implied the continuity and vitality of a living faith, a quality inherent in all great churches that had evolved over time.

The building committee responsible for expanding the 1847 St. Anne’s Anglican Church in Fredericton pursued a path exceedingly similar to Spence’s ideals of fusing the ancient with the modern. Completed in 1962, the modern St. Anne’s Parish Church was designed by Saint John architect Stanley Emmerson and connected respectfully to its predecessor. The newer wing is a substantial, autonomous structure, but it is clearly the result of a dialogue between the ancient and the modern. The new St. Anne’s maintains a height, volume and material palette resembling those of the original church; it uses rubble-faced sandstone walls, tall narrow windows with smooth stone surrounds, and a high nave clad with smooth limestone vertical ribs infilled with buff brick panels. The interior features a parabolic arch atop the altar and tiles reredos, backlit by hidden transom windows (fig. 60). The structurally expressive, open and light-filled St. Anne’s Parish Church is a poetic statement of 1950s shapes and colours, accentuating the darker, more enclosed and ornate qualities of its Gothic Revival ancestor.

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<sup>54</sup> Basil Spence, *Phoenix at Coventry: the Building of a Cathedral* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1962), 8.

During this time, religious cathedrals were joined by cathedrals of culture, and the creative ferment throughout New Brunswick was strongly supported by the province's business elite. The Beaverbrook Art Gallery opened in downtown Fredericton in September 1959, an event of momentous cultural importance in the life of the city and New Brunswick. The gallery was a major addition to the architectural attractions of Fredericton, and with its collection of Canadian and British masterpieces, it was immediately described as *the* tourist destination in the province (fig. 61).<sup>55</sup> Lord Beaverbrook donated his personal collection of art and paid for the substantial modern building on the banks of the St. John River that housed the collection. Bathurst native Sir James Dunn and later his widow, Lady Dunn, donated much of their valuable personal collection to the gallery, as did the Montreal- and St. Andrews-based Hosmer family. These individuals and families established a model that would soon be followed by the family of Harrison McCain. K.C. Irving's wife Harriet was on the initial Board of Governors, as was UNB President Colin B. Mackay. It was a philanthropic and volunteer-based instance of big business and visual culture coming together before such waves were common in Eastern Canada. The late 1960s and 1970s witnessed much greater government intervention and corporate investment.

Lord Beaverbrook could have engaged any leading international architect for his new art gallery in downtown Fredericton due to his enormous wealth and professional connections. But being a loyal New Brunswicker, dedicated to support those outside the circles of attention, he initially used the services of the provincial government architect,

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<sup>55</sup> Wardell, "The Beaverbrook Art Gallery," and Trueman, "An Enduring Gift to New Brunswick: The Lord Beaverbrook Art Gallery."

D.W. Jonsson. He then hired Lynn Howell, of Stewart & Howell, who made the preliminary sketches of the gallery. When Howell died during the design process, his partner Neil Stewart became the principal in charge, describing the job as “the chance of a lifetime.”<sup>56</sup> With its idyllic setting on the bank of the St. John River opposite the provincial legislature, this often-overlooked instance of mid-century modern Canadian architecture is unmistakable in its clean symmetrical form and pure lines. The building’s opening in 1959 was a watershed of high culture in New Brunswick, the event covered by no less than *Life* magazine.

Of necessity for the display of art, the original gallery is almost unbroken by windows, and with its glazed cream-coloured brick, white marble cornices and light granite base, it resembles an altar. This would have pleased European Modernists, who saw minimal white cubic forms as expressions of purity and order. The palette of materials throughout the interior is equally pristine: terrazzo floors, wood paneled walls, stainless steel handrails and aluminum windows. The interior plan is simple: a tall central gallery flanked by two large square galleries of equal size. Stewart went so far as to claim that the building was “of purely functional design,” which would have seemed the case in comparison with Canadian museums constructed in preceding decades. Stewart went on to relate that “the architectural style – providing a modern, functional look – had caught the attention of tourists even before the gallery opened.”<sup>57</sup>

The gallery’s form is inherently Classical in its proportion and layout, with a

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<sup>56</sup> “Beaverbrook Art Gallery One of the Finest in Canada: Designing Gallery ‘Chance of Lifetime for Capital Architect,’” *The Daily Gleaner*, September 14, 1959, 11.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.



central entry bound by two solid equal volumes. However, ornamental festoons are exchanged for a Spartan sensibility that revels in the luxury of simple materials and the textural play of light and shadow on bare walls. This aesthetic also characterizes such notable structures as Josef Hoffmann's 1934 Austrian Pavilion for the Venice Biennale and Edward Durrell Stone's 1959 American embassy in India. The embassy was hailed as "a supreme achievement of modern architecture"<sup>58</sup> for its central, symmetrical glazed entry, its clean low volume and its white concrete patterned wall. The balanced language of both this embassy and the Beaverbrook Art Gallery reflect North America's post-war "rediscovery" of symmetry as a means of achieving monumentality.

Stuart Trueman, editor-in-chief of the *Telegraph-Journal* newspaper and regular contributor to various other Canadian magazines, sermonized the virtues of the building and its collection the year before its official opening:

In years far ahead, people of future generations will be wending their way to a gleaming glazed-brick and white limestone building overlooking the Saint John River at Fredericton to see the treasures of the Lord Beaverbrook Art Gallery – which by then will have become an integral part of New Brunswick's cultural heritage.<sup>59</sup>

Noteworthy modern architecture had certainly arrived to New Brunswick, but with a catch. To its detriment, the province's architecture of the 1950s and 1960s rarely garnered a mention in the national architectural press, let alone substantial illustrated features. The era's coverage rarely ventured past Canada's larger cities for examples that fuelled the architectural interests of the nation. This oversight is evident in the lack of print and media attention outside the region of a number of modern post-secondary

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<sup>58</sup> India U/I News, accessed November 3, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nhKcRgy7gk>.

<sup>59</sup> Stuart Trueman, "The Lord Beaverbrook Art Gallery," *Canadian Art*, November 1958, 279.

architectural buildings that were transformational not only for their functional and tectonic reach, but for their inclusion of carefully-crafted artistic elements.

### **Campus building**

Canadian universities were slower to engage with modernism than their equivalents in the United States, but initial experiments followed the close of the Second World War at the University of Toronto and the University of British Columbia. Mies Van der Rohe's Illinois Institute of Technology campus in Chicago (1938-58) and Eero Saarinen's 1950s buildings at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge transformed the sensibilities of how universities could foster a progressive vision through their built form. Mount Allison University in Sackville would daringly embrace the style, instigating early modernist architectural acceptance in the Maritimes during the mid-to late-1950s. The University of New Brunswick would be invigorated by the changing context, but this resulted in solitary examples rather than sweeping changes.

By 1946, returning veterans had tripled the enrolment at UNB, and an alumni memorial fund was established to honour the students killed in both world wars. The result was the Memorial Student Centre, a quietly sophisticated building that was the first in Fredericton to adhere to the principles of High Modernism and break with the stylistic and material rules of the past. When it opened on May 12, 1955, the red brick student centre, described as "the pride and joy of U.N.B. students and the envy of

students from other universities who visit it,”<sup>60</sup> was labeled as one of the most modern and attractive in Canada (fig. 62).<sup>61</sup>

The flat-roofed building featured many modernist traits: an open plan with a multi-storey central circulation space at front and back entrance foyers, deep precast concrete window surrounds, aluminum windows and doors, a glass block vestibule, unadorned stained birch doors, and a skewed geometry evident in the angled rear porch and the fluted concrete decoration at the front. At the core of the building (both formally and metaphorically) was the distinctly minimal and carefully crafted war memorial wall. A calculated departure from the war monuments of the past, the memorial is both poignant and powerful in its austerity. The plan and overall form of the Memorial Student Centre strikingly resembles the house that Bauhaus architect Walter Gropius built for himself in Lincoln, Massachusetts, in 1937 (fig. 63). Both buildings have an open winding stair at their heart, glass block walls, ribbon and picture windows, a flat roof, a monolithic rectangular form, and the unmistakable angled canopy porch.

A letter to the editor of the Fredericton *Daily Gleaner* described UNB’s Student Centre as an intelligently realized design in harmony with both the urbanism of the campus and the surrounding natural landscape. The letter adds: “These features are not a happy accident, but are the result of the foresight and imagination of the architects,

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<sup>60</sup> “Memorial Student Centre cost Almost \$265,000,” University of New Brunswick, *Alumni News* (March 1956), 3.

<sup>61</sup> “Memorial Centre Officially Opened,” *The Daily Gleaner*, May 12, 1955, 2. The Memorial Student Centre included a large open common room with freestanding fireplaces, picture windows overlooking the city and the river, a ladies’ lounge, a music room, student offices and a cafeteria that could serve twelve hundred students a day.

Stewart and Howell of Fredericton. We hope that this building will be the forerunner of modern and imaginative architecture 'Up the Hill.'"<sup>62</sup>

Until mid-century, the Mount Allison University campus was a mix of older wood clapboard structures and early-twentieth-century Queen Anne style buildings clad with locally quarried red sandstone. In the late-1950s, like many universities across the country, Mount Allison anticipated the oncoming wave of new students and initiated a massive rebuilding program that transformed the campus through buildings that were polar opposites of those completed only a few years previous. Mount Allison openly welcomed the modernist approach, while respecting its roots through material, scale, and an intimate sense of site planning.<sup>63</sup>

Officially opened in the Summer of 1958, Mount Allison's Physics and Engineering Building (known as the PEG) would have profound consequences for the university, completely shifting the visual and functional language of its architecture. Worlds apart from the architectural and philosophical aims of Mount Allison structures built only a few years previous, the PEG unapologetically broke with the past with its flat roof, large expanses of glazed openings, exposed concrete block interiors, and playful/informal entry sequences (fig. 64). With a reinforced concrete post-and-beam superstructure infilled with concrete block, the three-storey PEG's exterior walls were faced with large areas of continuous window sashes, alternating with horizontal ribbons of composite panels. A one-storey main entry pavilion with polished brown granite walls

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<sup>62</sup> Pat Ryder and Alda Mair, Letter to the Editor, *The Daily Gleaner*, March 31, 1955, 4.

<sup>63</sup> See John Leroux and Thaddeus Holownia, *A Vision in Wood and Stone: The Architecture of Mount Allison University* (Kentville, NS: Gaspereau Press, 2016).

was set to one side, facing the center of campus. The building would feature a 204-seat auditorium, lecture rooms, numerous laboratories for Physics and Engineering, offices and faculty labs, a library, machine shop, photo darkroom, drafting rooms, a blueprint room, and a museum.<sup>64</sup>

The interior was a radical departure from previous models, as the walls were exposed concrete block with the ceilings displaying their open web steel truss structure (fig. 65). Floor finishes ranged from trowelled concrete to terrazzo, linoleum, and asphalt tile. While perhaps not as dramatic as some modernist buildings of the day, this honest treatment was appropriate for an engineering building where form followed function. The architecture was a visible teaching lesson in and of itself. As the first truly modern building on campus, the PEG Building's objectives were unmistakable: clarity, precision, and logic, all in a mathematically rigorous composition. The architect, Charles Fowler of Halifax, admired Mies van der Rohe's work and welcomed the opportunity to introduce something dramatically different than previous buildings on campus, while using architectural envelopes that got built much faster.<sup>65</sup>

The next major project on campus, the new Avard-Dixon Building (fig. 66), expressed ideals of precision and clarity (at the extensive window/spandrel curtain wall), while ornamental possibilities were achieved using light and shadow on sculptural concrete block walls at the eastern end of the main façade. This dappled pattern was joined by a colourful and geometric Lawren P. Harris mosaic tile mural at the Main Street entrance.

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<sup>64</sup> "Physics and Engineering Building" file, Mount Allison University Archives.

<sup>65</sup> Charles Fowler, interview by author, November 9, 2014, Halifax, NS.

Designed by C.A. Fowler & Company, the three-storey steel-framed Avarð-Dixon Building opened in September 1959 as the headquarters of two unrelated departments: Geology and Home Economics. Its rectangular floor plans contained the usual span of classrooms, offices, a library-lounge, and animal and food laboratories, along with a large kitchen and special 75-seat dining room on the top floor.<sup>66</sup>

Not everyone in the university community was enamored by the new minimalist building language and raw materials. The *Argosy* student newspaper of November 15, 1957 condemned the PEG Building as “a blot on our ivy-covered campus”<sup>67</sup> and predicted that it would soon look shabby and dated. In response to these criticisms, a respected figure came to the defense: Alex Colville. In the Spring 1959 issue of the *Mount Allison Record*, when asked about the architecture of the new university buildings and the controversy of the modern style, Colville said:

Our age is generally considered to be producing some of the best buildings of the last two or even five centuries, so it seems obvious to me that we should use the materials, processes, and styles of our time. A university is a living, changing thing; its buildings should reflect this organic character. Thus a campus made up of buildings in several styles is not incongruous provided the trees, the sky, aided by human discretion, can unite the various buildings into a rich but not tedious or static whole.

Also, I believe that our buildings should be well designed and constructed, but that they should make use of the modest materials and techniques which are in keeping with our means... generally it seems to me that we should class our new buildings as a success.<sup>68</sup>

The choice of modern architectural styles at Mount Allison may have been controversial as it was an aged institution with a tradition of decorated Victorian

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<sup>66</sup> “Avarð-Dixon Building” file, Mount Allison University Archives.

<sup>67</sup> *The Argosy Weekly*, November 15, 1957.

<sup>68</sup> Alex Colville, “An Artist’s View,” *Mount Allison Record*, Spring 1959, 22.

building precedents, but similar caution was absent during the planning of the nearby Université de Moncton in the 1960s. It was a *tabula rasa*.

Premier Louis Robichaud's 1960s programs of equalizing economic responsibility, taxation, and social and educational service levels to New Brunswick's poorer counties lifted the rural areas out of economic despair, but offered higher learning opportunities as well. One of the most noticeable changes during Robichaud's regime was the creation in 1963 of the Université de Moncton (U de M). Its establishment was a watershed for the Acadian cultural renaissance of the 1960s and 1970s and made Moncton the Acadian academic centre. Gerald Gaudet remembers it being "a big asset to the architectural profession." He feels that the arrival of the Robichaud government and their new procurement policies "affected [architects] greatly" in New Brunswick, and not only the Acadian firms.<sup>69</sup> Under new rules, any institutional project of the provincial government was to be designed by an architect (not simply an engineer), which was not always done in the past.

Because few buildings adequate for university purposes existed in Moncton, a new campus was created on the outskirts of the city. Local architects, many of them young Acadians, took advantage of the opportunity offered by this huge construction venture. It established not only a centre of learning but also a symbol of contemporary Acadian design. In the past, New Brunswick's Acadian regions had looked to Quebec for both designers and an architectural language, and the New Brunswick firms of the 1960s still found guidance from Quebec, especially in the deep-rooted convention of using

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<sup>69</sup> Gerald Gaudet, interview by author.

light buff brick for educational buildings. Gaudet considers that in the early days, the U de M was an excellent client, and that they understood what the local architects could offer:

The university knew our role very well because [Moncton architect] Conrad [Blanchette] had taught in the Engineering department and I taught the first year Engineers as well. So we were involved with the university. They knew us, the university had hired us to do work before that. Conrad had gone to St. Joseph [university], and I had gone to Bathurst [college], so the relationship was there... They knew the role, they knew that it was the proper thing to do, they depended on [the architects].<sup>70</sup>

Early proposals suggested various plans for a compact U de M campus, but these were not followed. The result was an automobile-dependant layout, with the buildings in retrospect sited too far apart for such an open and wind-swept location.<sup>71</sup> Even so, the campus includes some fine examples of mid-1960s institutional architecture. These include the X-shaped Rémi Rossignol Science Building (fig. 67),<sup>72</sup> the Pierre Armand Landry Building's chapel, the J. Louis Lévesque Arena, the slender Maison Lafrance student residence, the Arts Building, and the precast concrete Commerce Building. The Heating Plant, which stands as one of the most visible buildings on campus, is an overlooked achievement of Bauhaus-like crisp rectilinear composition, its prominent smokestack expressing its function (fig. 68).

The Rémi Rossignol Building layers meaning to the point of becoming a visual cultural icon, and it also relates to the 1968 student uprisings on campus, instigated by

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. Gaudet remembers that the university had hired a planner, but that it was deep in the design process and that "it was too late" to fix the sprawl of the campus.

<sup>72</sup> "Rémi Rossignol Building" folder, Bélanger and Roy collection, MC2774-4, PANB.



linguistic tensions in the city of Moncton. Much of the setting for the 1971 National Film Board documentary feature *“L’Acadie, l’Acadie?!?”* which captured the events of the protests, takes place in the building, and specifically around its grand spiral staircase that occupies the hub of the four crossing wings (fig. 69).<sup>73</sup> This was the location of the infamous and lengthy student sit-in, and was captured in the notorious photograph of policemen walking down the rotunda stairs in the midst of a severe warning for the protesters. The black and white picture is visually loaded, from the vertical rails of the stairway as metaphors of prison bars, to the spiral curve implying the cycle of history repeating itself, to the notion of French citizens on the lower level, while threatening English police walk down from above. That picture has become the actual poster image of the film (fig. 70), a powerful instance of architecture embodying both the hope for cultural emancipation and the dangers involved when principles and powers clash.

Herménégilde Chiasson, who took part in the protests as a U de M student, states that:

On a dit de *“L’Acadie, l’Acadie?!?”* qu’il est sans doute le film d’une génération; la première en Acadie à s’exprimer aussi ouvertement sur la place publique. Cette architecture moderne était sans doute le décor idéal pour cette image iconique établissant un lien entre cette prise de parole publique et une forme d’art de cinéma qui lui aussi s’affirme sur la place publique.<sup>74</sup>

### **Late modern architecture**

From one type of Moncton gathering space to a more moderated example, the aforementioned downtown Christ-Roi Catholic Church’s spatial and structural design

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<sup>73</sup> *L’Acadie, l’Acadie?!?”*, directed by Pierre Perrault and Michel Brault (National Film Board of Canada, 1971).

<sup>74</sup> Chiasson “Place à l’Architecture – Making Architecture Matter” lecture.

stands as a pure architectural expression of the liturgical change prompted by Vatican II. Proudly referred to as “one of the most modern churches in Canada” upon its opening in 1962,<sup>75</sup> it was a formal response to Vatican II with its open plan and radial focus on the altar. At the time, its concrete saddle-like hyperbolic paraboloid roof was “considered an architectural wonder in Moncton.”<sup>76</sup> Underneath the innovative structure, the interior was rich amalgam of brick, wood, glass, terrazzo, and especially glazed ceramic murals and stations of the cross by the eminent Quebec sculptor Jordi Bonet. A much sought-after Canadian liturgical artist, Bonet is also known in Moncton for having done the ceramic tile mural along the façade of the former Rubin’s department store on Main Street – one of the largest ceramic artworks in the Maritimes. Christ-Roi’s glazed tile murals at the main entry are stylized, somewhat sketchy depictions of a snow-white Christ on a donkey, and another of Christ in a crucified position aside Mary in a blue robe and another figure clad in yellow. The colours are rich and vibrant on a mottled earth-toned background. The tactility of the figures’ glaze is striking, as Christ’s skin-like feet and their nail holes are right at hand height. Architect Gerald Gaudet states that he felt Bonet was “a top-notch artist; very talented, a very nice guy, and I really enjoyed working with him. I think that the Christ-Roi murals are some of his best work, because he had the opportunity and he had the space to do it. It fits well.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> “Church Opening,” *The Atlantic Advocate*, November 1962, 78.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Gerald Gaudet, interview by author.

A kindred spirit to Christ-Roi completed three years later, St-Louis-de-Gonzague Catholic Church in Richibucto is one of the most significant modern buildings in New Brunswick, and with its circular architectural plan and structural daring, it is unique in Eastern Canada (fig. 71). Its architects, Bélanger and Roy of Moncton, led the push for modern architecture in New Brunswick from the 1950s to the early 1970s, and St-Louis-de-Gonzague stands as their finest achievement.<sup>78</sup> Along with the aforementioned Christ-Roi, it embodies the Acadian artistic avant-garde and architecture's role in Acadie's vital cultural resurgence during the 1960s.

Above the circular building footprint, the roof structure is an undulating thin concrete shell consisting of twelve parabolic vaults supported by a curved stone wall. Above the wall datum, the roof's open vault spaces are filled with geometric stained glass windows moving from blue to yellow hues, each crafted by Italian artists Mario Mauro and Carlo Mozardo. Erroneously labeled as a "clamshell" roof attached to a tall "lighthouse" bell tower, the building is a Canadian example of the celebrated 1958 concrete shell at the Restaurant Los Manantiales in Xochimilco, Mexico by Spanish-born architect and engineer Félix Candela (1910-1997). Candela is a revered icon of twentieth-century architecture and engineering who is most known for his design of thin curving concrete shell structures.<sup>79</sup> The link is of key importance, tying this relatively isolated and overlooked New Brunswick building to one of the era's foremost structural designs. Arcade Albert, the church's design architect, recalls that Candela's

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<sup>78</sup> "St-Louis-de-Gonzague" folder, Bélanger and Roy collection, MC2774-38, PANB.

<sup>79</sup> Candela considered Los Manantiales his most important work.

shell structure directly influenced the design and structural ingenuity of St-Louis-de-Gonzague.<sup>80</sup>

Testament to the progressive and courageous spirit of the modern age in the Maritimes was the Atlantic Canada Pavilion at Expo 67 (fig. 72). The four Atlantic Canadian provinces joined forces to design and build a shared structure. Rather than represent themselves as folksy, nostalgic entities that were wedded to historical built forms (as its American neighbor, the State of Maine awkwardly did with its Colonial pastiche),<sup>81</sup> they expressed their material legacy through a modern cantilevered wood and concrete structure which evoked the spirit of the region's heavy timber industrial structures. Massive 40-meter long composite laminated wood beams with a cantilever of up to 24 meters supported the structural lumber and plywood roof system. The enthusiastic embrace of "the old and the new" was perfectly visible through contrasts of transportation and sculptural form. A large traditional wooden-hulled ship was constructed over the course of the fair below the great roof. The roof also sheltered the adjacent elevated monorail line, and between was a stylized ship-frame sculpture made entirely of whalebones. Here, modern technology, tradition and contemporary culture were purposefully fused through pluralistic forms to imply a path forward. The pavilion's closing description in the official Expo 67 guidebook affirms that "the general impression which the Atlantic Provinces' Pavilion is designed to leave is of a region of great beauty,

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<sup>80</sup> Arcade Albert, interview by author, Shediac Cape, N.B., 2006.

<sup>81</sup> "State of Maine," in *Expo 67: Official Guide* (Montreal: Maclean-Hunter Publishing Company, 1967), 111.

with a great past to look back on and a great future to look forward to....”<sup>82</sup> Unlike the continued recognition that surrounds such Expo 67 structures as the U.S. geodesic dome, Habitat, or the France and Quebec pavilions (the latter two refurbished and joined in the early 1990s into the Montreal Casino), one would be hard-pressed today to find an image or mention of the Atlantic Pavilion in any context.

The 1930-1967 years were transformational for New Brunswick architecture, and for the provincial population who benefitted from its adventuresome and innovative forms, materials, and spaces. At this time there was equally a revolution in permanent infrastructure and built industrial forms – works that are not always considered to be on the architectural cusp. The decades following the Second World War witnessed an incredible burst of engineering activity in the province. The decisive military infrastructure built during the war had brought the benefits of modern technology to often overlooked regions. At the same time, it was clear that for the province to reach its full potential, its tired roadways and bridges needed substantial rebuilding, and huge swaths of New Brunswick were about to get electrified. This same ferment brought to light worthy instances of industrial design and consumer products that embodied material and cultural evolution.

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<sup>82</sup> “The Atlantic Provinces,” in *Expo 67: Official Guide*.

## Chapter 3

### Optimism and cultural expression through industry, design, and infrastructure

Massive socio-economic and cultural changes swept through New Brunswick and most of North America during the 1930s and 1940s. Although the province was still far from Central Canada's economic, political, and cultural power, much was evolving. Examples include: mass mobilization and infrastructure construction related to the Second World War, the thriving of visual art in Saint John, the international appeal of the Deichmann ceramics, the achievements of modernist ecclesiastical architecture within Acadian New Brunswick, the artistic reach of educational institutions such as Mount Allison, the Saint John Vocational School, and the University of New Brunswick, and instances of modern industrial design in the provincial manufacturing industry.

The art and architectural aspects of visual culture were burgeoning, but a currently overlooked aspect of visual modernity in New Brunswick society is the breadth of design in industrial plants, transportation infrastructure, civil and defense infrastructure, and product design. These helped fuel the dynamism and optimism of post-war New Brunswick, reflecting the economic expansion in a province whose journey was leading towards modernity. In his "Art and Democracy" opening speech to the 1941 Kingston Conference, Walter Abell preached that it was time for artists to play a role in the renaissance of democracy.<sup>1</sup> He urged the assembled alliance of visual artists

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Abell, "Art and Democracy," in *The Kingston Conference Proceedings: A Reprint of the Proceedings of the 1941 Kingston Artists' Conference* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1983), 27.

to consider the value of widespread “cultural reconstruction,”<sup>2</sup> of “architecture, town planning, the decorative arts like textiles and pottery, the industrial arts including everything from vanity cases to motor cars, and public utilities such as highways, dams, and bridges.”<sup>3</sup>

In mid-century New Brunswick, progressivism was not only political and modernist, it was design-centric. Change was political and machine-based in terms of the social progress that brought people out of poverty, which gave them access to electricity, high-paying industrial employment, better communications networks, and created broader social programs. It was modern and machine-based in terms of paring down designs to the most efficient necessary aesthetic. The interrelationship of transportation, dams, and even dishware connected to this new dominant aesthetic embraced a social-political-cultural goal of provincial progress and improvement. This in itself connected to a pan-continental movement. These goals become apparent in retrospect, but so do their limitations. The latter include episodes of environmental and social degradation at the hands of megaproject construction, the disregard of Indigenous land rights, and tragic instances of urban renewal.

### **The challenge of industrial and cultural reconstruction**

New Brunswick was often hindered by a regionalist stereotype of resigned tradition during the early twentieth century. Audacity was typically expected outside the region, particularly so in the 1920s during a substantial withdrawal of capital and manufacturing

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 23.

from the Maritime provinces.<sup>4</sup> In addition to the socio-political concern of sagging finances, in 1926, John C. Webster pleaded with Maritimers to understand that “the status of a nation is measured not merely by its material wealth, but by its contributions to science, art and literature, and by the evidence which exists of a widespread appreciation of culture among the people.”<sup>5</sup> Webster was a key mover in the establishment of the New Brunswick Museum and the construction of its new building in Saint John during the 1930s.<sup>6</sup>

Webster bemoaned the effect the 1920s industrial and economic exodus had on the enthusiasm of the Maritime Provinces within Canada, as well as on the fervor of its citizens who were, in his eyes, losing sight of the very essence of their lives – culture and education:

Serious as may be the stagnation in trade, I am much more perturbed by the stagnation and decadence in cultural and educational standards and in the higher thought of the country. Indeed, many of the economic ills are directly traceable to the latter conditions.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See Don Nerbas, “Adapting to Decline: The Changing Business World of the Bourgeoisie in Saint John, NB in the 1920s,” *Canadian Historical Review* 89, no. 2 (June 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Webster, *The Distressed Maritimes*, 46.

<sup>6</sup> The New Brunswick Museum in Saint John has roots going back to the personal collection of geologist and scientist Abraham Gesner in 1842. The museum was previously known as the Mechanics Institute Museum from 1846 to 1890, and then the Museum of the Natural History Society until 1930. The museum claims the title as Canada’s oldest continuous museum and since its inception featured natural history specimens, decorative arts from around the world (collected in large part from the global shipping trade tied to the city’s port), and the ubiquitous “curiosities” and oddball artifacts that any museum of this era proudly displayed. Lauded for his altruism, Webster would start and end his life in Shediac, with notable foreign stops in between. As a respected surgeon who had to cut his professional career short due to repeated illnesses, Webster found his new calling in the collection of Canadiana and the historical research of his home province. See George F.G. Stanley, “John Clarence Webster: The Laird of Shediac,” *Acadiensis* III, no. 1 (Autumn 1973).

<sup>7</sup> Webster, 6.



He continued to list the individual elements that he felt were required of a thriving and vital society, a list certainly affected by his time and immersion in the great cities of Europe and North America over the previous four decades:

Throughout the civilized world, there are certain well-recognized standards by which the culture of a community may be determined. These are an appreciation for good literature, fine architecture, painting, sculpture, music, and the theatre; and, outwardly, there are evidences of these in the shape of private and public libraries and art collections, theatres, lectures, concerts, and loan exhibition of works of art. *In the Maritimes such evidence of cultural development is almost entirely wanting.*<sup>8</sup>

From our vantage point, Webster may have been exaggerating the cultural dearth, but he was making a point: the heart of the Maritime provinces was dependent on not only material and industrial progress, but also on its alliance with culture. Otherwise, the soul of the nation would “utterly perish.”<sup>9</sup> Fortunately, by the dawn of the 1940s a palpable turnaround began in New Brunswick. The economic and infrastructure expansion, though far from the bountiful levels of Central Canada, allowed a fusion of economic development and visual-cultural awareness take hold. Much of this growth was technical and business-led, only with design principles and aesthetics at the core. It was a burgeoning time for modern industrial design in the province.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 11-12. Italics are Webster’s from the published text.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 14.

### **Industrial design baby steps**

Albeit volatile as an agent of change, the Second World War would play a major part in the economic and social gains of New Brunswick during the 1940s. A great industrial push occurred in Saint John with its shipbuilding at the forefront of war production. Naval repair yards and air bases were quickly built in every corner of the province, from Edmundston to Scoudouc, and Bouctouche to Chatham. K.C. Irving's early recompense for being responsive to economic shifts is perfectly encapsulated by his investment in the Saint John-based Canada Veneers Ltd. plywood factory. The company would earn him a fortune as a plywood supplier to the Allied war effort's production of Second World War Mosquito bombers that were innovative, fast, and lightweight. During the war, the factory buzzed 24-7 as 6,711 Mosquitos were produced using plywood shipped from Saint John, and Canada Veneers became the world's largest supplier of aircraft veneer.<sup>10</sup>

While New Brunswick's wartime boom was significant, it ended promptly after the end of hostilities in 1945. Regional advocates were ineffective in making wartime prosperity last: "federal planners and politicians not only failed to redress regional disparity during the war, but often made decisions detrimental to the Maritimes' long-term economic development, thereby consolidating rather than alleviating regional disparity."<sup>11</sup>

Canada Veneers would soon lose potential markets. Its pre-1945 success never translated into post-war manufacturing and design prospects. The creative promise of

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<sup>10</sup> John DeMont, *Citizens Irving: K.C. Irving and his Legacy* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1991), 45.

<sup>11</sup> Carman Miller, "War and Rehabilitation," in Forbes and Muise, 324.

the plywood industry and the precedent set by the Mosquito bomber were described in *Canadian Art* magazine immediately after the war, where images of fuselages were placed alongside renderings of molded stacking chair prototypes. The article affirmed that “the alert manufacturer and imaginative designer can find many civilian uses, related to these new techniques.”<sup>12</sup> Whether it was the shortage of industrial design investors in Saint John or a lack of commercial vision, the modern advancements in plywood furniture embodied by the late 1940s work of Charles and Ray Eames in California and the National Research Council-sponsored prototypes in western Canada by architects D.C. Simpson and A.J. Donahue were proof of an enormous opportunity lost for New Brunswick.<sup>13</sup> It was also not a case of the aircraft plywood industry being blinded to these new prospects. An illustrated article on manufactured objects in the July 1946 issue of *Canadian Art* entitled “Design for Use” showed a chair in molded plywood with laminated arms created by the Canadian Wooden Aircraft Company of Stratford, Ontario. The text declared, “In Canada, we should expect great advances to be made in consequence of various new applications of materials developed during the war. Nations in the competitive export field will make every effort to work out the designs which give the most use and best looks for the least money.”<sup>14</sup> Even with the raw material and the industrial record to back it, the modern household/commercial

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<sup>12</sup> “Research and Experiment,” *Canadian Art*, January-February 1946, 70.

<sup>13</sup> Ian Thom, *A Modern Life: Art and Design in British Columbia, 1945-1960* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery/Arsenal Pulp Press, 2004), 120-121.

<sup>14</sup> Donald W. Buchannan, “Design for Use,” *Canadian Art*, July 1946, 174-175. See also John B. Collins, “‘Design in Industry’ Exhibition, National Gallery of Canada, 1946: Turning Bombers into Lounge Chairs,” *Material Culture Review* 27 (Spring 1988): 27-38.

potential of the Saint John factory dissolved as Canada Veneers' operations were moved to Pembroke, Ontario in 1948.

Belying the region's post-war plywood stumble, instances of manufacturing accomplishment and modern industrial design via both new and old materials occurred in and around 1940s New Brunswick. Saint John native Sidney Bersudsky was one of first to initiate the production of a one-piece moulded plywood chair in 1946 that required no joinery (based on his even more avant-garde plastic prototype), although it stalled as the household market was deemed not yet ready for such designs.<sup>15</sup> Nadeau & Nadeau Furniture in Saint François de Madawaska gave another boost to the value-added wood industry. Founded in 1945 by local businessman and public figure J. Docithe Nadeau, Nadeau & Nadeau became the largest school furniture plant in eastern Canada during the 1950s and 1960s (fig. 73).<sup>16</sup> Fuelled by the baby-boom which forced the construction of new schools in every corner of the Maritimes, Nadeau & Nadeau specialized in classroom chairs and desks that were hefty and traditional at first. The company soon branched out into more sophisticated and slim modern models that fused wood panels with tubular metal frames and adjustable mechanical fittings (fig. 74).

In the case of more complex manufacturing and industrial design, Sackville established a substantial capacity beyond its relatively small population. The continued success of the well-established metals/foundry trades in the town was evident with the popularity of two separate but analogous companies: Fawcett Enamel and Heating

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<sup>15</sup> Gotlieb and Golden, 18-19.

<sup>16</sup> Norman Beaupré, "Docithe Nadeau (1910-1986): Portrait d'un Bâtitteur," *Revue de la Société Historique du Madawaska* XXXI, no. 1 (Janvier-Mars 2003): 20-31.

Products and the Enterprise Foundry. During the early to mid-twentieth century, Fawcett's and Enterprise's streamlined white stoves and home heating appliances were admired and sold across Canada (fig. 75). In the pre-global market where manufacturers of many items used by consumers could be found regionally, it was the exception rather than the rule where a 1940-1960 New Brunswick kitchen oven and range would be something other than a Sackville-made and designed Enterprise or Fawcett. By the inter-war period, a clean machine-age aesthetic was key to their product identity and market success. The cover of a 1930s Fawcett advertising brochure brandishes an aerodynamic commercial airliner above a streamlined locomotive streaking through the page, all underlined by the tagline "set a new pace in cooking convenience." The subtext implied that speedy, enamel-clad factory products of the age were not limited to transportation, and those same material and design sensibilities were attainable in the home for a manageable \$100 sum. The printed brochure began with "Streamline ranges are modern – Cook this modern way":

The modern trend is unmistakably toward streamlined appliances for the home. The design is new and outstanding, harmonizing with all the latest kitchen utilities. Note the absolute balance, heavily rounded corners, symmetry in design, elimination of all projections, making the range easy to clean and making for an ornament aside from being a perfect household necessity.<sup>17</sup>

Following the end of the Second World War, the growth in the average citizen's purchasing power, the return of women to domestic roles, and the baby boom enabled vast market growth for Fawcett and Enterprise kitchen appliances. In the same manner,

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<sup>17</sup> "Fawcett Streamline Ranges" [Fawcett Enamel & Heating Products Limited brochure] (Sackville, N.B., 1937). Collection of the author.

the petrochemical and plastics houseware market greatly expanded. Plastic melamine dishware, often called “Melmac” from the popular American trade name, became extremely popular from the 1940s through the 1960s. Considered the dishware of the future, the strong, lightweight, and relatively break-proof items were molded from melamine formaldehyde, a chemical compound developed in the United States in the mid-1930s.

Around 1944-45, the American Cyanamid company (makers of melamine powder) commissioned ceramic designer Russel Wright to design a commercial tableware line, which became instantly successful in the American market. About that same time, a pioneering melamine dishware company was formed in Sackville by civil engineer William Kinghorn and Hal Dickie. Known as Kinghorn & Dickie Plastics Ltd., the fast-growing firm moved to Fredericton in 1949 and continued to operate through the 1950s (fig. 76).<sup>18</sup> As the designer, Kinghorn was practical but artistically calculated in his interventions, such as the repeating “teardrop” bumps at the top outside lip of all bowls. Beyond an elegant motif, the teardrops were a functional complement that stopped the bowls from sticking together when they were stacked.<sup>19</sup> Fredericton manufacturing was traditionally known for snowshoes, canoes, and leather boots,<sup>20</sup> but during the mid-twentieth century Kinghorn & Dickie was a progressive design-minded exception to this rule. It produced cutting-edge goods and household technology that

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<sup>18</sup> Jim Morrison, “An Idea that Grew Into a Thriving Business,” *The Daily Gleaner*, February 2, 1952, 5.

<sup>19</sup> Jane Geurts, “Memories of Melmac,” *Telegraph-Journal*, June 2, 2007, S6.

<sup>20</sup> These cited factories were the nationally-known trio of: the Palmer-McLellan Boot Company, the Hartt Shoe Company, and the Chestnut Canoe Company, all within a stone’s throw of each other at the southern edge of downtown Fredericton, adjacent to the railway depot.

connected the province to the wider world of industrial design. Their dishware fully encapsulates the era's fascination with colour, fun, and optimism. Often overlooked in hindsight, the modern design innovations in and around wartime prove that New Brunswick produced more than just staples like food and lumber.

The work of Ukraine-born and Saint John-raised industrial designer Sidney Bersudsky pushed even further into the material-sculptural scope of design with its public and commercial reach. New Brunswick had developed a reputation as a province that was seemingly left out of the national industrial design field, but as Bersudsky proves, this was not the case. Bersudsky is regarded as one of Canada's first modern industrial designers and also one of its most successful. Inspired by such American luminaries as Raymond Loewy and Walter Teague, his creative legacy was familiar to many Canadians raised in the 1940s and 1950s, as his embrace of "new" materials like plastic and aluminum resulted in streamlined houseware designs such as the Magnajector magnifying projector (1954) (fig. 77), Lighto-Matic electric Iron (1955), and General Steel Wares' 51-2 electric kettle (1948).<sup>21</sup> He lived in Saint John until his late-20s, and his experiences and education in New Brunswick were foundational to his successful design career.

A copiously award-winning student at the Saint John Vocational School art department in the early 1930s,<sup>22</sup> and trained as an illustrator at New York's Art Students League later that decade, Bersudsky returned to his New Brunswick hometown and worked as a cartoonist, graphic artist and illustrator. Honing his three-dimensional

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<sup>21</sup> Gotlieb and Golden, 195, 208, 210, 230.

<sup>22</sup> "Winners of Prizes in Art Department," *Telegraph-Journal*, September 13, 1932, 9.

design skills in the Saint John commercial world, Bersudsky is credited with introducing the first instances of what were deemed “modernistic booths” at the Saint John Exhibition, which were important public interfaces for trade manufacturers and exhibitors.<sup>23</sup> The following year, he was named official display director for the entire exhibition.<sup>24</sup>

He established his design firm in Sydney, Nova Scotia in 1946, and relocated to Toronto in 1948. That same year, an article in the *Telegraph-Journal* described the “ace designer” as one who “has awakened Canadian manufacturers to the fact that they do not have to look to foreign fields for modern up-to-date designing for their products.”<sup>25</sup> He was honoured in 1952 as the first Canadian member of the American Society of Industrial Designers.<sup>26</sup>

The period’s material disparity between the increasingly industrialized and urbanized New Brunswick and the seemingly outmoded ways of life held by rural and Indigenous populations was a genuine challenge, here as it was elsewhere. The province’s Indigenous communities were generally given less attention than their urban, and seemingly more modern, counterparts, and were rarely considered as active contributors to provincial production. Some pictorial exceptions can be found, such as the “Indian Basket Weavers near Fredericton” that illustrated the *MacLean’s Magazine* cover in October, 1954, which showed a multigenerational mix of males and females

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<sup>23</sup> “Modernistic Note Attracts Comment,” *Telegraph-Journal*, September 5, 1935, 12. His booth clients included such New Brunswick stalwarts as W.H. Thorne & Co. Ltd., Saint John Civic Hydro, the Christie Woodworking Co., the *Telegraph-Journal*, and radio station CHSJ, among others.

<sup>24</sup> “Fair Exhibits Committee Names Display Director,” *Telegraph-Journal*, June 5, 1936, 12.

<sup>25</sup> “Now Ace Designer of Industrial Art,” *Telegraph-Journal*, May 18, 1948, 7.

<sup>26</sup> Gotlieb and Golden, 230.



diligently practicing the tradition of making ash splint baskets with a forested fall vista in the background (fig. 78). Such depictions at the time were more a romanticism of what the non-Indigenous settler population saw as a curious, disappearing past than what could be read today as sophisticated craftspeople practicing (and defending) an art form that was functionally useful, economically viable, culturally imperative, and uniquely tied to this region.<sup>27</sup>

### **The promise of the 1950s**

In extension of Conrad's "Atlantic Revolution" principle, the explosion of confidence and opportunity in the region during the later post-war boom had both a tangible effect and symbiotic relationship with the visual and tactile. Modern design was not simply expressed in material products or residential/commercial/institutional architecture. Huge infrastructure projects tied New Brunswick to the rest of Canada in a manner not seen since the Intercolonial Railway. Hydroelectricity, new industry, defense investment, and highways dotted the landscape by the mid- to late-1950s, and the change in outlook was substantial. As the decade progressed, New Brunswick desperately wanted to become modern and to be part of a progressive post-war Canada; design played a key part in this transformation. Politicians, businesspeople, architects, and artists, along with the general citizenry, seemed primed for the experiment. At the dawn of the 1950s, a feature in *Saturday Night* magazine asserted

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<sup>27</sup> Jennifer S. Neptune and Lisa K. Neuman, "Basketry of the Wabanaki Indian," *Encyclopedia of the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine in Non-Western Cultures* (Springer, Dordrecht, 2016), accessed January 2020, [https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-94-007-7747-7\\_10220](https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-94-007-7747-7_10220).

that “under this placid exterior, NB is very much a province in a hurry. It’s an old region with a new outlook – a region which is attempting to make up for lost time on the double-quick.”<sup>28</sup> While the article’s swaggering progress narrative looks simplistic and corny by today’s standards, it did list substantial industrial, economic, social, and tourist improvements over a short interval. Many such period features on the province, beyond evoking the memories of ship carvers and the like as did the *Saturday Night* article, specifically named and pictured its most famous professional artists – Brittain, Humphrey, and the Deichmanns – the latter listed as making a livelihood through their “distinctive New Brunswick handicrafts.”<sup>29</sup>

Significant economic development during the 1950s catalysed rapid change throughout New Brunswick. The discovery of massive base metal mineral deposits near Bathurst led to increased industrialization in the northeast; hydroelectric dams were constructed at Tobique and Beechwood; the new Trans-Canada Highway soon gave New Brunswick a modern road link with the entire country; K.C. Irving built Canada’s largest oil refinery in East Saint John;<sup>30</sup> a renewed push was on to build the Chignecto Canal

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<sup>28</sup> Trueman and Breen, 8.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>30</sup> The Irving Refinery in Saint John was one of the largest construction projects in New Brunswick’s history, and the sheer size and technical achievement of the project was staggering for Canada. Originally built in partnership with Standard Oil of California, it was constructed through the late 1950s and opened for business in July 1960. The refinery had an initial capacity of 40,000 barrels per day, but after expansions in 1971, 1974 and 2000, it became the largest refinery in Canada, producing 300,000 barrels per day. Even though the refinery is a massive component of the New Brunswick economy, it is seldom considered for its architectural-industrial form and scale. By the early 1960s, his empire of gas stations, lumber and paper mills, and various other businesses was an incredible framework of textbook vertical integration. By the early 1970s, Irving enterprises would command about a third of the provincial economy.

connecting the Bay of Fundy with the Northumberland Strait;<sup>31</sup> and Canadian Forces Base Gagetown was built at Oromocto, near Fredericton.<sup>32</sup>

Public optimism was evident, and one need look no further than *The Atlantic Advocate* issues from the decade to see boundless confirmation of such accord. Recent historical writing has brushed off much of the lustre of the era's elite industrial privilege, labelling it as archetypally white, male, and wealthy. State-led attitudes towards Indigenous disenfranchisement and control of land and resources were rarely challenged at the time. The Tobique and Beechwood dams cut off much of the traditional fishery of the Indigenous Malecite-Wolastoqiyik, who were given little voice in the barriers' conception. Urban renewal in Saint John (planned since the mid-1940s) soon reared its ugly head by displacing thousands of urban poor by demolishing their neighbourhoods in the early 1960s (fig. 79).<sup>33</sup> The latter included much of the city's black and Jewish population. Hindsight shows that modernisation was not always a widespread panacea. It was often messy, exclusionary, and sometimes misguided under the guise that new was always better than the old.<sup>34</sup>

Notwithstanding the aforementioned drawbacks, increased opportunity and prosperity during the post-war period was wide-ranging. The provincial story after the

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<sup>31</sup> "The Report to the Prime Minister," *The Atlantic Advocate*, April 1962, 14-15.

<sup>32</sup> Upon its opening in 1956, CFB Gagetown boasted Canada's most modern military facilities and an innovative planned community for over ten thousand citizens. See John MacDonald, "Camp Gagetown – A New Concept of Military Life," *The Atlantic Advocate*, August 1957, 31-35.

<sup>33</sup> J. Campbell Merrett, *New Life for Canada's Oldest City: A Plan for Saint John*. (Saint John, NB: Town Planning Commission of the City and County of Saint John N.B., 1946).

<sup>34</sup> See Greg Marquis, "Uneven Renaissance: Urban Development in Saint John, 1955-1976," *Journal of New Brunswick Studies / Revue d'études sur le Nouveau-Brunswick* 1 (2010); and John Leroux, *The Lost City: Ian MacEachern's Photographs of Saint John* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2018).

Second World War was one of massive state-supported infrastructure investment and business consolidation. The post-war increase in the use and numbers of automobiles also led to conspicuous changes that placed new demands on the built environment. Beyond the construction of new highways and suburbs, the provision of services for the growing automobile-based trucking and tourist trades became lucrative.

Conrad states, "In 1950 there were two Atlantic Canadas, one largely rural and isolated... the other essentially urban and fully integrated into mainstream North American culture."<sup>35</sup> As far as mid-decade New Brunswick was concerned, this equated to the Beechwood Dam harnessing the energy of the St. John River while rural tarpaper-shack squalor characterized nearby Pole Hill and other communities only a few miles away.

### **Visual expressions of resources and electrical power**

While the Second World War brought activity and employment back to New Brunswick, it was not nearly the intense and lasting catalyst that developed in other regions of Canada. As Young asserts, politics were never far away. Whether it was the most effective use of their funds and energies or not, the provincial government put most of their post-war eggs in the public works spending basket, which included roads, bridges, buildings, and other infrastructure.<sup>36</sup> Post-war regional progress and economic investment paled in comparison to Ontario, yet rural electrification soon radically changed the landscape of New Brunswick.

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<sup>35</sup> Margaret Conrad, "The 1950s: The Decade of Development," in Forbes and Muise, 382.

<sup>36</sup> Young, "'and the people will sink into despair'," 155.

After a 1944 study by the Power Corporation of Montreal, the New Brunswick Resources Development Board concluded that only hydro power would “provide relatively competitive power for new industry in New Brunswick.”<sup>37</sup> In 1948, future Progressive Conservative premier Hugh John Flemming advocated for a state-controlled monopoly on hydro development throughout the province and for imminent development of a dam at Beechwood on the St. John River.<sup>38</sup> The push was not lost on Liberal premier John McNair, who reformed the New Brunswick Electric Power Commission (NBEPC) in 1948 and moved their headquarters to a new modern ‘Stripped Classical’ building set near the Legislature in Fredericton, designed by the Commission’s head engineer John Feeney.<sup>39</sup> In 1950 the Tobique dam construction broke ground on the upper St. John River. The province’s shift to an integrated, largely hydroelectric power landscape had begun, and development continued after Flemming became premier in 1952.

The concerted focus of the province’s post-war economic growth was the expansion of the natural resources sector, specifically aligned with mineral extraction,<sup>40</sup> and a great demand for cheap power was required to achieve it. A new consensus emerged within the provincial state, as “within this resource-led strategy, electricity was

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<sup>37</sup> Young, ““and the people will sink into despair’,” 92-94. The Montreal consulting firm had identified Tobique, Beechwood, and Mactaquac as the most promising sites for hydro development. These became the sites of the NBEPC’s largest power dams in the 1950s and 1960s, effectively the backbone of New Brunswick’s “cheap power” until the development of the Point Lepreau nuclear station that opened in the early 1980s.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> John Leroux, *Building New Brunswick: an Architectural History* (Fredericton: Goose Lane, 2008), 179-182.

<sup>40</sup> James L. Kenny, ““We Must Speculate to Accumulate!”: Mineral Development and the Limits of State Intervention, New Brunswick, 1952-1960,” *Acadiensis* XXIII, no. 2 (Spring 1994).

identified as one of the principal constraints.”<sup>41</sup> Stimulating industrial growth was considered as being conclusively tied to hydroelectric development.<sup>42</sup> The NBEPC of the early 1950s provides a clear study of a jurisdiction running furiously into a consolidated future with technology as their torch, embracing and harnessing the great power of New Brunswick’s St. John River system.

Beechwood was a visually prominent construction and engineering project whose electrical production capacity helped lead New Brunswick’s post-war development. The opening in 1958 of this state-of-the-art \$30 million-dollar hydroelectric dam in the upper St. John River at Carleton County was a watershed for the province. It transformed “the NBEPC from a politically useful instrument of public expenditure at the local, consumer level into an efficient and dynamic part of the province's industrial infrastructure.”<sup>43</sup> The media of the day hailed it as “a great achievement in modern up-to-date engineering” (fig. 80).<sup>44</sup> Midway between Woodstock and Grand Falls on the St. John River, Beechwood had a double turbine capacity of 90,000 horsepower and an output of 112,500Kw.<sup>45</sup> It was a needed response to the province experiencing year-over-year increased electricity consumption of about

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<sup>41</sup> James L. Kenny and Andrew G. Secord, “Public Power for Industry: A Re-examination of the New Brunswick Case, 1940-1960,” *Acadiensis* XX, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 91.

<sup>42</sup> R.A. Young, “Planning for Power: The New Brunswick Electric Power Commission in the 1950s,” *Acadiensis* XII, no. 1 (Autumn 1982).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>44</sup> “Beechwood Represents Great Achievement,” *Telegraph-Journal*, June 27, 1958, 10.

<sup>45</sup> Edward F. Bush, *A History of Hydro-electric Development in Canada* (Ottawa: Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, 1986), 107.

ten percent.<sup>46</sup> A provincial government-sponsored full-page advertisement in the June 11, 1956 issue of the *Telegraph-Journal* boasted in no uncertain terms on the one-year initial construction anniversary that the project was “For a Greater New Brunswick”:

There are a few who lack the faith and vision to see the bright future ahead of us. They are blinded by a narrow partisan political outlook. But the people see in Beechwood a symbol of their future. They see in the Flemming Government the leadership, the energy and the determination our province needs in its time of decision.<sup>47</sup>

This political rhetoric diminished the legitimacy of the era’s contrary hydro development views, but opposition to Beechwood was in the minority.<sup>48</sup> The lack of substantial opposition and scant media coverage of it reflected not only the sweeping appeal of the modern progress narrative in New Brunswick, but also the era’s political marginalization of the local First Nations. The damming of the St. John River and its tributary decimated the Indigenous salmon fishery on the Tobique and St. John rivers, fish-ladders notwithstanding. Samantha Bourgoin recalls the preceding resistance to the Tobique and Beechwood dams upriver:

... the Tobique First Nation, along with fishing clubs, had brought lawsuits against the NBEPC for damages done to the fishery by the Beechwood and Tobique Dams built in the 1950s.... [D]espite the construction of a fish ladder and elevator system, the Beechwood and Tobique Dams impeded the movement of salmon upriver. The Maliseet relied on the fishery for food and employment and furiously protested the two dams. The NBEPC eventually settled the Tobique First Nations lawsuit in 1962 at \$50,000.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *New Brunswick’s Beechwood: An account of the studies preliminary to the beginning of construction of the Beechwood Hydro Development on the St. John River* (Fredericton: The New Brunswick Electric Power Commission, c.1955), 3.

<sup>47</sup> “BEECHWOOD Today!,” *Telegraph-Journal*, June 11, 1956, 7.

<sup>48</sup> Kenny and Secord, “Engineering Modernity,” 10, 18.

<sup>49</sup> Samantha Bourgoin, “Disregarded Sentiments: Discovering the Voices of Opposition to the Mactaquac Dam,” (Master’s thesis, St. Mary’s University, 2013), 85.

Hindsight shows the clear dispossession of the region's Indigenous citizens, but at the time the symbolic nature of the dam was paramount to New Brunswick's non-Indigenous population. Beechwood signaled a deep change in the industrial direction of the province. A New Brunswick Electric Power Commission full-page colour advertisement featuring the headline "Powered for Progress" preceded a substantial *Atlantic Advocate* article that described the dam in detail upon its July 1958 opening. The article called it "a great engineering triumph; a steel and concrete memorial to the time this province emerged from the Canadian Cellar."<sup>50</sup>

As with President Roosevelt's New Deal Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) hydro development, modern design and public welcoming were key to the messaging of the progressive and sophisticated nature of what amounted to a massive environmental transformation of the local landscape. While the dam and the engineering of Beechwood's sluiceway and turbines were designed by the NBEPC and Shawinigan Engineering Co. Ltd., the commission engaged Saint John architect Stanley Emmerson to assist in the design of the powerhouse building shell. The result was akin to the TVA's allegiance to creating a unified visual landscape of monumental concrete infrastructure executed in a modernist idiom. Emmerson rendered an elegant box with a checkerboard concrete cladding pattern and large dimensional sans-serif silver letters spelling "BEECHWOOD" and "NBEPC" facing the road. As Steven Heller writes in his essay "TVA Graphics: A Language of Power," the outward design and visual presentation of the 1930s dams were as important as their functional workings. WPA typography embraced

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<sup>50</sup> H.W. MacDonald, "Beechwood," *Atlantic Advocate*, July 1958, 15.



modernist sources such as Art Deco, Bauhaus, Futurist and Constructivist styles, and “each administrative office, power station, and turbine housing was adorned with simple, stark Gothic (modernist) signs in a monumental style that evoked both potency and optimism.” These were carefully considered aspects of an architectural and graphic design package indicating “that an overarching yet benevolent authority was pulling the real and metaphorical switches.”<sup>51</sup>

Beechwood’s repeating pairs of metal pipe towers atop the dam, painted in alternating sections of red and white, were iconic for several generations of drivers on the former Trans-Canada highway route that hugged the river valley. Outwardly painted as such for visibility of low-flying planes, their form and colour design were bold and conspicuous – not unlike Tintin’s famous red and white checkered early 1950s moon rocket. These repeating verticals also served a symbolic function, like finials on a medieval cathedral. While their sacred precedents metaphorically pointed upwards to God and heaven as pure arrows atop church roofs, the Beechwood duos are equally vertically piercing, but systematic and repeating as servants to the engineering below. Like a science fiction film lab where arcs of electricity shoot from adjacent rods, the red and white pairs consciously present the “electric” energy and vitality enabled by the severe grey-browns of the concrete dam below. As another newspaper article boasted upon the project’s opening: “Beechwood is many things to many people. To the casual tourist, it is a big dam. To some individuals it is a lot of concrete and steel. To others, a

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<sup>51</sup> Steven Heller, “TVA Graphics: A Language of Power,” in *The Tennessee Valley Authority: Design and Persuasion*, ed. Tim Culvahouse (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007), 105-106.

lot of water. To the engineer, Beechwood is something to be examined, appreciated, criticized, like a work of art.”<sup>52</sup>

Further to this art metaphor, the overall form and vertical emphasis of the Beechwood dam is reminiscent of the early twentieth-century graphic works of Italian architect/artist Antonio Sant’Elia (1888-1916), a prominent member of the Italian Futurist movement and a designer of enormous impact over the past century. Although he left behind almost no built projects, Sant’Elia was influential towards the pursuit of monumentalism in early modern architecture, engineering, and infrastructure through his widely published drawings of projected superstructures. He espoused crisp verticality and a sense of visual ornament through repetition of soaring thin forms and structural scaffolds, as opposed to superfluous decoration. His mannerist drafted conceptions, which included electrical power plants (fig. 81), were regularly cited in architecture books and journals of the 1950s, such as in the widely-circulated *Architectural Review* of May, 1955.<sup>53</sup> The Futurists understood these tangible aspects of machinery and the machine aesthetic as emotionally loaded symbols. The centrality and importance of electrical plants and power generating stations was expressed by Futurist leader and writer Filippo Marinetti in his 1914 manifesto “Geometrical and Mechanical Splendor, and the Sensibility of Numbers”:

Nothing is more beautiful than a great humming power-station, holding back the hydraulic pressure of a whole mountain range, and the electric

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<sup>52</sup> “Beechwood Plant is Key to Economy of province; Marks Turning Point,” *The Daily Gleaner*, June 28, 1958, 17.

<sup>53</sup> Reyner Banham, “Sant’Elia,” *The Architectural Review*, May 1955, 295-303.

power for a whole landscape, synthesized in control-panels bristling with levers and gleaming commutators.<sup>54</sup>

Whether or not the Beechwood architects and engineers were familiar with Sant'Elia's work, the Beechwood hydroelectric dam should be considered one of New Brunswick's few avant-garde industrial constructions. Like Sant'Elia's conceptual structures, it championed an aspirational future expressed through dramatic structures that imply motion, dynamism, and contemporary construction techniques and materials, looking for the sublime in the modern industrial world.<sup>55</sup> In the case of Beechwood, this machine aesthetic foundation goes beyond the functional into the intellectual, implying that the utilitarian could be rendered monumental, exciting, and stirring.

The outwardly designed and decorative elements at Beechwood were not all connected to the technical and instructive. It was important that a wide audience of New Brunswickers were brought on board with the development. Tourists and visitors were welcomed at the site, and power from the station ran a huge floral clock amid a large grassed garden with flowerbeds, all set adjacent to the power-house (fig. 82). Images of the dam equated past and present glories when placed on the cover of a 1965 school textbook on the history of New Brunswick, with a thin slice of Beechwood's skeletal towers graphically aligned to the adjacent vertical masts and riggings of a

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<sup>54</sup> As translated and quoted in Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, second edition (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1967), 125. The original Italian document can be found at: <https://www.wdl.org/en/item/20041/view/1/1/>.

<sup>55</sup> Esther da Costa Meyer, *The Work of Antonio Sant'Elia: Retreat into the Future* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 108-110.

nineteenth-century tall ship from the province's shipbuilding days (fig. 83).<sup>56</sup> *New Brunswick: The Story of Our Province* was widely used in elementary and junior high schools during the 1960s and 1970s, beginning with a well-considered and respectful Indigenous chapter (partially illustrated by images of the aforementioned "Micmac Indian Craftsmen"), and closing with images of modern infrastructure, including Beechwood.

In retrospect, the 1950s initiatives of the NBEPC were visual cultural watersheds as well as technological and industrial ones. These visual signs were central to corporate messaging and political buy-in, as the NBEPC was considered vital for the economic prosperity of New Brunswick by the end of the decade. The provincial speech from the throne on February 12, 1959 boasted:

The New Brunswick Electric Power Commission now has assets which have more than tripled since 1950 and now exceed one hundred million dollars. Generating capacity has more than tripled during the same period, while Gross Revenue has increased two-and-three-quarter times.<sup>57</sup>

Similar to the Depression-era TVA's state-wide power dam complex,<sup>58</sup>

Beechwood is posited as one of the province's key instances of high modernism. As James C. Scott notes, for high modernists, "the past is an impediment, a history that must be transcended; the present is the platform from which the aspirations to a better

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<sup>56</sup> George MacBeath, and Dorothy Chamberlin, *New Brunswick: The Story of our Province* (Toronto: W.J. Gage Ltd., 1965). An aerial photograph of the dam is also inside the book on page 339.

<sup>57</sup> New Brunswick Legislature, *Speech from the Throne. Delivered by the Honourable J. Leonard O'Brien, LL.D., Lieutenant Governor of the Province of New Brunswick*, February 12, 1959. Collection of the Legislative Library, Fredericton, N.B.

<sup>58</sup> Kenny and Secord, "Engineering Modernity," 14.

future will be launched.”<sup>59</sup> The ideology was prevalent in twentieth-century North America (especially during the post-war years) where scientific technical planning was pursued to “control both the natural and human environment to facilitate economic and social ‘progress.’”<sup>60</sup> As Scott says, the core belief of high modernism felt “it was possible to conceive of an artificially engineered society designed, not by custom and historical accident, but according to conscious, rational and even scientific criteria.”<sup>61</sup>

As with many well-laid plans, cheap power and rich mines weren’t enough to fix all of what was ailing the province. Hydroelectricity would, however, fuel a period of significant growth in industrial output in New Brunswick, and the provincial economy swelled by the end of the decade. The growing economies of New Brunswick and Canada during the 1950s led to increased vehicular traffic for commercial and personal/recreational purposes. Like Beechwood, another monumental concrete construction would cross the upper St. John River, this time directing cars rather than water.

### **An engineering monument to the automobile**

In 1958, construction began on another extraordinary structure that spanned the St. John River, this time at Hartland. It was an engineering project type that had never been seen before in New Brunswick: a slender cascade of concrete arches, designed so that

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<sup>59</sup> James C. Scott, “High Modernist Social Engineering: The Case of the Tennessee Valley Authority,” in *Experiencing the State*, ed. Lloyd I. Rudolph and John Kurt Jacobsen (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 16.

<sup>60</sup> Kenny and Secord, “Engineering Modernity,” 4.

<sup>61</sup> Scott, 6.

thousands of cars and transport trucks could make their way every day from coast to coast on the new Trans-Canada Highway (TCH). Designed and built through the late 1950s, the Hugh John Flemming Bridge officially opened to great fanfare in 1960, one of the most sophisticated bridges ever built in the Maritimes (fig. 84).<sup>62</sup> The Flemming Bridge was a critical component of the new ribbon of TCH that would link New Brunswick with the entire country, and the new bridge was an apt symbol of this vision. The Flemming Bridge became so familiar that its photo commanded the cover of the New Brunswick road map in the early 1970s.<sup>63</sup>

Although the old river road followed the steep winding banks of the St. John River valley, the new TCH highway alignment was chosen to run square through the hills above the river. The Department of Public Works chose the location for the new Hartland bridge to be about one kilometer upstream from its famous covered bridge predecessor, and thirty meters above the normal riverbed. Engineering studies began in 1956 by the Foundation of Canada Engineering Corporation Ltd. of Montreal, who would become the project's designers and principal structural engineers.

With aesthetic foresight, the government of the day felt that it was important to create an attractive modern structure to honour the beauty of its adjacent covered bridge landmark. Having this in mind, a proposal for a less costly steel-deck truss bridge

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<sup>62</sup> E. van Walsum, Jr. and T.J. Sluymer, Jr., "Concrete Arch Bridge at Hartland, New Brunswick," *The Engineering Journal*, April 1961, 77-82. The bridge was named after Hugh John Flemming, the Province's Conservative Premier from 1952 to 1960. A surprising aspect of this tribute is that it wasn't done as a memorial or a dedication after he retired, but was named as such during his term in office.

<sup>63</sup> However, upon visiting the town of Hartland's website in 2018 (<http://www.town.hartland.nb.ca>), not a single mention of the Flemming bridge is made, and no images of it were found.

was rejected in favour of the sculptural concrete design.<sup>64</sup> The concrete option also made sense in that the region had a plentiful supply of labour, lumber, reinforcing steel, cement, sand, and gravel. The latter two items were in abundance right at the bridge site. Construction began in March, 1958 by Fredericton's Atlas Construction Company Limited, and was completed in the early summer of 1960.<sup>65</sup>

The Flemming Bridge stylishly celebrated the virtues of modern structural engineering and the efficient use of materials. It is a triumph of design that fuses the commonly banal world of infrastructure with the high-art realm of sculpture, transcending the cautious limits often imposed by such projects to embody a more sophisticated sense of purpose. It was also a Canadian milestone in concrete construction. Unlike most concrete arch bridges which are level and have identical arches, the Flemming Bridge made innovative use of wide-span parabolic arches that gradually increased in height over a required 1% grade. This created an escalating structure where each of its seven arches had different heights and spans, although each one was based on the same parabolic form. This decision made economic sense as most of the formwork and scaffolding could be re-used on adjacent arches.<sup>66</sup>

The bridge's prominent arched profile is linked to the European expressionist concrete bridges designed by the renowned engineer Robert Maillart during the 1920s

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<sup>64</sup> van Walsum and Sluymer, 77-78.

<sup>65</sup> The final bridge was 661 meters long, used 14,500 cubic yards of concrete, and cost three million dollars.

<sup>66</sup> van Walsum and Sluymer, 78.

and 1930s, such as his celebrated Salginatobel Bridge in Switzerland.<sup>67</sup> Maillart is credited with developing some of the most revered structures of the twentieth century, utilizing the structural strength and expressive potential of reinforced concrete in a revolutionary modern form of narrow arches and thin vertical posts. Unlike the sensitivity evident in modernist automobile-infrastructure projects such as the Hugh John Flemming Bridge and its Maillart precedents, the sheer scale and haste of countless other modern-era projects were unsympathetic to humanistic traits. It was a time when the car ruled the planning world.

While the Hugh John Flemming Bridge represented the freedom and sophistication of modern automobile use, the highway and bridge imposed by Saint John's 1960s urban renewal misadventure proved that political and civic leaders could also go very wrong when following sober businesslike intentions. Still, there were numerous times where New Brunswick's political figures did make admirable modernizing changes much to the benefit of society at large. These were echoed by literary, academic, and cultural advocates who helped transform the province during the post-war era.

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<sup>67</sup> A 2001 worldwide survey in the British trade journal *Bridge - Design & Engineering* voted the Salginatobel Bridge the most beautiful bridge of the century.



## Chapter 4

### New Brunswick's modern political, literary, and cultural advocates

Why had those imbued with talent, charisma, and leadership invested themselves in a place as seemingly peripheral as mid-twentieth century New Brunswick? Writer and educator Fred Cogswell understood that it was about discovering possibility beyond their “narrow” environment and attitudes: it was about aspiring to a more expansive world.

But through our fields the Saint John River flows  
And mocks the patterned fields that we enclose;  
There sometimes pausing in the dusty heat  
We stretch cramped backs and lean upon our hoes  
To watch a sea-gull glide with lazy beat  
To wider regions where the river goes.<sup>1</sup>

The calling of an artist or creative individual is difficult to explain, let alone contain, and many politicians, academics, and other individuals contributed to the cultural milieu of New Brunswick at a time when pressing challenges faced the region. Some were empowered by position or wealth, while others were full of passion for making change through education, cultural awareness, and citizenship. But with such vision came episodes of public and professional resentment. While their leadership typically pursued a dogged reformist and modernizing sensibility, it was also tempered by modest means and social limitations.

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<sup>1</sup> Fred Cogswell, “Valley-Folk,” *The Stunted Strong* (Fredericton: University of New Brunswick, Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1954).

## Cultural voices at the University of New Brunswick

Canada's writers articulated the war years' and ensuing decade's increasing mechanization, urbanization, industrialization, and rapid alterations of public patterns of life. Whether pessimistic via social concern or optimistic for some form of new world order, Canadian poets responded to wider socio-economic conditions. This was equally the case with the era's artists, architects and designers. The overlapping of social causality and wider cultural benefits was gradually understood, while artists and creative professionals became increasingly conscious of their roles in nation-building and in developing relationships with kindred spirits in politics and academia. As A.J.M Smith wrote in the 1948 edition of the anthology *Book of Canadian Poetry*:

The poetry of the forties grows out of a sense of being involved in the whole complex life of our time – its politics, its society, its economics – and of being involved in it in a deeply personal way that touches the sensibilities, the mind, and the physical being of the poet. This is perhaps the common attitude which unites all the very different individual poets into a single recognizable school.<sup>2</sup>

In the mid-1940s, a young Desmond Pacey arrived at UNB. He was about to change the study of modern Canadian literature, and soon became one of the country's leading authorities and advocates. Brought to the University of New Brunswick in 1944 to head the English department at the age of 27, Pacey was an early champion of Canadian literary studies – a vessel that until then had been barely pried open.<sup>3</sup> He would spend multiple decades assembling a faculty of young writers at UNB who would become a major influence on Canadian literature from coast to coast. Pacey was also

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<sup>2</sup> A.J.M Smith, ed., *Book of Canadian Poetry* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) (Toronto: W.J. Gage, 1948), 32.

<sup>3</sup> Billy Johnson, "Desmond Pacey" in the *New Brunswick Literary Encyclopedia* (2012), accessed April 2, 2020, [http://stu-sites.ca/nble/p/pacey\\_desmond.html](http://stu-sites.ca/nble/p/pacey_desmond.html).

well connected to the burgeoning visual arts scene in New Brunswick. As his son Peter recalls:

[He] was indefatigable in his efforts on behalf of his charges and also integral to raising the culture, character and charisma of UNB. He was an early supporter of the Arts Centre, he was a founder of the *Fiddlehead Magazine*, which spawned a renaissance of writing in New Brunswick. He was integral to establishing the UNB artists-in-residence program, later initiating musicians-in-residence and most crucially [ ], the inception of the writers-in-residence program.<sup>4</sup>

Desmond Pacey partnered with Pegi Nicol MacLeod in 1947 on an illustrated children's book<sup>5</sup> and worked closely with Lucy Jarvis to promote the UNB Art Centre.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, Pacey's longstanding colleague Fred Cogswell also developed into a keystone of the post-war English-language literary resurgence in New Brunswick, extending the lineage going back to Sir Charles G.D. Roberts and Bliss Carman. By the mid-1940s, a change was in the air that moved beyond the romanticism of the Confederation Poets. As Tony Tremblay observes of the young Fred Cogswell:

[He] was one of a small number of cultural workers in Canada who came to Canadian literature at the moment of its greatest potential. With the end of the Second World War in 1945, thousands of young servicemen, Cogswell among them, returned to Canada with a greater sense of the larger world, a sense that demanded more of their country than their fundamentalist and provincial origins could deliver.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Pacey, "Poets' Corner," *The Daily Gleaner*, August 22, 2017, A7.

<sup>5</sup> The Pacey written - MacLeod illustrated version of "Hippity Hobo" was never completed, although some of MacLeod's watercolour images still exist in the Pacey family collections. In the early 1950s, the book was published in Fredericton by University Press, with illustrations by a Czech immigrant couple named Milada Horeje and Karel Rohlick, who worked for Michael Wardell as in-house artists.

<sup>6</sup> Laura Brandon, *Pegi by Herself: The Life of Pegi Nicol MacLeod, Canadian Artist* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2005), 165.

<sup>7</sup> Tony Tremblay, "Preface & Acknowledgements," in *Fred Cogswell: The Many Dimensioned Self* (St. Thomas University/NB Studies Centre, 2012), accessed April 2, 2020, <https://cogswell.lib.unb.ca/content/preface-acknowledgements>.

Coming of age through his writing and studies, Cogswell was a child of both the traditional, rural Maritimes of the early twentieth century and a citizen of the world who travelled Europe in the 1940s. Cogswell recalled that “exposure to European ideas had to a great degree ended, among the veterans, the kind of political naïveté which had previously characterized Canadian student life.”<sup>8</sup> Through this new awareness, he absorbed ideals of left-wing politics and a sense of greater purpose through the creative arts. Poet, respected mentor, editor, publisher, professor, translator, and literary critic, Cogswell was called “one of the pillars of Canadian modernism in the twentieth century.”<sup>9</sup> His decades-long mentorship as editor of *The Fiddlehead* literary journal and his teaching with such notables as Pacey made him “one of the pre-eminent cultural workers in twentieth-century Canada.”<sup>10</sup>

The latter point is perhaps the strongest tie linking these inspired individuals: while nuanced, they all shared a desire to expose New Brunswickers’ creative potential, and they led by a deeply committed example. Their action and conviction were for a place often ignored by the national elite, but they knew it was also filled with untapped creative and cultural talent.

In a 1956 issue of *the Fiddlehead*, Premier Hugh John Flemming and the Province of New Brunswick purchased a full-page ad near the end of the issue to espouse a message that linked the province’s burgeoning modern culture with not only *the Fiddlehead*, but the aforementioned Beechwood dam:

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<sup>8</sup> Tremblay, “Universities of New Brunswick and Edinburgh,” in *Fred Cogswell: The Many Dimensioned Self*, accessed April 2, 2020, <https://cogswell.lib.unb.ca/content/universities>.

<sup>9</sup> Tremblay, “Preface & Acknowledgements,” in *Fred Cogswell: The Many Dimensioned Self*.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

## A Cultural Voice

Is a vital adjunct to a Province shaping its future by harnessing its water power potential to process the raw materials of the mine, the forest, the sea, and the soil. The Province of New Brunswick has such a voice in THE FIDDLEHEAD.<sup>11</sup>

That a provincial government would sell an industrial “harnessing” of the landscape within the pages of a poetry periodical with a focused readership of writers, academics, and literary students is unusual, but indicative of the era’s coming confluence and mutual respect of cultural, literary, and political players. It was an awareness that had played out nationally several years earlier, with New Brunswick actively implicated.

### **New Brunswick’s Massey ambitions**

Cogswell’s view of “discovering possibility” within New Brunswick on a national stage was connected to understanding the enduring hardships in the national and provincial landscapes. In this vein, the post-war state was about to invest heavily in culture and education. A cross-country mission of nation-building was set to touch down in New Brunswick: complex and imperfect, the Massey Commission gave New Brunswick cultural professionals and amateurs alike a seat and voice in its formation, with conspicuous New Brunswick connections at the head.

Post-1945, the new interventionist welfare state was quickly defining itself in Canada, and a dedicated MP named Brooke Claxton took over the reins of cultural renewal, his determination to maintain a steadfast sense of mission, if not a

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<sup>11</sup> *The Fiddlehead*, no. 30 (November 1956): 34.

“nationalism ... bolstered by a strain of utopianism.”<sup>12</sup> As Canada shook off the struggles of the Second World War, it was ready to take a more active and valued place among the world powers. Lester Pearson, then secretary of state for external affairs under Prime Minister St. Laurent, “felt that the country’s cultural life, or lack of it, would be an important part of its growing international reputation.”<sup>13</sup> Such outlooks were aligned with new international initiatives spearheading democracy and cultural/educational progress, such as the United Nations’ establishment of UNESCO.<sup>14</sup>

The post-war Canadian state engaged culture as a nation-building exercise, since this was seen as central to the modernizing of the country, both domestically and in the international sphere. Central to the federal government’s cultural assessment of the nation was the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences<sup>15</sup> – a game-changing initiative that has been referred to almost exclusively as the “Massey Commission” since it tabled the final report in 1951. The 1949-51 Massey Commission and its conclusions emerged as lynchpins of a nationalist course of Canadian cultural policy.<sup>16</sup> Culture now had a critical role to play, stimulating intellectual development and self-awareness.<sup>17</sup> While the larger goals of the Massey Commission are considered to have generally paid off (through the establishment of the Canada Council, increased funding for higher learning, and the acknowledgement on a

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<sup>12</sup> Paul Litt, *The Muses, the Masses, & the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 17.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 174-175.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30.

<sup>16</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on National Development in Arts, Letters and Sciences (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1951).

<sup>17</sup> Litt, 100-101.

federal level of the importance of culture, among other initiatives), some scholars such as Paul Litt define its success as limited and philosophically problematic.<sup>18</sup> The criticisms range from the Commission's elitist focus on "high culture" as opposed to popular or American-fuelled mass culture, and the commercial interests in media such as radio, magazines, studio films, and television.

The Massey Report encouraged federal funding throughout the country to support cultural initiatives, broadcasting and mass media, post-secondary education, a National Library and Archives, expansion of the National Film Board, and a professional patronage institution that became the Canada Council for the Arts. The Report was considered a barometer of state intentions – a measure of how Canada saw itself at a specific time relative to the world, but it also spoke to class and ethnic subjugation, regional interests, modern social reforms, and post-war anxiety. Historians remind us that the Massey exercise was a clarion call that sought to champion a cultural renaissance in Canada as much as it was a technical/procedural document.

Vincent Massey and the other commission members were greatly respected and broad-based in their expertise and backgrounds (certainly so for the time), which lent the initiative much-needed esteem.<sup>19</sup> This was critical in a country that had shown limited public or private support for the arts, especially when compared to the United States. Of note was a substantial New Brunswick familiarity, embodied by commission

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>19</sup> In addition to Vincent Massey, the other commission members were Hilda Neatby, a history professor at the University of Saskatchewan; Arthur Surveyor, a civil engineer from Montréal; Norman Mackenzie, president of UBC; and Georges Henri Lévesque, dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Laval University.

members Norman Mackenzie and Georges Henri Lévesque.<sup>20</sup> Chaired by Massey, the Royal Commission held 114 public meetings in sixteen Canadian cities (two of which were in New Brunswick), starting in the late summer of 1949. They heard roughly 450 briefs, with experts also invited to present in their specific fields. By responding to these open sessions and interviews from coast to coast, the Massey Report focused on nation-building through culture, and more specifically, the federal government's role in defining Canada's post-colonial sense of itself in the new world order. The roots of the Massey Commission were a desire to measure the emergent Canadian culture (often eclipsed and self-conscious), aspirational European-based culture (high culture), and subversive American culture (lowbrow/mass culture). Together they set the scene to clarify the socio-cultural barometer of the early- to mid-century era in a country that was often considered a cultural neophyte. As period observer George Woodcock (editor of *Canadian Literature*) recalled:

What impressed me perhaps more than anything else was the way the Commission had created its own bow wave of interest, not only looking into needs but making people think of them, so that when the time came to implement the most important of all the recommendations, that regarding the foundation of the Canada Council, the idea was accepted virtually without protest.<sup>21</sup>

The Commission's public meetings held in New Brunswick included sessions in Fredericton and Saint John in mid-January, 1950. Twenty-seven presentations and/or briefs were submitted to the committee in New Brunswick, with sixteen done in

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<sup>20</sup> Norman Mackenzie was a former president of the University of New Brunswick, and Georges Henri Lévesque was a former university professor and trusted mentor to soon-to-be premier Louis Robichaud and Université de Moncton founder, father Clément Cormier.

<sup>21</sup> George Woodcock, "editorial: Massey's Harvest," *Canadian Literature*, no. 73 (Summer 1977): 3.



Fredericton.<sup>22</sup> Saint John hosted ten.<sup>23</sup> The June 1950 presentation and report by Kjeld and Erica Deichmann on Canadian handicrafts, with particular reference to New Brunswick, was a special study prepared at the request of the Royal Commission.<sup>24</sup>

A brief at the later session in Halifax by Moncton radio station CKCW expressed a common concern that in its rapidly changing world, a newfound focus on cultural matters and an ardent sense of nationalism was paramount: “The aim of all is the advancement of our country. In its cultural development are we particularly concerned, and to it we have dedicated our energies, our resources, and our intelligences.”<sup>25</sup> The shared sense of urgency and accord was reiterated, and what these engaged New Brunswickers in the cultural and educational fields expected, and at some points demanded, would in many ways come to fruition.

The New Brunswick Competitive Festival of Music hoped for serious music curriculums in schools throughout the country, the establishment of a national symphony and opera, and interest in teaching “the latest techniques” of music education. This was all framed as fostering “a national spirit.” A heavy Cold War angst

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<sup>22</sup> These included: CFNB broadcasting station, David Corbett, Fiddlehead Poetry Society, Fredericton Art Club, Margaret Hall, Lucy Jarvis, Louise Manny, NB Department of Education, NB Department of Industry and Reconstruction (Handicraft Division), NB Teachers Association, Provincial Council of Women of NB, Madge Smith, University of New Brunswick, Dr. C.P. Wright, York-Sunbury Historical Society, and a listed *ad hoc* group.

<sup>23</sup> These included: the NB Competitive Festival of Music, Maritime Association of Broadcasters, Maritime Federation of Agriculture, Maritime Library Association, Mount Allison University, New Brunswick Museum, Saint John Art Club, Theatre Guild of Saint John, Université du Sacré-Coeur de Bathurst, and the Université Saint-Joseph.

<sup>24</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on National Development in Arts, Letters and Sciences, “Appendices I & II,” 423-435.

<sup>25</sup> CKCW (Brief to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences), accessed at Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, file: #CA.Z1.1949.336, 13.

was palpable in their brief, as cultural nation-building was tangibly considered a solution to the looming nuclear threat:

Those interested in music have a job to do and a part to play in the building of a better world; a world in which our children shall perceive that this dark appalling chaos is indeed the troubled dawn of a fairer day. The spiritual harmony men call music is one of the most essential and convincing expressions of that faith in truth, in goodness and in beauty which alone makes human life worthwhile.<sup>26</sup>

A similar request to boost cultural-educational funding and opportunities for young Canadians in order to help fend off the forces of totalitarianism was voiced by the Fiddlehead Poetry Society – a group of young writers and scholars at the University of New Brunswick:

We believe that the awareness of the complexity and richness of human life which has been developed through study of its components cannot but add depth and significance of human living to those who have been given the opportunity to study the humanities... it would be a pity for our universities after such a resurgence and flowering to have to recede to the level of pre-war days; it would be equally a pity if the level of technically educated and critically trained men and women so suddenly raised as a result of the aftermath of war, were allowed to recede again. It would be more than a pity; it would be a tragedy. These are perilous times, and Canada needs to have all her citizens educated to the utmost critical awareness of the dangers and the lessons at stake in the world today.<sup>27</sup>

The Provincial Council of Women of New Brunswick asked for increased cultural content in broadcasting, expansion of the National Film Board, support for UNESCO, and an improved Public Archives, National Museum and National Gallery that could see all

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<sup>26</sup> Competitive Festival of Music of New Brunswick (Brief to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences), accessed at Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, file: #CA.Z1.1949.23, 7-9.

<sup>27</sup> Fiddlehead Poetry Society (Brief to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences), accessed at Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, file: #CA.Z1.1949.113, 2&6.

three partner in extension work with the New Brunswick Museum.<sup>28</sup> Similar thoughts were expressed by the New Brunswick Museum itself, with an interesting caveat on the UNESCO file: "Participation in the activities of UNESCO is desirable, but more might be done for our 'culture' at home before we attempt to enlighten the world."<sup>29</sup>

The New Brunswick Museum sought for a program out of Ottawa that would assist in the distribution of materials and exhibitions from the National Gallery and Museum. The Fredericton Art Club pushed for a branch of the National Gallery in each provincial capital to make "our National Art Gallery truly national."<sup>30</sup> The democratic and "common good" ideals behind their brief were palpable. A desire to encourage the participation, training, and enjoyment of visual art and related lectures went beyond simply making healthy and happy citizens, it was a path to a strong, equitable modernity:

We feel that we need more art in our modern mechanized world, to counterbalance our technical outlook. We know that art has been regarded as a sissy thing and not something done by a strong, healthy people. In recent years this view has changed. Art is now considered one of the most important factors in a healthy development. Art is now considered as something that contributes to the preservation of our democratic way of life.<sup>31</sup>

The Université Saint-Joseph (precursor to present-day Université de Moncton) asked to speak not only for itself, but for the entire francophone linguistic and cultural

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<sup>28</sup> Provincial Council of Women of New Brunswick (Brief to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences), accessed at Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, file: #CA.Z1.1949.342, 1-5.

<sup>29</sup> New Brunswick Museum (Brief to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences), accessed at Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, file: #CA.Z1.1949.174, 2.

<sup>30</sup> Fredericton Art Club (Brief to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences), accessed at Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, file: #CA.Z1.1949.118, 1.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 2.

sector of the Maritimes.<sup>32</sup> It sought more services in French film production and an expanded French radio system, which then counted only two weak French stations “à la périphérie du territoire.” It sought respect for regional organizations relative to the national institutions such as the National Museum and National Library. It also asked for financial assistance for universities, and an institute of Acadian history with a library, archives, and museum.<sup>33</sup> The University of New Brunswick also asked for federal aid for students, facilities, faculty, and extension programs, as it felt “creative work is most likely to advance where the people as a whole show intelligent and informed interest in and knowledge of Arts and Letters.”<sup>34</sup>

The New Brunswick Teachers’ Association voiced many concerns for modernizing education and federal funding aid. On a more physical end, they also focused on the deep influence of architectural surroundings: “The appearance of a school building, its inherent dignity and beauty, are factors which can have an inestimable effect for good upon the minds of both the pupils in attendance and the citizens or people of the community.”<sup>35</sup> The “modern” attributes of education were consistently espoused, from well-stocked libraries essential to the “modern school,” the incorporation of music and art, extensive uses of visual and radio aids, laboratory equipment, physical education

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<sup>32</sup> Université Saint-Joseph (Brief to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences), accessed at Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, file: #CA.Z1.1949.472, 1.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 2-5.

<sup>34</sup> University of New Brunswick (Brief to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences), accessed at Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, file: #CA.Z1.1949.466, 10.

<sup>35</sup> New Brunswick Teachers’ Association (Brief to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences), accessed at Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, file: #CA.Z1.1949.172, 1.

gymnastic equipment, and a “modern pedagogical approach.”<sup>36</sup> These points were also promoted by the brief of the New Brunswick Department of Education.<sup>37</sup>

The Deichmann’s presentation on Canadian handicrafts began by channeling the ethos of William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement in Great Britain, where modernity could foster a balanced culture with room for “both the mass-producer and the handicraft worker, the former to raise the general standard of comforts and convenience, the latter to raise the standards of enjoyment and appreciation...”<sup>38</sup> The presenters noted that there seemed to be a lack of awareness and exhibition of Canadian craft compared to most other countries in the world. The Deichmanns asked “where then can our contemporary decorative arts be found, and who is keeping records of the development and progress of this aspect of our life and culture?”<sup>39</sup> They did, however, speak glowingly of some instances of craft successes in New Brunswick, including the applied arts program at Mount Allison University, the new handicrafts program in Fredericton and Fundy National Park started by Dr. Ivan Crowell, and they listed specific craftspeople in the province. These included the Loomcrofters in Gagetown, the Madawaska Weavers in St. Leonard, and Indigenous basketweavers at

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>37</sup> New Brunswick Department of Education (Brief to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences), accessed at Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, file: #CA.Z1.1949.177, 13.

<sup>38</sup> Erica and Kjeld Deichmann (Brief to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences), accessed at Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, file: #CA.Z1.1949.64, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 3.

Kingsclear.<sup>40</sup> By Considering a wider sphere, the Deichmann's conceptual understanding of fine craft's place in the cultural life of the nation was more than symbolic:

We as a nation are beginning to grow up and must face the responsibilities of our new development in a clear and definite way because so much in our future will depend on our concepts and choices here and now. What has been cannot change. Our way to an adjusted future is to accept the past with understanding before we go on to positive inquiry.<sup>41</sup>

Divided without any regional strategy, New Brunswick and the other Maritime provinces seemed poorly placed to take advantage of the new world order on the macro level, but at the micro level substantial aspects were improving. Stagnant growth compared to the rest of North America was a burden, although the baby boom and focused regional enterprises such as hydroelectricity and oil refining would soon give New Brunswick an economic kick-start. With a visual arts and creative core that continued to make strides in the ensuing decades, the technical and artistic modernism that was rising in the province during the 1940s and 1950s attested specifically to the optimistic development claims made by the individual Massey Commission presenters. Such a collective sensibility witnessed a political catalyst appear at the onset of the 1960s, thus allowing the visual culture of New Brunswick to effectively surge and reach a wider potential.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 6. On the basketweavers, the Deichmann's write: "With the coming of the Second World War, many craftworkers gave up their work to join one of the Services, while others who stayed home continued to work on a small scale. This was the case of the Indians on the various reservations, notably the Malicetes at Kingsclear on the St. John River, who specialize in making many kinds of baskets."

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 8.

## Politics and cultural awareness

Politically, the years preceding and including the 1960s were an era of confident New Brunswick leaders who were given long terms to make their marks on the economy, and perhaps more importantly, on Federal politics while garnering national respect. Hugh John Flemming and Louis Robichaud each in turn made significant social, economic and cultural leaps through their policies (their premierships running from 1952-1960 and 1960-1970, respectively). The greatest of these was Robichaud's visionary "Equal Opportunity" program, instigated at a critical junction in New Brunswick's history.<sup>42</sup>

The planning and establishment of Robichaud's 1960s Equal Opportunity (EO) program was one of the more courageous and progressive instances of political vision in post-Confederation New Brunswick provincial politics. Its guiding principles were that "all residents of the province should have access to a basic standard of service regardless of the fiscal capacity of the locality in which they lived."<sup>43</sup> Regional disparities "in all walks of life" had to be removed for New Brunswick to properly contribute to the nation and its rapidly changing landscape.<sup>44</sup> By Robichaud's own estimation, the province had, prior to his election, "been dealing with its difficulties on a piecemeal basis, achieving only limited industrialization, its people in many areas underemployed

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<sup>42</sup> Robert Pichette, interview by author, April 2014.

<sup>43</sup> Robert A. Young, "The Programme of Equal Opportunity: An Overview," in *The Robichaud Era, 1960-70* (Moncton: The Canadian Institute for Research on Regional Development, 2001), 23.

<sup>44</sup> Della Stanley, *Louis Robichaud: A Decade of Power* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1984), 140.

and undereducated, unfairly taxed and over-governed.”<sup>45</sup> In many ways, EO set the wheels in motion for New Brunswick to become a modern, just society.

Although significant post-war development occurred in New Brunswick under the watches of Premiers McNair (L) and Flemming (PC), the widely acknowledged trailblazer who brought the deepest changes to New Brunswick’s social and political landscape was Louis Robichaud in the 1960s. As leader of the provincial Liberal party, Robichaud (1925-2005) undertook a wide-reaching update of government programs that amended taxation, health care, education, language rights, and economic development. The stakes were high, as were the protectionist voices in opposing districts, but it was progressive reform that he saw as necessary to bring New Brunswick into the modern world. Robichaud was convinced that the state had a central role to play in ensuring the wellbeing of every citizen, and his Liberal Party caucus made great strides in making this so:

All New Brunswickers, regardless of where they lived, in every part of New Brunswick, were entitled to human dignity and recognition of their worth as individuals and to achieve this they must have decent standards in education, health, welfare and the administration of justice....<sup>46</sup>

Near the end of his second term in office, Robichaud saw the need to bring cultural affairs into the government docket. Conscious of the importance of cultural

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<sup>45</sup> Louis J. Robichaud, “New Brunswick: The Sixties as an Era of Progress and Change,” speech presented at Queen’s University, 24 October 1969, Robichaud Papers, RS 416 A/1/9, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick (PANB). Stanley notes that “The Byrne Commission reported that in 1961, 12,000 children in Gloucester, Kent, Northumberland, Madawaska and Restigouche Counties were taught by unqualified teachers. There were school districts which could not afford a high school. There was little incentive to farm in regions where the average gross income was \$500 a year and where over one third of the labour force had only a grade four education.” Stanley, 149.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 214.



heritage to New Brunswick's two main linguistic groups, he witnessed the wave of artistic and cultural support from Ottawa in the mid-1960s, in August 1966 the premier announced that his government saw an "urgent necessity" as they "contemplated the creation in the Province of a body similar in aims and policies to the Saskatchewan Arts Board and the Ontario Council for the Arts." He further stated that he considered it a key part of his EO initiatives: "As part of our program of reform, we would be remiss if we, as a government, did not take the cultural progress of the citizens of this province at heart."<sup>47</sup> Fighting public apathy towards the arts, in a Saint John address to the Canada Council he noted:

In other parts of the nation, governments at all levels and industry have become more and more aware during the past years of the significance of the arts in the life of the community.... The state, in particular, has not assumed its full share of the responsibility it must assume in cultural affairs. Other provinces have led the way...in this respect.<sup>48</sup>

New Brunswick's Cultural Affairs Branch was created in March 1968 under the Department of Youth.<sup>49</sup> Robert Pichette, Robichaud's executive assistant, was placed at the helm as director. His task was "promoting cultural development and making people within and without the province aware of the culture that exists."<sup>50</sup> Subsequent to the successful New Brunswick presence at Expo 67, the establishment of the New Brunswick Art Bank, and the recent launch of the Branch's quarterly cultural magazine

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<sup>47</sup> "Premier Hints at New Body for the Promotion of Arts," *The Evening Times Globe*, August 23, 1966.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Robert Pichette, "Culture and Official Languages," in *The Robichaud Era*, 74-75.

<sup>50</sup> Gary Bannerman, "Pichette's Aim for N.B.: Keep Cultural Ball Rolling," *The Telegraph Journal*, December 31, 1969, 3.

“Dimensions,” there was good reason for optimism in the modern cultural direction of the region.

In April 1966, Robichaud and opposition MLA Cyril Sherwood gave congratulations on the floor of the NB Legislature to Alex Colville’s in honour of his upcoming Centennial coin release (fig. 85).<sup>51</sup> The Premier noted the achievement’s relationship to the era’s design and material culture, and that such a triumph was accomplished by a New Brunswicker:

Mr. Speaker, many of the most sensitive thinkers of our age have commented on the trivialization of the things of our common life – the objects that we handle each day, the goods that pour forth from the processes of industry. Wise men have pondered the damage done to our humanity when the ordinary objects and creations that we see and handle become crass and barren.

In the beauty and vitality of his designs, Mr. Colville has done much to reverse this depressing tendency of our time.... In designs of great strength, of wonderful evocative power, he has succeeded in his aim.

It is a privilege, Mr. Speaker, to pay tribute to his genius and to rejoice that he, Mr. Alex Colville of Sackville, is a citizen of New Brunswick.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> New Brunswick Legislature, *Synoptic Report of the Proceedings of the Fourth Session of the Forty-Fifth Legislative Assembly of the Province of New Brunswick, 1966 Volume I*, Daily Sitting No. 15, April 21, 1966, Collection of the Legislative Library, Fredericton, N.B. 269-270. Of high regard in the numismatic world, Colville’s Canadian Centennial coin set is considered among the finest coin designs in Canadian history. Designed in Sackville, NB and submitted to the Royal Canadian Mint in 1965, Colville’s set uses animals as the theme, all in movement or dynamic poses. The six coins that made up the series are quite likely the most widely disseminated works by a Canadian artist, and without question the most so ever created by a New Brunswick artist. The set includes: a Canada goose (one dollar coin), wolf (fifty cent piece), wildcat (quarter), mackerel (dime), rabbit (nickel), and a dove (penny). At the public announcement of the set’s design, Colville spoke of his aim for them to transcend this particular time, in the hopes his imagery “will express not merely some particular time, place or event, but a whole century of Canada and even more.” “Sackville Artist Designs Special Centennial Coinage,” *The Telegraph-Journal*, April 20, 1966, 3.

<sup>52</sup> *Synoptic Report*, 269.

In an ensuing letter to Colville, Robichaud applauded the “distinguished designs,” and related that “We are proud to claim you as a New Brunswicker, and we thank you for the distinction you bring to this Province, even as we thank you for the beauty your work brings to our lives.”<sup>53</sup> In return, the artist lauded the premier’s support for visual art and the cultural landscape of the region, and framed it within the aims of EO:

Dear Mr. Premier,

I want you to know that I was really touched by your letter and by your remarks in the Legislature concerning my coin designs.

... Since you have so eloquently expressed your appreciation of my work in the arts, let me say that I realize fully that I am able to do my work only because you and others like you are working so diligently at politics at constructing and operating the ship of state on which I am, so to speak, a passenger. I am very aware that I have been given an equal opportunity.... I do thank you for taking the time from your hard work to extend this courtesy to me.

With good regards,

Alex Colville<sup>54</sup>

An individual of measured and considered statements, Colville’s response letter is quite remarkable. He overtly connects his artistic freedom and success with the health and vitality of the political state. The artist certainly understood the precarious nature of society and the dangers of a malicious regime – one that could use culture as a weapon – as his experience being an official war artist during the Second World War attests. Regarding his ongoing feelings towards the coin set and its place in the Canadian design canon, his daughter Ann Kitz recalled, “It pleased him very much to have his work so

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<sup>53</sup> Louis J. Robichaud to Alex Colville, April 21, 1966, RS416-1966/97, PANB.

<sup>54</sup> Alex Colville to Louis Robichaud, April 25, 1966, RS416-97-1w3, PANB.

widely circulated. He was very interested in design in all forms: typefaces, logos (e.g. the CN logo), furniture, buildings.”<sup>55</sup>

Even with these cultural successes, Robichaud had staunch opponents as he faced racial and linguistic loathing, challenges from established business interests, and the complacency of an archaic administrative system. He was successful in developing necessary program consensus to drive these changes, especially in Acadian regions, but also in central Canada, where New Brunswick was praised for “showing the way to other provinces in the matter of good government.”<sup>56</sup> He was fortunate in that during the progressive decade of the 1960s, the voice of history embraced the rationale of “two Canadas”<sup>57</sup> and hence two New Brunswicks, which supported the imminent officially bilingual region that Robichaud brought to the fore.

Opposition notwithstanding, Robichaud had many allies and admirers nationally. Lisa Pasolli sheds light on a critical instance of twentieth-century intellectual influx to New Brunswick, where “Robichaud was eager to recruit talented civil servants who could allow him to capitalize on political excitement to create viable programs.”<sup>58</sup> Pasolli asserts that in the mid-1960s “the success of Robichaud’s reforms depended in large part on the transformation of the provincial bureaucracy.”<sup>59</sup> In our present era of political entitlement and patronage, it seems almost radical for Robichaud to have

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<sup>55</sup> Ann Kitz, e-mail message to author, May 11, 2020. As for the modern CN monogram logo, it is considered one of the preeminent corporate logos of the twentieth century. It was designed by Canadian graphic designer Allan Fleming in 1959 and officially launched in 1960.

<sup>56</sup> Stanley, 149.

<sup>57</sup> McKay, “Introduction: All that is Solid Melts Into Air,” xviii-xix.

<sup>58</sup> Lisa Pasolli, “Bureaucratizing the Atlantic Revolution: The ‘Saskatchewan Mafia’ in the New Brunswick Civil Service, 1960-1970,” *Acadiensis* 38, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2009): 127-128.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

committed to a search for the “best person in Canada” to fill the position of Provincial Treasurer, but he indeed enticed Saskatchewan’s Donald Tansley,<sup>60</sup> along with other Westerners soon to come. They were attracted by what Tansley called “perhaps the most fundamental, most dramatic and most rapid reforms to local government and provincial services which have ever been attempted in Canada.”<sup>61</sup> With this expertise and an avowed efficiency in place, the New Brunswick civil service became a well-oiled modern bureaucracy, soon to nearly double in size with the new demands.<sup>62</sup>

### **Acadian social modernity**

Many of the most obvious changes to New Brunswick’s social landscape through EO were in Acadian regions. The roots of the 1960s Acadian cultural renaissance can be linked to the Acadian national movement of the 1950s, which owed much of its establishment to the offshoots of the Acadian Deportation’s 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorations. The celebrations were conceived “as a stepping stone to a more modern Acadia” where the province’s francophones would help build a renewed Acadian identity within a society that “could take its future in its own hands while working with its Anglophone neighbours.”<sup>63</sup> Allied with this initiative was Father

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 133. Pasolli states that credit for the creation of a modern finance department in New Brunswick belongs almost entirely to Tansley.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>63</sup> Joel Belliveau, “Acadian New Brunswick’s Ambivalent Leap into the Canadian Liberal Order,” in *Creating Postwar Canada: Community, Diversity and Dissent, 1945-75* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 65.

Clément Cormier's<sup>64</sup> successful lobbying of the federal government for a regional francophone branch of the CBC in Moncton, which was set up in 1954 (radio) and 1959 (TV). Joel Belliveau states that by the early 1960s, the cultural and social landscape of urban Acadia was quickly taking shape:

Moncton had become the nonofficial Acadian "capital," where were concentrated major institutions such as the Archbishopric, L'Assomption, L'Évangeline, Radio-Canada, the SNA, and now the largest and most modern of Acadian colleges... The era of isolationism was definitely coming to an end.<sup>65</sup>

Much of the francophone society's enthusiasm and support for EO translated into a public sense of community 'participation' in establishing new relationships with English New Brunswick powers, both political and economic. This changed somewhat by the late 1960s when a significant student protest hit Moncton.<sup>66</sup> The student-led social unrest represented a desire for swifter change (specifically towards bilingualism) and greater empowerment for Acadians to control their own institutions. This wave led to the formation of the Parti Acadien in 1972 and the push for duality in education and health care in the 1970s.<sup>67</sup> Acadian society was fast becoming economically, politically, financially, and culturally empowered, as well as rapidly urbanized. Near the end of his term as premier, in June of 1969 at the opening of the French-language Teachers' College at the U de M campus, Robichaud equated education and cultural development as keys to the advancement of New Brunswick, where growth was "not only in terms of

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<sup>64</sup> Cormier was the Université de St. Joseph's president and a member of the Congregation of the Holy Cross

<sup>65</sup> Belliveau, 67.

<sup>66</sup> See *L'Acadie, l'Acadie?!?*.

<sup>67</sup> Belliveau, 78-80.

industrial and economic expansion, but parallel to this development and in conjunction with this development, the cultural and intellectual development of the province. One is inseparable from the other. Both are vital to the harmonious development of the province.”<sup>68</sup>

In his autobiography *I’m from Bouctouche, Me*, Canadian public policy expert and proud Acadian, Donald Savoie, ties many of his initial opportunities as a young man in a poor region of francophone New Brunswick to the Robichaud-era changes. He goes so far as to call his cohort “the Louis J. Robichaud generation.”<sup>69</sup> The personal narrative is also a story of modernism arriving to a long-suppressed and traditional people through liberal ideals of support for individual rights and commercial/educational opportunities:

It begins in a small hamlet where people looked to the Roman Catholic Church for hope and to farming, fishing and construction for a living. In a generation, the Acadian world was transformed, turned upside down. It is a story worth telling, not only for the benefit of Acadians but for other minority groups and indeed all Canadians.<sup>70</sup>

Through his own story of growing up in impoverished Kent County and taking advantage of opportunities through international higher education and work connections, Savoie’s journey would have been extremely difficult, if even possible, to most Acadians born just before him:

In one generation, I saw a people literally transformed. To be sure, Robichaud was the catalyst, but his initiatives unleashed a series of events that sent shockwaves to every corner of l’Acadie, New Brunswick, and the other Maritime provinces.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> “Education Key to N.B. Growth --- Robichaud,” *The Moncton Daily Times*, June 6, 1969, 5.

<sup>69</sup> Donald Savoie, *I’m From Bouctouche, Me* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2009), 244.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, ix.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

It is worth noting that the socio-economic and political reforms undertaken by the Robichaud government in the 1960s were often front and centre in the Quebec and Canadian media,<sup>72</sup> at times articulating their modernizing changes with clever visual culture metaphors. Nationally broadcast on February 24, 1966 on CBC TV news,<sup>73</sup> Robichaud's passionate speech on fighting prejudice within English-French relations was followed several days later by an editorial cartoon by Raoul Hunter in *Le Soleil du Quebec*.<sup>74</sup> The ink drawing showed a clumsy and untidy Gothic cottage labeled "Nouveau Brunswick," dreaming of a clean International Style modern office tower, connected to the world via a jet flying overhead (fig. 86). This graphic allegory of the aspirations for structural (and architectural) change taking place in New Brunswick was auspicious due to the imminent opening of the International Style Centennial Building in Fredericton. The building not only evoked the cartoon's thought bubble forms, but, as described in chapter 5, the execution of the architectural project was considered by those in authority as one of the most tangible symbols of social/economic/political/cultural progress the provincial government had achieved.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> For instance, a Liberal-sponsored insert in the *Moncton Daily Times* of October 19, 1967, quotes a 1966 issue of the *Ottawa Citizen* newspaper: "If the New Brunswick experiment results in improved services, especially to then poorer sections of the province, it will be worth imitating elsewhere. Meanwhile, Mr. Robichaud deserves credit for daring to undertake a pioneering task."

<sup>73</sup> "Robichaud on Fighting Prejudice," CBC Digital Archives, accessed December 13, 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/robichaud-on-fighting-prejudice>.

<sup>74</sup> "Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec," cote: P716,S1,P66-02-26, accessed December 12, 2019, <http://numerique.banq.qc.ca/patrimoine/details/52327/3271366?docsearchtext=%22nouveau-brunswick%22>. Of note is that in the newspaper issue in which it ran (February 26, 1966), the cartoon was printed backwards by mistake.

<sup>75</sup> See footnotes 1, 7 and 10 in chapter 5.



Although all was not rosy in the region, Robichaud's policies created an environment where self-determination and freedom of expression were achievable for a vast section of the province's francophones. New Brunswickers in lower socio-economic conditions benefitted greatly from the expanded welfare state, and students looking for post-secondary opportunities were given far greater choices than the previous generation. R.A. Young considers EO to have been as much about achieving social justice as much as reconfiguring the province's financial and infrastructure strategies.<sup>76</sup> Della Stanley even compares Robichaud and his cabinet to "itinerant gospel preachers" as they expounded the benefits of EO while crisscrossing the province in the 1960s.<sup>77</sup> In many ways they were prophets, metaphorically leading the populace out of the desert towards a world of social change and the new Canadian welfare state.

Such tangible reforms and demands on the workings of the provincial civil service required a complete retrofit of physical space in which to work and act. The net result was a mammoth construction project that not only housed the "new" civil service, it would also be one of the fullest instances of modern art, architecture, design and politics ever combined and brought to light in the Maritimes.

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<sup>76</sup> Young, "The Programme of Equal Opportunity: An Overview." in *The Robichaud Era*, 27.

<sup>77</sup> Stanley, 147.

## Chapter 5

### Social, political and cultural synthesis in 1967: the Centennial Building

1967 was a defining point in the cultural aspirations of Canada and the rest of North America. Belying the conflicts in Vietnam and Israel, the baby boom came of age in the “Summer of Love,” while the Beatles released *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*, Robert Kennedy aimed for the presidency, and actor Sidney Poitier was breaking racial barriers with his film *In the Heat of the Night*. Closer to home, Canada’s red and white flag still felt new and Montreal’s Expo 67 World’s Fair was a resounding success that showcased Canada and innovative modern architecture to the rest of the globe.

This conviction was reflected in a wealth of centennial construction projects from coast to coast, including Fredericton’s Centennial Building. This commanding structure still occupies a difficult place for its rigorous aesthetics and considerable scale. Nevertheless, the vast Centennial Building is one of New Brunswick’s most notable achievements in modernism and an important instance of modern architecture and design in the province (fig. 87). Strategically located in the downtown’s legislative/government district, it was designed to “streamline the efficiency and convenience of provincial administration” and was considered a “magnificent” and “beautiful” symbol of progress during what may have been the most optimistic time in Canada’s history.<sup>1</sup> Designed by Bélanger & Roy Architects of Moncton, the building was

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<sup>1</sup> André Richard, Minister of Public Works, quoted in the pamphlet *New Brunswick Centennial Building. Official Opening. Tuesday, March 7, 1967*, 4. Collection of the author. In the pamphlet, he also stated that “Aesthetically, it provides suitable surroundings for conducting the affairs of the province.”

crafted with a material richness and technical refinement that has rarely been matched in the region since it opened in early 1967.

A little-known aspect of the story is that the building (that is, earlier versions of it) almost saw the light of day in every decade since the 1930s. A chain of non-executed “provincial government office building” iterations on or next to the current site show how formal developments changed over the years, as the classical gave way to the modern (fig. 88).<sup>2</sup> The recurring dance finally ended when a contract was signed with Bélanger & Roy architects in May 1962 to design the definitive building. Period files show that in mid-November 1962 the provincial government realized that if they framed the new office building as their sanctioned “Confederation Memorial Project,” they could access substantial federal funds.<sup>3</sup> After extensive negotiation, the deal came to pass in 1964. The genuine need for the project and the mutual respect between Premier Louis Robichaud and Prime Minister Lester Pearson helped New Brunswick get its building at a fraction of the cost — Ottawa provided a sizeable contribution of \$2,500,000.<sup>4</sup> With its name changed from “Provincial Building” *et al.*, to “Centennial Building” in late 1964,<sup>5</sup> it was the first project in Canada to be completed under the Federal-Provincial Confederation Memorial Program, which assisted with the

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<sup>2</sup> Intended to replace overcrowded administrative structures like the nearby 1888 Departmental Building, the first designed proposal was in 1931, likely cancelled due to the Great Depression. Another was put forward in the late 1940s, a third in 1956, and a fourth unexecuted scheme in 1961. See “Review of various studies made in connection with Provincial Government Administration Building Requirements” in RS416-1965/274. 2. PANB.

<sup>3</sup> R. Palmer to Henry Irwin, November 16, 1962, and Henry Irwin to R. Palmer, November 21, 1962, “Centennial Building – Planning” file, PANB.

<sup>4</sup> Henry Irwin to Louis J. Robichaud, February 5, 1964, “Centennial Building – miscellaneous file,” RS416-1964/280, PANB.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Irwin to John Fisher, November 2, 1964, and R. Palmer to Henry Irwin, November 3, 1964, “Centennial Building – Planning” file, PANB.

construction of permanent structures to celebrate the nation's hundredth anniversary. Where other provinces used the program to erect cultural or educational buildings, New Brunswick desperately needed a new headquarters for its public service, but in the process also aimed to create an artistic showpiece. The provincial speech from the throne on February 18, 1964 declared this goal, whereby in the construction of the new building "will be embodied appropriate and lasting allusions to the role of our province in Confederation and the building of the nation and to our pride in being Canadian."<sup>6</sup>

Occupying nearly an entire downtown city block, the Centennial Building opened to great fanfare on March 14, 1967.<sup>7</sup> A packed crowd and live television cameras filled the gleaming lobby, all watching Premier Robichaud and federal Secretary of State Judy LaMarsh speak enthusiastically and cut the ceremonial ribbon. Grounded in the centennial year and the current needs of the government, the project showcased what seemed like a clear path forward. Modernism was embraced as the language that best spoke to the social and economic transformation of the province. In her address at the opening ceremony, LaMarsh said:

In this magnificent administrative centre, we have visible evidence of faith in our future, in the future of Fredericton, in the future of New Brunswick, in the future of Canada. This is a building of the present, a celebration of the present, so that New Brunswickers in the weeks, months and years

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<sup>6</sup> New Brunswick Legislature, *Speech from the Throne. Opening of the Second Session of the Forty-fifth Legislative Assembly of the Province of New Brunswick. Delivered by the Honourable J. Leonard O'Brien, LL.D., Lieutenant Governor of the Province of New Brunswick*, February 18, 1964, Collection of the Legislative Library, Fredericton, N.B.

<sup>7</sup> "The Centennial Building Will Be Opened With Distinction," *The Daily Gleaner*, March 13, 1967, 17.

ahead can benefit from the improved government services, which will flow from this building.<sup>8</sup>

Up until then, provincial government employees had been scattered in over twenty older buildings throughout Fredericton. The new structure improved the efficiency of government by accommodating nearly all of the civil service in one site. Six storeys in height with a T-shaped plan and roughly 250,000 square feet of floor space, the \$7.25 million Centennial Building housed over one thousand employees.<sup>9</sup> The office floors used a flexible plan with movable partitions that could adapt to changing uses within. Beyond the office areas, the building contained meeting rooms on every floor, a spacious cafeteria, a mainframe computing centre, a central post office, four public elevators, and of course, washrooms and stairs. Its structural steel framework is clad in polished New Brunswick black granite, stainless steel glazed curtain wall, and olive sandstone from Nova Scotia on the end walls. The building's use of local stone as a counterpoint to the adjacent slick metal and glass skin added texture and a clear expression of "Canadian-ness" to the popular International Style architectural language that typically advocated as much crisp glass/metal curtain wall as possible.

The Centennial Building's main lobby is one of the most prominent interior spaces in the province with terrazzo floors, round travertine marble columns, and a backlit translucent panel ceiling (fig. 89). Travertine was considered by the architectural

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<sup>8</sup> "Address by Secretary of State Honourable Judy LaMarsh," *The Civil Service Digest*, April 1967, 9.

<sup>9</sup> *Report of the Confederation Centenary Celebrations Committee in New Brunswick*, RS172-A15. 15, PANB.

profession as *the* material for public spaces in modernist office towers, epitomized by its use in Mies van der Rohe's landmark 1958 Seagram Building in Manhattan.<sup>10</sup>

Robert Pichette, the former executive assistant to premier Louis Robichaud, recalls that during the mid-1960s the Centennial Building was a critical aspect of the progressive changes Robichaud brought to New Brunswick. The building was a visual manifestation of the Equal Opportunity program that would drastically reform the province:

The move of the Public Service to a modern, utilitarian, and properly appointed new building very much epitomized the sea of changes that Premier Robichaud had brought to governance in a relatively short period of time. You could taste and feel the change. The move out of the very gloomy and fusty Victorian Departmental Building was a physical relief as well as highly symbolic. Its furniture was old, non-descript, and decrepit. It looked like a backwoods county council office. The relief was palpable and we genuinely believed that this was a new beginning on modern lines. Out with the non-functional old, and in with the promise of the new!<sup>11</sup>

The Centennial Building represents the culmination of the International Style of High Modernism in New Brunswick. Fully anchored in its time, the stone and glass structure fully expresses the conditions of contemporary economy, social equality,<sup>12</sup> and

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<sup>10</sup> However, the Centennial Building isn't shackled by van der Rohe's Spartan minimalism, as its polished travertine panelled walls are embellished with historic texts by New Brunswick statespersons, poets, and notable citizens, done in dramatic bronze lettering. These include Champlain's 1604 diaries, the Lord's Prayer transcribed in Mi'kmaq by Father Chrestien Le Clerq in 1677, speeches by New Brunswick's Fathers of Confederation, and poems by Bliss Carman and Sir Charles G.D. Roberts.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Pichette, e-mail message to author, January 8, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> What may be considered the façade's gridded uniformity by some is actually representative of a conscious design where every office (i.e. every employee, by default) on the exterior is treated with the same amount of detail, design, glass and finish as any other one. The Premier's office is not on an upper floor with larger windows, balconies, or ornamental treatment. Rather, it is on the second floor and is no more self-aggrandizing than any other worker's space. The implication is that all are equal parts of the workings of government.

simple purity. It also speaks to the post-war spirit of confidence, ideals of progress within New Brunswick, and the era's technical advances in building design. In 1967, Premier Robichaud stated that:

New Brunswick's Centennial Building stands as a monument to the honour of achievements past; a symbol of our future aspirations. More than that, it epitomizes the progressive spirit of our people and indicates our confidence in our own bright future.... New Brunswick can have no finer memorial to confederation than one that is in daily use by those who have chosen to serve the people of our province, and the great country of which we are part.<sup>13</sup>

In the case of the Centennial Building, its legacy as one of Canada's transformational centennial projects helps establish its previously overlooked nation-building role. As Colin Ripley and Marco Polo affirm in their recent book, *Architecture and National Identity: The Centennial Projects 50 Years On*, "the Centennial Buildings can be read as relics of a time when architecture was understood to play an essential role in Canadian culture."<sup>14</sup> Further study of this collection of mid-1960s pan-Canadian architectural projects offers "the framework for a new appreciation of how this architecture has given shape to the values, aspirations, and enthusiasms that drove the development of Canada as we entered our second century."<sup>15</sup>

### **An artistic showpiece: the Centennial Building murals**

The allied arts movement of the 1950s and 1960s encouraged the integration of fine arts and architecture through collaborations with the best professional artists in the

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<sup>13</sup> Louis J. Robichaud, quoted in *New Brunswick Centennial Building. Official Opening*.

<sup>14</sup> Marco Polo and Colin Ripley, *Architecture and National Identity: The Centennial Projects 50 Years On* (Halifax: Dalhousie Architectural Press, 2014), 33.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

country. As such, the era rarely saw a major public building or large church constructed without the commission of a substantial mural or prominent piece of public art.<sup>16</sup> A surge of International Style government buildings and office towers arose in the cities of Central and Western Canada. Along with Expo 67 projects in Montreal, this commissioned public artwork was rarely traditional and figurative, but more abstract and material/texture-based, such as Jean-Paul Mousseau's 1964-66 ceramic tile medallions throughout Montreal's Peel Metro Station. Large corporations or the federal government, both of which offered scant art patronage in New Brunswick until the Centennial Building project arrived, financed nearly all murals during this period. As Fred Ross said in a 1974 interview, "The problem with doing murals is that there aren't that many walls around that offer the opportunity, and the cost of doing murals is prohibitive. Like sculpture, it's something that has to be subsidized by governments or philanthropists."<sup>17</sup>

So in keeping with a trend in government edifices of the era, the Centennial Building catered to "the cultural as well as the functional."<sup>18</sup> On each of the six floors, a large mural was displayed in the lobby area, each in a different medium depicting themes from New Brunswick's industrial and cultural landscape or history. Six of the province's most prominent artists were chosen to execute the murals, which ranged from figurative to abstract, and from flattish paintings to three-dimensional hanging

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<sup>16</sup> Sandra Alfoldy, *The Allied Arts: Architecture and Craft in Postwar Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), 24-25.

<sup>17</sup> Dorothy Dearborn, "Fred Ross: A Realist Comes Into His Own," *Saint John Telegraph-Journal*, December 14, 1974, 17.

<sup>18</sup> "The Centennial Building Has A Large Mural On Each Floor," *The Daily Gleaner*, March 13, 1967, 21.



sculptures, reflecting the diversity of New Brunswick's art practice at the time:

Ground floor/lobby: John Hooper's 45-foot long resin and fibreglass sculpture portraying New Brunswick's history, with a central panel depicting the Fathers of Confederation;

Second floor: Claude Roussel's welded metal rod sculpture representing the forestry industry;

Third floor: Bruno Bobak's gouged plywood relief panels of three miners;

Fourth floor: Jack Humphrey's coloured glass mosaic tile mural depicting fishermen in a coastal landscape;

Fifth floor: Tom Forrestall's welded and buffed sheet metal construction of farm elements;

Sixth floor: Fred Ross's circular painted mural inspired by the prolific nineteenth century literary history of New Brunswick.

The murals are eminent in their prominent locations and material qualities, but how these artists were chosen and how the murals ultimately came to be is a complex story that began with civil servants and political leaders who wanted to carve out a cultural legacy for New Brunswickers at a crossroads as the province consciously embraced modernity. In the early stages of the Centennial Building's development, Richard Palmer, New Brunswick's Deputy Minister of Public Works, was put in charge of project planning. In a letter dated December 18, 1962, Palmer describes his discussions with the architects and the provincial Minister of Education, Henry Irwin, who was also deeply involved with the building as co-chair of New Brunswick's Centennial Committee:

The suggestion was made that a contest be held for New Brunswick artists, either resident or not resident in the Province, for the design of a mural

which would show New Brunswick's history and development over the last hundred years.<sup>19</sup>

By January of the next year, provincial minister of Public Works André Richard wrote back to Palmer with strong agreement and enthusiasm for the plan to place a large mural in the lobby as "it would become the focal point of the whole building."<sup>20</sup> The provincial government quickly appointed a committee to study the potential of incorporating permanent works of art in the as-yet-unnamed building. The committee was made up of Richard Palmer, Fred Phillips (of the New Brunswick Travel Bureau), Cyrille Roy (project architect with Bélanger & Roy), and Dr. Alfred Bailey (Dean of Arts at the University of New Brunswick).<sup>21</sup> For the initial meetings the committee also included Dr. George MacBeath (Director the New Brunswick Museum) and sculptor Claude Roussel.<sup>22</sup>

To gain the federal government's support for the building's cultural impact, in an April 20, 1964, draft of the Federal-Provincial Confederation Memorial Project Agreement, Palmer proposed:

This edifice will include suitable interior decorations within the main entrance feature consisting of a large mural and wall panel decorations...  
The site and location are to form an important integral part of a planned

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<sup>19</sup> R. Palmer to Andre F. Richard, December 18, 1962. "Centennial Building: Interior Decorating – Murals" file, PANB.

<sup>20</sup> Andre F. Richard to Richard Palmer, January 8, 1963. "Centennial Building: Interior Decorating – Murals" file, PANB

<sup>21</sup> R. Palmer to R.A. Tweedie, March 23, 1964. "Centennial Building – Planning" file, PANB.

<sup>22</sup> While Roussel accepted, minutes from the meeting show him commending the government "for its desire to encourage the arts of our province," he excused himself after several meetings, admitting early on that he would definitely want to contribute to the public art that was to come and had to avoid a perceived conflict of interest. MacBeath also had to excuse himself from the committee after only two meetings as he was moving from the province.

overall complex of buildings devoted to Government and the Arts so as to enhance further the cultural centre of the Capital City.<sup>23</sup>

At the mural committee meeting on October 2, 1964, Cyrille Roy widened the direction as to where the building's artwork was headed. He thought that the work "should be a sculpture of some sort in relief" and that the media could be "mosaic, ceramic, painting, tapestry, metal sculpture, or fibreglass."<sup>24</sup> Minutes of the meeting show that they got right to the subject of modernism — how contemporary the visual language should be and the level of monumentality for which it should strive:

Dr Bailey: I wonder if our populace is educated to abstractions. Personally I don't like simple representational figures any more. When Claude Roussel was here we discussed going into some degree of abstraction. The idea is to utilize simplified figures that have become symbolic.

Mr Palmer: I thought you leaned more to naturalism.

Dr Bailey: I think you can strike a medium. But I think it looks Victorian, or at best Edwardian, to deal in simple representational work.

. . .

Mr. Phillips: This mural should express this moment in time. I think it must indicate the forces of the past being gathered up and burgeoned forth into a completely new future, sparked by technology.<sup>25</sup>

It's clear that they were eagerly charging ahead into "the future," and they knew the visual language had to harmonize with their ambition; it could not be tied down by the aesthetic of the past.

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<sup>23</sup> R. Palmer to Henry Irwin, April 20, 1964. "Centennial Building – miscellaneous file," RS416-1964/280, PANB.

<sup>24</sup> "Minutes of a meeting of the Committee on Murals for the New Brunswick provincial Building," 2 October 1964, "Centennial Building: Interior Decorating – Murals" file, PANB.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

By early 1965, the mural committee advertised for New Brunswick artists in the provincial newspapers, and ultimately received nine expressions of interest. Three artists made the second stage, and each artist had a solid reputation and experience in large sculptural works: Bruno Bobak, Claude Roussel, and John Hooper.<sup>26</sup> On March 11, 1965, a letter went out to the three, advising them that they had been asked “to submit a model of a proposed metal sculpture for the main lobby of the New Brunswick Confederation Memorial Building.”<sup>27</sup> Metal was specified as the medium for the sculpture, which was to fill a massive upper wall space measuring fifty feet wide by ten feet high. The theme was “The People of New Brunswick” and the letter implied that the mural sought to embody the modern spirit and aesthetic of the times:

The work should present a montage of Provincial activities — historical, cultural, political, educational and industrial. The work contemplates the use of simplified figures in a symbolic way, bearing in mind that the building is a Centennial memorial commemorating Confederation.<sup>28</sup>

They were given four months to submit a finished scale model and were each given one thousand dollars for the task.<sup>29</sup> Of the three submissions, Bruno Bobak created a series of standing figures, Claude Roussel created a sweeping panorama of stylized individuals and scenes in thin metal rod, and John Hooper designed a sculpture loaded with roughly carved figures and scenes portraying New Brunswick’s history and

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<sup>26</sup> Fred Phillips to Richard Palmer, March 11, 1965. PANB, “Centennial Building: Interior Decorating – Murals” file, PANB.

<sup>27</sup> (Letters from) R. Palmer to Claude Roussel, Bruno Bobak and John Hooper, March 11, 1965, “Centennial Building: Interior Decorating – Murals” file, PANB.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

the Fathers of Confederation. Hooper's ultimately won.<sup>30</sup>

Roussel remembers that the Centennial Building was “a focus point in New Brunswick pride. We always have a tendency to build something and just keep it so limited as far as having works that added warmth of shape and form — a place where people could identify.”<sup>31</sup> His lobby mural proposal is classic mid-1960s Roussel: playful, clean, technical, and stylized to a point that would satisfy modernists and traditionalists alike.<sup>32</sup> Harmonizing with the requested cultural, political, educational, and industrial themes, his composition was a tableau of human scenes surrounded by elements of their environment: a man holding a guitar and touching a tree, a teacher with five young children dancing around her (all holding flowers representing Indigenous youth and four founding European peoples of Canada), potato farmers in a field, a lumberjack piling wood, an industrial scene with mining cars, smokestacks, an atomic symbol, miners in a mine shaft, a lighthouse and lobster traps, and a fisherman pulling in his nets alongside a weir — all linked by a ribbon of spiky trees. Infused with metaphor and modern attributes of form, Roussel wrote in 1965 that “the elements were chosen on the basis of representation plus their plastic possibilities for a work of art.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> R. Palmer to John Hooper, 9 November 1965, “Centennial Building – miscellaneous file,” RS416-1965/274. 15, PANB.

<sup>31</sup> Claude Roussel, interview by author.

<sup>32</sup> Revealing his wide-ranging arsenal of material and styles, Roussel's cache of early study sketches shows him casting his net wide. Each version ends up with kindred themes and objects as the final model, but through different modes, such as a very sharp vertical/linear study with only objects, and a similar composition but with simple curvilinear shapes that alternate solid and open. The latter is remarkably similar to his 1965 brazed bronze sculpture “Air Shapes,” which graces the Fredericton Airport control tower, showing that the motif was definitely at the front of his creative mind that year.

<sup>33</sup> Claude Roussel to Richard Palmer, July 16, 1965. Personal archive of Claude Roussel.

At the February 1965 mural committee meeting, Palmer put forward a decisive proposal. Based on his recognition of the potential to elevate the artistic reach of the Centennial Building far beyond having simply a decorated lobby, he suggested:

some who had lost out on their bid for the main metal sculpture might be invited to produce other art for the building. He mentioned a reasonably large wall space in the Premier's area of the building immediately behind the wall that will carry the large metal sculpture; and one work for each of the floors above . . . . They should have a bearing upon New Brunswick, although not necessarily upon the Centennial.<sup>34</sup>

It was a worthy idea, and the committee sought out the advice of Stuart Smith, curator of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery, to help select and work with the artists. By their meeting of March 2, 1966, the committee had established a draft list of fourteen from which to choose; a list that shows the rich calibre of visual artists of which New Brunswick boasted in the mid-1960s.<sup>35</sup>

Five of these artists were ultimately chosen: Jack Humphrey, Alex Colville,<sup>36</sup> Bruno Bobak, Tom Forrestall, and Claude Roussel were offered upper floor murals.<sup>37</sup> The

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<sup>34</sup> "Minutes of a meeting of the Committee on Murals for the New Brunswick provincial Building," February 17, 1965, "Centennial Building: Interior Decorating – Murals" file, PANB.

<sup>35</sup> "Minutes of a meeting of the Committee on Murals for the New Brunswick provincial Building," March 2, 1966, "Centennial Building: Interior Decorating – Murals" file, PANB. The fourteen artists were: Jack Humphrey, Saint John; Fred Ross, Saint John; Miller Brittain, Saint John; Alex Colville, Sackville; Lawren Harris, Mount Allison University, Sackville; Bruno Bobak, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton; Molly Bobak, Fredericton; Tom Forrestall, Fredericton; Claude Roussel, Moncton; Rosamond Campbell, Saint John; Lucy Jarvis, Fredericton; Claude Picard, Edmundston; Ted Pulford, Mount Allison University, Sackville; Peter Furse, Hampton.

<sup>36</sup> Alex Colville did not execute his mural in the end. Dr. Bailey, forecasting possible issues, had previously suggested that "if Colville is too expensive or not interested, we could then call on Fred Ross," which all had agreed upon. What is incredibly unfortunate is that little negotiation took place with Colville. He turned the offer down when he claimed "the guidelines which you state in your letter are of such a nature that I would not be willing to do the job." He very likely would have needed more time than was allotted, or perhaps more payment (which the committee expected), and he was a painter — not an artist who dabbled in sculpture or relief

artists were free to choose the form and medium, but other considerations such as location, size, and theme were fixed, as the subject matter of the works generally related to the specific government department on the artist's designated floor.

At the widely attended opening of the Centennial Building, the murals were far from shrinking violets; they were front and centre in the officials' esteem and were held in the highest regard. In his address at the opening ceremony, André Richard made special mention of the "splendid artwork."<sup>38</sup> For the first few years, public tours were regularly given of the building, with the artworks lauded as one of the main attractions. As a group, the murals are one of the finest post-war collections of public art in Atlantic Canada. Individually, they are fascinating cases of New Brunswick artists pushing themselves beyond their comfort zones. Collectively, they are a testament to an enlightened government working to open the public's eyes to a broader world.

Following are the accounts of the artworks, floor by floor:

### **Ground floor lobby — John Hooper**

High on a travertine marble wall in the lobby of the Centennial Building, stretching almost forty-five feet long and depicting hundreds of years of the province's history, John Hooper's mural was his first major sculpture in Canada, and was the ideal

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works. But he was more than capable of designing inspiring modern murals within architectural space. What's more, the fine mural by Fred Ross that did end as the replacement was essentially a painting and it was eventually removed and lost.

<sup>37</sup> From the strength of his lobby mural proposal, Roussel was offered the 20-foot-long wall on the second floor. All other upper floor mural areas were in the main elevator lobbies, with walls framed at 8 feet 6 inches in height and 9 feet 2 inches in length.

<sup>38</sup> "Address by Public Works Minister Andre F. Richard: Official Opening - Centennial Building," March 14, 1967, 3, "Centennial Building – miscellaneous file," RS172-C.7.b, PANB.

centerpiece in a building that honoured Canada's hundred-year journey from 1867 (fig. 90). Winning the 1965 competition for the mural that would adorn the grand lobby, Hooper worked the design theme of "the People of New Brunswick" out on scaled sketches, using an episodic timeline narrative from left to right: Indigenous peoples, forests, ships, pioneers, building, cities, Confederation, industry, culture, and modern youth. The focus was the life-sized, tightly packed figures at the centre, representing the Fathers of Confederation. He then created a meticulous scale model out of coloured resin and fibreglass to work out the specific challenges of composition and depth.

New materials and technologies appeared on the sculpture scene in the 1960s. The provincial government had asked for a work in metal, and while Hooper had inquired about getting his work cast in bronze or aluminum, he finally settled on what was known as a cold cast bronze technique. This involved making a full-scale clay original, then a plaster negative mould of it, removing the clay and filling the mould with a thick layer of polyester resin bonded with finely powdered metal — all reinforced with fibreglass and a rigid frame — and finally removing the plaster mould. He had used the technique in 1961 for a hung wall sculpture at the Durban Marine Terminal in South Africa.<sup>39</sup> At the outset of the Centennial Building project, he explored the cost and availability of various metal powders such as nickel, aluminum, and stainless steel, but in the end he abandoned a silvery finish and settled on the time-honoured look of bronze. Using bronze powder for the colour gave the appearance of cast bronze but at a fraction of the cost and weight, and it was a process that he could do on his own without a

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<sup>39</sup> Tom Smart and George Fry, *The World of John Hooper* (Fredericton: the Beaverbrook Art Gallery, 1997), 50-51.



foundry or technicians. But one thing he could not do without was a large space for the massive project, and so he converted an old garage on his Hampton property into an insulated studio.

With a horizontal layout punctuated by recessed scenes and figures thrusting outwards for emphasis, Hooper's final polyester resin and bronze powder mural concurred with the artist's view that "major considerations have been the architectural setting allied with the aesthetic."<sup>40</sup> With the main lobby being broken up physically and visually by the four slender marble columns, Hooper was adamant in his proposal that a single, unified piece was necessary, stating: "A sculptural design made up of separate units would only further diminish the simplicity and impact of the entrance hall."<sup>41</sup> Anchoring the long mural were three groups of tall standing characters, in the middle and at the two ends. At the left edge was an Indigenous figure and three European settlers. The centre featured a group of eight formally-dressed men representing New Brunswick's Fathers of Confederation. At the right-hand end of the mural were two older men and a young contemporary couple holding hands, completed by a bold "HOOPER66" signature.

Smaller-scaled montages and compartments pepper the spaces between, coinciding left to right with the sweep of New Brunswick's history from the age of European contact to the modern era: log palisade forts, river-running canoes, wooden homes in early settlements, sailing ships, lumbermen and log drives, a railway steam

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<sup>40</sup> "New Brunswick. Confederation Memorial Building. Proposed Metal Sculpture. Designed by – John Hooper," 2, John Hooper fonds, PANB.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 3.

engine and riverboat, Saint John's Great Fire of 1877, steel battleships, a hydroelectric dam, oil tankers at the Saint John refinery, a timber truck and log pile, modern mill structures, a helmeted workman, miners deep below the surface, a surveyor, and a scientist with a microscope. Once installed, the mural was a dramatic and weighty presence when one entered the lobby, especially so in the early years before the current security barrier was installed and when the translucent tile ceiling was completely lit. Once up, the work was burnished and rubbed with raw linseed oil to bring out the surface texture and character.

As curator Tom Smart wrote in his 1997 monograph on Hooper, the mural established his national renown (he was soon given a sculpture commission for Expo 67) but it also set him on his way to becoming a wood sculptor: "The completed relief mural announced Hooper as a forceful presence in the New Brunswick cultural landscape and other public commissions soon began to flow his way."<sup>42</sup>

## **Second floor — Claude Roussel**

By the early 1960s Claude Roussel had started to explore simple welded metal sculpture that focused on lines and angular planes, often with roughly textured solid infill of metal or resin. Appropriately, as a native of Edmundston, Roussel was given a mural theme of "Forest Industry including the Pulp and Paper Industry":<sup>43</sup>

That was right down my alley because I had a lot of respect for pulp and paper, which was the backbone of [the provincial economy]. I was raised

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<sup>42</sup> Smart and Fry, 66.

<sup>43</sup> R. Palmer to A. F. Richard, June 23, 1966, 3, "Centennial Building – miscellaneous file," RS416-1966/263, PANB.

in that atmosphere of papermaking. My father worked for forty-some years in the mill at Fraser's Company. It was a very difficult life.<sup>44</sup>

Roussel used the same metal rod style he proposed for his unrealized lobby scheme. The linear design, production technique, and the left-to-right storyline all stayed true to his earlier lobby mural idea. "I wanted to concentrate on the line" he said. "I had to simplify the shapes so that it would represent the subject clearly and respecting the limits of metal rods."<sup>45</sup> His idea of building a narrative of the broader industry, from the forest to the mill, are evident in the mural: a chainsaw and wood piling pair of figures, to pike pole-wielding log drivers, then the industrial ending implying huge rolls of paper (fig. 91). Roussel did all the welding himself, using steel rods afterwards painted dark green, a budget-conscious and flexible medium with which he was increasingly comfortable — but this time without infill.<sup>46</sup> With spare amounts of steel rod, he implied softwood trees by tightly welding their spindly branches and needles, and suggest the heft of raw logs and the bodies of the burly lumbermen using the open space between the outlines. The final mural is minimal, linear, with human figures that are modern, mechanistic, and equally firm and dynamic, their stances reminiscent of Marcel Duchamp's legendary "Nude Descending a Staircase."

Roussel's Centennial Building mural was done at a time of great change in the forest industry. In 1960 small crews, horse teams, and log drives on the province's rivers were still commonplace; by 1970 they had all but disappeared. Mechanization and changing economics had fully modernized the processing landscape. Roussel's mural

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<sup>44</sup> Claude Roussel, interview by author.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

was designed in the thick of this transformation, and his subjects were equally relics of past practices and depictions of what the province deemed the bright path forward. His chainsaw wielding lumberjack was given the same amount of space as the nimble log driver with his pike pole pushing felled trees down a watercourse, and the labourer piling rings of cut logs by hand was counterpointed by the large spirals of the paper mill rolls. Surrounded by a dancing fence of trees, the mural's message was loud and clear: the natural resources of the New Brunswick forest were serious fuel for the economic engine of the late 1960s.

Roussel has always felt strongly about the integration of works of art in architecture.<sup>47</sup> He believed that art could bring to a building that makes the architecture complete. Roussel epitomized the promise of Louis Robichaud's Equal Opportunity reforms: a worldly and broadly educated bilingual citizen, still very much grounded in New Brunswick. At his core, Roussel was a humanist, and his art was a blueprint for New Brunswickers to imagine a progressive future that had aesthetics at the core of their advancement.

### **Third floor — Bruno Bobak**

After he accepted a position as resident artist at the University of New Brunswick in 1960, Bruno Bobak, his wife Molly Lamb Bobak, and their two children moved to Fredericton from British Columbia. In Vancouver, Bruno Bobak was an important member of a wave of young artists, architects, and craftspeople that were nurturing a

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<sup>47</sup> In 1964, still in his early thirties, Roussel won the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada's Allied Arts Medal for outstanding creative achievement in the arts connected to architecture.

fundamental shift in Canadian art. His work already collected by the National Gallery in Ottawa, he was chosen to represent Canada at several international exhibitions, including the 1958 World's Fair in Brussels. The arrival of the Bobaks to New Brunswick was a substantial boost to the local cultural and visual art landscape.

As an acclaimed Canadian mid-career artist, Bruno Bobak was in the midst of a seismic personal shift in style and approach. His pre-1960 drawings and watercolours were inspired by the breadth and haunting melancholy of nature ever-present at the edges of a burgeoning Vancouver. But with the new decade and surroundings, the linearity and stark natural tones of his work were radically transformed, to colourful expressionistic oil paintings of human figures and city landscapes in thick impasto, along with related drawings and prints.

No longer focusing on flora and fauna but on human figures and their emotional character, his ink-on-paper works grew in size and became more immediate and raw, the chiseled lines rougher and more jagged. Some woodblock prints were even done on a massive scale, using an entire sheet of plywood to capture life-sized figures.<sup>48</sup> This new avenue saw Bobak's works embrace the style and energy of German Expressionist woodcuts by artists such as Käthe Kollwitz and Max Beckmann.

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<sup>48</sup> Woodblock printing is an ancient, tactile medium where the "drawing" is created by gouging into a smooth, flat piece of wood with gravers or chisels. Ink is rolled over the remaining uncarved surface, a paper sheet pressed onto the block, and the cut-out areas remain blank as they make no contact with the paper. The subject can appear like a white line drawing on an inked background, or the complete reverse, depending on whether the figure lines themselves are cut or if the surrounding negative space is removed and the figure left as untouched wood. The former is what Bobak would do for the Centennial Building using plywood, but with a surprise twist to the wood/paper convention.

Bobak was already a skilled muralist before he moved east. In 1952 he won a juried competition for the design and construction of a ten-foot by twenty-eight-foot tall cast concrete relief mural above the main entrance to the Vancouver School of Art — a work as impressive and sophisticated as any mid-century modern architectural artwork in Canada.<sup>49</sup> With his qualifications and reputation, they handed him the subject of “Mining Industry” for his Centennial Building mural.<sup>50</sup> Bobak channeled the blackness of coal dust and dark underground tunnels in his initial ink study where two men stand in front of a black background with a miner’s helmet, pick, and shovel, exuding equal measures of weariness and proud labour in their poses. On May 17, 1966, he sent the sketch along with a letter to Richard Palmer, admitting that he had yet to start his research into the miners or refine the actual design, but he was sold on the palpable “character” of the sketch and that he considered it a “happy solution” for the project.<sup>51</sup> Describing the future mural, Bobak related that “My intention is to carve the design in low relief on wood and then cover the surface with a durable washable surface. I would like to treat the thing boldly and graphically and very dark perhaps with a slight change in colour.”<sup>52</sup>

He translated the root idea of the sketch into the final carved eight-by-nine-foot plywood mural, which was essentially a huge gouged woodblock painted black on the

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<sup>49</sup> John Leroux, *Bruno Bobak: Modern in Nature* (Fredericton: Beaverbrook Art Gallery, 2014), 4, 8.

<sup>50</sup> R. Palmer to Hon. A. F. Richard, June 23, 1966, 3, “Centennial Building – miscellaneous file,” RS416-1966/263, PANB.

<sup>51</sup> Bruno Bobak to R. Palmer, May 17, 1966, “Centennial Building: Interior Decorating – Murals” file, PANB.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

smooth unworked surface, with organic gouges of light reddish-brown (fig. 92). The initial two miners became three, standing in a balanced layout clutching digging tools with their shirt sleeves rolled up in an expression of strength, the meandering carving marks on their bare arms, hands, and faces suggesting sinews of muscle. A central helmeted miner (likely a Bobak self-portrait), his brawny arms resting on a long shovel, stands between two men, all engaging the viewer with their gaze. The severe black void surrounding the trio is skirted by a warm cut-wood outline, notably around their heads where it practically acts as a glowing halo, evoking dignity and sacredness akin to a Renaissance painting of a saint or the Bible's three wise men. Although Bobak certainly studied and measured the implements and environment of the province's miners, the temperament of the mural is more critically one of humanistic earthiness and sacrifice.

As the largest work he had ever produced in New Brunswick, the mural gathered wide attention and admiration before its final installation, as the main feature at a Bruno and Molly Bobak art exhibition at the UNB Art Centre in October 1966. True to his polymath spirit that explored all materials, Bobak created several other mural works in the 1960s, but this time out of welded metal: a 1969 abstract welded metal sculpture called simply *Engineering* that hung in the lobby of the new UNB engineering building, and a large lacy metal screen that graced the interior of the Atlantic Provinces Pavilion at Expo 67. All evidence that one of the province's foremost artists was as adept at heroic public sculpture as he was at easel painting and works on paper.

#### **Fourth floor — Jack Humphrey**

As one of the deans of Eastern Canadian visual art, Humphrey was given a Centennial Building mural commission with the theme of “Fishing Industry,”<sup>53</sup> initially writing to Richard Palmer that he looked forward to “designing something simple and decorative.”<sup>54</sup> Humphrey produced a series of gestural sketches of offshore working fishermen at the water’s edge dressed in their hats and garb, carrying rope and oars, surrounded by the trappings of their calling: boats, weirs, traps, nets, and yes, fish, which became the basis of the final mural (fig. 93).

He chose glass mosaic as a medium, and it would not be easy. Having been a painter/draftsman his entire career, he would have to let go some control to work with this unfamiliar material. Modern mosaics were far more prevalent in Central Canada, due to their cost and their needing specialized craftsmen, and beyond a smattering of modern churches, very few public mosaics were done in the Maritimes. But these limitations didn’t deter Humphrey, as he saw mosaic as a logical bridge between easel painting and a sculptural mural, as well as something that couldn’t be ruined over time. As Stuart Smith recalls, “Jack was obsessed with his place in history and despite his lack of experience or technical skill, wanted to design in mosaic because in his mind it was more resistant to meddling or alteration.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> R. Palmer to Hon. A. F. Richard, June 23, 1966, 3, “Centennial Building – miscellaneous file,” RS416-1966/263, PANB.

<sup>54</sup> Jack Humphrey to R. Palmer, April 20, 1966, “Centennial Building: Interior Decorating – Murals” file, PANB.

<sup>55</sup> Stuart Smith e-mail to John Leroux, August 2016.



Olga Pugliese, a scholar of Italian-Canadian studies, has written that there was a “flurry of activity in the production of mosaics in the 1960s” brought on by the convergence of “the presence and availability of European-trained artists and craftsmen, many of whom were recent immigrants to Canada .... Further, modernist architecture, with its stress on simple lines ... lent itself to the use of mosaic decoration in the 1960s.”<sup>56</sup> Most of these artists/craftsmen came from Northern Italy and many would settle in Toronto to work for the Conn-Arts Studio. The firm not only produced Humphrey’s Centennial Building mural, but the company claimed many of the major Canadian mosaic works between its foundation around 1930 to its closing in the mid-1980s.<sup>57</sup>

The mural was made up of tens of thousands of *tesserae*, or small squared individual mosaic tiles.<sup>58</sup> As the piece was to be enlarged by the mosaic craftsmen from

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<sup>56</sup> Olga Zorzi Pugliese, “Beautifying the City: 1960s Artistic Mosaics by Italian Canadians in Toronto,” *Quaderni d’italianistica* XXVIII, no. 1, 2007: 94.

<sup>57</sup> The 1960s were a heyday for the Conn-Arts Studio, when the company created a great many public works including modern mosaics for the Centennial Fountain in Vancouver, St. Peter’s Cathedral in Peterborough, Carleton University in Ottawa, and in Toronto, the Connaught Medical Research Laboratory, the Bell Canada building, and Our Lady of Sorrows church. The company hired a wave of Italians from Friuli, including three who helped create the Centennial Building mural: Luigi Olerni, Sereno Zucchiatti, and Mario Della Rossa. Olerni attended the renowned Friuli School of Mosaic in Spilimbergo, Italy, graduated in 1954, and worked for Conn-Arts between 1960 and 1970. In a 2016 interview, Olerni remembers laying out the Centennial Building mural at the Conn-Arts studio at Downsview near Toronto. Luigi Olerni, telephone interview by author, August 2016.

<sup>58</sup> The tesserae were a classic mosaic material known as *smalti*: opaque glass tiles from the renowned Italian glass manufacturing island of Murano, near Venice. The smalti are made from richly-coloured molten glass, kiln-fired and hand-cut to varied cube shapes using a sharp hammer and chisel. A medium dating back to Byzantine times, smalti produce an almost infinite range of colour possibilities that never dull over time, and their irregular finish makes them a strong reflector of light.

a two-foot-square sketch provided by Humphrey, it took several weeks to select the right coloured/sized *smalti* and lay them out full-scale on a large flat surface.<sup>59</sup>

Wanting “the contours of the fishermen to express their characters,” Humphrey also hoped for colours that would best represent such things as the “fishermen’s weatherbeaten skin” and that the artisans should “regard faces as areas of pattern rather than with features.”<sup>60</sup> The final mural is successful, but still has limitations. The colour and texture of the smalti tiles are gorgeous, and the subject matter in the mural is certainly appropriate, but the fishermen, fish, and objects seem somewhat listless compared to the bare waves of coloured tile that glide through the background. Proof that artistic collaboration isn’t always easy, especially over long distances with new materials; in some ways the work’s greatest value is that of a respected artist pushing his own limits.

### **Fifth floor — Tom Forrestall**

The 1960s were years of tremendous artistic progress for Tom Forrestall. He became widely celebrated for his meticulous egg tempera and watercolour paintings — realist works that captured an atmospheric sense of mystery, abandonment, and wistfulness, while affirming a deep sense of nobility and grace. His art focused on every detail, every tree branch, and every weathered barn board grain. Alden Nowlan once dubbed him in

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<sup>59</sup> The entire mosaic was divided into roughly twelve-inch-square panels whose tiles interlocked like a puzzle and were glued to a paper backing for shipping to New Brunswick.

<sup>60</sup> Jack Humphrey to Mr. Svoboda, [n.d.], Jack Humphrey fonds, “New Brunswick Dept. of Public Works” file, NGC Archives.

a poem “this Meister Tom who makes a separate portrait of each blade of grass.”<sup>61</sup>

Belying these labels, the 1960s was also a decade where he worked in ceramic tile and cast bronze, and seriously explored an avenue seemingly contradictory to his pictures: raw welded metal sculpture.

While the paintings were his bread and butter over the years, Forrestall’s other artistic mediums have been largely forgotten. Three of his notable 1960s projects include a unique sheet metal mural at the Centennial Building, its somewhat linked piece at Expo 67’s Atlantic Provinces Pavilion, and a series of modernist mosaic tile murals for the new Provincial Teachers’ College in Fredericton. Forrestall’s sculptural centrepiece at the Expo Pavilion was a twenty-foot tall welded steel totem made of abandoned metal farm items collected during the establishment of the Mactaquac Dam’s head pond, where hundreds of working farms were left deserted, soon to be flooded underwater.<sup>62</sup>

While Forrestall’s metal works may have seemed crude next to his paintings, there was an insight and tactile sophistication to them, as well as a sense of humour and irony that would later appear in much of his work. So, as a trusted artist who could handle large sculptural panels, Forrestall was given a Centennial Building mural with the

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<sup>61</sup> Tom Forrestall and Alden Nowlan, *Shaped by This Land* (Fredericton: University Press of New Brunswick, 1974), 18.

<sup>62</sup> As a self-confessed artistic anthropologist, Forrestall gathered artefacts with great fervour: “There were beautiful bits and pieces. [NB Power] got us a truck and we went around with a guy. We’d ask ‘can you get that old piece of ploughshare off that thing?’ and so on. We took it all back to the Horsnell Machine & Iron Works on King Street in downtown Fredericton. That’s where we put it all together.” Tom Forrestall, interview with author, Dartmouth, N.S., August 22, 2016.

theme of “Farming Industry,” a fitting and meaningful subject for an artist who captured and cared for the rural Maritimes’ texture and temperament.<sup>63</sup>

He described his initial mural scheme to Richard Palmer as “done in wood and welded steel. I would contrast the land and space in our province with the complexity of the farming industry.”<sup>64</sup> Early conceptual sketches show the artist playing with simpler compositions, while later drawings have the mural leaning towards a fusion of large shaped wooden panels with a tighter, complex cluster of steel farm items at one end. Somewhere along the line, wood was dropped. The eventual mural consisted of welded sheet steel in slight relief, forming a tight grouping of farm animals, implements, plants, barns, and a large tractor in the middle with its oversize rear wheel at the centre (fig. 94). Cut voids and darker tones on simple rear shapes representing rich agricultural soil helped give the mural its edges. Roughness was exploited in the exposed welds and torched cuts.

Forgoing the classical tradition of metal sculpture where assistants or hired hands often did the actual fabrication, Forrestall was very hands-on and composed the final cutting and placement details in the trusted Horsnell Machine & Iron Works. He did all the grinding and buffing in the shop himself to give it texture, because he “didn’t want it too shiny or too immaculate,” and he very much considers it a collaboration with Horsnell’s:

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<sup>63</sup> R. Palmer to Hon. A. F. Richard, June 23, 1966, 3, “Centennial Building – miscellaneous file,” RS416-1966/263, PANB.

<sup>64</sup> Tom Forrestall to R. Palmer, May 14, 1966, 1, “Centennial Building: Interior Decorating – Murals” file, PANB.

In all of the sculptures that I did with them, I would sometimes even hold the things with big tweezers and say 'put that there right like that' and they'd heat weld it on. I did that with the Centennial Building piece, every bit of it. I would look at it, fiddle around, and ask 'does that look good?' I'd shift and turn it around a little bit and say 'OK, let's put that right there.' And they'd tack weld it on. I just wanted good welding as it's a tricky little thing. Those guys knew their business through and through. I must commend them for that.<sup>65</sup>

Forrestall considered the Centennial Building mural one of his shaped works, tied as much with his bent-metal framed paintings as it was with his more dimensional metal sculptures with their rough cuts and drippy, untouched welds. He felt "the [mural] shape mirrors some of the shapes inside it. It relates inward, not outward."<sup>66</sup> The mural's irregular outline form floated on its white backing wall, framed in a sense with the architecturally set rectangular brown border.

The thickness of the work had to be tight, yet still perceptible. The whole was about as abstracted as it could be while still having recognizable elements within it, which he remembers as being "what was expected of me for the commission." In retrospect, Forrestall feels that the mural's execution is very much of its time as a late 1960s work.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Tom Forrestall, interview with author.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

## Sixth floor — Fred Ross

Admitting to having doubts during the early 1960s on his figurative inclination,<sup>68</sup> Fred Ross felt pressure to experiment and be “more adventuresome.”<sup>69</sup> A pair of large murals gave him license to ruthlessly deviate from tradition and the physical settings that defined his easel work. The first was a 1961 semi-abstract mural measuring forty feet long by twelve feet wide, painted directly on the wall of a common room for Prince of Wales College in Charlottetown, P.E.I.

The Prince of Wales mural is a massive plane of loosely drawn black flowing lines filled with vaguely geometrical forms of bright colour. The composition centres on a triple-faced figure “representing the approach to the sciences, arts, and industry” whose multiple hands grip stylized items of study.<sup>70</sup> Akin to the “sailboat” planes in his Saint John Tourist Office mural, a series of sharply abstracted bird-like forms animate the space around the central figures, implying a sort of mystical energy and dynamism. This approach would manifest itself most powerfully several years later in his final, most sophisticated modern mural: his circular Centennial Building panel.

Ross’s Centennial Building mural was a seven-foot-six-inch diameter tondo panel of mixed media on half-inch plywood, projecting slightly from its bright white background. Given the theme of “Literature of the Nineteenth Century in New

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<sup>68</sup> Ross’s late 1950s painting experiments with modern slants show this leaning.

<sup>69</sup> Fred Ross, interview by author, April 14, 2001.

<sup>70</sup> “Ceremony Officially Opens PWC’s Montgomery Hall,” *The Guardian* (Charlottetown), 3 October 1961, 5.

Brunswick,”<sup>71</sup> he emphasized the names of Bliss Carman and Sir Charles G.D. Roberts, along with the anniversary dates 1867 and 1967 at the left-hand side, which overlapped a textured arc (fig. 95).

Painted in tones of blue and brown with red highlights, with swaths of sand, acrylic, burlap, and nails added here and there for textural effect, the mural leans toward the early Synthetic Cubist forms of Picasso and Braque. The result was a modern image that was tighter and more coarsely dimensional than his Prince of Wales mural. While at first glance, the Centennial Building mural appears almost completely abstract in configuration, Ross’s fanciful curves are also distinct representations of book pages, letters, and envelopes.

In an August 3, 1966 letter, Ross wrote of his admiration for the Centennial Building’s architecture, wanting his work to be a kindred spirit to its surroundings:

I feel that the architecture demands a basically abstract approach, and the purity of the circle suggests the continuing never ending progress of literature.... To sum up I would like the mural to be basically decorative, with strong tactile values, elegance, and simplicity to compliment the same qualities in the architecture of the building.<sup>72</sup>

In the end, the mural was an exceptional event in Ross’s career, and it was called a “dynamic abstract” and a “focal point” after it was unveiled.<sup>73</sup> But Ross’s foray into the avant-garde was eventually overlooked and time was not kind to the Centennial Building panel. It was removed from its wall during a renovation in the early 1990s, and its whereabouts are presently unknown – although by all accounts it was likely destroyed.

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<sup>71</sup> R. Palmer to A. F. Richard, June 23, 1966, 3, “Centennial Building – miscellaneous file,” RS416-1966/263, PANB.

<sup>72</sup> Fred Ross to R. Palmer, August 3, 1966. “Fred Ross fonds,” PANB.

<sup>73</sup> *The Daily Gleaner*, March 13, 1967, 24.

Out of the public eye for too long, the Centennial Building murals reflect the tensions between local traditions and international perspectives. These murals, their creators, their subjects, and their patrons speak to the cultural and political aspirations of the era. Nevertheless, there not been a similar instance of a profoundly and carefully decorated public building since this one in New Brunswick. As Stuart Smith suggests, “It was the first NB government building to have a complete fine art programme, and it was the last. Often all it takes is imagination and optimism. 1967 had that in abundance.”<sup>74</sup>

The Centennial Building and its public art demonstrate how seamlessly a functional cultural icon could be made if political, bureaucratic, and artistic aspirations come together. It speaks to a time when such things mattered, when governments eagerly expressed their ambitions and interests through modern art, architecture, design, and culture.

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<sup>74</sup> Stuart Smith e-mail to John Leroux, August 2016.



## Conclusion

A tall white structure stands upright at the busy riverside junction of Fredericton's Regent Street and St. Anne's Point Drive. To locals and outsiders alike, its tapered form is intimately familiar due to its wooden shingled exterior and bright red trim (fig. 96). It is obviously a lighthouse – or is it? While visitors are busy snapping digital images of their kids standing in front of it, they would be scarcely aware of the established role it has diligently played since its recent construction in 1989: selling ice cream to tourists. In the early 1990s, Fredericton's tourism literature described it as "a genuine St. John River lighthouse," ignoring the fact that it was then only a few years old and it was privately built as a huge working billboard for the *Pioneer Princess* riverboat rides.<sup>1</sup> It was an inappropriate representation of the city's built heritage; a pastiche in a city that never even had a lighthouse.

While the St. John River still possesses lighthouses downriver, they are generally small structures that are dwarfed by what Fredericton now labels as the *Lighthouse on the Green*. With its steel fire escape stairs hanging off the tower and a fisherman's rope railing enclosing a collection of plastic patio chairs, the new structure speaks to a misguided perception of the province as a place of fisherfolk and quaint lighthouse keepers – a tangible instance of Ian McKay-like "Quest of the Folk" observations, but in a New Brunswick context.

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<sup>1</sup> Built and operated by local businessman Robin Hanson in the 1980s, the *Pioneer Princess* attempted to look like Mississippi riverboats rather than the authentic St. John River type.

Two other recent examples of pseudo-traditional developments landlocked alongside the Trans-Canada highway near Moncton's Magnetic Hill are the Moncton Casino and Wharf Village.<sup>2</sup> Built in 1987 beside an artificial pond, Wharf Village consists of a series of nine themed shop buildings under the guise of "a traditional Maritime fishing village setting."<sup>3</sup> The provincially-funded casino's entrance is a glazed imitation lighthouse tower that is miles from any coastline. So why is New Brunswick reduced to getting fake lighthouses, and why was this supported by a provincial government that once aspired to a modern cultural expression for its infrastructure? What is unsettling about the casino is not its theme-park commercialism, but its questionable attempt at recreating an environment that is so far removed from the very cultural context that inspired it. Moncton never was a fishing village, nor a coastal community. It's a bilingual and urbane New Brunswick metropolis that was founded in response to modern transportation infrastructure. This pattern of welcoming kitsch at the dawn of the twenty-first century and disposing of modernism aligns with Clement Greenberg's assessment of industrial capitalism needing something to replace the genuine culture that it had made irrelevant:

To fill the demand of the new market, a new commodity was devised: ersatz culture, kitsch, destined for those who, insensible to the values of genuine culture, are hungry nevertheless for the diversion that only culture of some sort can provide.... Kitsch pretends to demand nothing of its customers except their money – not even their time.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> One can also include the similar "Ritchie's Landing" tourist village in Miramichi.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bmwunstopable.com/listings/magnetic-hillamusement-park-moncton-nb-canada>, accessed August 9, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Clement Greenberg, "Avant Garde and Kitsch," in *Collected Essays and Criticism, vol. 1 Perceptions and Judgments, 1939-1944*, ed. John O'Brien (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 12.

With the Centennial Building, the complexities of modernism's cultural consideration are a case in point. Although the former Liberal provincial government was enthusiastic about the building's artistic, social, and functional legacy, and thus initiated a full restoration and refurbishment in early 2017, the ensuing Progressive Conservative administration halted the project and sold the property.<sup>5</sup> Cost-cutting reasons were cited, even though construction had begun many months prior.<sup>6</sup> Far from universally applauded before the project was mothballed, a *Telegraph Journal* editorial lambasted the Liberal regime after the restoration announcement, in what it saw as "a sad testament to the lack of imagination in New Brunswick's corridors of power...."<sup>7</sup> At the turn of the twenty-first century, the province's past rapport with modernism, and certainly its key local examples, was habitually ignored, often considered so daunting by the public, developers, and governments that the material and cultural integrity of those decades was severely maligned. As a formerly recognized symbol of excellence and provincial achievement, many saw the Centennial Building as regressive, rather than progressive.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, the innovative 1950s PEG Building and Avarð-Dixon Building at Mount Allison University were altered in the late 1990s to the point where the original modern

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<sup>5</sup> Andrew Waugh, "Sold, for \$4M – but without a courthouse," *Telegraph-Journal*, December 19, 2019, A1.

<sup>6</sup> Katrina Clarke, "Province: Centennial Project is Dead," *Daily Gleaner*, December 13, 2018, A1.

<sup>7</sup> "Editorial: What's Past is Prologue," *Telegraph-Journal*, February 24, 2017, A8.

<sup>8</sup> In 2004, the author nominated the Centennial Building as an official New Brunswick Provincial Historic Site. Following the nomination's rejection, then Deputy Minister of Supply & Services, G. Stephenson Wheatley met with the author, stating that while he believed the building was significant and deserved the designation, he felt that a convincing argument couldn't have been made to the provincial government as the building was not understood or appreciated enough by the public at that time.

buildings became unrecognizable. In the case of Avard-Dixon, a complete renovation in 1994 saw the exterior concrete block/glass/panel skin removed and replaced with the now familiar rock-faced red sandstone. The ribbon glazing was changed to a spare fenestration of punched square windows with divided lites and stone lintels. A shingled hip roof was placed above the flat roof, with new wood-clad gabled dormers periodically set along the edge. The entry portal's colourful abstract ceramic tile mural by Lawren P. Harris was maintained – albeit just barely.<sup>9</sup> Whether it was a case of the 1990s university administration being ashamed of modernist traits, or whether the desire for red sandstone uniformity was too strong, the change resulted in the Avard-Dixon building being altered to a point of banal predictability. Several years later, the PEG Building would suffer the same fate. As an April 2000 article admitted, the new sandstone exterior finish gave the PEG building “a similar look to other buildings on campus.”<sup>10</sup>

These instances indicate that at the dawn of the millennium, the daring technical and social spirit of important Mount Allison buildings was misunderstood. While new stone skins may have appeared to many as aligning with the context of the university, a pluralistic mix of styles and materials would have been much more in keeping with the architectural narrative of Mount Allison's preceding century and a half. The 1950s pair

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<sup>9</sup> The importance of the exterior artwork was lamentably not brought to the attention of the construction workers during the renovation. It would have been destroyed by hammers in minutes had it not been for Virgil Hammock, the former head of the Fine Arts Department, who was alerted by a passerby that they were starting to shatter off the tiles. He ran over, “essentially put his body between the workers and the mural,” and quickly alerted the administration to the skirmish. Word immediately came down from above to keep the mural. Virgil Hammock, interview by author, August, 2014, Sackville, NB.

<sup>10</sup> *Campus Notebook: Mount Allison University's community newsletter*, March/April 2000, 4.

were structures out of step with the dominant building language of the campus and could not compete with the recent hunger for a reassuring 'presence of the past.' These actions represent a calculated shift that fosters a respectable and somewhat touristic view for those 'from away,' as much as it implies the reality of a contemporary East-Coast university.

Architectural historian Steven Mannell explains that the reverse ought to be championed:

So why worry about modern heritage in a region where many feel that modernity has failed? There are the worthy reasons, including our obligation to bear witness to the continuum of our heritage, not just to an imagined once-upon-a-time 'golden age' .... Our built modern heritage is a legacy of ambition, will and symbolism, left for our benefit and use by those who came before us.... It is puzzling that contemporary Atlantic Canadians are easily motivated to conserve buildings from the pre-modern era, a time that most would find oppressive to inhabit in social, political and economic terms, yet are uncomfortable recognizing the value of the built heritage of the post-war era, which expresses such legacies as democratization, human rights, social mobility, access to education and health care, access to decent housing and the arts, women's and minority rights, and improved standards of living.<sup>11</sup>

This probe of cultural modernism is New Brunswick history. The fact that the province's modern artistic and material bearings have rarely been investigated in depth or celebrated outside of a select group in the recent past, has, in my opinion, not only clouded the public's conception of its value, but sometimes its very survival.<sup>12</sup> Following the Great Depression, and certainly by mid-century, New Brunswick was a geopolitical

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<sup>11</sup> Steven Mannell, "The Dream and Lie of Progress: Modern Heritage, Regionalism, and Folk Traditions in Atlantic Canada," *Journal for the Society of the Study of Architecture in Canada* 36, no. 1 (2011): 102-103.

<sup>12</sup> The removal and eventual destruction of Fred Ross's modern Centennial Building mural is a compelling instance of this, as it was the only completely abstract mural from the building's suite of six aforementioned public artworks.

entity that faced adversity, but was earnestly intent on “becoming.” Over the past several decades, this self-assurance has often contracted. Confidence, opportunity, and even the population level dropped considerably in many areas. Imagining a genuinely optimistic political leadership, media, and public seems difficult, if not implausible for much of the population today.<sup>13</sup> During the post-war boom, by understanding the province’s weaknesses and focusing on its strengths, the government(s) and engaged citizenry of New Brunswick focused on its potential in the Canadian state. They began to deal with inter-provincial restrictive policies, reconsidered the role of Acadian society within the halls of government, managed the growing post-war social safety net, and built a progressive infrastructure to accommodate the burgeoning growth of business, energy, transportation, and industry. The era’s socio-economic and political evolution was immense, and it was clearly expressed in modern forms that dovetailed with the public’s expectations of where the region was headed, and how it needed to embody that direction. From the 1930s to the late 1960s, attitudes and expectations of New Brunswickers became increasingly aligned with political policies of change and growth. This was concurrently demonstrated in the era’s extensive modernist visual and tactile practices of artists, architects, designers, teachers, patrons, and others, attaining its apex during the mid-1960s. The collaborative, diverse, and sturdy nature of the Centennial Building stands as an ideal expression of this. Yet this trust in visual modernity as social symbol would soon change due to complex factors.

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<sup>13</sup> See Tony Tremblay’s current research in: Michael Staples, “Prof asks: Why is N.B. often portrayed as ‘backward’?” *Daily Gleaner*, November 21, 2018, A6.

## The modernist erosion

North American culture was increasingly prosperous and comfortable during the unprecedented growth of the 1950s and 1960s, but social norms radically shifted at the end of the latter decade through protest, violence, economic pessimism, and the coming-of-age of the Baby Boom generation. By the beginning of the 1970s, the energy crisis, Watergate, and a severe economic slowdown stole much of the enthusiasm from the progressive ideals of only a few years previous. The stormiest events and temperaments south of the border (Vietnam and Civil Rights) not being directly connected to Canadian policy, made our landscape less volatile, although the broader zeitgeist did change social attitudes and actions in specific matters north of the border.

The 1960s were a sustained period of collective optimism and positive economic outlook for New Brunswick, but by the 1970s and 1980s it would fall back into being a region of recurring economic slumps and population stagnation. The old guard's belief in the static nature of New Brunswick society was being tested and undermined in the late 1960s by students, especially during the Université de Moncton's year of protest and the "Strax Affair" at the University of New Brunswick (both 1968-69). These saw considerable student protest attempt to wrestle social change and power shifts from administrative authority.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See Peter C. Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom: The 1968 Strax Affair at the University of New Brunswick* (Formac: Halifax, 2012) and Jean-Philippe Warren et Julien Massicotte, "La fermeture du département de sociologie de l'Université de Moncton: histoire d'une crise politico-épistémologique," *Canadian Historical Review* 87, no. 3 (septembre 2006). The eventual outcomes made for a more democratically governed UNB as student voices were brought to the table, although it also ended the UNB Presidential career of Colin B. Mackay. The Affair's occurrence in 1968 was no coincidence, as it was also the year of massive protests throughout

Marshall Berman categorized 1960s attitudes towards modernism into three tendencies: affirmative, negative, and withdrawn.<sup>15</sup> These seem appropriate in the case of New Brunswick; the 1960s witnessed vast social and demographic changes that put the preceding eras' attitudes through the wringer. While artists were to be able to break down the barriers between art and other human activities (commercial and entertainment pursuits fuelling pop art, for example), the affirmative vision of modernism also "encouraged writers, painters, dancers, composers and filmmakers to break down the boundaries of their specializations and work together on mixed-media productions and performances that would create richer and more multivalent arts."<sup>16</sup> The converse to this optimistic and pluralistic change were the negative and withdrawn tendencies, the former embodied internationally by a virtually unimpeded Robert Moses as he waged war against the complex and noisy street life of inner city New York and helped empty the city of many of its middle-class citizens during the 1950s-60s. New Brunswick had its episode of Moses-like urban devastation in the form of Saint John's urban renewal throughout the 1960s. Out of such catharsis, another social movement arose, hell-bent on halting similar projects, understanding the value of life on the street, and embracing a nuanced understanding of heritage, complexity, and depth. The late 1960s and early 1970s brought about a deep questioning of modernity and

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many of the western world's university and college campuses, including demonstrations that were far more violent and confrontational. Less fierce than those south of the border, but still close to the heart of a large section of our region's society, the Université de Moncton protests of 1968/69 had linguistic and cultural rights at the centre, with one of the battles pitting the student body of the brand new French university against the city's bigoted mayor Leonard Jones and an English-controlled civic government that were loath to lose face and authority.

<sup>15</sup> Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, 29.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 31-32.



modernism. As Berman expounded, a paradox of modernism is that modern urban renewal destroyed the “only kind of environment in which modern values can be realized.” He accepted the dialectic that “in our city life, for the sake of the modern we must preserve the old and resist the new.”<sup>17</sup>

Many of the aforementioned controversies, critical face-offs, and iconoclastic episodes during the mid-twentieth century were related to modern art and the challenge of modernist aesthetic leanings (whether form- or content-based). Over the past half century, debates in North America and Europe have ranged from initial hostilities with consequential public acceptance and admiration for modern art, to the contrary where intense public distaste, legal battles, censorship, and even destruction of the particular “offending” artworks occurs. Why has modern art so often driven people to extreme protest and acts of outrage and suppression? As artist George Sugarman asserts, “Isn’t controversy part of what modern art is all about?”<sup>18</sup>

Unlike Claude Roussel’s public accolades and critical success of the 1950s and 1960s, pushback to his modern art forms began to be felt in New Brunswick by the early 1970s. Testament to this shift was the public outcry in the early 1970s towards Roussel’s *Progression* (1972), a large triptych fibreglass architectural sculpture that hooked atop the entry portico of the new brutalist Saint John City Hall (fig. 97). The minimalist sculpture included three bent cubic forms: yellow, orange, and red, each longer than the previous volume. From today’s perspective, the formal design connects well with the

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<sup>17</sup> Marshall Berman, “In the Forest of Symbols,” from ed. Philip Kasinitz, *Metropolis: Center and Symbol of our Times* (New York: NYU Press, 1995), 150.

<sup>18</sup> As quoted in Michael G. Kammen, *Visual Shock: A History of Art Controversies in American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 2006), ix.

city hall's rectilinear architecture and seems almost restrained in its intention. For an artist who had been commissioned to create comparable modern pieces throughout Eastern Canada and Maine during this time, the outcry towards Roussel and *Progression* around the unveiling was unexpected. Roussel recalls:

It was a competition and the general public didn't like it at all... . It was very disturbing. Can you imagine how difficult it was to achieve something while having the public on your back like that? I knew I was doing the right thing... . There were many, many projects throughout the world that had been realized like that. Mine was just a continuity of what had been done.<sup>19</sup>

In hindsight, Roussel "could see no reason why New Brunswick shouldn't be as progressive as Montreal."<sup>20</sup> It was said that Bob Lockhart, the mayor of Saint John the time, was "so ashamed of the piece it was unveiled early in the morning with no fanfare."<sup>21</sup> Comparing the response to the reveal of a prominent Roussel public sculpture from only three years before is striking in its contrary tone. On June 19, 1969, two thousand people came to see the artist's large stone sculpture of three stylized standing fishermen, honouring the thirty-five men who drowned in the 1959 Escuminac disaster in Northeastern New Brunswick. Granted, there were deep emotions connected with memorializing the victims, as compared to the more decorative, abstract, and impersonal aspects of the Saint John city hall artwork, but the difference of admiration between the two is still startling. Premier Hugh John Flemming spoke of the "sacrifice"

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<sup>19</sup> Mike Landry, "Monumental Modern Man," *Telegraph-Journal*, October 23, 2010, S4-S5.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, S5.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

and “heroism” being “symbolized by the [Escuminac] monument and the inscriptions.”<sup>22</sup>

Was the public growing weary of modern art and minimalism in New Brunswick by the 1970s? It appeared so.

From today’s perspective, the radical change in aesthetic and material expression that overwhelmed the world during the mid-twentieth century can be understood in its usurping of visual norms, but it also helped cement moral positions and hostility towards cultural change. As technological and social modernity became the benchmark of Western society during the immediate post-war years, the public’s consensus with the new artistic forms was difficult. As Michael Kammen relates:

A majority of Americans, even while embracing modernity because it is equated with progress and thereby improves the quality of life, have acknowledged disliking or feeling uncertain about modern art. Modernity did not connect well with modernism, and there was nothing paradoxical about that.<sup>23</sup>

If modernity as a shared global condition can be questioned, then the bumps on this path are necessary to investigate if we are to understand the current state-of-affairs and how we got here. Modernism’s forms and effects have been highly variable. The continued debate in the public sphere of modern artistic modes being sensitive and responsive to other voices, formal artistic developments, as well as diversity outside of the typical white, English-speaking upper-class elite, has been mounting for decades. Kammen concludes:

Visionary innovation in the arts is virtually certain to provoke resistance and controversy, at least initially. When unprecedented aesthetic

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<sup>22</sup> Marianne Weizel, “Fishermen’s Memorial Unveiled at Escuminac,” *The Daily Gleaner*, June 20, 1969, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Kammen, 89-90.

possibilities conflict with national values... or with traditional social values... contestation is likely to occur. Whether or not it takes place within the bounds of civility and efforts at mutual understanding depends not only upon contextual circumstances but also what role the media choose to play – one of education and clarification or one of sensationalism and obfuscation.<sup>24</sup>

In New Brunswick's case, the sensitivities towards modernism were growing through the 1970s. The failure of industrial and design modernity in New Brunswick ran deep with the mid-1970s Bricklin automobile manufacturing fiasco during the term of Progressive Conservative premier Richard Hatfield.<sup>25</sup> The car's ripples can still be felt in local attitudes towards large-scale development schemes and modern design in New Brunswick.

During the socio-cultural apex of 1967 (New Brunswick's participation in Expo 67, Alex Colville's Centennial coins, the Jack Humphrey retrospective at the NGC, sweeping EO reforms, the "Sélection 67" art exhibition at the U de M, the recent success of the "Micmac Indian Craftsmen," and the completion of the Centennial Building and its suite of New Brunswick-designed murals), a tangible sense of the prowess of modernism permeated New Brunswick. In hindsight, the Centennial Building was fundamentally a last gasp of an outlook that ended all too quickly. Its integration of modern art, architecture, and design optimism was championed by all levels of government as emblematic far beyond its material bearings. Even considering the recent debate and elucidation on its importance, it still stands as a misunderstood episode in a province trying to rekindle a long-lost sense of itself as a place that builds, creates, and leads.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 384.

<sup>25</sup> Dimitry Anastakis, "The Quest of the Volk(swagen): The Bricklin Car, Industrial Modernity, and New Brunswick", *Acadiensis* XLIII, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2014).

While there has been growing interest in the post-war artists of New Brunswick<sup>26</sup> and appreciation for the socio-political achievements of Louis Robichaud and the Acadian renaissance are solidly acknowledged, the interconnectedness of New Brunswick's expansive modern cultural life, its visual expression, and its accompanying material/aesthetic/philosophical/social objectives between 1930 and 1967 are often disregarded. New Brunswick realized some of its greatest achievements in art, design, architecture, fine craft, and infrastructure during a time where so much seemed to matter, so much was interwoven, and so much was modern.

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<sup>26</sup> Colville, for example, remains extremely admired, as demonstrated by his 2015 National Gallery retrospective, and Miller Brittain and Molly Lamb Bobak have been increasingly studied.

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NBM Miller Brittain Documentation File.  
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## Figures

8 The Daily Gleaner Friday, March 6, 1964

### HERE'S WHAT WE'RE DOING IN NEW BRUNSWICK NOW

- 1. Heavy construction throughout New Brunswick** employs a growing force of welders, many of them trained in the Province's new trade schools. In addition, on-the-job training, financed by government, is proving attractive to new and expanding industries.
- 2. Shipbuilding, particularly at Saint John,** has been extremely active during the last two years. The construction, dry-dock and port facilities at this all-year port equal or surpass any on the Eastern Seaboard.
- 3. Expansion in oil refining and distribution** is providing increased year round employment. Technically-trained graduates of New Brunswick's schools are finding rewarding careers in this field.
- 4. Along the Fundy coast, particularly in the Black's Harbour area,** sardine fishing employs many men, while women operate the production lines of the packing plants. Processed value of all New Brunswick fisheries in 1963 was over \$27,000,000.00.
- 5. This modern railroad marshalling yard at Moncton** indicates the important place rail shipment plays in New Brunswick's economy. The steady railroad payroll is an important stabilizing influence.
- 6. The electronics industry is finding** easily-trained help available in New Brunswick. Here, a recent high school graduate operates a punch press at the new plant of Radio Engineering, which employs 500 men and women.
- 7. Coastal waters around the whole of New Brunswick** are the home of the succulent lobster. Fishing, handling and processing employ thousands, and the lobster is a powerful tourist attraction.
- 8. Major projects are under way in base metals mining.** A \$19,000,000.00 ore concentrator is already producing high-quality concentrates. The next, already under way, is a \$23 million smelter-chemical complex.
- 9. Vast peat moss deposits in the northern part of New Brunswick** are the basis of an unusual industry—digging, processing and packaging peat moss for the lawns and gardens of North America.
- 10. Availability of kraft papers and board** has sparked an important cardboard container and printing industry. More and more local manufacturers are relying on the printing facilities within the province.
- 11. For many years, New Brunswick has been one of the few Canadian provinces** producing custom grade shoes. Today, famous makes like Hartt and Dack's are manufactured in modern Fredericton plants.
- 12. New Brunswick's textile industry,** by far-sighted specialization, continues to thrive. New Brunswick tartans and knit-wear find a ready market both inside and outside the Province.


 **NEW BRUNSWICK DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND INDUSTRY-FREDERICTON, NEW BRUNSWICK, CANADA**  
HON. LOUIS J. ROBCHAUD, PREMIER HON. L. G. OGBURN, MINISTER, FINANCE AND INDUSTRY

Figure 1: "Here's What We're Doing in New Brunswick Now," (March 6, 1964), *Daily Gleaner* [Fredericton].



Figure 2: Saint John's "Loyalist Man" standing next to the Reversing Falls Visitor's Centre.



Figure 3: Harry Wickey, *Study of Woman* (1921).





Figure 4: Reginald Marsh, *Hat Display* (1939).



Figure 5: Miller Brittain, *Tuberculosis Hospital Cartoon* (1941-42), collection of the New Brunswick Museum.



Figure 6: Jack Humphrey, *A Harbor Scene* (1936).



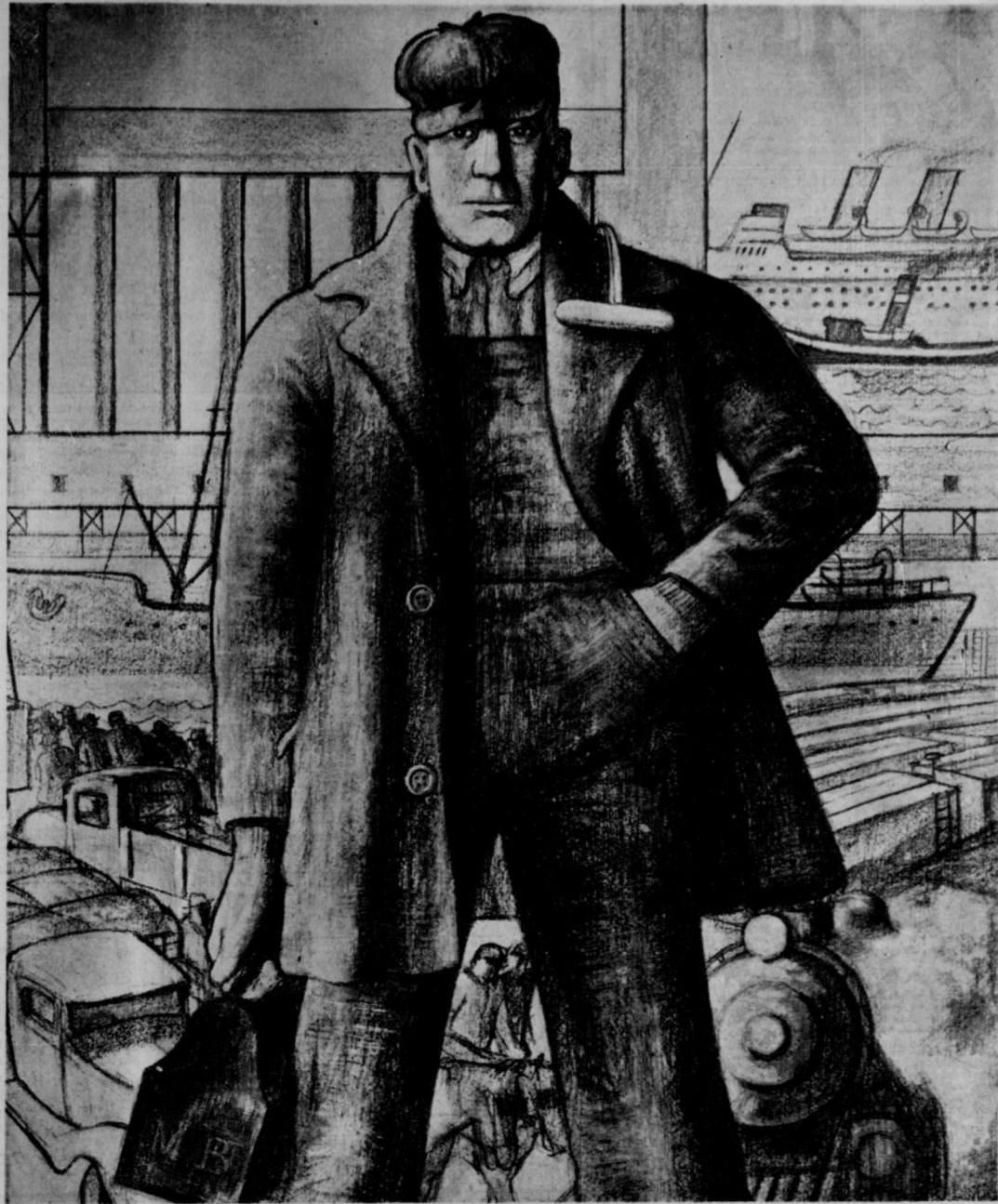
Figure 7: Jack Humphrey, *Draped Head* (1931), collection of Hart House, University of Toronto.





Figure 8: Miller Brittain, *Longshoremen* (1940), collection of the National Gallery of Canada.





*Shipment of Canadian Goods Via Canadian Ports  
Means More Money for Canadian Workers*

Figure 9: Miller Brittain, "Longshoreman" (1936), *Telegraph Journal* [Saint John], November 30, 1936.



Figure 10: Adrien Hébert, *Montreal Harbor* (1925).



Figure 11: Charles Sheeler, *Classic Landscape* (1931), collection of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.





Figure 12: Canadian Pavilion, 1937 World's Fair, Paris, France.



# 1783 — Loyalist Day — 1937



ONE of the noblest epics of sacrifice in history is that of the United Empire Loyalists. Homes, states, comforts—these they left behind them to follow the flag of their King. Divested of their possessions, pilloried and mocked by their neighbors because they placed loyalty above themselves, they came to New Brunswick as exiles to start life anew. They came not as beaten refugees seeking sanctuary but as resolute pioneers determined to overcome rugged wilderness and claim for themselves a home where they could live as they chose—under the British flag. On May, 18 1783—just 154 years ago today—they landed at Saint John, the first of them, at what is now Market Slip. In this picture Miller Brittain depicts a Loyalist couple on that May day of long ago looking up from the shore at the rocky hills on which they would build a city, envisioning the future.

Perhaps they were enunciating the words of Ward Chipman uttered when he first entered the harbor—the words that became Saint John's motto: "O fortunati quorum jam moenia surgunt"—"O fortunate people whose walls are already rising."

In the background is the artist's conception of their vision—the skyline of the city which was to be. Not content with the building of one city were the Loyalists. They spread further afield to make incalculable contributions to the development of New Brunswick in particular and Canada in general, carrying with them where they went their ideals of loyalty and devotion to the Crown and fighting hardship with courage. On this Loyalist Day, 154 years after, the inspiration of their sacrifice burns brightly as ever.

Figure 13: Miller Brittain, "Loyalist Day" (1937), *Telegraph Journal* [Saint John], May 18, 1937.



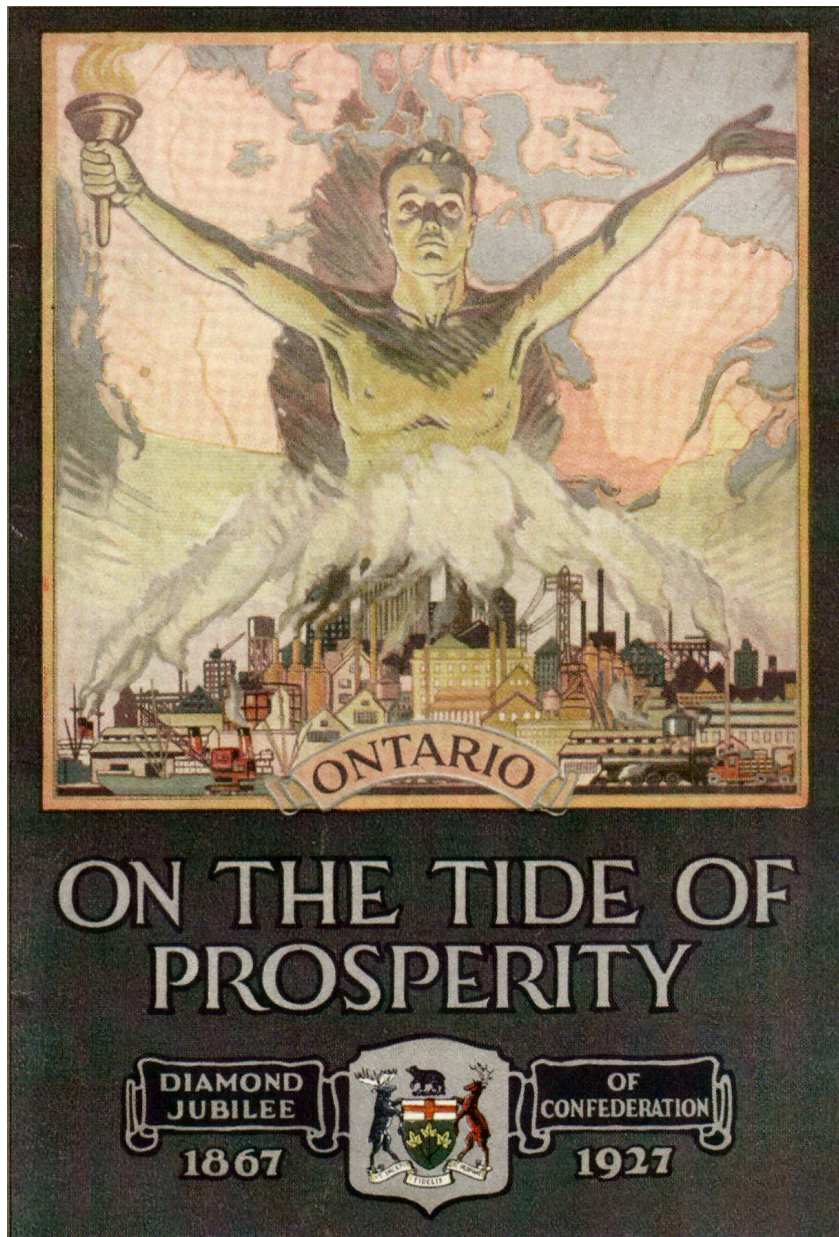


Figure 14: *On the Tide of Prosperity* cover [province of Ontario] (1927).



Figure 15: Deichmann ceramic collection, collection of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery.

Karsh's Saint John *continued*

## The Timeless Look

In the market, old faces look young and on the street corners young faces look old in these unposed portraits by a great portrait photographer

**THIS** LIFE of Saint John revolves around the city's market, Karsh decided, but when he took his camera there he was confronted with the same problem that has plagued him in each of the city stories he's done in his current series for Maclean's: every time they see his camera people want to pose. For this strip of unposed studies of faces young and old he waited until a radio broadcast from the market area began and wandered quietly through the crowd stealing candid shots. Later Karsh and his wife took part in the broadcast themselves and were pursued by autograph hunters for the rest of the day. But their status as VIPs, while it made working difficult in a few cases, had its compensations. The mayor, for instance, provided a car and a driver from the police force. "To any city dweller, that was heaven," Karsh reflects happily. "Park anywhere and get the ticket fast before it's issued." \*

Eighty-year-old sailmaker, William Holder, once fitted out some of the finest barks, schooners, ketches and full riggers on the seven seas. He still makes an occasional sail for a racing yacht, but his chief output now is tarpaulins, awnings and storm curtains for steam vessels.

### NEW CRAFTS AND ANCIENT SKILLS

In Saint John, Karsh photographs the first of the very new artisans and the last of the very old

Hand-rolled and hand-painted pottery have made Kild and Erika Deichmann, Danish immigrants, internationally famous. The contrast between their studio and William Holder's shop seemed an apt accent and punctuation mark to Yousuf Karsh's most lasting impressions of Saint John.

Figure 16: Yousuf Karsh, "Youth and Age in a Timeless Seaport," *Maclean's Magazine* (January, 1953).





Figure 17: Still frame image from NFB film *The Story of Peter and the Potter* (1953).



Figure 18: Pegi Nicol MacLeod, *Indian Girl* hooked rug study (c. 1941), collection of the University of New Brunswick.



Figure 19: Betty Sutherland, [*Saint John Vocational School murals on main auditorium doors*] (1940).



Figure 20: Thomas Hart Benton, *America Today* [detail] (1930-31), collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.





Figure 21: Charles Comfort, *Toronto Stock Exchange murals* (1937).

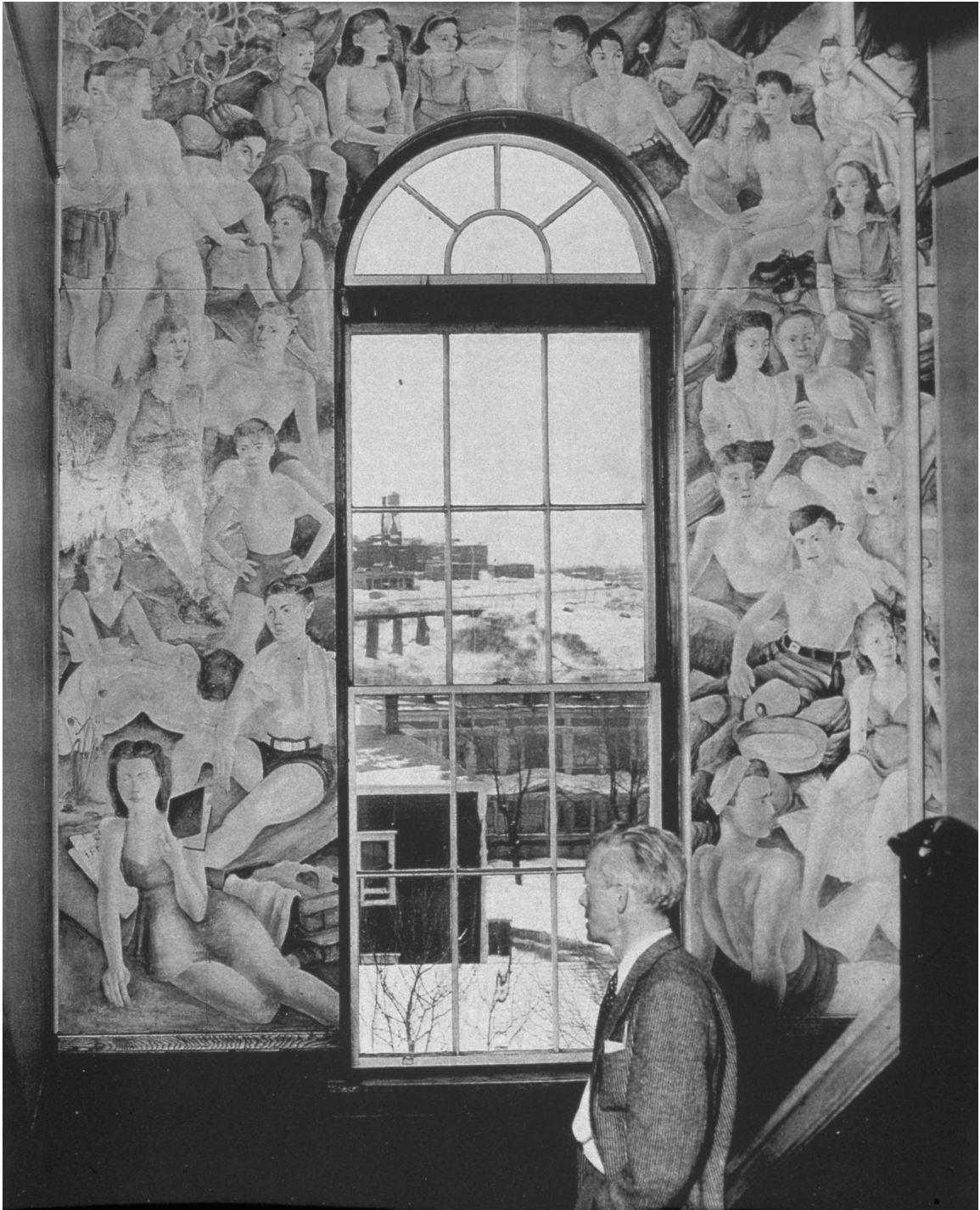


Figure 22: Ted Campbell in front of Fred Ross's *Annual School Picnic* (1946).



Figure 23: Fred Ross, *The Destruction of War and Rebuilding the World Through Education* [Fredericton High School War Memorial mural] (1948).





Figure 24: Fred Ross, *City Slums* (1950), insitu at Saint John's Harbourview High School.



Figure 25: Jack Humphrey, *South Wharf with Three Boats* (c. 1948-1950), collection of the National Gallery of Canada.



Figure 26: Jack Humphrey, *Shore of Night* (1958), collection of the National Gallery of Canada.





Figure 27: Fred Ross, *Saint John Tourist Office mural* (1957).





Figure 28: Lawren P. Harris, *Chevron Sequence* (1970).

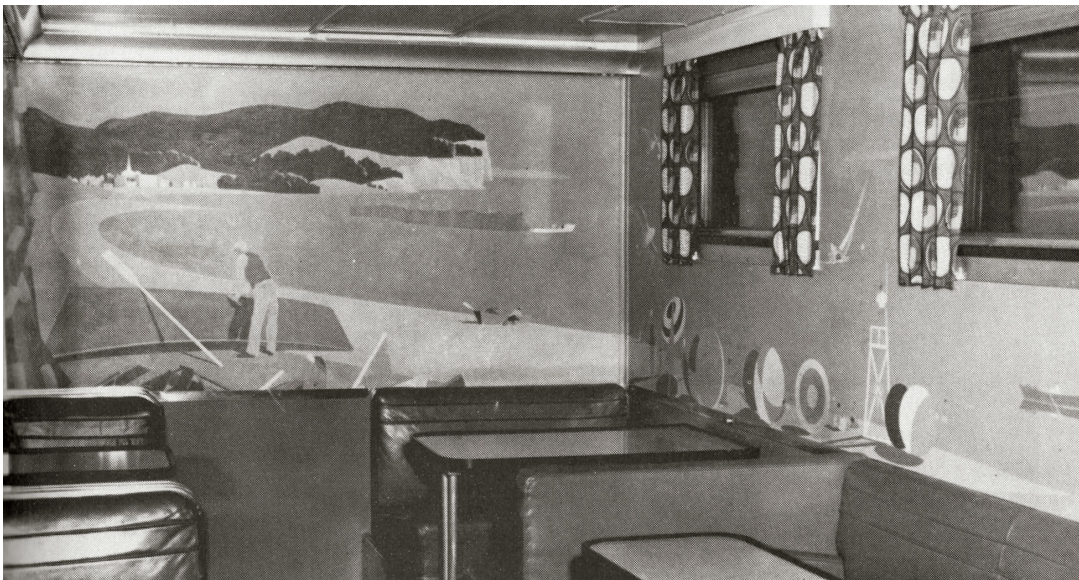


Figure 29: Lawren P. Harris, *Fundy National Park* [CPR “Canadian” car mural] (1954).



Figure 30: Lawren P. Harris, Mount Allison residence tile murals: [top to bottom] Bennet House with entry mural from courtyard, Bennet House mural study, Bigelow House mural study, and Hunton House mural study.





Figure 31: Tom Forrestall, *Cotton Mill* (1972), collection of the National Gallery of Canada.

**... D'ARCHITECTURE ET D'ENVIRONNEMENT  
ART**

**... ARCHITECTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL**



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street  
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school  
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à l'église  
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Figure 32: Claude Roussel, "Architectural and Environmental Art" poster (early 1970s).



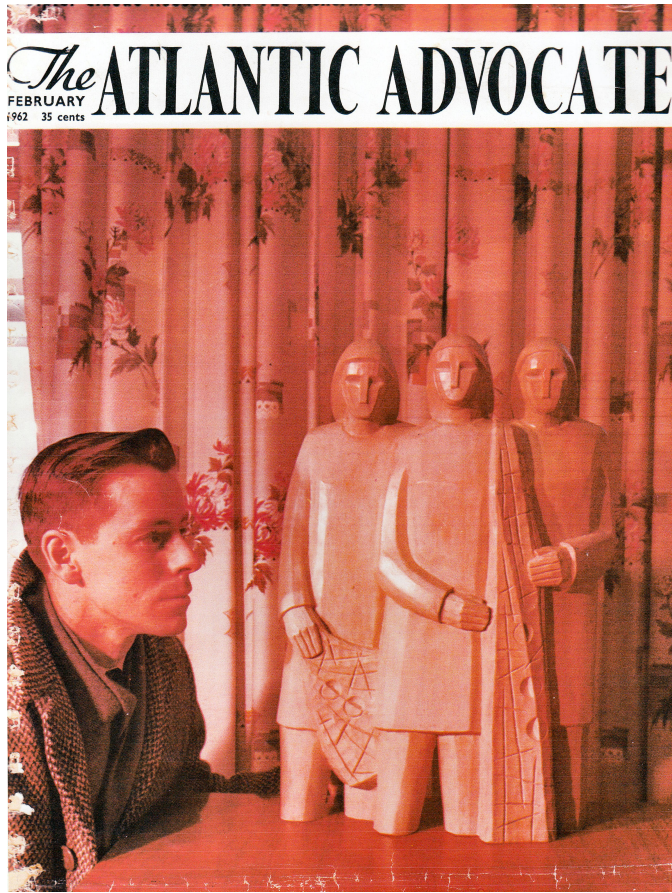


Figure 33: Claude Roussel aside his carved wood maquette for his Escuminac Disaster monument, *Atlantic Advocate* cover (February, 1962).



Figure 34: Claude Roussel, *Les Deus Castors / The Two Beavers* (1959), collection of the City of Fredericton.





Figure 35: Roméo Savoie, *Notre-Dame-du-Sacré-Cœur church*, Edmundston (1967).

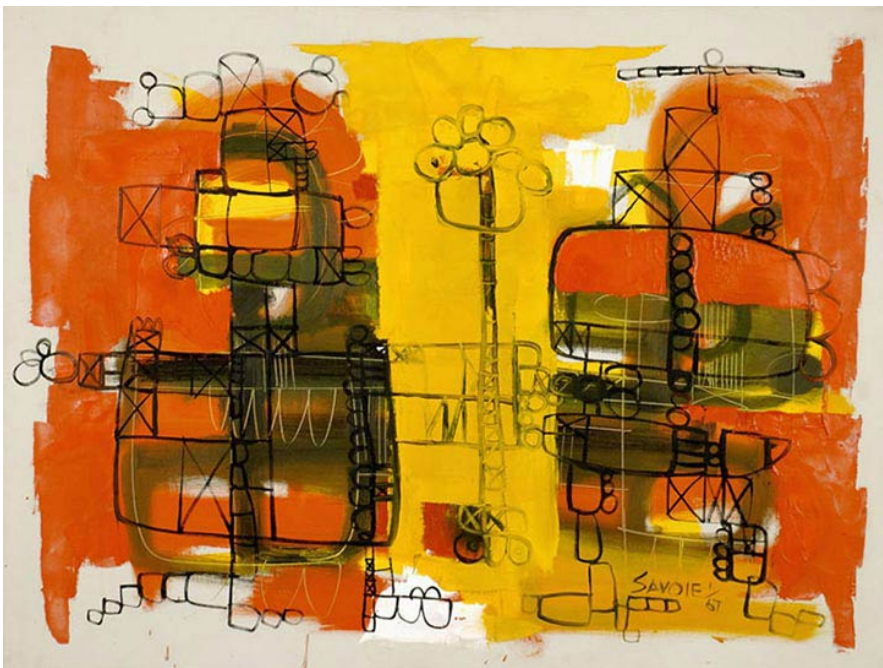


Figure 36: Roméo Savoie, *Hommes mécaniques no. 2* (1967).



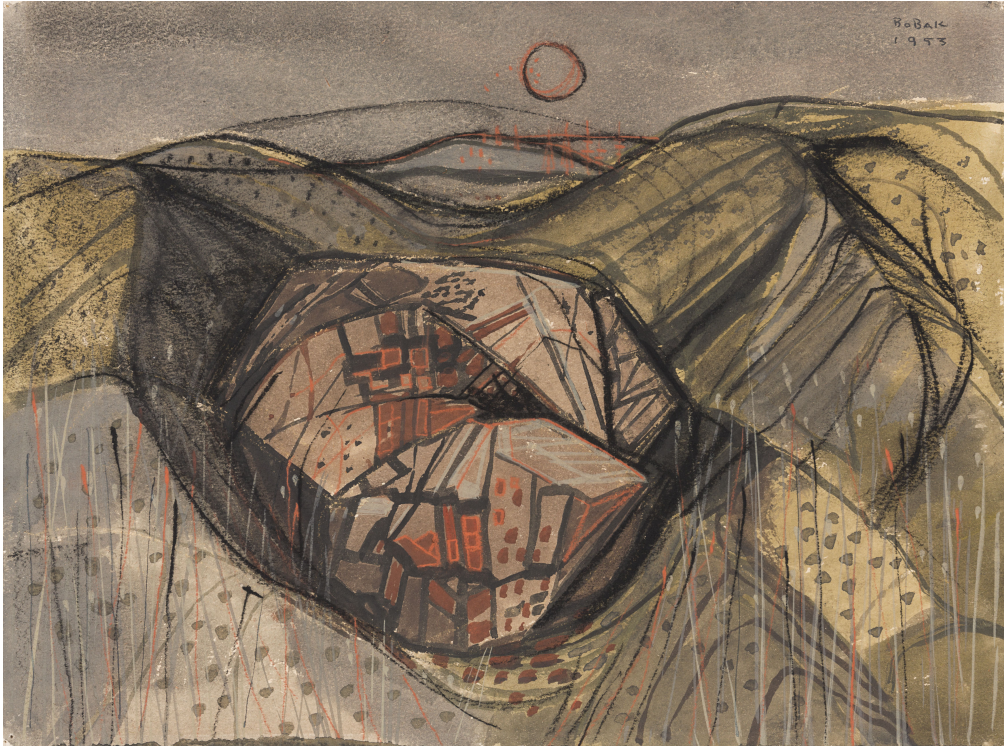


Figure 37: Bruno Bobak, *Untitled* (1953), collection of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery.

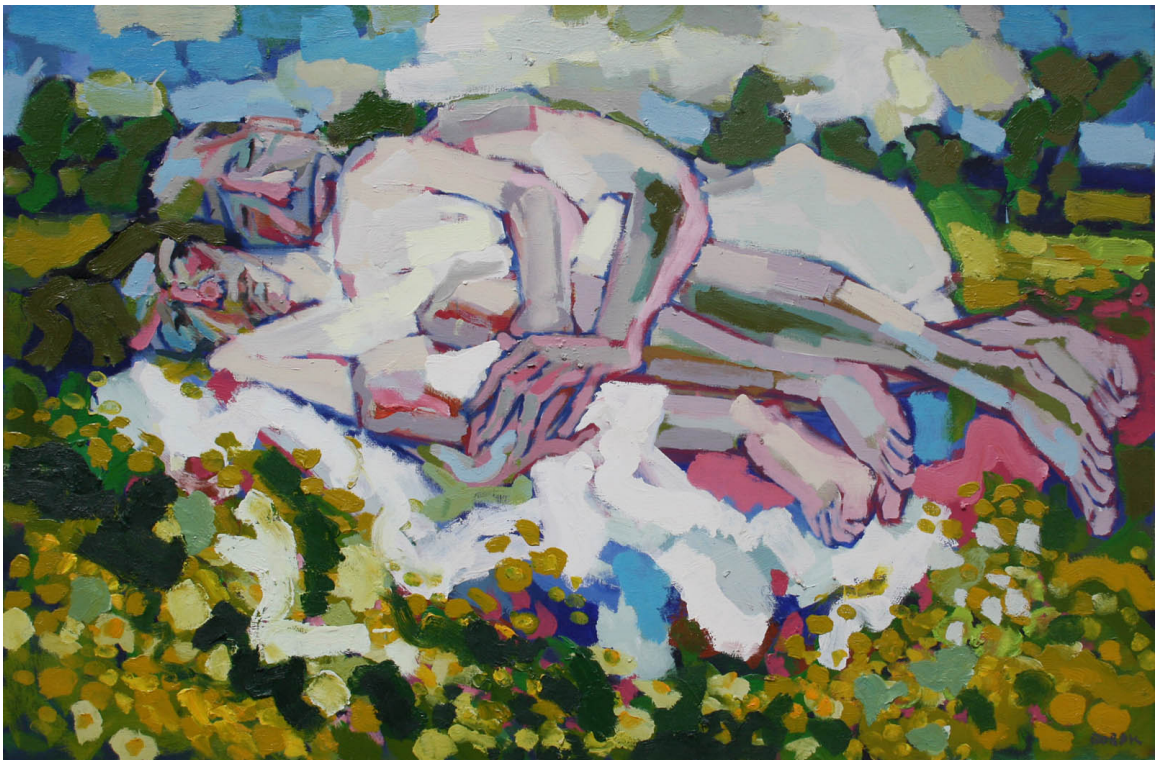


Figure 38: Bruno Bobak, *Figures in a Landscape* (c. 1967).





Figure 39: Bruno Bobak, *London River* (1963).



Figure 40: Molly Lamb Bobak, *On the Beach* (1983).



Figure 41: Molly Lamb Bobak, *Red Poppies* (1977).





Figure 42: Bruno Bobak, *Departure* (1962).



Figure 43: The New Brunswick School of Arts and Crafts, Fundy National Park, c. 1960.





Figure 44: Michael Francis, *The Legend of Glooscap's Departure* (c. 1963).



Figure 45: Michael Francis, *The Legend of the Tidal Bore* (c. 1963).



Figure 46: Saint John General Hospital, Saint John, NB (1931).



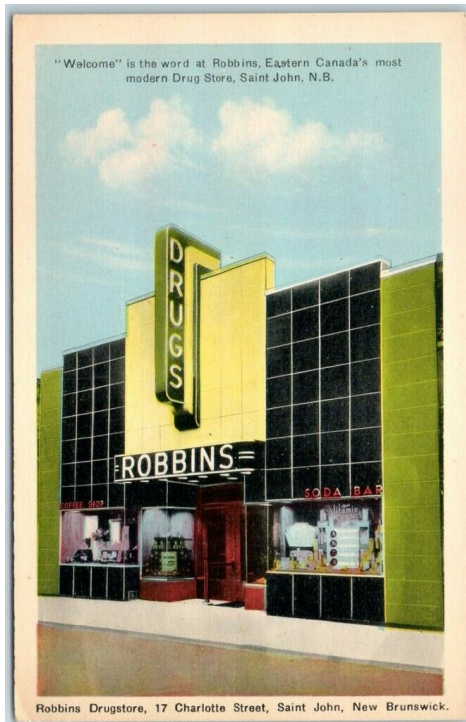


Figure 47: Robbins Drug Store, Saint John, NB (1939).



Figure 48: Bank of Nova Scotia, Main Branch, Saint John, NB (1931).



Figure 49: Radio Canada International Transmitter Building [I], Sackville, NB (1939).



Figure 50: Radio Canada International Transmitter Building [II], Sackville, NB (1944).



Figure 51: Radio Canada International Transmitter Building [II], Sackville, NB (1944).





Figure 52: Cathédrale Notre Dame de l'Assomption, Moncton, NB (1940).



Figure 53: Carved pilaster capital showing modern airplane, Cathédrale Notre Dame de l'Assomption, Moncton, NB (1940).



Figure 54: Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs church, Edmundston, NB (1953).



Figure 55: Très Saint-Sacrement church, Saint-Quentin, NB (1948).





Figure 56: Société l'Assomption building, Moncton, NB (1953).



Figure 57: Terrazzo floor medallion, l'Assomption Youth Centre, Moncton (1956).



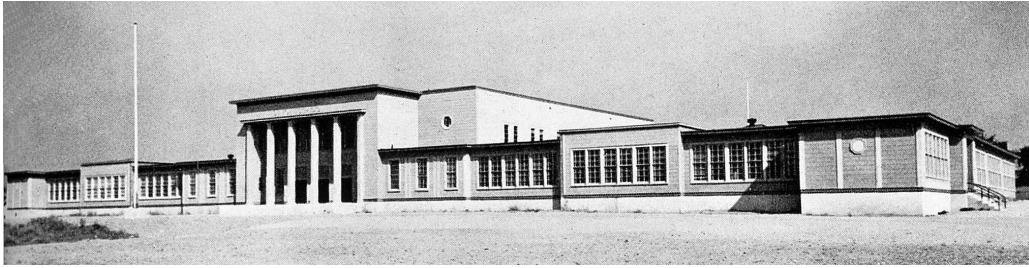


Figure 58: Devon Junior High School, Fredericton, NB (1953).



Figure 59: Christ-Roi church, Moncton, NB (1962).



Figure 60: St. Anne's church, Fredericton, NB (1962).





Figure 61: Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton, NB (1959).



Figure 62: Memorial Student Centre, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, NB (1955).

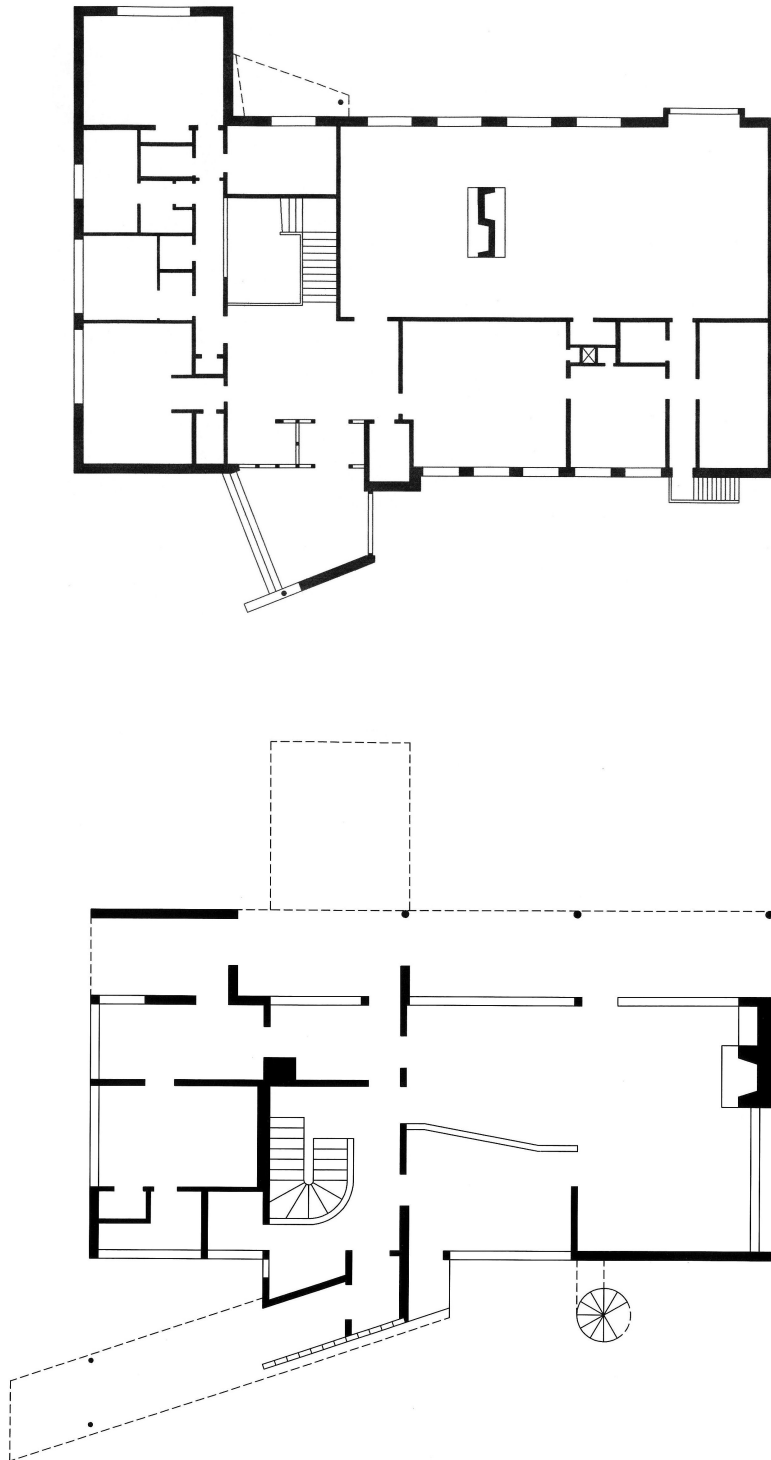


Figure 63: Main floor plan comparison of the 1955 UNB Memorial Student Centre (top) with the 1938 Walter Gropius House, Lincoln, Massachusetts (bottom).



Figure 64: Physics and Engineering Building, Mount Allison University, Sackville, NB (1958).



Figure 65: Physics and Engineering Building drafting room, Mount Allison University, Sackville, NB (1958).





Figure 66: Avard-Dixon Building, Mount Allison University, Sackville, NB (1959).

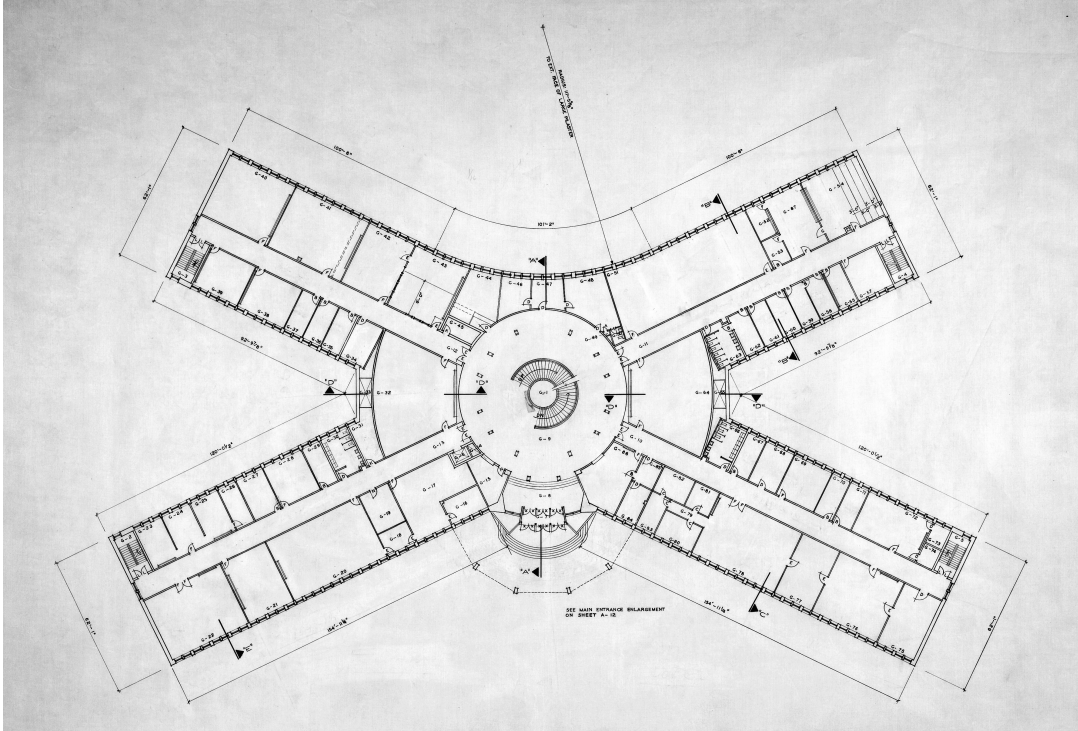


Figure 67: Main Floor Plan, Rémi Rossignol Science Building, Université de Moncton, Moncton, NB (1965).



Figure 68: Heating Plant, Université de Moncton, Moncton, NB (1965).



Figure 69: Central stair, Rémi Rossignol Science Building, Université de Moncton, Moncton, NB (1965).

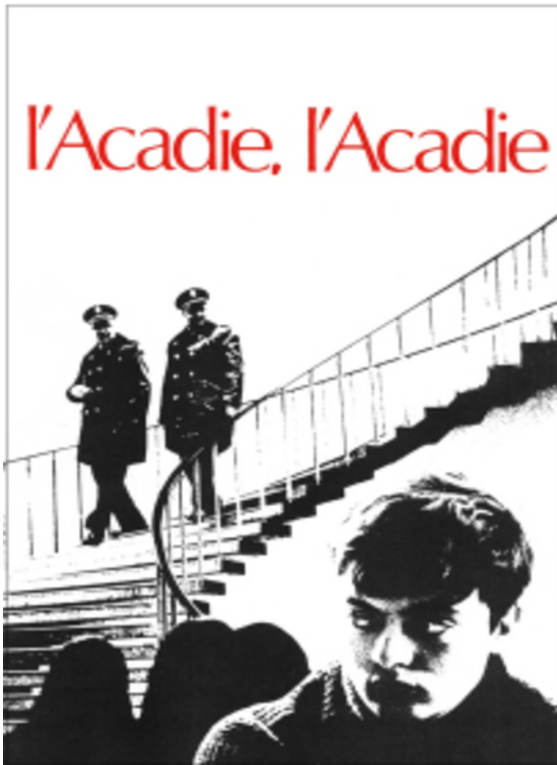


Figure 70: Promotional poster for NFB film *L'Acadie, l'Acadie?!?* (1971).





Figure 71: Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague church, Richibucto, NB (1965).

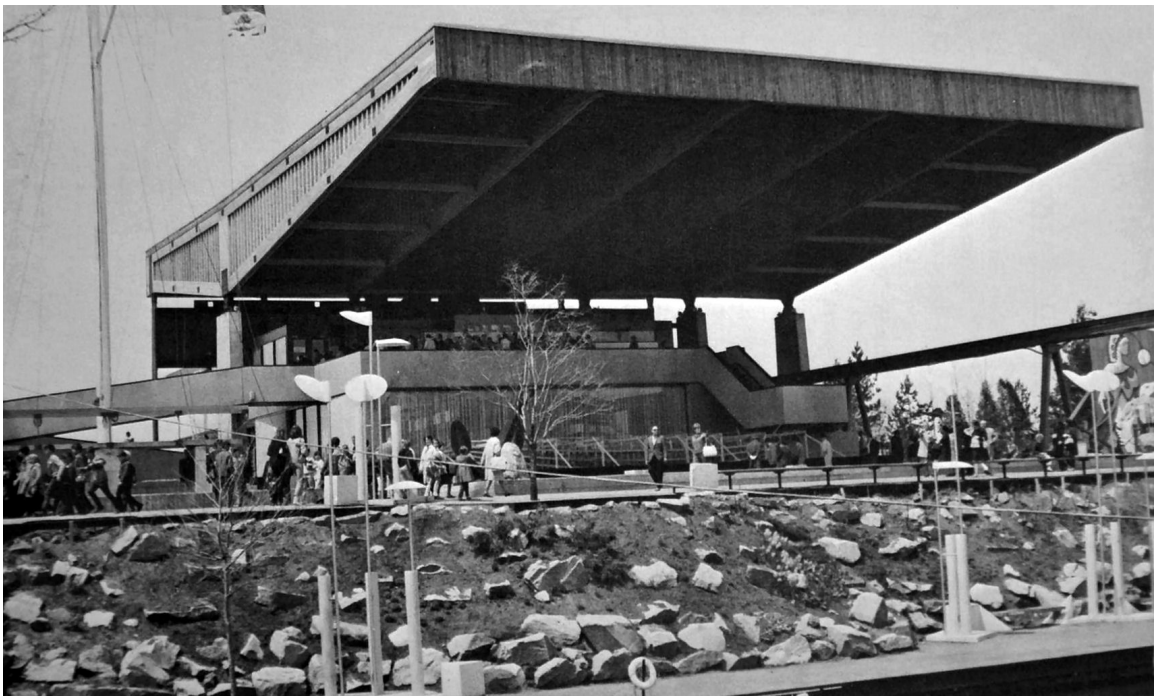


Figure 72: Atlantic Provinces Pavilion, Montreal, PQ (1967).





Figure 73: Nadeau & Nadeau Ltd. exhibition display (c. 1955).



Figure 74: Nadeau & Nadeau Ltd. steel and wood school classroom set (1970).

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Figure 75: Enterprise oil ranges advertisement (1949).





Figure 76: Kinghorn and Dickie melamine dishware (1950s).



Figure 77: Sidney Bersudsky, "Magnajector" magnifier projector (1954).



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# MACLEAN'S

OCTOBER 15 1954 CANADA'S NATIONAL MAGAZINE 15 CENTS



Figure 78: James Hill, "Indian basket weavers near Fredericton," *Maclean's Magazine* cover (October, 1954).





Figure 79: Figure-ground plan diagram of Saint John's Main Street-North End neighbourhood before (top - 1957) and after (bottom - 1976) the 1960s Urban renewal demolitions and bridge/highway construction.





Figure 80: Beechwood Hydroelectric Plant, Beechwood, NB (1958).





Figure 81: Antonio Sant'Elia, *The Power Plant* (1914)



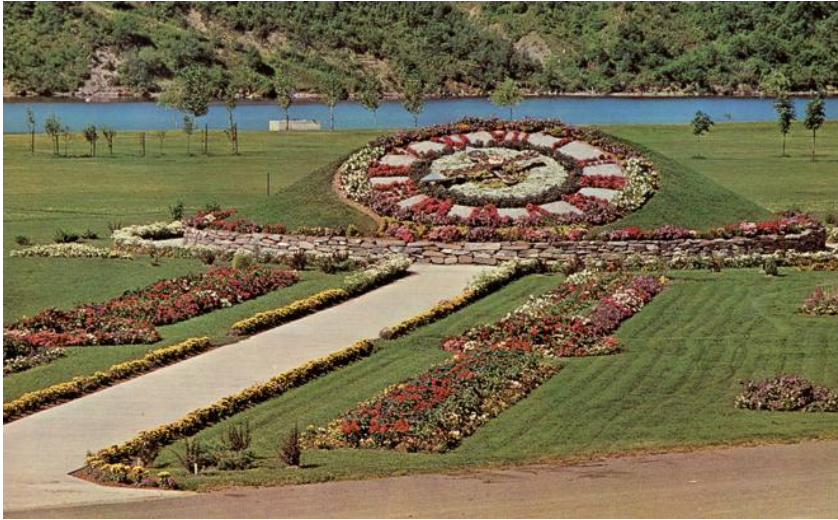


Figure 82: Beechwood Hydroelectric Plant public garden, Beechwood, NB (1958).

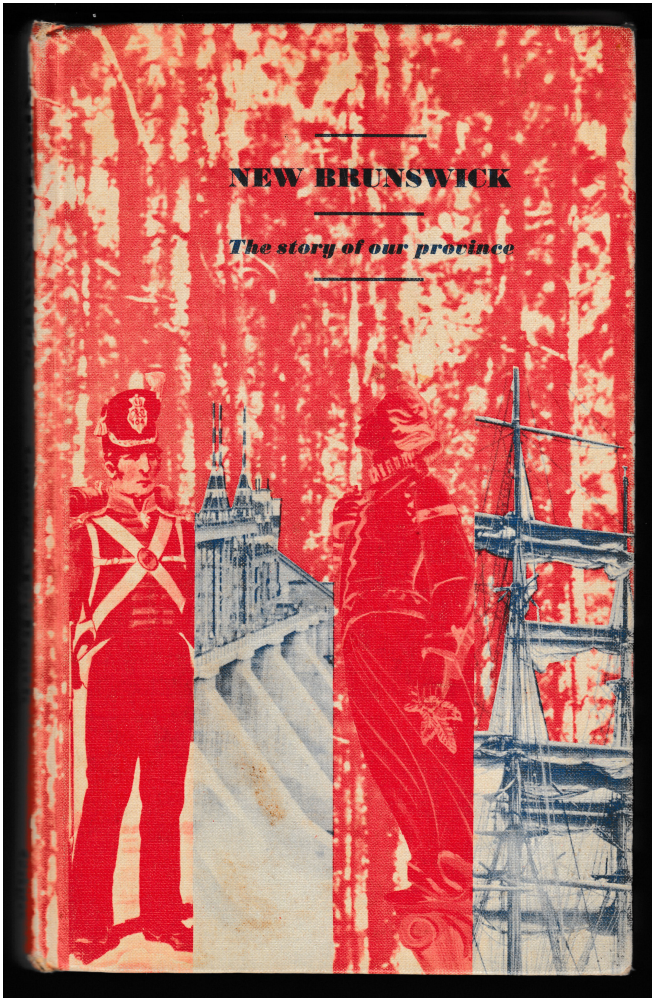


Figure 83: *New Brunswick: The story of our province* textbook cover (1965)





Figure 84: Hugh John Flemming Bridge, Hartland, NB (1960).



Figure 85: Alex Colville, *Canadian Centennial Coin Set* (1967).

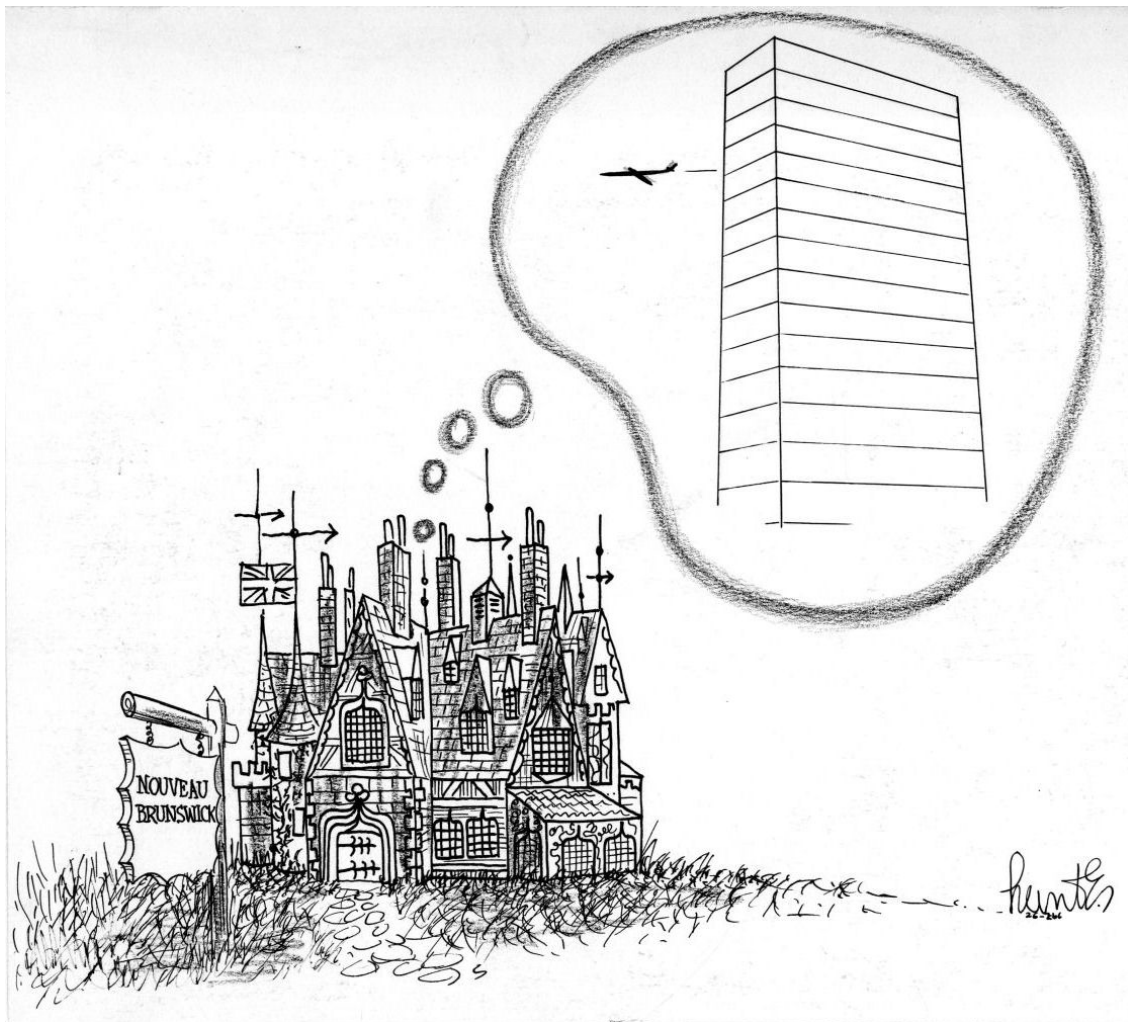


Figure 86: Raoul Hunter, editorial cartoon, *Le Soleil du Québec* (February, 1966).





Figure 87: Centennial Building, Fredericton, NB (1967).



Figure 88: Previously proposed (and unbuilt) Provincial Building designs, Fredericton, NB (from top to bottom: 1931, 1956 & 1961), Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.





Figure 89: Centennial Building lobby, Fredericton, NB (1967).



Figure 90: John Hooper, *Centennial Building mural* (1966) and lobby at night.





Figure 91: Claude Roussel, *Centennial Building mural* (1967), collection of the New Brunswick Provincial Art Bank.



Figure 92: Bruno Bobak, *Centennial Building mural* (1967), collection of the New Brunswick Provincial Art Bank.





Figure 93: Jack Humphrey, *Centennial Building mural* (1967), collection of the New Brunswick Provincial Art Bank.



Figure 94: Tom Forrestall, *Centennial Building mural* (1967), collection of the New Brunswick Provincial Art Bank.





Figure 95: Fred Ross, *Centennial Building mural* (1967), collection of the New Brunswick Provincial Art Bank.



Figure 96: *Lighthouse on the Green* tourist centre, Fredericton, NB (1989).





Figure 97: Claude Roussel, *Progression* (1972) installed above the entry canopy of Saint John City Hall, Saint John, NB (1971).

## **Vita**

**Name:** John Archibald Leroux

### **Universities Attended:**

University of New Brunswick, 2014-2020, Doctoral Candidate  
Concordia University, 1997-2002, Master of Arts (Art History)  
McGill University, 1989-1994, Bachelor of Architecture

### **Select Publications:**

*The Lost City: Ian MacEachern's Photographs of Saint John*, Goose Lane Editions, 2018

*A Vision in Wood and Stone: the Architecture of Mount Allison University*, Gaspereau Press, 2016

"Revision and Recovery: Fred Ross' Fredericton High School Memorial Murals,"  
*Acadiensis: Journal of the History of the Atlantic Region*, vol. XLIII, no. 2,  
summer/autumn 2014

"Obscured Brilliance: Fredericton's Modern Stained Glass Heritage," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2013

*Building New Brunswick: An Architectural History*, Goose Lane Editions, 2008

### **Select Conference Presentations:**

"The Lost City: Ian MacEachern's Photographs of Saint John," Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada 44th Annual Conference, St. John's, NL; 2018

"Art for a People: the 1967 Centennial Building Murals" – 17<sup>th</sup> annual University of Maine/UNB International Graduate Student Conference, Orono, Maine; 2016

"Mural, Mural on the Wall, Did Scorn and Pretense Make You Fall?" Association of Critical Heritage Studies 3<sup>rd</sup> Biennial Conference, Montreal, PQ; 2016

"Revision and Recovery: Fred Ross' Fredericton High School Memorial Murals," New Brunswick's Mural Legacy: The State of the Art' conference, UNB Fredericton, NB; 2012

"Obscured Brilliance: Fredericton's Modern Stained Glass Heritage," Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada 39th Annual Conference, Ottawa, ON; 2012