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Canada

# MODERNISM IN CANADA:
# CLEMENT GREENBERG AND CANADIAN ART

Daniel J. Currell

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Art History

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
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## ABSTRACT

Modernism in Canada:
Clement Greenberg and Canadian Art

Daniel J. Currell

This thesis is a study of Clement Greenberg's approach to the art and artists in the United States versus his approach in Canada, in his effort to promote "modernism." Greenberg's promotion of his concepts of modernism became in fact, a quest for the establishment of the primacy of an art movement which he would name Post- Painterly Abstraction. He believed that this tendency, which was also called chromatic abstraction, colour or colour-field painting, was the logical successor in the evolutionary history of modern art. The steps Greenberg took in his bid to ensure the supremacy of this art movement were the same, regardless of whether he was acting in the United States or Canada.

In this thesis, Greenberg's concepts of modernism are examined, followed by an analysis of his approach to the American art and artists upon whom he had an impact. The similarity of this approach in the Canadian context is shown through a study of his association with Painters Eleven in Toronto, with particular emphasis on his relationship with Jack Bush, as well as an analysis of his all-encompassing involvement in the art of Western Canada.

Greenberg's fervent involvement in the Canadian art scene resulted in controversy that split the artistic community into pro and anti-Greenberg factions. This controversy, which included an anti-American political factor, is also analyzed.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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A special thanks to Kazuo Nakamura and Tom Hodgson, who took the time to reply to a questionnaire that I drew up, and to Ray Mead who shared his reminiscences about Greenberg and Painters Eleven in two telephone conversations. I had been somewhat hesitant to make personal contact with these artists, due to their importance in the history of Canadian art, but I was immediately put at ease by their approachability and their willingness to help me.

I also wish to thank Sandra Paikowsky for her help in suggesting a novel approach to my thesis topic, and whose suggestions and criticism helped pull it all together. A special thanks to Brian Foss who always seemed to call me at the moment when I was most ready to give the entire thing up, and whose diligent editing and recommendations were invaluable. Thanks also to Joan Acland for her helpful comments and suggestions. Finally I wish to thank my mother Margaret Currell, my father Daniel Ivan Currell, my daughter Tatum, my friends Lilian Eyre, David McKnight, Jerry Morrell and my colleagues at work, who supported me and encouraged me throughout this endeavour.

## DEDICATION

Clement Greenberg died on May 7, 1994. Unfortunately, I did not get the chance to interview him or to ask for his opinion of the points I was making in my thesis. As I researched this paper, in spite of the fact that I often found myself agreeing with Greenberg's critics, I could not help but be awed by the astuteness of his observations, opinions, and predictions which in hindsight, turned out to be so prescient. Regardless of the criticism directed at Greenberg's concepts and methodology, his love for and life-long dedication to art cannot be questioned.

After the 1960s, Greenberg's opinions were voiced with increasing infrequency, and his authority as a critic began to wane. I am sure however, that he would have been pleased to know that his critical efforts in the Canadian artistic community in the 1950s and 1960s have intrigued a post-graduate student in Montreal in the 1990s. Therefore as his efforts in bringing modernism to Canada were the inspiration for my efforts, with the utmost respect I dedicate this thesis to the memory of Clement Greenberg.

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# INTRODUCTION

Writing a thesis on Clement Greenberg is like being caught in the middle of a tug-of-war game. Both in the United States and in Canada, there are two opposing camps--those who are anti-Greenberg and those who are pro-Greenberg. The participants of each camp appear to be lined up on each side of a dividing line that you occupy as a unbiased observer, while the respective force of argument from each side compels you to change position. I found myself shifting sides--pro or con--as the power of the particular argument of the moment forced me to change my stance.

Greenberg matters to Canadian art because he was a highly influential and persuasive American art critic in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, who had very definite ideas as to where modern art should be going. He was able, through his visits to Toronto in 1957, and to Emma Lake, Saskatchewan and the Canadian West in 1962, to influence Canadian artists. On some artists, his influence was powerful enough that they changed their approach. Other artists, art critics and historians felt that he was one of the people primarily responsible for bringing modern art to Canada, and that he gave to Canadian artists a sense of self-worth, a belief that they could be as good as anyone in the world. There were also members of the art community who felt that his visits had little influence upon their work, as well as those who argued that he was the worst thing that could have happened to Canadian art in the sense that he had attempted to force an American artistic style

upon the Canadian artist. Certainly Greenberg had an unsettling, divisive effect upon the Canadian artistic community.

In this thesis I will examine these reactions from the point of view of Greenberg's approach to Canadian art and artists versus his approach to American art and artists. Was his approach in Canada different from that in America? Was he patronizing in his approach to Canadian art, more willing to accept styles of painting such as landscape and Abstract Expressionist work, than he would have been had this work been done in the United States? I will also examine the reactions to Greenberg's visits, and his motives for his interest in Canadian art Was he motivated simply by altruistic intentions--his desire to share his knowledge, his love of art in general, and his interest in artistic developments away from America? Was there an ulterior motive? Was he in fact pushing a particular artistic line and seeking converts to his credo in Canada? My examination of this topic will, I hope, allow the reader to choose sides or to change sides as the case may be.

## CHAPTER 1 CLEMENT GREENBERG (1909-1994) AND MODERNIST ART IN THE UNITED STATES

### GREENBERG AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIS CONCEPT OF MODERNIST ART

Clement Greenberg was born in the Bronx, New York City in 1909, the eldest of three children. As a youngster, he drew obsessively from the age of four on. In an interview with art historian James Faure Walker in 1976, he stated that:

> I was a child prodigy as an artist. I could draw - I won't say that what I did was of any value, but I could draw photographically. Some people are like that, it doesn't say anything about your potentiality as an artist.[1]

At the age of 16 in 1925, he enrolled in Richard Lahey's life drawing class at the Art Students League in New York, but did not otherwise continue his art studies. He remarked that there were moments in his career when he regretted not going ahead and trying to paint seriously and that, although he continued to paint on and off throughout the forties and the fifties, he was not happy with his work.[2] Greenberg completed his Bachelor of Arts degree from Syracuse University in 1930. After university, he spent two and a half years at home learning German, Italian, French and Latin. Following a two-year stint in his father's drygoods business, he supported himself by translating, and in 1936 began to work as a civil servant for the federal government, where he found time to write. By the end of the 1930s, he began to get published, his first article being published in Partisan Review in 1939.

By the late 1930s, Greenberg had decided to pursue a career as a critic. His longer critical essays throughout the 1940s were written primarily for Partisan

Review, where he was editor from 1940 to 1942. His shorter articles appeared in The Nation, to which he was a regular contributor from 1942 to 1949. Up until 1941, Greenberg wrote more articles on literature than on art but this was reversed by 1942. Greenberg explained the reason for his change of focus from literature to art criticism:

> I wrote about literature, it was in the forefront of my attention, at that time. And looking at art later on--it was '38 or '39--I was reading art criticism then, and I thought God, most of it was poor stuff....Literature was much easier to write about, for obvious reasons. Art was much harder to write about, and calling your shots in contemporary art too was much chancier. There seemed to me more of a challenge there, and I thought I'd bet my eye against whatever.[3]

In addition to Partisan Review and The Nation, Greenberg also contributed articles to The Contemporary Jewish Record, Commentary, The New Republic, Politics, Horizon, The New York Times, and various art periodicals. He resigned as editor of Partisan Review in 1942, and as art critic for The Nation in 1949.

During these formative years as a critic, Greenberg's political attitudes were being moulded. After 1936, he could be characterized as a Marxist of the Trotskyite persuasion but by 1948 he labelled himself an "ex-or disabused Marxist."[4] Greenberg's disenchantment with Communism and his change in political outlook could have been occasioned by Stalin's systematic extermination of all opposition in Russia, his signing of a non-aggression pact with Hitler in 1939, as well as by the Communist-directed assassination of Trotsky in Mexico in 1940.

Nevertheless, Greenberg's intellectual position, both in his criticism and in the development of his concept of modernist art, owes much to the lessons of Marx.

Borrowed from Marxism was the concept of the history of modern art as a succession of styles, each inevitably, inexorably evolving and dying, to be superseded by another, and each of which brought art closer to "self-definition."[5] After 1955, he began to publicize what would become, Post-Painterly Abstraction as the next step in this continuous, evolutionary progression:

> And I cannot insist enough that Modernism has never meant, and does not mean now, anything like a break with the past....Modernist art continues the past without gap or break, and wherever it may end up it will never cease being intelligible in terms of the past.[6]

The narrowness yet comprehensiveness of Greenberg's reductive view of modern art and its validation with historical empiricism lent it immense power as a polemic.

Also essential to Greenberg's aesthetic and his critical methodology was the conviction that each of the arts aspires to be pure, toward that which is unique in the nature of that particular medium. To this end modernist painting must renounce three-dimensionality, as this was the domain of sculpture. Representational subject matter had to be avoided at all costs as this was the realm of literature. It must therefore concern itself with that which is inherent in its own medium--flatness or two-dimensionality, the shape of the support, and the properties of pigment.[7]

In New York of the 1940s and 1950s, two distinct approaches in abstract painting had developed concurrently. The first trend was Abstract Expressionism which, during the 1940s and early 1950s, most fully met the criteria formulated in Greenberg's modernism. The reasons for Greenberg's support for Jackson Pollock, for example, are inherent in Donald Kuspit's description of Greenberg's critical position at that time:

> For Greenberg, the most complete modern painting, with the most abstract unity and the frankest recognition of the medium, is the decentralized, polyphonic, all-over picture which, with a surface knit together of a multiplicity of identical or similar elements, repeats itself without strong variation from one end of the canvas to the other and dispenses apparently, with beginning, middle, and ending.[8]

By the mid-1950s, however, Greenberg began to feel that Abstract Expressionism had exhausted its creative capabilities and had begun to look mannered, uninspired, and repetitive:

> By 1955 at the latest the expressive possibilities of abstract painterly appearance...had been exhausted for the time being. Painterly Abstraction had turned by and large into an assortment of ready-made effects. The smears, swipes and lumps of paint left by a brush or spatula...had begun to connote the mannered and stereotyped far more than the spontaneous or fresh. The look of the accidental had become an academic, conventional look.[9]

In addition, he felt that much of the Abstract Expressionist work of this period, particularly that of de Kooning, implied a return to illusionistic three-dimensional space and consequently, representation.[10] This "homeless representation" implied "a plastic and descriptive painterliness that is applied to abstract ends, but which continues to suggest representational ones."[11] As Greenberg continued to refine his concepts of modernism throughout the 1950s, and as his disenchantment with Abstract Expressionism grew, a burgeoning awareness and appreciation of alternatives became apparent in his criticism. In his articles "After Abstract Expressionism" (1962) and "The Crisis of Abstract Art" (1964), and in the catalogue essay for the exhibition Post Painterly Abstraction which he organized for the Los Angeles Country Museum in 1964, Greenberg consolidated the arguments that he had begun to formulate from the mid-1950s on.[12] He argued that painting, in its

quest for "purity", would have to rid itself of thick, unevenly applied paint which suggested tactile properties and the sculptural. Value contrasts, produced by heavy brushwork and textured paint, which gave the impression of three-dimensionality, were to be avoided. Colour, because of its optical or solely visual properties, became increasingly important, as did flatness and openness of design.

This "new" colour-field painting had begun inside Abstract Expressionism itself and had emerged simultaneously with Abstract Expressionism in New York in the late 1940s. In his article "'American-Type' Painting" of 1955, Greenberg described the work of Clyfford Still, Barnett Newman, and Mark Rothko: "Because it is not broken by sharp differences of value or by more than a few incidents of drawing or design, color breathes from the canvas with an enveloping effect, which is intensified by the largeness itself of the picture."[13] By the middle of the 1950s, Greenberg believed that chromatic abstraction was surpassing Abstract Expressionism as the avant-garde direction that modern art should be taking, and that "by the new openness they have attained, Newman, Rothko, and Still point to what I would risk saying is the only way to high pictorial art in the near future."[14]

Developing contemporaneously with Newman, Rothko, and Still in the 1950s was a second generation of painters who worked in a style that adhered to the tenets of Greenberg's modernism. Colour-field painting would evolve in the 1950s and 1960s to include the soak and stain colour abstractions of Helen Frankenthaler, in which a degree of touch was retained; the spilled, diluted paint of Morris Louis with which he produced veils of stained colour; the more structured, geometric,

symmetrical patterning of stained colour in the work of Kenneth Noland; and the sprayed, atmospheric colour hazes of Jules Olitski.

In October 1958, French and Company Inc. opened a gallery in New York City that focused on contemporary art. In December of that year, Greenberg was appointed artistic consultant, a position which he held until February 1960. Greenberg initially refused the position, as he did not want to get involved in the commercial aspects of the art field.[15] But he was assured that there would be no selling involved and that the position would primarily entail the organizing of exhibitions. Spencer Samuels, the Director of the gallery, convinced Greenberg by arguing that "the position would give him the opportunity to promote those artists in whom he believed."[16] This appointment put him in a position not only to promote in writing those artists who shared his ideas, but also to get their work exhibited and make it accessible to the commercial market. In his book American Art Theory, 1945-70, Stewart Buettner writes:

> Gathering the new painters around him in his role as adviser to French & Co., Greenberg stood in a position to actually dictate the fundamentals of the formalist aesthetic by sheer weight of his influence as a critic.[17]

In 1961, Greenberg's previously published critical essays, many of which were revised, were brought together in a collection entitled Art and Culture. The availability of Greenberg's critical articles in one volume, which demonstrated the logic of his reasoning in the steps towards the development of his concept of modernist art, solidified his position as the most powerful and influential American art critic at that time.

## GREENBERG'S FORMALIST CRITICISM

Greenberg's theory of modernism was translated into a formalist approach to criticism: "The essence of Modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence.[18] The work of art as an autonomous entity was the proper subject of art criticism, and should be discussed using the material terms of its medium. In "Complaints of an Art Critic" of 1967, he expressed his distress over what he felt was a misinterpretation or misreading of his ideas:

> Of all the imputations to which this art critic has been exposed, the one he minds most is that his aesthetic judgments go according to a position or 'line'. There are various reasons for this imputation, not least among them being, I suppose, the flat, declarative way in which he tends to write. But there is also a general reluctance, or even inability, to read closely, and an equally general tendency to assign motives.[19]

Greenberg insisted that he was open-minded in his critical judgments, ready to find quality in all art, and denied that he was advocating a line in his assessment of quality in art. He was disturbed by the claims of his critics that he had motives for liking one work of art and not another, "because his program forces him to, not because his mere ungovernable taste won't let him do otherwise."[20] He felt that imputing a line to his criticism limited his freedom to be surprised, to have his expectations thwarted, to be inconsistent in his judgments, and to like anything in art as long as it was good.[21] In fact, he felt that:

> You cannot legitimately want or hope for anything from art except quality. And you cannot lay down conditions for quality. However and wherever it turns up, you have to accept it. You have your prejudices, your leanings and inclinations, but you are under the obligation to recognize them as that and keep them from interfering.[22]

The sole enterprise of criticism was to distinguish whether a work of art was good or bad. Aesthetic judgments, he contended, were involuntary and were contained in the immediate experience and in the presence of art, and were not arrived at through subsequent reflection and analysis.[23] Greenberg admitted that the determination of quality in art was primarily subjective, in that it was based upon the critic's conviction which was informed by his taste. But he also felt that there were objective elements to aesthetic judgment that were acting subconsciously:

> Because aesthetic judgments are immediate, intuitive, undeliberate, and involuntary, they leave no room for the conscious application of standards, criteria, rules, or precepts. That qualitative principles or norms are there somewhere, in subliminal operation, is certain; otherwise aesthetic judgments would be purely subjective....[24]

In spite of his claims of impartiality, by the mid-1950s Greenberg supported colour-field or chromatic abstraction as not only good art, but the best art:

> Undeterred by the potential conflict between taste and dogma, he insisted that both led him to a single style and the same artists. He seems to have been uncomfortable with the "subjective" authority of taste alone (no matter how commanding) and needed an appeal to the "objective" authority of purist aesthetics and art history. Greenberg's appeal to history was enormously attractive, doubly so because it was accompanied by an appeal to visually verifiable criteria.[25]

## GREENBERG'S ROLE AS A CRITIC

The typical role of the art critic--commenting upon, analyzing and writing about works of art and exhibitions--does not do justice to Greenberg's efforts as related to Post-Painterly Abstraction. As Kenneth Lochhead put it: "It should be noted that it is a very unique situation when a critic is involved with the problems that the artist faces in his studio environment. He is usually connected with art as an appraiser of art when on public display."[26] The perception of Greenberg's role in the development of Post-Painterly Abstraction is the source of heated controversy. Was he a coach and mentor to the artists involved, or did he direct and dictate how they should paint? Did he work actively to manipulate taste in order to shape and direct developments in art, or was he an interested observer, watching without interference as the orderly and linear progression of modernist art evolved inevitably towards Post-Painterly Abstraction? Bradford R. Collins wrote in the May 1987 issue of Arts Magazine that Greenberg rallied institutional and critical support for the artists in the Post-Painterly Abstraction art movement and commented that "unlike Hess and Rosenberg, who supported and explained developments, Greenberg influenced them, was seen to do so, and implicitly argued that this was the ultimate task for the critic."[27]

While Greenberg might have considered the critic's role in influencing artistic developments as an implicit one, Michael Fried, who shared and built upon Greenberg's formalist criticism, was explicit in his delineation of the role of the modernist critic:

> Modernist painting is at least a criticism of itself. And because this is so, criticism that shares the basic premises of modernist painting can play a role in its development only somewhat less important than that of new paintings themselves. [The] formal critic...in discussing the work of painters he admires...can point out flaws in putative solutions to particular formal problems; he is even justified in calling the attention of modernist painters to formal issues that, in his opinion, demand to be grappled with.[28]

John Bentley Mays, in Greenberg's obituary (1994), likened Greenberg's role to that of an impresario linked to the fighting journalist, which as such involved "the making and breaking and shaking, the bullying and cajoling of artists, the remorseless promoting."[29] Because Greenberg's opinions were persuasive and because he had succeeded in shaping opinion, his stature and power were such that artists sought him out for critical assessment, advice and direction.[30]

Regardless of how Greenberg's role is interpreted, he did in fact take specific actions to promote and establish Post-Painterly Abstraction, regardless of whether he was acting in the United States or in Canada. Most important was his persistent denigration of Abstract Expressionism from the mid-1950s on. This was in contrast to his determined promotion of Post-Painterly Abstraction as its successor, as well as his steadfast support of specific artists who were pursuing chromatic abstraction, regardless of where they lived. He encouraged an exchange of ideas between those artists who shared his convictions and had their work included in exhibitions, many of which he organized himself. He wrote articles promoting their work, and used his influence to have them appointed as directors of workshops or as members of the faculties of university fine arts programmes. Finally, Greenberg was the most important critical audience for their work, making suggestions,

approving developments, and editing the work itself.

In the United States, the artists whose work he began to promote most avidly after 1955 were Morris Louis and Ken Noland, and somewhat later, Jules Olitski. Louis and Noland came to New York from Washington, D.C. in April, 1953 to confer with Greenberg,[31] as did sculptor Anthony Caro from England on a Ford fellowship in the autumn of 1959.[32] In Canada, Greenberg's advice was sought by some members of Toronto's Painters Eleven when they requested that he visit their studios in June 1957 and critique their work. His advice was also solicited by the organizers of the Emma Lake Workshops in Saskatchewan when they requested that he act as the workshop leader in 1962, and by the editor of Canadian Art magazine that same year to assess and write an article on the status of art in Prairie Canada.

Greenberg felt that it was advantageous if artists were distanced from the New York art scene during the mid-1950s and early 1960s.[33] The fact that Noland and Louis did not live in New York was "not unrelated to the quality of their work,"[34] and he felt that they were able to move ahead of other young painters because from Washington, they could "keep in steady contact with the New York art scene without being subjected as constantly to its pressures to conform...."[35] Greenberg was to repeat this sentiment in the Canadian context.

Isolated somewhat from the corrupting influences of what he felt had become a stagnant Abstract Expressionism of post-1955, Greenberg then proceeded to educate those artists who showed tendencies towards chromatic abstraction. For

example, in 1953, he brought Noland and Louis to Helen Frankenthaler's studio to see the new direction that her work had taken the previous year. Similarly, British sculptor Anthony Caro and Jack Bush of Painters Eleven in Toronto were encouraged by Greenberg to visit New York, and were introduced by him to those artists who were part of his circle. Both Caro and Bush became friends with Ken Noland and both acknowledged the influence that he had upon them.[36] In Canada, Greenberg attempted to achieve the same result by bringing the work of his New York protégés to the provincials when he organized the exhibition Three New American Painters: Louis, Noland, Olitski for the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina in 1963. In addition, he helped secure the position that colour-field abstraction was attaining in the Canadian West by recommending and succeeding in having first Noland and then Olitski selected as leaders of the Emma Lake workshop in 1963 and 1964.

Greenberg's role in the movement extended beyond the intellectual, beyond a detached defense of the theory and methodology involved. Having formed a coterie of artists around him, Greenberg engaged in the creative process himself, by advising artists how they should best proceed, by means of his critiques and suggestions, and by editing the work itself. Sandler likened Greenberg's role to that of "a kind of editor whose advice is valued by creative writers."[37] He was revered by "his" artists and his comments and creative suggestions were valued above all others. This did not necessarily mean, however, that he told these artists how and what to paint. Frank Bowling wrote in "Formalism: A Selective View", that

"Greenberg does not tell artists what to do; he nearly always surmises as to how best an artist might, even should proceed."[38] Helen Frankenthaler also noted this in reference to her Mountains and Sea of 1952:

> [Friedel] Dzubas [with whom she shared a studio in 1953] and Greenberg, who saw the picture the day it was made, "agreed it was 'finished' and shouldn't be touched; that is, complete and shouldn't be added to....Clem encouraged me to go ahead and make more. I did. In all kinds of combinations and possibilities; I couldn't try them out fast enough."[39]

Similarly, John Elderfield examined Greenberg's impact upon Morris Louis and wrote that, although the influence that Greenberg had upon Louis should not be underestimated, it was nevertheless Louis who made the final decisions, though not without input from Greenberg. Diane Headley points out that "the degree to which Louis trusted Clement Greenberg is revealed in a notation made by the artist on an unstretched canvas..."Dalet Tet". At the upper right in front of the canvas appears the following: '1" of white on each side as per Clem.'"[40] Elderfield also noted that it was partly due to Greenberg's criticism of the Louis exhibition at the Martha Jackson Gallery in November 1957, that Louis returned to painting veils.[41] Louis' work at that time was hectic, intricate, and dense, showing Abstract Expressionist influences. Most of this work he later destroyed.[42]

To lay the groundwork for the acceptance of second-generation colour-field artists Greenberg began organizing exhibitions of the work of first-generation colour-field artist Barnett Newman to revive his reputation.[43] Immediately following, he organized the first one-man show of Louis' stain painting in April 1959, followed by exhibitions of Noland's work in the Fall of 1959 and in the Spring of 1960, all at

French and Company. Olitski's first one-man show was also organized by Greenberg at French and Company in 1960. In the May 1960 edition of Art International, Greenberg published "Louis and Noland," in which he discussed and promoted the work of these two artists.[44] Greenberg was also instrumental in having "his" artists appointed to positions of authority and influence. Closely associated with Bennington College in Vermont, Greenberg was an occasional lecturer and consultant to the art programme and he used his association with the College to recommend that Olitski and Caro be appointed to the faculty.[45] These promotional activities, normally outside the realm of the art critic, inevitably came under attack in the United States as they would in Canada. Sandler noted that Greenberg "was accused of having marshaled a coterie of artists, critics, curators, dealers, and collectors, some of whom served as museum trustees, in support of formalist art."[46]

## GREENBERG AND REPRESENTATIONAL ART IN THE UNITED STATES

In addition to a consideration of Greenberg's views on abstract art, and the methodology and actions he took to establish a consensus for his preferred variety of abstraction, it is also necessary to examine his position regarding representational art in the United States prior to exploring his approach to Canadian art and artists. This is due to the fact that, in addition to the abstract art that he saw in Canada, he was also required to critique a good deal of representational painting, landscape work in particular. He was confronted with representational

work at the Emma Lake workshop he conducted in 1962, as well as during his commissioned tour of Western Canada to write an article for Canadian Art.

It has generally been assumed in the literature dealing with Greenberg's visits to Canada that his acceptance and praise of the representational landscape work by Canadian painters was an indication of a leniency in his criticism in the Canadian context. It has also been used to substantiate the claim that, in Canada, even though Greenberg was espousing colour-field painting, he was not dictatorial and could be accepting of alternative styles of painting. An appreciation of landscape painting was not, however, uncharacteristic of Greenberg's aesthetic, either in the United States or Canada. In "Abstract and Representational" Greenberg wrote that "no one has yet been able to show that the representational as such either adds or takes away anything from the aesthetic value of a picture or statue."[47] The contention that representational art was not necessarily inferior to abstract art was made in Greenberg's articles throughout the 1950s.[48]

Nevertheless, Greenberg's attitude towards representational art changed as the 1950s progressed, and it became increasingly evident in his writing that representational art, even if it was good art, could at best be merely secondary or provincial in status.[49] In "A Famous Art Critic's Collection" of 1964, he asserted that there were many contemporary representational artists whose work he admired, including the Canadian Goodridge Roberts,[50] but that he could never get as involved with these artists or as excited by the work they were producing in comparison to certain artists who were working in abstraction.

Nevertheless, Greenberg appeared at times to be almost helplessly disposed to certain types of representational art, landscape work in particular:

> The very best art of this time continues to be abstract but the evidence compels you to recognize that below this uppermost level success is achieved, still, by a far higher proportion of figurative than of abstract painting. When jurying you find yourself having to throw out high-powered-looking abstract pictures and keeping in trite-looking landscapes and flower pieces. Despite certain qualms, you relish your helplessness in the matter, you relish the fact that in art things happen of their own accord and not yours, that you have to like things you don't want to like, and dislike things you do want to like.[51]

Greenberg himself painted landscapes and had shown three of them in a group show.[52] Gallery owner John Bernard Myers noted that "Clem, through all the years he came to the gallery, would, if I showed him new work without telling him who did it, invariably be more sympathetic to representational painters than to the abstract ones."[53] It is therefore not unprecedented that he praised a good deal of the landscape work that he saw in the Canadian West.

## NOTES - CHAPTER 1

1 James Faure Walker, "Clement Greenberg interviewed by James Faure Walker," Artscribe, No. 10 (January 1978), 20.

2 Ibid, 21.

3 Ibid, 20 & 21.

4 John O'Brian, ed., Clement Greenberg - The Collected Essays and Criticism. Volume 1 (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1986), XX.

5 Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," Forum Lectures, Washington, D.C.: Voice of America (1960). Reprinted in O'Brian, Volume 4, 85-93. For the ease of the reader, I have cited the Greenberg articles as they appear in John O'Brian, Clement Greenberg - The Collected Essays and Criticism. Volumes 1-4. In the accompanying Bibliography, the original article is also cited.

6 Ibid, 92.

7 Ibid, 87 & 88.

8 Donald B. Kuspit, Clement Greenberg - Art Critic (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 57.

9 Clement Greenberg, "The Crisis of Abstract Art," Arts Yearbook - The Art World, No. 7 (1964). Reprinted in O'Brian, Volume 4, 179-180.

10 John Gruen, The Party's Over Now. Reminiscences of the Fifties - New York's Artists, Writers, Musicians, and their Friends (New York, N.Y.: The Viking Press, 1972), 181.

11 Clement Greenberg, "After Abstract Expressionism," Art International, 6:8 (October 1962). Reprinted in O'Brian, Volume 4, 124.

12 Greenberg, "After Abstract Expressionism," 125. Greenberg, "The Crisis of Abstract Art," 179-180. Greenberg, "Post Painterly Abstraction," Art International, 8:5-6 (Summer 1964). Reprinted in O'Brian, Volume 4, 192-196.

13 Clement Greenberg, "'American-Type' Painting," Partisan Review, 22:2 (Spring 1955). Reprinted in O'Brian, Volume 3, 232.

14 Greenberg, "After Abstract Expressionism," 131.

15 Bradford R. Collins, "Clement Greenberg and the Search for Abstract Expressionism's Successor: A Study in the Manipulation of the Avant-Garde Consciousness," Arts Magazine, 61 (May 1987), 40.

16 Ibid, 38.

17 Stewart Buettner, American Art Theory, 1945-70 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1973), 146.

18 Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," Art and Literature, Volume 4 (Spring 1965). Reprinted in O'Brian, Volume 4, 85.

19 Clement Greenberg, "Complaints of an Art Critic," Artforum, Volume 6 (October 1967). Reprinted in O'Brian, Volume 4, 267.

20 Ibid, 268.

21 Ibid, 266.

22 Ibid, 267.

23 Ibid, 265.

24 Ibid, 265.

25 Irving Sandler, The New York School: The Painters and Sculptors of the Fifties (New York, N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1978), 313.

26 Kenneth Lochhead, "Report on the 1962 Emma Lake Artists' Workshop," The Flat Side of the Landscape; The Emma Lake Artists' Workshops (Saskatoon, Sask.: The Mendel Art Gallery, 1979), 129.

27 Collins, 40.

28 Michael Fried, "Modernist Painting and Formal Criticism," The American Scholar, (Autumn 1964), 648.

29 John Bentley Mays, "A Critical Loss for Art," Toronto Globe and Mail, (May 14, 1994), C6.

30 Numerous references have been made to Greenberg's influence and power in the New York art world, particularly after the appearance of his collection of essays in Art and Culture in 1961. Emile De Antonio and Mitch Tuchman in Painters Painting. A Candid History of the Modern Art Scene, 1940-70 (New York, N.Y: Abbeville Press, 1984), 32 wrote that "an essay by Greenberg influenced collectors as much as it did painters." Irving Sandler in American Art of the 1960s

(New York, N.Y.: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988), 107 noted that "an essay about an artist or even a favorable mention by Greenberg counted for immeasurably more than did any other critic's writing."

31 Sandler, The New York School..., 228.

32 Gene Baro, "Britain's New Sculpture," Art International, (June 1965), 27.

33 See David Howard, "Building the New Frontier: Modernism & the Military Industrial Complex in the United States & Canada, 1957-1965," Ph.D. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1993. Howard's thesis is a study of Greenberg and the geography of modernism (New York, Los Angeles and Canada).

34 Clement Greenberg, "Louis and Noland," Art International, 4: No. 5 (May 1960). Reprinted in O'Brian, Volume 4, 95.

35 Ibid, 95 & 96.

36 Jack Bush's comment about Noland suggesting to him that he try to beat Matisse, and the boost of confidence that it gave him to enter the big leagues of painting has often been included in books and articles dealing with Bush's career. On Greenberg's influence on Caro, see Baro, "Britain's New Sculpture," 27.

37 Sandler, American Art of the 1960s, 131.

38 Frank Bowling, "Formalism: A Selective View," Cover, 6 (Winter 1981-82), 40.

39 Gene Baro, "The Achievement of Helen Frankenthaler," Art International, 20 (Sept. 1967), 36.

40 Diane Upright Headley, Morris Louis: The Mature Paintings 1954-1962, Ph.D Thesis, University of Michigan, 1976, 59. Quoted in Sandler, American Art of the 1960s, 140.

41 Elderfield, 5.

42 Sandler, The New York School..., 233.

43 Collins, 42 (Footnote 31). Newman had not shown in New York City since 1951, at which time an exhibition of his work, held at the Betty Parson's gallery, had received hostile reviews.

44 Clement Greenberg, "Louis and Noland," Art International, 4: No 5 (May 1960), 26-29. Reprinted in O'Brian, Volume 4, 94-100.

45 Alan Solomon, "The Green Mountain Boys," Vogue, August 1, 1966.

46 Sandler, American Art of the 1960s, 132.

47 Clement Greenberg, "Abstract and Representational," Art Digest, (November 1954), 6-8. Reprinted in O'Brian, Volume 3, 187.

48 See Clement Greenberg, "A Critical Exchange with Fairfield Porter on 'American-Type' Painting," Partisan Review, (Fall 1955). Reprinted in O'Brian, Volume 3, 240 and Clement Greenberg, "Letter to the Editor of the New York Times," The New York Times, (May 29, 1960). Reprinted in O'Brian, Volume 4, 102.

49 Clement Greenberg, "A Famous Art Critic's Collection," Vogue, (January 15, 1964). Reprinted in O'Brian, Volume 4, 182.

50 ibid, 182. He listed the following artists: Milton Avery, Arnold Friedman, Richard Diebenkorn, Elmer Bishcoff, Paul Granlund, Sidney Laufman, Edwin Dickinson, Edward Hopper, Andrew Wyeth, John Chumley, and Lennart Anderson.

51 Greenberg, "Complaints of an Art Critic," 266 & 267.

52 John Bernard Myers, Tracking the Marvelous. A Life in the New York Art World (New York, N.Y.: Random House Inc., 1981), 142. Myers did not specify the date of the show, but wrote that Greenberg's paintings were mountain and meadow scenes.

53 Myers, 142.

## CHAPTER 2 GREENBERG IN EASTERN CANADA - HIS ASSOCIATION WITH PAINTERS ELEVEN IN TORONTO.

### INTRODUCTION

It might have appeared to some observers that Greenberg was more lenient towards Canadian art and artists and, as Denise Leclerc wrote in The Crisis of Abstraction in Canada: The 1950s, "...reserved his more caustic judgements for his American colleagues."[1] Although it might appear that he was more tolerant, this is very difficult to define and to evaluate. The information concerning Greenberg's relationship with the artists he encountered is often second-hand and filtered through memories. In addition, the interpersonal and psychological dynamic between the artist and Greenberg is difficult to assess. Nevertheless, the apparent tolerance which Greenberg demonstrated can be explained by the fact that his sojourns into Canada were not self-initiated and his criticism had been requested. And in fact, Greenberg could be extremely critical of Canadian painting when he felt criticism was warranted. While he was in Toronto assessing the work of Painters Eleven, Macdonald and Bush accompanied him on visits to various art galleries in the area to examine the work of other Canadian painters. Macdonald reported some of Greenberg's comments in a letter to Maxwell Bates dated July 3, 1957:

> York Wilson...oils too cut up & busy...no matter what this artist does on the surface of his canvas (cubism, abstraction etc.) he cannot avoid being a 100% Academic....Shadbolt...a facile painter, clever in many ways, but this thing contains only the work of twenty other artists....Binning...completely stagnant, stuck in a derivation of cubism....[2]

In his assessment of the art in Western Canada, Greenberg's assessments were also harsh at times. However, when he realized that his comments were for publication, and that they would most likely be seen by the artist involved, he usually tempered the severity of his critique with a note of encouragement.

Greenberg was sensitive regarding the degree of his involvement in Canadian art, probably in light of the consequent controversy that his visits to Canada and his criticism engendered, and was quick to correct any suggestion that his counsel and criticism had been offered unsolicited.[3] He had been invited by an art community that sought his counsel and paid his expenses (and at times an honorarium or a commission for an article). Given the circumstances, it is not unexpected that Greenberg's criticism, which was often ruthless in the United States, would have been somewhat tempered by a desire to be helpful towards a Canadian artistic community that regarded his opinion so highly.

This did not mean, however, that he modified his critical stance or his viewpoint as to what constituted the genuine path for the development of modern art, when dealing with work produced in Canada. The fact that the Canadian art community was isolated geographically from the "destructive" Abstract Expressionist influences centered in New York City, was considered a positive factor by him. But perhaps he also looked upon the Canadian artist as a clean slate, uncorrupted, open to suggestion and receptive to new ideas. Shortly after his visit to critique the work of Painters Eleven in June 1957, he wrote to Jock Macdonald:

> ...I really feel you people might have a better chance of getting something important out of yourselves simply because you're so much more open & ready to take experience as it comes. The sophisticated good taste of the New Yorkers, which works to shut off real originality, is a serious handicap in the final analysis.[4]

Two fundamental differences are evident when comparing Greenberg's visit with Painters Eleven to his visit to the Emma Lake workshop that he directed in 1962. First, Greenberg spent only a half-day with each of those members of Painters Eleven who had agreed to meet with him. At Emma Lake, he lived with the artists, lecturing and critiquing the artwork on a daily basis: "...I found myself much closer to all the artists [at Emma Lake] because I was spending two weeks with them. It wasn't a half day visit....There was quite a difference between Emma Lake & Toronto."[5] Secondly Painters Eleven work was exclusively abstract, while at Emma Lake he was presented with both abstract and representational work, landscape painting in particular. His subsequent trip through Western Canada for Canadian Art magazine was a whirlwind tour of several art centers, to evaluate both abstract and representational painting and sculpture created by a host of artists. During this tour, his contact with the artists and his examination of the work was of an even more cursory nature than his contact with Painters Eleven had been.

## PAINTERS ELEVEN, THE RIVERSIDE MUSEUM EXHIBITION IN 1956, AND THE INVITATION TO GREENBERG TO CRITIQUE THEIR WORK IN JUNE 1957.

Formed in November 1953 to get their paintings exhibited, Painters Eleven had no coherent, binding manifesto other than a unified goal to paint non-

objectively. The eleven members of the group were Jack Bush, Oscar Cahen, Hortense Gordon, Tom Hodgson, Alexandra Luke, Jock Macdonald, Ray Mead, Kazuo Nakamura, William Ronald, Harold Town, and Walter Yarwood. At the time of Greenberg's visit in June 1957, the group was well established, having exhibited regularly in Toronto and elsewhere.

The first breakthrough for Painters Eleven into the American art scene came when they were invited to exhibit with the American Abstract Artists Society at the Riverside Museum in New York City at the Society's 20th Annual Exhibition, held from April 8 to May 20, 1956. William Ronald had moved permanently to New York City in the Winter of 1955 and acted as a catalyst for the group, promoting their work as he made contacts in the New York art community. Jock Macdonald, in a 1956 letter to Maxwell Bates, wrote:

> Everyone wonders how on earth we received the N.Y. invitation. Well, all I can say is that certain N.Y. people have been interested in the PXI group, increasingly, during the past two years and have come up to Toronto, making special requests to meet the PXI artists & see their work. There has been Dr. Hale, one of the Metropolitan Museum Directors, Martha Jackson, of the Martha Jackson Gallery and L. Campbell, associate editor of the American Art News. All have been impressed considerably.[6]

Each member of Painters Eleven was represented in the American Abstract Artists Society exhibition by two paintings and four members--Bush, Luke, Macdonald, and Ronald-- attended the opening. New York critics praised the work, and favourable reviews appeared in The Village Voice, Time Magazine, and Art News.[7] William Ronald's painting Central Black was singularly honoured, being hung over the entrance to the exhibition. He was also praised by Lawrence

Campbell, who touted Ronald as "the most sensational of the group."[8] Important New York collectors were also taking notice of Ronald's work, including the Manhattan collector Countess Ingeborg de Beausac, who introduced him to Sam Kootz, owner of one of the leading commercial galleries in New York City.[9] Kootz consulted with Hans Hofmann and Clement Greenberg as to whether he should take Ronald on, and in the winter of 1956 signed him to a three-year contract with his gallery.[10] Ronald later recalled that Kootz had asked Greenberg to take a look at his work and that Greenberg reported back to Kootz that he (Ronald) was not ready.[11] In a subsequent letter, Greenberg rebutted this: "Incidentally, Ronald's version of our relations is turned upside down: I did recommend him to Kootz, & Bill was grateful to me for that."[12] The possibility that Greenberg recommended Ronald's work of 1956, with its use of the central image and his debt to Abstract Expressionism, suggests that he saw Ronald's painting as a step above the imitative Abstract Expressionist work that he had begun to condemn by that time.

In the Spring of 1957, Ronald had his first solo exhibition at the Kootz Gallery in New York City. Jock Macdonald, who was Ronald's former teacher and mentor, travelled to New York for the opening of the exhibition, and attended a party given at Kootz's apartment in Ronald's honour. In a discussion with Greenberg at the party about the Toronto art scene and Painters Eleven, Macdonald invited Greenberg to come to Toronto and look over their work. In a letter to Bates on June 3, 1957, Macdonald wrote:

> There is considerable interest about this group [Painters Eleven] in New York. Out of the interest Greenberg jumped at an enquiry, or invitation, I

> gave him to come to Toronto, when I was present at an evening party in Kootz's apartment after the opening of Ronalds' [sic] first N.Y. show at Kootz Gallery. Greenberg's visit should be valuable to us. I believe that he is a most direct person.[13]

Greenberg recalled that "...he [Ronald] was the one who proposed my visit to Toronto, w. Jock Macdonald seconding him."[14] He consented to go to Toronto, provided that his expenses were paid, and agreed to spend a half-day with each of the members of Painters Eleven who wished to meet with him, and to give individual critiques of their work. Macdonald returned to Toronto with this offer and he and Jack Bush immediately called a meeting of Painters Eleven to present it. Ronald flew up from New York for the meeting, as he felt that this was an essential and constructive opportunity for the group. The meeting was held at Macdonald's house on May 9, 1957 and ten of the original eleven members attended. (Oscar Cahen had been killed in an automobile accident in November, 1956). Greenberg's proposed visit did not meet with unanimous support, however. Alexandra Luke recorded this dissension in the minutes she took of the meeting:

> Bill's [Ronald's] suggestion that P XI invite Clement Greenberg to Toronto (he volunteered to come) was knocked around, the strongest opposition came from Harold Town and milder from Walter Yarwood. Hortense did not think it necessary but many of us felt it would be greatly to our advantage to have a man like Greenberg who many N.Y. artists try to meet, come and see our work especially as he would be doing it on his own time! We would simply pay his expenses.[15]

Bush later recalled that Ronald had commented at the time that the point in bringing Greenberg to see their work was that he was so brutally honest that they could not help but benefit.[16] Nevertheless, Town and Yarwood decided not to partake of Greenberg's critique. Town elaborated on this decision in a 1975 letter: "Further

to this Yarwood and Town never did refuse to see that ass Greenberg..we refused to pay our share of his expenses to get to Toronto to look at the work. My comment at the meeting was this.."He should pay to look at our stuff!."[17] Macdonald wrote to Bates on July 3, 1957 explaining that the reason Yarwood and Town refused to show their work to Greenberg was that they felt they did not need or desire "the opinions of any critic from anywhere," and commented that "such a stand bespeaks fear in my opinion."[18] Greenberg stated in an interview years later that he was unaware until he arrived in Toronto that Town and Yarwood would not take part and was told simply that they were not interested.[19]

**GREENBERG'S CRITIQUE - PAINTERS ELEVEN**

In analyzing Greenberg's relationship with the Painters Eleven artists, it becomes apparent that the methodology he had followed in his involvement with the American colour-field artists was repeated, and the same pattern emerges. His denigration of the Abstract Expressionist influence in their painting, as well as his promotion of openness of design, simplicity, and the emphasis on two-dimensionality and pure colour, was a reiteration of the stance he was then taking in the United States. Jack Bush, as the member of the Painters Eleven upon whom Greenberg's critique had the most impact, was encouraged to visit his counterparts in the United States--Noland and Louis in particular.

In an interview in January 1978, Greenberg described his procedure when entering a studio to critique an artist's work:

> ...your main idea is to be helpful, not to sit in judgment so much as to be helpful, and maybe learn something for yourself, and often you do....So when I visit a studio I make it my policy to say what I don't like, to pick out what I like the most. And you have to convey to the artist that your likes and dislikes couldn't define his eventual capacities as an artist, or his potentialities; that like all other human beings he held infinite possibilities.[20]

In the Canadian context, although Greenberg may have had specific comments about individual paintings, he tended to group an artist's work as a whole, thus providing an overview of the body of work in his assessment. In a second interview that same year, Greenberg again outlined his approach, this time with specific reference to his visit to Toronto in June 1957:

> Of course I was aiming for a certain effect but only so far as telling them what I liked and what I didn't like. A lot of what I saw I liked. I didn't feel it was necessary for me to lie....I don't visit a studio and say a painting has to go this way or that way. It's rumoured that I do that. I know damn well I don't....I don't get into `becauses.' When you come into a studio you see a number of works. My habit is to go to the one I like most. If you start to say `because' you get into art jargon. You do most of your talking about the works....Every artist is a law to himself whether it's good or bad.[21]

Greenberg visited for almost five days with the eight members of Painters Eleven who had agreed to see him. In general, he admonished them to stop revering New York painters or other celebrated artists in the world, and to stop adopting stylistic techniques from their work.[22] As he recalled in 1979: "I did urge artists to get rid of Abstract Expressionist mannerisms insofar as they were mannerisms, & I would often suggest that they try to do that by going in the opposite direction, that is away from lathered paint."[23] Alexandra Luke, in her minutes of a meeting held June 15, 1957 at Jock Macdonald's house after Greenberg's visit, noted that he had told them that "we must not stand in awe of the New York school -

we should cauterize the infectious influence by which we have been contaminated - break away from all influences and express ourselves more sincerely."[24]

Greenberg also felt that in many cases the artists did not show enough nerve, enough confidence in themselves, and he later recalled having encouraged them not to be intimidated by the outside world.[25] Macdonald noted that Greenberg had said: "There is nothing that any of you need to learn about how to paint (technically), you can all paint excellently...what you have to do is to realise that within yourselves you have the personal abilities to say something as profound as anywhere in the world."[26]

Macdonald reported that Greenberg had stated that he was expecting to be confronted with capable imitations of European or New York work, but instead discovered something that was from neither New York or Europe and that was creatively much deeper than he had anticipated.[27] Luke wrote that Mrs. Greenberg (Greenberg's second and much younger wife who accompanied him on the trip) said that they had wondered before their arrival which of the painters would give them an argument. Luke commented that this "indicates it must have be [sic] a foregone conclusion that the criticisms would be mostly unrelated to praise."[28] She noted that, in his discussions of the work of other artists, Greenberg criticized nearly every artist that was mentioned, but that he was honest.[29] Luke commented that "Greenberg said our group should produce something terrific, that we were on fire!!!"[30]

## HORTENSE GORDON, TOM HODGSON AND KAZUO NAKAMURA

Gordon, Hodgson and Nakamura appear not to have recorded their personal impressions of their meetings with Greenberg. Macdonald's recollections therefore serve as the main reference for Greenberg's assessment of the work of these three artists. Macdonald reported that Greenberg quite liked some of Gordon's work, felt that Hodgson possessed tremendous possibilities as a painter and that he was exceedingly good but at the same time the most confused of the group, and that Nakamura was too "captured by oriental taste."[31] Macdonald pointed out that Nakamura was angered by this comment. Two decades later, Greenberg recalled that Nakamura was perhaps "a little too tasteful at times...and he had to be told not to be so tasteful, but it was fine for him."[32] Macdonald summarized Greenberg's evaluation of Nakamura's work, writing that he felt that "Nak would continue to produce individuality in his work & be `very finished' in his technical abilities but would never really do anything of powerful importance."[33]

Perhaps Gordon, Hodgson and Nakamura did not record their impressions of Greenberg's visit because they were not particularly influenced by or interested in his critiques. Hodgson and Nakamura have both confirmed that Greenberg's opinion did not have any short-term or long-term influence upon their work.[34] The remaining four members of Painters Eleven whose work Greenberg examined were more attentive to his critique, and recorded their personal impressions of their meeting with him.

## RAY MEAD

In 1977 Mead recounted his impressions of his meeting with Greenberg:

> I showed him a rather large black painting with nothing else in it. I thought he'd laugh at it. To my amazement he didn't. He said it's rather funny that you're doing that, and [Clyfford] Still, he's doing the same thing. [I said] I suppose it's a very simple thing. And immediately he said no, it's not simple Actually it's very complex.[35]

After looking at some collages, Greenberg encouraged Mead to work them up to nine feet.[36] Greenberg also told him that he would have to increase the scale of his painting in order for his work to be shown in New York. However, at that time in his life Mead could not afford the cost in paint and canvas to get a show of large paintings ready.[37] With his growing advocacy of chromatic abstraction, Greenberg would have empathised with Mead's affinity for flatness in his work, as well as his use of relatively broad design and areas of colour, which had provoked the comparison of his work to Still's. In fact, according to Macdonald, Greenberg had thought that "Ray Mead and myself were ready for any top notch Gallery in New York, or anywhere. He considered that we were the most creative individuals, without accents of statements introduced from other artist's works anywhere."[38] Macdonald commented that "this opinion would amaze the others [Painters Eleven members] but I have retained it for myself."[39]

In 1958, Mead was moved to Montreal by his employer, MacLaren's advertising agency. There was an eight-year period beginning in 1963 when, disgruntled by dealers trying to dictate how he should paint, he stopped painting entirely.[40] He did, however, keep up a life-long friendship with Greenberg, and

whenever Greenberg was in Montreal they would get together.[41]

**ALEXANDRA LUKE**

Luke recorded her impressions of Greenberg's visit, as well as his comments, in handwritten notes.[42] She noted his general comment that most women artists lacked confidence in themselves and were too timid. Regarding Greenberg's assessment of her work in particular, she recorded that he felt she could paint, did not need any lectures or instruction, and like most women artists, just lacked confidence. Luke noted that "one thing he liked about my work which he could not say of the other members of group [was that] it was not squashed in at the sides which is one excellent thing that Hofmann frees you of."[43] Luke had studied with Hofmann for many years during summer trips to his school in Provincetown in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Jock Macdonald recalled that Greenberg told Luke to go back to nature as her source and to stop worshipping Hofmann.[44]

When he commented on specific paintings done by Luke, Greenberg's prejudices against the Abstract Expressionistic mannerisms which he found in her work, and his endorsement of chromatic abstraction, became apparent:

> Most of those on the walls are too busy too much detail seem to be trying too hard to make an acceptable painting & to conform with the idiom of the day - Forget all art school painting - become absolutely free, be yourself - your colours are too dragged over - let the pure colour stand without feeling it has to have another shade to decorate it. Don't be afraid of space put your large canvas on the floor...don't be timid. Use almost anything but artists brushes - use large wall painting brush.[45]

Perhaps as a result of these suggestions, a new fluidity became apparent in Luke's work after the Greenberg critique.[46]

Greenberg subsequently commented that Luke had shown that she had assimilated the latest New York art without succumbing to it.[47] He remarked that on a much later visit to Toronto, subsequent to the 1957 visit, he made a side trip to Oshawa and saw some of her newer work. He described the paintings as being very fine, and commented that "she died too young [1901-1967], before she had done her best work."[48]

## JOCK MACDONALD

The work that Macdonald produced from 1957 until his death in 1960 has been considered his crowning achievement. After a life of study and inquiry he had begun to feel that he had finally found the means to evoke the mystical and the spiritual elements in nature in his work. Having been introduced to Lucite 44 paint by Harold Town at the beginning of 1957, Macdonald found that he was able to paint with more fluidity, as Lucite was thinner than regular oil paint and dried more quickly. Hence, he was able to obtain the freedom of expression that previously he had only been able to obtain in his watercolours.[49] In fact Jean Dubuffet, when examining Macdonald's work during the latter's stay in France in 1954, had already advised him to strive for the same freedom and fluidity in his oils that he saw in his watercolours.[50]

Greenberg's visit in 1957, and his confirmation that the new direction that

Macdonald had taken in his painting had resulted in the production of first-rate work, was important at this critical point. In 1957 Macdonald wrote to Maxwell Bates:

> At long last I am really on the road--so says Clement Greenberg. He arrived here after I had two of the new things done so he told me that my new work was a tremendous step forward, in the right direction, completely my own and could stand up with anything in New York. The step forward is through my being able to completely free myself from the canvas limitations--or what he calls `the box'.[51]

This vote of confidence resulted in a summer of intense production. Macdonald wrote to Bates on August 7, 1957 that since the middle of May he had produced twenty-two works and was continuing to produce with fervour. He enthused that they were completely different from anything he had done before, and that he considered them by far superior. This he attributed to the use of Lucite.[52] He acknowledged that "Greenberg gave me such a boost in confidence that I cannot remember ever knowing such a sudden development taking place before. The only parallel was when I concentrated for five months producing automatic watercolours every day. This work is also automatic."[53]

Macdonald's new work consisted of shifting planes which are defined by colour. But while this work appeared to comply with Greenberg's formalist concepts, a falling out between Macdonald and Greenberg eventually ensued. As Joyce Zemans records, Greenberg was initially impressed by the two-dimensionality in Macdonald's new work of 1957, but later began to complain that Macdonald was not adhering to one of the fundamental rules of the modernist painter in maintaining the integrity of the picture plane, as Macdonald had been

introducing elements of three-dimensionality into his work. Zemans commented:

> But Macdonald was never a colour field painter, nor was this his intention. He never flooded paint onto the canvas or worked a canvas on the floor...although he often achieved an ease and flow that paralleled the stained canvas. He was committed to a new interpretation of space, not to flatness for its own sake.[54]

In a letter dated February 17, 1960, Macdonald wrote that he had learned that Greenberg had "queered" a possible show of his work at the Berthan Schaefer Gallery in New York.[55] In a reply to Joan Murray on this topic, Greenberg replied that this was "news to me" and that as far as he was concerned, "Jock's relations with me never cooled."[56]

In a 1978 interview Greenberg was asked if it was a lack of time and money that had restricted Macdonald's career, rather than a lack of talent. He responded: "I don't know what kept Jock back. Then I don't want to say anything kept Jock back. I just think he was a damn good painter and that's it. Had he lived longer, he would probably be painting still better."[57]

## JACK BUSH - HIS ASSOCIATION WITH GREENBERG

All of the members of Painters Eleven who agreed to meet with Greenberg were exposed to some aspects of his critical approach, in that he tended to denounce Abstract Expressionist mannerisms in their work, and advocate and promote the concerns related to chromatic abstraction. It was, however, Jack Bush alone who, in adopting Greenberg's suggestions, ultimately became a member of the Greenberg group of artists and as such was given the same treatment as his

American counterparts. Greenberg's influence upon the other members of Painters Eleven was not as strong as it was on Bush and as a result their relationship with him was not as close. Bush, on the other hand, adopted Greenberg's formalist position whole-heartedly, radically changed his style of painting, and developed a close friendship with Greenberg. Indeed, Bush became one of Greenberg's protégés and due to the fact that, like Noland, Louis, and Olitski, he came to believe in the validity of colour-field abstraction, he allowed himself to become progressively absorbed into the Greenberg crusade to promote this art movement He visited, and exchanged ideas with, other artists who toed the Greenberg line, and Greenberg promoted Bush's work in writing and in exhibitions. Not only did Greenberg recommend Bush's work to dealers and collectors, but his involvement in his career included an ongoing critical assessment of his painting, which entailed the editing of his work and suggestions as to how to paint. For example, in 1970 Greenberg suggested that Bush leave some unpainted canvas visible when the pictures were stretched, as he had noticed that the paintings often looked better in the studio before they were stretched and framed.[58] Similarly, in 1971 Greenberg suggested that Bush keep his form or forms out of the centre and locate them towards the sides of the canvas.[59] And Bush's son Robert recalled Greenberg saying, "Simplify, simplify, simplify" on visits to Bush's studio.[60] He also remembered Greenberg questioning those details which pertained to the finishing touches or the final adjustment or resolution of the painting.[61] Although Greenberg was encouraging, and would tell Bush that he was becoming a great painter, Robert

stated that Greenberg would often insist that his father should be doing better.[62]

The controversy and divisiveness within the artistic community in Ontario over Greenberg's theories and the extent of his influence centered primarily on Greenberg's relationship with Bush. Bush's life-long friendship with Greenberg, his transformation into a colour-field painter, and the commercial success and international reputation that he attained, all became sources of controversy.

During Bush's association with Painters Eleven, but prior to Greenberg's visit, he was painting abstract work, which he denigrated in an interview on CBC radio in 1976:

> Well it was abstract, based on a subject of some sort. Whether it was a landscape or people or what, but it was mainly colour and it was put on rawly with a brush and splattered all over the place and then palette-knife strokes would cut through it. Didn't mean anything![63]

This style of painting was typical of the imitative Abstract Expressionist work that Greenberg was railing against at that time in New York. Macdonald reported that Greenberg gave Bush an "awful scolding," and advised him to stop using idioms of design borrowed from other painters and to "speak in his own way." This, Greenberg felt, Bush had succeeded in doing in one or two of his watercolours.[64]

Bush described Greenberg's visit as follows:

> And I remember well that half-day I spent with him in my studio at home....I proudly showed him all my new work with abstract expressionist influence and so forth....He said...you're just taking all the hot licks from the New York painters which is so easy to do. Try painting simpler, and thinner, as you have done in these water colours. If it scares you, good--you'll know you are onto something that is your true self....[65]

The watercolours that Greenberg was referring to were a series that Bush had

completed in November 1956 to commemorate the death of Oscar Cahen. They are simple in composition, open and flat in design, with an emphasis on thinly applied areas of colour.

Bush reported that he was stunned by Greenberg's comments. He recalled saying to his wife, Mabel, after the meeting, "My God, he cut my stomach right open and I was bleeding. I'm finished Mabel, I'll never paint again."[66] After recovering from the shock, Bush decided to try the simplified approach in his oils, as recommended by Greenberg. He reported that in six months time he realized that "Clem was right - the paintings were better, and I didn't look back."[67]

Greenberg's critique thus marked the beginning of a new direction in Bush's work. He tried to emulate the spontaneity, freedom of design, and the simplicity which Greenberg had admired in the watercolours. Acting as his mentor, Greenberg invited Bush to visit him, and on regular visits to New York in the late 1950s and early 1960s Bush cemented his friendship with Greenberg, visited the studios and galleries that Greenberg recommended, and examined the art of which Greenberg approved.[68] As Andrew Hudson has noted, with reference to Greenberg's influence on Bush: "Greenberg has helped many, many artists see and appreciate some quality in another artist's work, so that they might be inspired to aim for a similar quality in their own work.[69] Dennis Reid agrees, noting that all of these New York contacts gave Bush the last bit of assurance that he needed to adopt colour-field painting whole-heartedly.[70]

By the end of the 1950s, Bush had become a fervent practitioner of Post-

Painterly Abstraction. He became first an acquaintance and then a friend of Morris Louis, Ken Noland and Jules Olitski. Bush's first New York dealer, Robert Elkon, remarked that "Noland and company believed in what Bush was doing. They incorporated him spiritually within their group."[71]

Bush made his first trip to Europe in the early summer of 1962, having been awarded a Canada Council Senior Fellowship. While in London he met the sculptor Anthony Caro, another devotee of Greenberg's formalist concepts. This meeting had been arranged through a letter of introduction from Greenberg himself.[72] Bush remained in Europe for two months. The degree of his involvement by that time with the New York supporters of colour-field painting is evidenced by the fact that, immediately after this trip, he spent the month of October 1962 in New York, and stayed at the same hotel as Ken Noland. Bush credits Noland with having given him the idea, at that time, that he could be the best painter in the world. When Bush told Noland that during his European trip he had been most impressed by some large collages he had seen in Switzerland, done by Matisse when he was over 80 years old, Noland commented, "Why don't you go out and beat him?"[73]

As a member of this artistic community Bush drew upon the members not only for moral support, but also for technical assistance. For example, early in his development as a colour-field painter he called Morris Louis in New York to find out how Louis managed to keep the stained paint from bleeding through to the back of the canvas. Bush had been getting complaints about this from collectors of his own work. (Louis solved this problem by painting the back of his canvases white in

order to keep the stained paint from showing, a practice which Bush adopted.)[74] Similarly, Greenberg reported that Bush learned from Louis and Noland to leave cotton canvas unsized and unprimed.[75]

In January 1966, Bush left the Walter Moos Gallery in Toronto and joined the David Mirvish Art Gallery, and in November 1966 the gallery held its first one-man exhibition of his work. Mirvish was attentive to Greenberg's recommendations, and it would appear to have been on Greenberg's urging that Bush changed dealers;[76] Walter Moos recalled that Bush had left his gallery under "less than pleasant" circumstances, and that "Bush made this move at the sole and only suggestion of Clement Greenberg."[77] Nevertheless, in moving to the Mirvish Gallery Bush shared a dealer with Frakenthaler, Olitski, Noland, Stella, and Caro, each of whom had been given an exhibition at the Mirvish Gallery by the mid-1960s. Mirvish wrote of the closeness of this association of artists:

> In the period before he [Bush] began to show at my gallery we had shown many artists to whom Jack was very sympathetic, people he knew or whose work he knew and admired....It was my intention to provide the work of Jack Bush and all the gallery's artists with a mutually supportive context....At my first Anthony Caro exhibition in 1966, Kenneth Noland and Jack Bush helped with the installation. Then everyone present helped to paint and touch-up the pieces.[78]

In addition, Greenberg was also instrumental in obtaining a New York dealer for Bush. In 1962, he recommended to Robert Elkon that he take Bush on.[79] Bush received his first New York solo exhibition at the Elkon Gallery that same year. Greenberg also organized a one-man exhibition of Bush's work at Bennington College in Vermont in September 1964.[80] And, in late 1963, on the introduction and

recommendation of Greenberg, Vincent Melzac, a collector from Washington, D.C., visited Bush. He bought fourteen of his paintings, and was the first major American collector to purchase his works.[81] In 1966, Bush moved to the more prestigious André Emmerich Gallery in New York. Although Greenberg's influence was instrumental in getting Bush accepted by the Elkon and the Mirvish galleries, Greenberg asserted that he never said a word about Bush to Emmerich. He maintained that it had been Emmerich's decision to take Bush away from the Elkon gallery.[82] However, Greenberg's authoritative position, his promotion of Bush's work, as well as the fact that he tended to act as an agent for the American colour-field artists that Emmerich was handling (Emmerich had begun showing the work of Helen Frankenthaler in 1959, that of Kenneth Noland in 1960, and that of Morris Louis in 1961),[83] would in themselves have been powerful incentives for Emmerich to represent Bush.

In Greenberg's 1963 article, "Painting and Sculpture in Prairie Canada Today," he used Bush as a point of comparison in praising Arthur McKay's work; he wrote that in his recent painting McKay had achieved "some of the best as well as most ambitious painting I have seen anywhere in Canada since I came on the later work of Jack Bush three years ago in Toronto."[84] Greenberg included Bush, as well as McKay and Ken Lochhead, as the only three Canadian representatives in his Post Painterly Abstraction exhibition held at the Los Angeles County Museum in 1964.

Having Greenberg as a mentor did not assure commercial success, however.

Terry Fenton has pointed out the pitfalls of the association between Greenberg and Bush: "[Greenberg is] not a great power in the market place. The artists he admires at the time often have to suffer for years because of a certain backlash to Greenberg. Having Greenberg like you is like the kiss of death to a certain extent."[85] It was only in 1968, eleven years after their fateful first meeting, that Bush felt that sales of his work were brisk enough to allow him to give up his career in commercial art.

As a successful colour-field painter, Bush turned his back on his own past. In 1964, he resigned from all memberships in Canadian art societies. Similarly, in his list of exhibitions he edited out all shows in which he had participated prior to 1954, except for those in which he had exhibited with Painters Eleven.[86] Like Morris Louis, who literally destroyed much of his pre-Greenbergian work, Bush figuratively did likewise. In late 1959 he painted a set of pictures with explicit references to the natural world. These were the "Flower" pictures, with titles such as Peony and Iris, and Pink with Wild Violets, but were never exhibited. According to Duncan MacMillan: "It is suggested that Bush was dissuaded from exhibiting his Flower pictures, that he was pushed away from his own inclinations and persuaded to follow a more strictly formalist path."[87] Although MacMillan does not speculate as to who did the persuading, it is logical to assume that Greenberg had a hand in this. Bush's wife Mabel prevented him from destroying these paintings.[88] In the retrospective of his work held in 1976-1977, Bush allowed only those paintings which he had produced from 1958 on to be included.[89] Barrie Hale noted that: "His

long-awaited retrospective...did Bush the disservice of implying that maturity was something conferred on Bush by Greenberg during his 1957 Toronto visit."[90]

## NOTES - CHAPTER 2

1 Denise Leclerc, The Crisis of Abstraction in Canada: The 1950s (Ottawa, Ontario: The National Gallery of Canada, 1992), 68.

2 Jock Macdonald, letter to Maxwell Bates, July 3, 1957. Montreal, Quebec: McGill University, McCord Museum of Canadian History Archives.

3 Jack Bush. National Film Board of Canada. Catalogue No. C 10179004, 1979. Interview with Jack Bush and comments by Clement Greenberg. See also Clement Greenberg, letter to Joan Murray, January 7, 1979. Archives. The Robert McLaughlin Gallery: "Jack Bush in the movie made shortly before his death, has me offering to come, which is wrong."

4 Quoted by Jock Macdonald, letter to Bates, July 3, 1957.

5 Allan Walkinshaw, interview with Clement Greenberg, March 15, 1978. Archives. Oshawa, Ontario: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.

6 Jock Macdonald, letter to Maxwell Bates, March 13, 1956. Montreal, Quebec: McGill University, McCord Museum of Canadian History Archives.

7 In "Rebels in Manhattan," Time Magazine (Canadian edition), LXVII: 19, (May 7, 1956), page 38 the anonymous reviewer wrote that "...Painters Eleven have had to contend with the public's massive indifference....But they have also begun to find warm supporters....An exhibit of 22 exuberantly non-objective compositions by Painters Eleven was a featured attraction in the Am. Artists annual show...."

The review entitled "American Abstract Artists with 'Painters 11' of Canada," in The Village Voice, 1 No. 3, (May 16, 1956), page 11 was even more glowing: "Comparing the work. .few of the local contingent are unwilling to admit the decisive superiority of the Canadian showing. There seems a greater relaxation in dealing with broad surfaces, a general refinement in depicting movement that requires no violence to communicate emotion and a facility to apply rich, ardent colouring without transitional fuss."

8 Lawrence Campbell, "Reviews and Previews," Art News, Volume 55, No. 3 (May 1956), 50.

9 Barry Lord, The History of Painting in Canada; Toward a People's Art (Toronto, Ontario: NC Press Ltd., 1974), 205. See also Joan Murray, interview with William Ronald, Toronto, May 31, 1977. Archives. The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.

10 Jock Macdonald, letter to Maxwell Bates, January 2, 1957. Montreal, Quebec: McGill University, McCord Museum of Canadian History Archives. In the letter Jock describes the terms of Ronald's contract with Kootz in detail.

11 Murray, interview with William Ronald, May 31, 1977. This interview is punctuated with pauses where Ronald appears to be unable to recall or to think clearly. He also recalled an argument with Greenberg which almost came to blows. When subsequently asked about this argument, Greenberg did not recall any altercation having taken place, and remembered recommending that Kootz take Ronald on (Clement Greenberg, letter to Joan Murray, January 7, 1979. Archives. Oshawa, Ont.: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery).

12 Greenberg, letter to Murray, January 7, 1979.

13 Jock Macdonald, letter to Maxwell Bates, June 3, 1957. Montreal, Quebec: McGill University, McCord Museum of Canadian History Archives.

14 Greenberg, letter to Murray, January 7, 1979. Also in Walkinshaw, interview with Greenberg, March 15, 1978.

15 Alexandra Luke, minutes of Painters Eleven meeting held at Jock Macdonald's, May 9, 1957. Special Collection - Box 5, File No. 7: Painters Eleven Group Meetings - Notes and Minutes. Archives. Oshawa, Ontario: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.

16 Jack Bush. National Film Board of Canada.

17 Harold Town, letter to Jennifer Watson, Sept. 29, 1975. Archives. Oshawa, Ontario: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery. Also in the Painters Eleven Biographies - Jack Bush. Special Collection - Box 5, File No. 8. Archives. Oshawa, Ont.: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Town said that "no dam [sic] hot shot U.S. critic was going to tell him how to paint."

18 Macdonald, letter to Bates, July 3, 1957.

19 Walkinshaw, interview with Greenberg, March 15, 1978.

20 James Faure Walker, "Clement Greenberg - An Interview," Artscribe, No. 10 (January 1978), 21.

21 Walkinshaw, interview with Greenberg, March 15, 1978.

22 Macdonald, letter to Bates, July 3, 1957.

23 Greenberg, letter to Murray, Jan. 7, 1979.

24 Alexandra Luke, minutes of Painters Eleven group meeting held at Jock Macdonald's house after Clement Greenberg's visit, dated June 15, 1957. Special Collection - Box 1, File No. I. Oshawa, Ontario: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.

25 Walkinshaw, interview with Greenberg, March 15, 1978.

26 Macdonald, letter to Bates, July 3, 1957.

27 Ibid.

28 Luke, minutes of her meeting with Clement Greenberg, dated June 14, 1957. Special Collection - Box 1, File No. I: Original Notes - Lecture Notes, Teachings, Study Notes. Archives. Oshawa, Ontario: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.

29 Ibid.

30 Luke, minutes of Painters Eleven group meeting held at Jock Macdonald's house after Clement Greenberg's visit, dated June 15, 1957.

31 Macdonald, letter to Bates, July 3, 1957.

32 Walkinshaw, interview with Greenberg, March 15, 1978.

33 Macdonald, letter to Bates, July 3, 1957.

34 Daniel J. Currell, questionnaire to Tom Hodgson; replied June 5, 1994 and questionnaire to Kazuo Nakamura; replied June 13, 1994. In the possession of the author.

35 Joan Murray, interview with Ray Mead, Feneton Falls, Sept. 4, 1977. Archives. Oshawa, Ontario: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.

36 Ibid.

37 Unrecorded telephone conversation between the author and Ray Mead in Toronto, July 20, 1994.

38 Macdonald, letter to Bates, July 3, 1957.

39 Ibid.

40 Joan Murray, Two Decades - Ray Mead. Exhibition - Jan. 5 to Jan. 31, 1982 (Oshawa, Ontario: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 1982), 11.

41 Unrecorded telephone conversation between the author and Ray Mead in Toronto, July 20, 1994.

42 Luke, minutes of her meeting with Clement Greenberg, dated June 14, 1957.

43 Ibid.

44 Macdonald, letter to Bates, July 3, 1957.

45 Luke, minutes of her meeting with Clement Greenberg, dated June 14, 1957.

46 Jennifer C. Watson, Alexandra Luke: A Tribute.Exhibition - July 6 to Aug. 7, 1977 (Oshawa, Ontario: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 1977), 36.

47 Walkinshaw, interview with Greenberg, March 15, 1978.

48 Ibid.

49 Joyce Zemans, Jock Macdonald. The Inner Landscape. Exhibition. The Art Gallery of Ontario April 4 - May 17, 1981 (Toronto, Ontario: The Art Gallery of Ontario, 1981), 193.

50 Ibid, 184.

51 Macdonald, letter to Bates, July 3, 1957.

52 Jock Macdonald, letter to Maxwell Bates, August 7, 1957. Montreal, Quebec: McGill University, McCord Museum of Canadian History Archives.

53 Ibid.

54 Zemans, 194 & 197.

55 Jock Macdonald, letter to Maxwell Bates, February 17, 1960. Montreal, Quebec: McGill University, McCord Museum of Canadian History Archives.

56 Greenberg, letter to Murray, Jan. 7, 1979.

57 Walkinshaw, interview with Greenberg, March 15, 1978.

58 Kenworth Moffett, "Jack Bush in Retrospect," in Karen Wilkin, ed., Jack Bush (Toronto, Ontario: McClelland and Stewart in Association with Merritt Editions Ltd., 1984), 36.

59 Ibid, 41.

60 Ken Carpenter in conversation with Robert Bush, Feb. 3, 1978. Quoted in Ken Carpenter, "The Evolution of Jack Bush," Journal of Canadian Art History, 4 no. 2 (1977-1978), 123.

61 Ibid, 123.

62 Ibid, 123.

63 "Jack Bush - Some Thoughts on his Painting (from a conversation with Art Cuthbert broadcast on CBC Radio in September, 1976)," In Jack Bush - Paintings and Drawings, 1955-1976. Exhibition (Edinburgh, Scotland: University of Edinburgh, 1980), 18.

64 Macdonald, letter to Bates, July 3, 1957.

65 "Reminiscences by Jack Bush - Extracts from a Videotaped Interview with Jack Bush by Lesley Fry and John Newton, March - 1975," 10 Canadian Artists in the 70s. An Exhibition for European Tour (Toronto, Ontario: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1980), 35.

66 Painters Eleven Biographies - Jock Macdonald, Jack Bush. Special Collection - Box 5, File No. 8: Painters Eleven Biographies. Archives. Oshawa, Ontario: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.

67 "Reminiscences by Jack Bush...," 35.

68 Lord, 208. Also in the Walkinshaw interview, March 15, 1978, Greenberg said that Bush went to New York in the late 1950s and early 1960s to take a look at stain painting in order to untrack himself from the Abstract Expressionist mannerisms that were part of his work at that time.

69 Wendy Blair, "Washington: An Interview with Andrew Hudson," Artmagazine, Vol. 8, No. 33 (May/June 1977), 34. Quoted in Virginia Anne Woodley, "Jack Bush 1909-1977: The Events Which Led to His International Reputation" (Ottawa, Ontario: Carleton University, 1979), 89.

70 Dennis Reid, A Concise History of Canadian Painting (Toronto, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 1973), 262.

71 Phyllis Tuchman, "Where Did the Time Go?" in Wilkin, 104.

72 Jennifer Murray, "Chronology," in Wilkin, 205.

73 "Reminiscences by Jack Bush...," 35.

74 Wendy Brunelle talks with Jack Bush. A Film. Alberta Access Television, Edmonton, Alta., 1977.

75 Clement Greenberg, "Jack Bush," in Wilkin, 7.

76 Letter from Toronto art dealer Walter Moos to Virginia Anne Woodley, September 5, 1978. Quoted in Woodley, 92.

77 Ibid.

78 David Mirvish, "A Dealer's Memoir," in Wilkin, 46.

79 Reid, 289.

80 Thérèse Dion, "Ascension de trois artistes canadiens sur le marché de l'art: Jack Bush, Yves Gaucher, David Rabinowitch" (Montréal, Québec: Université de Montréal, 1976), 43.

81 Murray, "Chronology," in Wilkin, 206.

82 Clement Greenberg, letter to Virginia Anne Woodley, July 21, 1978. Quoted in Woodley, 84.

83 Woodley, 140.

84 Clement Greenberg, "Painting and Sculpture in Prairie Canada Today," Canadian Art, 20.2 (March-April 1963), 92.

85 Wendy Brunelle talks with Terry Fenton re Jack Bush and his work. A Film. Alberta Access Television, Edmonton, Alta., 1977.

86 William Withrow, "Jack Bush," Contemporary Canadian Painting (Toronto, Ontario: McClelland and Stewart, 1972), 51-52.

87 Duncan MacMillan, "The Red Barn: The Search for a Formal Language," in Wilkin, 62.

88 Murray, "Chronology," in Wilkin, 204.

89 Withrow, 52. Withrow noted this tendency on Bush's part prior to the 1976 retrospective. He wrote: "When asked by the Art Gallery of Ontario in early 1971 if he [Bush] would permit the gallery to organize a full-dress retrospective, he was adamant that the exhibition should deal only with the years after 1950. (In fact he would have preferred the show to begin with 1960, as had a 1970 retrospective in Western Canada)." The 1971 retrospective was not held as Bush's doctor felt that it would be too much of a strain on him.

90 Barrie Hale, "Out of the Park; Modernist Painting in Toronto, 1950-1980," Provincial Essays. Volume 2 (1985), 39.

## CHAPTER 3 GREENBERG IN WESTERN CANADA

### INTRODUCTION

On March 10, 1963 Greenberg wrote to Kenneth Lochhead, the Director of the School of Art at Regina College:

> You have no idea of how much I'm betting on Saskatchewan as N.Y.'s only competitor. When I tell that to people around here there's general amazement–as you might expect--but there's also a willingness to allow for me being right--which is even more amazing to me....All of which means I have something of a stake in Saskatchewan.[1]

Whereas his influence in Eastern Canada had produced only one true disciple, Jack Bush, Greenberg had begun to realize that his doctrine was having a powerful impact upon the artists of Western Canada. Perhaps he foresaw that the extent of the support that was developing on the Canadian Prairies could provide a major impetus for securing the primacy of Post-Painterly Abstraction, while at the same time yielding a host of participating artists.[2] In a report written shortly after the 1962 Emma Lake workshop conducted by Greenberg, Lochhead referred to Greenberg's burgeoning interest in the art and artists of the Canadian Prairies:

> Mr. Greenberg was, in turn, able to get very close to the problems of each participant, and has indicated since the Workshop that he has a more than active interest in the future work of the participants. He intends to keep in close touch with many of the participants since he believes that they will develop a more exciting and coherent form of expression in their painting as a result of his criticism.[3]

The stake in Saskatchewan that Greenberg was referring to had its inception in August 1962, when he was asked to lead the Emma Lake Artist's Workshop.

This was immediately followed by a commission from Alan Jarvis, Editor of Canadian Art magazine, to write an article on the status of painting and sculpture in the Prairie provinces. Greenberg was accompanied by his wife and guided by Robert Murray, a Western Canadian sculptor who by that time had moved to New York. During the tour, Greenberg travelled approximately 1500 miles through Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba and examined the work of some 100 artists.

**THE EMMA LAKE WORKSHOP**

In 1930, an art camp had been organized by Augustus Kenderdine at Murray Point on Emma Lake, about 50 kilometers north of Prince Albert. It later became the summer school for the University of Saskatchewan art programme. In 1955, under the auspices of Ken Lochhead, Director of the programme, and faculty member Arthur McKay, a series of two-week seminars for practising artists, conducted by guest lecturers, was instituted at Emma Lake. The initial aim of the workshop was to enable Prairie artists, who were isolated from distant art centers, to work under the direction of more experienced contemporary artists, and to foster an exchange of ideas.

Barnett Newman's direction of the 1959 workshop introduced chromatic abstraction first-hand to Western Canada. Newman's personality and his commitment to his art were infectious, and had a motivating effect, most profoundly upon those painters who later constituted the Regina Five. These painters, Ronald Bloore, Ken Lochhead, Ted Godwin, Arthur McKay, and Douglas Morton, pursued

their work with a new seriousness after the Newman workshop.[4] In 1961, they were given a group exhibition at the National Gallery, Five Painters from Regina, and the group became known across the country as the Regina Five. Bloore, McKay, and Lochhead in particular, through their working affiliation with the Regina College of Art and the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery, were largely responsible for the direction of the Emma Lake workshop programme and the yearly selection of the leaders. It was primarily their doing that a series of critics and artists of international stature was invited to direct the workshops in the early 1960s. Having declined an invitation to lead a second workshop in 1962, Newman suggested Greenberg, who accepted.

## GREENBERG'S INVOLVEMENT WITH THE ART OF PRAIRIE CANADA

Greenberg's approach to art in Western Canada was consistent with his approach in the United States and in Toronto with Painters Eleven. His involvement in the art of the Canadian West, however, became all-encompassing, as will be seen. The geographical isolation of the Canadian West from New York was again considered an advantage by Greenberg. Likewise, the artistic community had sought his counsel, not only to lead a two-week workshop but to evaluate for them the overall situation of art on the Prairies. The concepts of modernism that Greenberg was continuing to refine at the time of his association with Painters Eleven in 1957 had become more rigidly formulated by 1962 and, although he appeared to be tolerant and ready to find quality in all art, he seemed

even more assured by that time about what constituted the best art.

An examination of Greenberg's appraisal of the diverse work that he saw in the Canadian West, which included abstract and figurative work, landscape painting in particular, reveals that he did in fact praise work which he felt was meritorious, regardless of the style of painting. The condition that he invariably objected to was not the artistic style itself, but rather the lack of originality and inventiveness, the adoption of hackneyed formulas, or the slavish imitation of the work of other artists. When asked in 1978 about his direction of the Emma Lake workshop, Greenberg recalled that he found himself close to the artists because of the length of time that he spent with them.[5] Greenberg recalled that he had urged the artists to seek out and express their own individuality:

> Those two weeks [at Emma Lake] were a real chance to say, `Now look, don't do what I say, Don't think that I'm telling you what to do, but you find out what you want to do. I can see that what you're doing now is imitating someone else, giving yourself a notion of where you want to go.'[6]

Where Greenberg most often observed the imitative work that he was referring to was in painting that showed Abstract Expressionist influences. In his article "Painting and Sculpture in Prairie Canada Today" he condemned this situation:

> ...its mannered brush swipes and smears and spatters, and its deceptively hackneyed scaffoldings of light and dark. The influence of this New York manner has been one of the most blighting, as well as most infectious, that I know of in modern art.[7]

On the other hand, it is interesting to note that he appeared to be more forgiving of imitative colour-field painting, as a number of artists in Western

Canada, having been swayed by his rhetoric, turned their hand to this approach. He was also more tolerant of and more prepared to praise a sincerely felt and honestly rendered landscape, even though he felt it was of secondary status to abstract work.

Greenberg found a receptive audience for his views. Arthur McKay wrote in the fall of 1964: "For some reason unknown to anyone, the artists have co-operated to a remarkable degree with the workshop program. I suppose westerners have always given an ear to the visiting evangelist."[8] This receptivity and willingness to listen was savoured by Greenberg. Until the controversy over his ever-expanding role in the Western Canadian art scene began to split the art community apart, he was treated with the utmost respect. He watched as many artists seriously began to consider his ideas and to experiment with formalist concepts in their work.[9] Terry Fenton and Karen Wilkin have attempted to explain this willing acceptance of Greenberg's chromatic abstraction in Western Canada:

> By the late 1950s, Saskatchewan artists wanted to shake off the sense of being colonially dependent within Canada. If artists in Toronto and Montreal could relate directly to New York, so might they. And when they did, they chose the aspect of New York which seemed least provincial. In their eyes, this was abstract painting. Moreover, it was the kind of abstract painting which concerned itself least with `content', with `literature'. Perhaps they feltliterature entailed the regionalism and populism which had, in the past, led to provincialism and colonial dependence.[10]

In this receptive environment, Greenberg promoted colour-field painting zealously, using the same approach he had followed with the Painters Eleven, but with a more fervent application. After his stint at Emma Lake in 1962, and in order to educate or, as his opponents might argue, indoctrinate Prairie artists, Greenberg

recommended and succeeded in having first Noland and then Olitski selected as workshop leaders for the years 1963 and 1964, respectively. This was consistent with his policy of educating and promoting discussion among the supporters of colour-field painting, accomplished in this case by "import[ing] artists from the Mecca in the hope that some of its magic will rub off."[11]

With Ronald Bloore in Greece on sabbatical and Gerald Finley acting as temporary Director of the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery, Greenberg, with Lochhead's endorsement, was permitted to get involved in the exhibition programme.[12] Greenberg organized the exhibition Three New American Painters: Louis, Noland, Olitski, which ran from January 11 to February 15, 1963 at the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery, and flew to Regina for the opening. In the catalogue introduction, Finley commented that the exhibition had been suggested by Greenberg and that "it was only due to his interest and assistance that it became a reality."[13] Christopher Varley has noted that "he [Finley] emphasized Greenberg's involvement against Greenberg's own wishes...."[14] Perhaps Greenberg realized that not all of the members of the art community in Saskatchewan would be as receptive to his increasing involvement in their art scene. Conceivably, Greenberg did not want it to appear as if he was forcing his artistic preferences on the Prairie art community, by organizing an exhibition which showcased the type of painting and the artists he favoured. He would probably have preferred that his role appear to have been a minor one, with recognition for selecting and organizing the exhibition accorded to the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery. This does not mean,

necessarily, that Greenberg was devious in his involvement in the art scene in Saskatchewan. This fertile territory was not a part of his own country, however, and as a guest in Canada he undoubtedly realized that he had to proceed with caution. He could not be as assertive, nor voice his opinions and convictions as authoritatively as he was wont to do in the United States.

In his Introduction to the catalogue for this exhibition, Greenberg praised the art community in Saskatchewan, extolled its foresight and the precociousness it demonstrated in its acceptance of modernism, and commented that he took "what is perhaps irrational satisfaction" in the fact that the exhibition was being shown first in Regina:

> ...I am not so sure but that the enlightened art public of western Canada won't find the challenge more exhilarating than anything else. I don't want to win that public over by flattery, but it strikes me as being less set in its ways than most publics. I have a notion that the apparent simplifications of these three painters [Louis, Noland, Olitski] will find more immediate appreciation, at least on the part of the 'professionals' among you, than they found in New York. I don't think it a mere accident that a good deal of the art being produced right now in Saskatchewan is far less provincial than most of that shown downtown on Tenth Street in New York.[15]

The three successive workshops at Emma Lake, led by the three principle proponents of colour-field painting (Greenberg, Noland, Olitski), along with this major exhibition of colour-field painting, resulted in the establishment of an orientation towards this style of painting in the Canadian West.[16] Lochhead explained the rationale for this sudden emphasis upon colour-field painting in an interview in 1970:

> Well, it was a thorough sort of way of looking at what was one of the big developments in contemporary art, which was the result of these three

> guys....So, here we had a lead on a very significant development in contemporary art, and here we were getting each of the guys that were primarily responsible for it--so why not stay with it once you have a good thing?[17]

Opposition to Greenberg was beginning to develop, however, particularly after his article appeared in the March/April issue of Canadian Art in 1963. Nevertheless, those who directed the exhibition programme at the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery as well as the art programme at Regina College continued to support Greenberg and to accept his suggestions. Greenberg, working through Gerald Finley and Ken Lochhead, also began to make arrangements for work from the Joseph Hirshhorn collection to be exhibited at the Norman MacKenzie Gallery in 1963. He also agreed to organize an exhibition of Hans Hofmann's paintings for the Spring of 1964.[18]

Upon returning to Saskatchewan from sabbatical in Europe in the summer of 1963, Bloore, who was the Director of the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery, was shocked and angered to learn that, in his absence, Lochhead and Finley had allowed Greenberg to become so deeply involved in the exhibition programme. He proceeded to cull any exhibitions initiated by Greenberg,[19] and both the exhibition of the work from the Hirshorn collection and the Hofmann exhibition were cancelled.[20]

The extent of Greenberg's involvement in the art community in Western Canada, particularly that of Saskatchewan, and the increasing control that he was acquiring is also evidenced by the fact that in September 1965 he juried a show for the Norman MacKenzie Gallery called the Diamond Jubilee Exhibition of

Saskatchewan Art. Greenberg noted that he did not think that any of the work he chose for the show had been done before 1964.[21] At the same time, he assessed the permanent collection of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, and recommended the purchase of selected works from this exhibition for its collection.[22] In his introductory article to the catalogue for this exhibition, Greenberg expressed his opinion concerning art being produced in Saskatchewan:

> Saskatchewan abounds in good minor art. I don't pretend that my selection would, as a whole, make a case for the province as a center of major art. Nevertheless, some small part of it would stand up in the company of the most important art being produced anywhere else at this time.[23]

Greenberg also became involved in the commissioning of sculpture for public display in Regina and he was consulted by Finley and Lochhead concerning a proposal to purchase a work by Robert Murray for the grounds of the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery.[24] Similarly, after his second visit to Saskatchewan in January 1963, Greenberg learned that the Saskatchewan Power Corporation was constructing a new building in Regina for which a number of works of art would be commissioned. He convinced American sculptor David Smith to submit proposals for a new sculpture which Smith agreed to sell to the Corporation at cost.[25] In the Spring of 1964, this project was allowed to fall through for political reasons.[26] Greenberg had also considered accepting a temporary teaching position at the Regina campus of the University of Saskatchewan beginning in the fall of 1963. This position had been offered to him in February, 1963 but he was unable to accept it due to other commitments.[27]

In Greenberg's overall assessment of painting and sculpture in Prairie Canada, presented in 1963 in Canadian Art,[28] he praised the work of the Regina Five painters in general, and the painting of Art McKay and Ken Lochhead in particular. He avowed that most of the artists who had studied at Emma Lake during his workshop, many of whom he again encountered on his tour, were "pro". He commented that it was to their credit that the artists of Western Canada, because of their geographical remoteness and isolation, accepted the fact that their art was provincial in nature. This acceptance, he argued, allowed them to be open-minded, amenable to suggestion, and eager to learn.

Fundamental to the criticism in Greenberg's article was his persistent disparagement of Abstract Expressionist mannerisms, which he frequently felt muffled genuine inspiration.[29] He also advised many artists to pursue representational rather than abstract work. He found that many Prairie artists often showed genuine inspiration when painting representational landscape work, as a result of which this work tended to be superior in quality to their abstract painting. As he had done in Toronto, he also encouraged many of the artists to believe in themselves, to be confident in the validity and quality of their work, and to find the nerve and persistence to express their individuality:

> The handicap of art in Saskatoon is a diffidence and modesty I find characteristic of Anglo-Canadian art as a whole. Diffidence is better, as I find out increasingly, than brashness; it tends to guarantee honesty. But there comes a point where its disadvantages outweigh its advantages. For one thing, it entails the reluctance to take oneself seriously enough as an artist. For another, where nerve and pretention can falsify the truth diffidence can diminish it.[30]

Despite his efforts to be encouraging and helpful, Greenberg could at times be very blunt in his assessments. He was particularly disparaging of the abstract work he saw outside of Saskatchewan and, in his critique of the work of a number of abstract painters in Calgary, he dismissed their efforts in a single sentence: "Among the abstract pictures that I thought were betrayed by their timidity and mere tastefulness were those of Patton, Perrott, Motton, Whillier, Blodgett, Ungstad, Angliss, and Snow."[31]

Three of the artists in the Regina Five--Bloore, McKay, and Lochhead--are of particular relevance when discussing Greenberg's approach to the art of Western Canada because of the importance of their relationship with him. Ronald Bloore was extremely critical, both of the colour-field painting craze instigated by Greenberg that had been adopted so swiftly in the West, and of Greenberg's role in promoting this type of painting. Art McKay was something of an anomaly among the artists whom Greenberg supported, in that he was "discovered" by Greenberg fully formed, as it were. McKay had been inspired by Barnett Newman after attending his workshop at Emma Lake in 1959. He changed his approach completely, and began to paint a series of thinly shaped discs, squares with rounded edges, and blunted ovals which were pale in colour and juxtaposed against a very dark ground. Surprised and very impressed by his work, Greenberg had exerted no influence upon it himself. He praised McKay's work highly, describing it as "some of the best as well as most ambitious painting I have seen anywhere in Canada since I came on the later work of Jack Bush three years ago in Toronto."[32]

Ken Lochhead became, in a sense, the equivalent of Jack Bush in the Canadian West. After attending the Emma Lake workshop conducted by Greenberg in 1962, his work underwent a dramatic change from calligraphic, black and white Abstract Expressionist work towards colour-field painting. In discussing Greenberg's influence upon his work, Lochhead recalled that at his workshop:

> He [Greenberg] went on for two weeks pointing out thoughts and ideas that really were opposite to what other critics were writing about the New York School; he said things like `it's not what you put in, it is what you leave out....Why not edit our statement and let the colour come through.'[33]

Lochhead began to organize large areas of pure, flat colour into simplified, semi-geometrical shapes that seemed to float on the raw canvas ground. As Director of both the art programme at Regina College and the workshop programme at Emma Lake, Lochhead formed a close working relationship and friendship with Greenberg. They corresponded frequently concerning the selection of workshop leaders, exhibition programmes, and the commissioning of works of art. Like Jack Bush, he visited New York on Greenberg's invitation, and was encouraged in his pursuit of colour-field painting by him. Greenberg praised Lochhead efforts in "Painting and Sculpture in Prairie Canada Today":

> The turn Kenneth Lochhead's painting took in the summer of 1962 toward color and concentricity should make him the next among the Five to be reckoned with importantly....This new direction relates to nothing else in contemporary Canadian painting, for which reason Lochhead's latest pictures are perhaps a more surprising apparition even than McKay's. It remains to be seen whether this accomplished and versatile artist will pursue his vision of color with the required tenacity, and above all, nerve.[34]

And, as noted in Chapter 2, Greenberg's Post-Painterly Abstraction exhibition for the Los Angeles Country Museum (1964) included the work of the three Canadians:

Jack Bush, Ken Lochhead and Art McKay.

Considering the intensity of Greenberg's drive to promote his ideas in the Canadian West, it was inevitable that modernist concepts would begin to be incorporated in the work of many of the artists in Prairie Canada. Artists such as William Perehudoff, Henry Bonli, and Andrew Hudson of Saskatoon, Kenneth Lochhead, Bruce Parsons, and Kenneth Peters of Regina as well as Joan Rankin of Moose Jaw began making colour-field paintings of one sort or another.[35] As Terry Fenton has commented, "It was impossible to avoid being influenced," but he also contended that "Emma Lake convinced artists in Saskatchewan that influence was a matter of conscious choice."[36]

On a more personal level, Art McKay recalled that Greenberg urged him to drop friendships with people who were wasting his time and draining his energy.[37] When Dorothy Knowles complained that she did not have the time to commit herself to her painting due to the constraints imposed by being a married woman, Greenberg was unsympathetic, and stated that no allowances could be made for her. He pointed out that if she wanted to become a serious painter, she had to find the time and energy necessary to dedicate herself to her art. Greenberg's impact on her is strikingly illustrated by the fact that Knowles dropped her married name (Mrs. William Perehudoff) because Greenberg thought it would be a good idea, making her independent of her artist husband.[38]

## GREENBERG AND LANDSCAPE PAINTING IN WESTERN CANADA

Greenberg's fondness for the landscape painting that he saw in the Canadian West was not a concession, nor was it indicative of a lenient or patronizing attitude towards Canadian painting, as he had a predilection for landscape work in the United States as well. At Emma Lake and during his tour of the Prairies for his article "Painting and Sculpture in Prairie Canada Today," Greenberg saw a good deal of landscape work. He dedicated a significant portion of his article to a discussion of landscape painting in North America in general, and to that of Prairie Canada in particular: "The tale of landscape painting, both in Canada and the United States, is far from told. I would hazard that more good landscape painting is still being turned out today in both countries than painting of any other kind."[39] What might have intrigued Greenberg, as far as the landscape work being done on the Canadian Prairies was concerned, was the actual flatness of the land itself. Artists, in attempting to convincingly portray the flatness and openness of the terrain, could have inadvertently found themselves dealing with Greenberg's modernist concerns. Christopher Varley has pointed out that "Aesthetically, `colour field' painting would seem to be almost the perfect response to the prairie environment."[40] This view is supported by Greenberg's article, where--with specific reference to landscape--he addressed the issues of inspiration and originality versus the imitative and derivative in painting. In fact, in Canada Greenberg felt that his criteria for quality had most often been met in landscape painting. He praised the work of two Western Canadian landscape artists in

particular: Dorothy Knowles and Ernest Lindner. Pro-Greenberg critics have often pointed to the fact that he encouraged these two artists, among others, to continue painting representationally, in order to support their contention that he was not, as has been claimed, dictating that artists should be pursuing colour-field painting. While this in fact might have been the case, it is important to realize that Greenberg's appreciation for landscape work was not contrary to his aesthetic, especially given the possibility that he could perhaps detect certain colour-field tendencies in their work. As Barry Lord has observed, in his examination of Greenberg's interest in the landscape painting of these two artists, "The main thing was that the landscape painter had to be preoccupied solely with formal problems, not with any significant subject matter."[41] In addition to Knowles' gift for colour to which Greenberg referred, there is a flatness and openness about her panoramic vistas of the Prairie landscape that must have alerted Greenberg to its affinity with his modernist aesthetic. Greenberg advised Knowles "to concentrate on the formal problem of translating three-dimensional space onto the two-dimensional picture plane,"[42] while Lochhead recalled that "Greenberg thought they were fabulous paintings; that she was doing great."[43]

Ernest Lindner's work, on the other hand, is distinguished by its detailed, realist painting of the undergrowth. Greenberg was particularly impressed by his paintings and wrote the Introduction for an exhibition of Lindner's work which opened in December 1962 at the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery:

> ...as I see it, the present and future of pictorial art belong to color in a fuller sense than heretofore. And it doesn't matter whether the color is abstract or descriptive. I want to emphasize that. I find more imagination and modernity in Ernest Lindner's sharply focused rendering of a tree trunk than in the largest part of current abstract painting.[44]

Greenberg remarked that Lindner's work contained high colour but felt that it had to be "aerated and loosened and opened up in order to declare itself rightly."[45] Roy Kiyooka recalled that Greenberg encouraged Lindner to move in close to his subject: "...a stump, put it right up front and get involved in the minute details of it and leave all the area around the stump white. Whereas previously he [Lindner] literally felt the need to paint in the whole forest around it."[46] Andrew Hudson has observed that Greenberg's recommendation was "a parallel development to the 'stripping down' that was going on in the abstract painting of Ken Lochhead, Henry Bonli, and William Perehudoff."[47] The accent on colour, the suggested opening up of the motif, and the up-front, two-dimensional presentation emphasized by leaving the background blank resulted, as Barry Lord has observed, in the subordination of the realistic aspect of Lindner's painting to a concern with the surface quality.[48]

In addition to Greenberg, both Noland and Olitski had an influence upon the work of Knowles and Lindner, as a result of their attendance at the Emma Lake workshops. Noland and Olitski advised Knowles to attempt a freer handling of her paint,[49] and Lindner has credited Olitski with having encouraged him to focus his attention on colour.[50] In 1971, Terry Fenton analyzed the effect that the Greenberg workshop and the subsequent workshops by Noland and Olitski had upon the representational Prairie artist in general:

> As a result of these workshops, artists such as Lindner, [Rita] Cowley, Knowles and [Wynona] Mulcaster discovered that they were in no sense inferior to the abstract painters and that quality and originality in their own art could come from painting closer to nature. This resulted in greater communication between abstract and representational artists of the Province, one of the most heartening aspects of Saskatchewan art during the past decade.[51]

Greenberg's approach to art and artists in the Canadian West, both abstract and representational, raises two issues--the extent of his involvement in the Prairie art scene, and the degree to which he was pushing his concepts. Undoubtedly Greenberg's involvement in the art of Prairie Canada had an impact upon many artists, but was he really dictating how they should paint? Greenberg was intensely committed to modernism and to a formalist approach to art. Due to the fact that the artistic community in Western Canada was receptive to his ideas, he continued to broadcast his convictions, quickly becoming intricately involved in many aspects of the Prairie art scene. "I don't prescribe," he insisted, "I criticize."[52] As soon as he realized that his efforts were being met with resentment and open hostility, he quickly withdrew, as will be seen in the following chapter.

## NOTES - CHAPTER 3

1 Clement Greenberg, letter to Kenneth Lochhead, March 10, 1963. Quoted in David Howard, "From Emma Lake to Los Angeles: Modernism on the Margins," The Flat Side of the Landscape: The Emma Lake Artists' Workshops (Saskatoon, Sask.: The Mendel Art Gallery, 1979), 41.

2 See David Howard, "Building the New Frontier: Modernism & the Military Industrial Complex in the United States & Canada, 1957-1965," Ph.D. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1993.

3 Kenneth Lochhead, "Report on the 1962 Emma Lake Artists' Workshop (Fall 1962)," included in The Flat Side of the Landscape..., 129.

4 Lochhead was on sabbatical in Italy during the Newman workshop. However he learned quickly from the other four members of the Regina Five who had attended the workshop, and was also affected by Newman's spirit and the intensity of his commitment to art.

5 Allan Walkinshaw, interview with Clement Greenberg, March 15, 1978. Archives. Oshawa, Ontario: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.

6 Ibid.

7 Clement Greenberg, "Painting and Sculpture in Prairie Canada Today," Canadian Art, 20.2 (March-April 1963), 92.

8 Art McKay, "Emma Lake Artists' Workshop: An Appreciation," Canadian Art, 21.5 (Sept./Oct. 1964), 280.

9 Gerald E. Finley, "A Note on the Exhibition by the Acting Director," Canadian Art, 20.3 (May/June 1963), 173. Preface to Clement Greenberg's catalogue essay for the exhibition, "Three New American Painters: Louis, Noland, Olitski." Finley wrote: "This past summer, Clement Greenberg led the workshop. Here, his ideas made an immediate impact on the participating artists and his influence is being felt in Saskatchewan particularly in Regina and Saskatoon."

Lochhead commented, in his "Report on the 1962 Emma Lake Artists' Workshop (Fall 1962)," 129, which was directed by Greenberg: "It was noticeable that a high percentage of the participants altered their direction as painters and that a change in art in this area may become quite evident within the next decade as a result of the influence of this critic."

10 Terry Fenton and Karen Wilkin, Modern Painting in Canada. Major Movements in Twentieth Century Canadian Art (Edmonton, Alta.: Hurtig Publishers, 1978), 82.

11 Terry Fenton, A.F. McKay, Paintings and Drawings, 1959-1967. Exhibition, October 4 to November 3, 1968 (Regina, Sask.: Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery, 1968), 5-9. Reprinted in John D.H. King, "The Emma Lake Workshops, 1955-1970" (Brandon, Manitoba: John D.H. King, 1972), 336.

12 Christopher Varley, Winnipeg West - Painting and Sculpture in Western Canada, 1945-1970. Exhibition (Edmonton, Alta.: Edmonton Art Gallery, 1983), 38.

13 Gerald Finley, Three American Painters: Louis, Noland, Olitski. Exhibition - Jan. 11 to Feb. 15, 1963 (Regina, Sask.: Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery, 1963). The quote was taken from the above exhibition catalogue directly, and was included by King in, "The Emma Lake Workshops...," 10-11.

14 Varley, 38.

15 Clement Greenberg, "Three New American Painters: Louis, Noland, Olitski," Canadian Art, 20.3, (May/June 1963), 172.

16 John O'Brian in his catalogue "Introduction" to the exhibition, The Flat Side of the Landscape..., 18, pointed out that the Newman, Greenberg, Noland, Olitski workshops, as well of those of Michael Steiner in 1969, Anthony Caro in 1977, Freidel Dzubas and John Elderfield in 1979, all contributed to "indelibly stamp the art of the region... [with the] values espoused by modernism."

In J.D.H. King, interview with Ken Lochhead, February 18, 1970, included in King, "The Emma Lake Workshops...," 386, Lochhead stated that, "If I had stayed on for another year, I would have got Jack Bush the following year. [Lochhead resigned as Director of the art school at Regina College in 1964 and joined the University of Manitoba art programme in Winnipeg]. I really felt that for 1965 that would have been my choice not only because I liked what he was doing but he was a Canadian and because he's part of the Greenberg `camp'." Jack Bush was asked to lead the 1969 workshop on very short notice, but declined.

17 King, interview with Ken Lochhead, February 18, 1970, 133.

18 Kenneth Lochhead, letter to Robert Murray, New York City, January 4, 1963. Included in The Flat Side of the Landscape..., 130.

19 "Clement Greenberg Workshop, 1962," The Flat Side of the Landscape..., 82.

20 Varley, 38. Ronald Bloore's criticism of Greenberg will be addressed in detail in Chapter 4.

21 Clement Greenberg, "Introduction to a Group Exhibition in Saskatchewan," Diamond Jubilee Exhibition of Saskatchewan Art (Regina, Saskatchewan: Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery, 1965). Reprinted in John O'Brian, Clement Greenberg - The Collected Essays and Criticism. Volume 4 (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 217. See endnote 5 in Chapter 1 for an explanation of how the references to Greenberg's published articles have been cited.

22 Sandra Gillespie, Ann K. Morrison and Colleen Skidmore, "Chronology," The Flat Side of the Landscape..., 72.

23 Ibid, 217.

24 Lochhead, letter to Robert Murray, New York City, January 4, 1963, 130. Murray had been deeply impressed by Barnett Newman during his stint as leader of the Emma Lake workshop in 1959. Murray moved to New York from Saskatchewan after this workshop, and became a close friend of Newman's. Lochhead wrote to Murray: "I will have an opportunity to discuss this matter not only with Clem, who recommends you as a top New York sculptor, but with my associates in the next few weeks."

25 John O'Brian, "Where the Hell is Saskatchewan, and Who is Emma Lake?" The Flat Side of the Landscape..., 31.

26 Ibid, 31. One of the members on the selection committee was a politician who was afraid of public repercussions if it was discovered that he was associated with the acceptance of an abstract sculpture. The sculpture, Voltri I, found its way instead into the collection of the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C."

27 "Clement Greenberg Workshop, 1962," 82.

28 Greenberg, "Painting and Sculpture in Prairie Canada Today," 90-107.

29 Ibid, pages 93, 96, and 98 respectively.

30 Ibid, 104.

31 Ibid, 96. Three of these artists wrote letters to Canadian Art attacking Greenberg's critique of their work. They were published in the Letters section of Volume 20.3 (May-June 1963), 196, the issue which immediately followed that in which Greenberg's article had been published.

32 Ibid, 92.

33 "Joan Murray Interviews Kenneth Lochhead," Selections from a tape-recorded interview in Ottawa in November 1977. Artmagazine, Volume 9, No. 37 (March/April 1978), 45.

34 Greenberg, "Painting and Sculpture in Prairie Canada Today," 92.

35 Terry Fenton, "Olitski and Saskatchewan," Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery Newsletter, (April 1970), 10-15. Reprinted in King, "The Emma Lake Workshops...," 338.

36 Terry Fenton, Saskatchewan Art and Artists. An Exhibition (Regina, Sask.: Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery, 1971), 19.

37 Joan Murray, interview with Art McKay, Toronto, June 1, 1978. Archives. Oshawa, Ontario: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.

38 John Bentley Mays, "Times Change at Emma Lake," Toronto Globe and Mail, (August 9, 1980), 138. Mays reported that Dorothy Knowles told him this herself, when he visited the Canadian West in the Summer of 1980.

39 Greenberg, "Painting and Sculpture in Prairie Canada Today," 99.

40 Varley, 40.

41 Barry Lord, The History of Painting in Canada; Toward a People's Art (Toronto, Ontario: NC Press Ltd., 1974), 210.

42 Ibid, 210.

43 King, interview with Ken Lochhead, February 18, 1970, 123.

44 Clement Greenberg, "Introduction to an Exhibition of Ernest Lindner," Ernest Lindner (Regina, Sask.: Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery, 1962). Reprinted in O'Brian, Volume 4, 134.

45 Greenberg, "Painting and Sculpture in Prairie Canada Today," 104.

46 Joan Murray, interview with Roy Kiyooka, Whitby, April 17, 1978. Archives. Oshawa, Ontario: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.

47 Andrew Hudson, "Memories of Saskatchewan," in William Townsend, ed., Canadian Art Today (London, England: Studio International, 1970), 51.

48 Lord, 210.

49 David Burnett and Marilyn Schiff, Contemporary Canadian Art (Edmonton, Alta.: Hurtig Publishers Ltd., 1983), 139.

50 Ernest Lindner interviewed by J. Climber, Director of the Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon. The date of the interview is not given, but it had to have been done before 1972 as it was included in King's 1972 thesis, "The Emma Lake Workshops...," 371.

51 Fenton, Saskatchewan Art and Artists. An Exhibition, 18.

52 Andrew Hudson, Letters to the Editor - "Greenberg and Friends Defended," ArtPost, Volume 6, no. 3 (Spring 1989), 5.

## CHAPTER 4 THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING GREENBERG'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE CANADIAN ART SCENE

### CRITICISM OF GREENBERG IN WESTERN CANADA

While a detailed analysis of the controversy surrounding Greenberg's involvement in the art scene in Canada is beyond the scope of this thesis, a study of his approach to art and artists in Canada would not be complete without some consideration of the conflict which ensued.

An analysis of Ken Lochhead's assessment of Greenberg's contribution at Emma Lake juxtaposed against Ron Bloore's evaluation, illustrates the polarity of the two positions--pro- and anti-Greenberg--and the divisiveness that resulted from Greenberg's involvement in the art of Western Canada. Lochhead wrote in the Fall of 1962:

> Mr. Greenberg was particulary [sic] successful with his individual criticism of the participants' work together with the presentation of a most objective view of current international tendencies in art, as well as intimate portrait character studies of certain noted painters and their work.[1]

Bloore's interpretation was different:

> The Artists' Workshops helped to evoke an intellectual atmosphere for an essentially indigenous creative movement in Regina in the late Fifties; later workshops have poisoned the integrity of that atmosphere. The workshops at Emma Lake grew, achieved maturity, faltered and finally substituted for creative exploration an imported critically secure painting theory. It is probable that recent workshops [1964 and earlier] have inhibited rather than stimulated the rich potential in the visual arts on the prairies.[2]

Upon returning from sabbatical in 1963, Bloore was shocked to find that a number of Prairie artists had converted to colour painting. From Bloore's perspective, it

appeared as though the artists in the Canadian West had been brainwashed.

In his article on the art of Western Canada in Canadian Art in 1963, Greenberg made it clear, in spite of acknowledging Bloore's leadership role in the development of art in Regina and in the formation of the Regina Five, that he did not like his work: "It's a little sour and at the same time too elegant in its impasted whites; and there is also a somewhat trite relation between his regular, geometrized configurations and the shape itself of the picture; here he could have learned a lot more than he did from Newman."[3] As noted in Chapter 3, Bloore--angered by the situation which had developed in his absence--demanded revisions or cancellations of the exhibitions in which Greenberg had become involved. Greenberg was offended by Bloore's comments and actions and, although Bloore later apologized, the rift between them became a permanent one. Greenberg returned an advance for the aborted exhibition of Hans Hofmann's work,[4] and began to withdraw from his involvement in the art of the Canadian Prairies, pulling up his stake as it were.

A few artists have commented on the rationale for Bloore's actions. Art McKay felt that both Bloore and Ted Godwin were bitter because their work had not been reviewed more favourably by Greenberg.[5] According to Lochhead, Bloore did not think that a critic was the right person to be leading a workshop and influencing artists. Bloore had not been present at the Greenberg workshop and did not get to know him personally.[6] Lochhead intimated that, had Bloore been able to interact with Greenberg first-hand, and had he been given the opportunity to judge Greenberg's motives and actions as they were unfolding, he might not have been

so critical.[7]

While Bloore appeared to be the leader in the rebellion against Greenberg, he was not a lone crusader. When Greenberg's article on the painting and sculpture on the Prairies came out in the Spring of 1963 it caused a furore. Critics contended that the tone of his article was patronizing towards the Prairie artist, and that he assessed the work that he saw with his vision clouded by his own preconceived notions of what constituted the right path for art.[8] Peter Millard also observed in 1968: "Some, too, have deplored what they see as the almost supernatural hold exercised by Clement Greenberg over artists and careers here, as if he were some sort of alien guru, mesmerizing us into painting and buying works of bizarre abstraction."[9]

Greenberg was being attacked simultaneously in the United States for his critical methodology. Max Kozloff was particularly caustic, accusing Greenberg of singling out certain artists as the only ones of significance, of ignoring all art movements that did not fit into his linear view of the evolution of modern art, denouncing recent developments in art such as Pop Art and Op Art. Kozloff also argued that Greenberg's ideas derived their power from their directness and tendency to oversimplify, that his criticism betrayed an either-or mechanism about artistic choice that was unrealistic, and that his judgements betrayed a lack of confidence in his personal intuition despite the authority with which they were pronounced.[10]

The criticism directed at Greenberg in Canada, as opposed to that in the

United States, had an additional component in that there were anti-American political overtones present. In 1977, Bloore referred to Greenberg as a "guru for the Imperial Cultural Centre of America," and remarked that he was "the greatest disaster that ever struck Canadian art."[11] With the shift from Europe to New York as the center of the art world, avant-garde art became more readily accessible to Canadian artists. This was overshadowed, however, by an ever-increasing anti-American sentiment in Canada, caused by:

> ...America's deteriorating international image, her deepening involvement in Vietnam, and the racism and violence which threatened her cities. American draft evaders sought refuge in Canada. American influence over the Canadian economy and Canadian politics was felt, increasingly, to be an unwarranted intrusion. The fear of U.S. expansion and 'continentalism' was resurrected. Canadian artists began to worry, again, about a truly 'Canadian' art.[12]

Greenberg's involvement in the art of Prairie Canada, and his advocacy of colour-field painting, got caught up in this reaction. As Terrence Heath so aptly phrased it: "The aesthetic of Greenberg was not simply confined to art, no matter how self-referentially the art object may have been defined. It involved a paradigm of cultural thought which posited a centre and a periphery."[13] Nonetheless, Greenberg's influence was pervasive in Western Canada. As Heath observed in 1990:

> ...there is a widespread and passionate feeling that the Emma Lake Workshops and the Greenberg aesthetic have been profoundly hurtful to the artists of this country. The re-structuring of art school curricula, the exclusion of artists from public galleries, the decisions of granting juries, the discouragement of art which deviated from the canon and the manipulation

of art markets have, rightly or wrongly, been laid at the feet of Greenberg enthusiasts.[14]

George Swinton, who attended the Noland workshop at Emma Lake, stated that the art in Saskatchewan became more provincial as a result of these workshops: "...what can be more provincial than to be oriented towards a big city?...The only thing it did that was like a big city was that it created envy and distraught and suspicion in the community. Before everybody was sort of: We are artists; now they felt: Look, he's copying so and so."[15] Another artist, J.E. Poklen, also a participant at the Noland workshop, asserted that the workshops run by Greenberg and his followers "had the effect of encouraging (and intimidating) people to turn their back on individual creative vision - integrity. To forsake one's own uniqueness for the glory trip on the New York bandwagon "[16]

In addition to Bloore, one of the most outspoken critics of Greenberg's influence on the art of the Prairies was Joe Fafard. Having obtained his Master of Fine Arts degree from Pennsylvania State University, he returned home to Saskatchewan in the late 1960s to find formalist abstraction dominant in the art community:

> I think we should make art from our own experiences, from our own feeling about things, and they should be coming straight out of life, instead of from a lot of intellectual garbage that is sounded around by art critics and leading artists....It's an ambition [of the art critic] to be smarter about the artist's work than the artist himself is.[17]

Fafard did four ceramic sculptures satirizing Greenberg. In one of them, My Art Critic (1980), Fafard portrayed him as a larger-than-life-size head which, looked at frontally, appears three-dimensional. When looked at from the side, however, the

head is flat. As Meeka Walsh has observed, Fafard extended "the critic's own notions of the canvas as only flat, turning dogmatism into art, and presenting Greenberg as narrow in every sense."[18]

There were, however, artists and critics in Western Canada who supported and defended Greenberg amidst the controversy, the most prominent being Ken Lochhead, Art McKay, Andrew Hudson, and Terry Fenton. In 1964, for example, Art McKay expressed his contempt for the anti-Americanism that was rampant in the Western Canadian art community at that time:

> The hottest controversy has arisen following the Greenberg workshop and his subsequent tour. It seems that western Canadians, other than the workshop participants, prefer their critics either not to write at all or merely to have Canadian Civil Service appointments - or both. In any case, the reaction to the tour article in Canadian Art revealed that most of us are terrified that someone may tamper with our image. Curiously enough, we accept political coercion, economic domination, Coca-Cola, and predigested mass communication, while we resist exposure to the more humane and civilized arts from the U.S.A.[19]

Lochhead also attacked the anti-American stance:

> ...they [the artists] get mixed up with a sense of belonging, and their sense of belonging is only possible through attaching oneself to a political entity like `Canada'. If you're a Canadian--oh, yes, well, that means that there's something very unique in this country- we've got to safe-guard it; that's a form of paranoia...so we're cutting our own throat to say: Well, I don't want anything to do with New York....they think that the people like Greenberg are just big manipulators and phonies--and we're cutting our own chances of developing a mature position.[20]

He pointed out that in the 1960s, New York was where the best as well as the worst art was being produced, and contended that this refusal to confront and learn from the best was a parochial attitude. Lochhead believed that it was essential for the artists of Western Canada to open themselves up to the widest range of influence

possible, and to direct their attention to the best art being produced at the time, regardless of geographical location.[21]

For their part, both Hudson and Fenton insisted that Greenberg was not dictatorial. Hudson attended each of the Greenberg, Noland and Olitski workshops and took down their comments verbatim. In the Spring of 1989, he wrote a letter to ArtPost in Greenberg's defense, disputing the contention, made by Fafard, that Greenberg was telling artists how to paint, and quoting some of the remarks Greenberg had made at his workshop in 1962:

> Don't worry about what you ought to be doing--as though art is something outside yourself.
>
> Painting is not to show skill, but to say something--it should be where your feeling is.
>
> This question of taste, of other people's paintings you like. You must have the honesty to say 'I love these paintings, but they are not for me,' and turn your back on them.
>
> You need to have the nerve to be true to your feeling. There are no authorities in art.[22]

Fenton, too, has commented upon the generosity and helpfulness that Greenberg displayed at his workshop. On the one hand, he has pointed out that not every artist who consulted with Greenberg benefitted from the experience:

> ...but that's not to say that everyone Clem has ever talked to has turned into a great artist--it's far, far from the case--but he has encouraged people and somehow or other they have drawn some kind of inspiration and as a result of that encouragement they have been able to go on to do something that maybe they were incapable of doing before.[23]

However, he also named artists, including Morris Louis, Jack Bush and Anthony

Caro who, in his opinion, became great artists with Greenberg's assistance. Many other artists, including Ernest Lindner, Lea Collins, Jack Sures, and Dorothy Knowles, remarked that the fact that Greenberg liked their work was a source of tremendous encouragement for them. His commendation gave them a confidence that they had not previously possessed, expanded their vision, and led them to experiment more in order to realize their potential. They developed a pride and confidence in themselves and, due to the outside stimulus, did not feel as isolated as they once had. Greenberg and other contemporary New York artists had given them access to contemporary developments in the larger art world.[24]

The difference in opinion over Greenberg, as exemplified by the disparate positions of Bloore and Lochhead, split the Western Canadian art community into two factions. While the members of this community were able to continue functioning in spite of this difference in opinion, the close proximity of Bloore and Lochhead as working colleagues was an untenable situation. Unable to bridge the gap that had developed between them, Lochhead left Regina College and moved to Winnipeg in 1964.

## CRITICISM OF GREENBERG IN EASTERN CANADA

While Greenberg's influence in Western Canada was far-reaching, controversy over his involvement in Eastern Canada really centers around one's perception of his association with Jack Bush. In fact, after the 1960s, allowing for occasional visits to the Canadian West, Greenberg's involvement in the Canadian

art scene consisted almost exclusively of his involvement in Jack Bush's career. The controversy that ensued was, however, no less acrimonious than the one in Western Canada. Bush's commercial success and international reputation engendered a great deal of resentment and controversy in the art community in Ontario. Bush's critics argue to this day that he sold out to Greenberg, and that he adopted the Greenberg line in its entirety. They contend that Greenberg guided Bush's development, was instrumental in the creative process, and that it was due to Greenberg's authoritative position and influence that Bush achieved the success that he did.

Reaction to Greenberg in Eastern Canada also included an anti-American element, although this was not as pronounced as in the West. This is probably due to the fact that Greenberg's influence in Eastern Canada was not as pervasive. Nonetheless, as David Burnett and Marilyn Schiff have noted, Bush's detractors have looked down upon his association with Greenberg, seeing his work "as part of a `Greenbergian system' and a diminishment of Canadian art by American influence."[25] Duncan MacMillan has also noted that, in allying himself with New York painting, Bush was seen as having changed his allegiance, severed his Canadian ties, and embraced a foreign tradition.[26]

Joan Murray's exhibition catalogue Painters Eleven in Retrospect (1979) summarizes the antagonism on the part of Bush's former Painters Eleven colleagues (Painters Eleven disbanded in 1960). There is therefore no need to go into detail on this topic other than to quote the conclusion Murray reached

concerning Greenberg's influence on Bush, which was based upon what she described as almost a consensus of opinion among the Painters Eleven artists at the time of the exhibition: "Greenberg feels he didn't really have much influence. Yet today, Painters Eleven members, [surviving members in 1979 were Hodgson, Mead, Nakamura, Ronald, Town, and Yarwood] almost to a man, condemn Bush for accepting as much from Greenberg as he did."[27] Hodgson, for example, stated that "Bush was ambitious...and he knew who Greenberg was...."[28] More recently, Hodgson has written that Bush was influenced "100% by Greenberg...never did find himself."[29] This echoes a view published by art critic Elizabeth Kilbourn of The Toronto Star in 1964, which was particularly vitriolic in its denunciation of Greenberg as a director of art, and a shaper of careers, and which referred to Bush as "a footsoldier in the Greenberg army: ...[Greenberg] has also developed the habit of pointing his prestigious finger at certain artists and joining them to a band."[30] Bush himself, however, claimed (1975): "We paint not intellectually at all, at least I don't. I paint from my belly, it's instinct, plus a gut feeling."[31] Perhaps his critics would be more correct in contending that Greenberg explained and justified what Bush painted, rather than that he told Bush how to paint. Harold Town commented on this situation in 1978:

> Bush was a perfect foil for the C.G. [Clement Greenberg] conspiracy because he disclaimed any real knowledge of how he achieved his stuff .. this allows as Rosenberg has stated the critic to become the artist and direct all reaction through explanation to the work.[32]

There were definite instances where Greenberg had some input into the creative process, but to argue that Greenberg told Bush how to paint would tend to be a

gross exaggeration. And numerous Canadian art historians and critics have pointed to the fact that, at the time of Greenberg's visit in 1957, Bush had already been working toward the simplified style that Greenberg was to recommend, as evidenced by his 1956 watercolours commemorating the death of Oscar Cahen.[33] Bush himself denied adamantly that Greenberg told him how to paint, as did Greenberg. In 1977 Bush stated:

> What I would like to do is to rave about Mr. Greenberg....If I talk glowingly about him, for instance, his opponents will say 'Aha, there's Bush, another Greenberg guy. Greenberg just picks up the phone and tells him which colour to put here,' and all that jazz, which is all a lot of phoney nonsense. So I've sort of stopped doing it.[34]

Greenberg commented that "he [Bush] liked to exaggerate my role with respect to his art out of sheer generosity"[35] and, in a filmed interview done shortly after Bush's death in January 1977, substantiated Bush's claim that he had little involvement in the creative process:

> [There were]...malicious stories around...that I would tell Jack how to paint and nothing could be less true....You just didn't tell Bush how to paint. Well you don't tell anybody how to paint but you certainly didn't tell Bush. And every move from then on [after 1957] was his own. And I'd come to Toronto or he'd show in New York and I'd be surprised. I'd be as surprised as anyone else.[36]

While the promotion of modernism had originally been the principal motivating factor for Greenberg's interest and involvement in Canadian art, it is unjust to conclude that he was oblivious to everything else that was not pertinent to the achievement of this goal. There are references to acts of kindness and thoughtfulness on Greenberg's part towards artists whose work was outside the range of his aesthetic, or whose painting he did not particularly like. Roy Kiyooka

reported various instances when Greenberg was helpful towards him, in spite of the fact that, at the Emma Lake workshop in 1962, Greenberg had criticized his work.[37] Kiyooka subsequently visited Greenberg in New York on at least two or three occasions. Greenberg "was always friendly; he even recommended me for the Canada Council, but I don't think he ever liked what I did."[38] As noted in Chapter 3, Greenberg was also very generous with his time and energy with Ernest Lindner, though Lindner's work was outside the modernist position. Lindner spoke glowingly of Greenberg's contribution to and support for the art and artists of the Prairies:

> You see, with the Workshop, and with people like Greenberg, and Noland, and Olitski...it relieved our isolation...And not only this, but when we did get to New York...you had people to contact there. I didn't know a soul in New York, Greenberg reserved the hotel room for me, he invited other artists in to meet me--Olitski, Noland, all those people came to the opening of my show--well, those things would never have happened if they hadn't known us.[39]

Lindner also stated that he had been invited to Greenberg's house, and remarked that his was not an isolated case. He explained that once the New York contact had been made by means of the workshops at Emma Lake, "all of the Saskatchewan artists" were given the same welcome and support by Greenberg and other workshop leaders."[40] Lindner also recalled that "he [Greenberg] criticized some work in Regina of some really bloody amateurs... [and] seriously tried to encourage whatever he thought was good in their work."[41] Commenting on Greenberg's tour of the Prairies, Canadian Art Editor Alan Jarvis wrote of how Greenberg had impressed everyone he met with "his gentleness, his exhaustive knowledge and the stimulation of his personality."[42] This quality in Greenberg was

confirmed by many artists, including Dorothy Knowles, Andrew Hudson, John Nugent, and Clark McDougall.[43] And, as John Bentley Mays noted in 1980, many of the artists he met at Emma Lake were genuinely grateful to Greenberg:

> The real reason Greenberg is revered in these parts is not because he was a great thinker or a shrewd shaper of careers - in 20 years, nobody from Emma Lake has really made it outside Canada - but because, on his repeated trips to Saskatchewan, he has been very kind. Several artists told me that, while eastern critics ignored developments in the Prairies, Greenberg was right there, encouraging, parenting, and pushing artists to do better.[44]

## NOTES - CHAPTER 4

1 Kenneth Lochhead, "Report on the 1962 Emma Lake Artists' Workshop (Fall 1962)," Reprinted in The Flat Side of the Landscape; The Emma Lake Artists' Workshops (Saskatoon, Sask.: The Mendel Art Gallery, 1979), 129.

2 Arthur McKay, "Emma Lake Artists' Workshop: An Appreciation," Canadian Art, 21.5 (Sept./Oct. 1964), 281.

3 Clement Greenberg, "Painting and Sculpture in Prairie Canada Today," Canadian Art, 20.2 (March-April 1963), 92.

4 Christopher Varley, "Essay," Winnipeg West - Painting and Sculpture in Western Canada, 1945-1970 Exhibition (Edmonton, Alta: Edmonton Art Gallery, 1983), 38.

5 John D.H. King, interview with Art McKay in Regina, March 3, 1970. Transcript in John D.H. King, "The Emma Lake Workshops, 1955-1970" (Brandon, Manitoba: John D.H. King, 1972), 125.

6 John D.H. King, interview with Ken Lochhead, February 18, 1970. Transcript in King, "The Emma Lake Workshops...," 384.

7 Ibid, 384.

8 In the "Letters to the Editor" section, Canadian Art, 20.3 (May/June 1963), 196 and Canadian Art, 20.4 (July/August 1963), 246, letters from various members of the Western Canadian art community concerning Greenberg's article were published. At the end of the letters section in the July/August 1963 issue the Editor wrote: "This correspondence is now closed."

9 Peter Millard, "Emma Lake Workshop: Failure or Promise," Arts West, Vol. 3, No. 5 (Sept./Oct. 1978), 33.

10 Max Kozloff, "A letter to the Editor," Art International, 7 (June 1963), 88.

11 Joan Murray, interview with Ronald Bloore in Toronto, May 12, 1977. Bloore's comments re Greenberg are taken from this interview and are included in Joan Murray, "Appendix C: Canadian Artists on Greenberg," Painters Eleven in Retrospect. An Exhibition (Oshawa, Ontario: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 1979), 79.

12 Terry Fenton and Karen Wilkin, Modern Painting in Canada. Major Movements in Twentieth Century Canadian Art (Edmonton, Alta.: Hurtig Publishers, 1978), 83.

13 Terrence Heath, "Prairie Archdemonics; Blessed or Cursed by the Emma Lake Workshops," Border Crossings, Vol. 9.1 (Jan. 1990), 55.

14 Heath, 55.

15 John D.H. King, interview with George Swinton at the School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, April 1970. Transcript in King, "The Emma Lake Workshops.. ," 421.

16 King, "The Emma Lake Workshops...," 298.

17 John D.H. King, interview with Joseph Fafard held at School of Art, Regina College, March 4, 1970. Transcript in King, "The Emma Lake Workshops...," 193.

18 Meeka Walsh, "The Prairie Trickstering of Joe Fafard," ArtPost, Volume 6, No. 2 (Winter 1988/89), 21. On Page 3 of the Letters section of ArtPost, Volume 4, No. 4 (Summer 1989), artist Douglas Bentham attacked Walsh's article, calling it "both shallow and irresponsible."

19 McKay, "Emma Lake Artists' Workshop: An Appreciation," 280.

20 John D.H. King, interview with Ken Lochhead and Donald Reichert held at the School of Art, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, March 26, 1970. Transcript in King, "The Emma Lake Workshops...," 399-400.

21 Ibid, 400.

22 Andrew Hudson, Letters to the Editor - "Greenberg and Friends Defended," ArtPost, Volume 6, No. 3 (Spring 1989), 5.

23 John D.H. King, interview with Terry Fenton held in Regina, March 3, 1970. Transcript in King, "The Emma Lake Workshops...," 328.

24 These observations are drawn from various comments made by participants who attended the Greenberg workshop, as well as other workshops directed by New York artists. They are taken from King, "The Emma Lake Workshops..." See especially p. 269 (Lea Collins), p. 335 (Terry Fenton), p. 413 (Jack Sures), p. 426-427 (George Swinton). See also Ernest Lindner, quoted in McKay, "Emma Lake Artists' Workshop: An Appreciation," 281.

25 David Burnett and Marilyn Schiff, Contemporary Canadian Art (Edmonton, Alta.: Hurtig Publishers Ltd., 1983), 50.

26 Duncan MacMillan, "The Red Barn: The Search for a Formal Language," in Karen Wilkin, ed., Jack Bush (Toronto, Ontario: McClelland and Stewart in Association with Merritt Editions Ltd., 1984), 64.

27 Murray, "Appendix C: Canadian Artists on Greenberg," Painters Eleven in Retrospect..., 77.

28 Ibid, 77.

29 Daniel J. Currell, questionnaire to Tom Hodgson; replied June 5, 1994. In the possession of the author. In the questionnaire sent to Kazuo Nakamura, he responded that "Jack Bush may have been influenced by Greenberg's approach to painting in the colour field however, I never discussed it with him."

30 Elizabeth Kilbourn, "Art and Artists: The Greenberg Gospel," The Toronto Star, February 22, 1964, 30.

31 Statement by Jack Bush in Jack Bush. National Film Board of Canada. Catalogue No. C10179004, 1979.

32 Harold Town, letter to Virginia Anne Woodley, May 3, 1978. Quoted in Virginia Anne Woodley, "Jack Bush 1909-1977: The Events Which Led to His International Reputation" (Ottawa, Ontario: Carleton University, 1979), 73.

33 This point is made by Ken Carpenter, "The Evolution of Jack Bush," Journal of Canadian Art History, 4 no. 2 (1977-1978), Theodore Heinrich, "Jack Bush: A Retrospective," Artscanada, 34, no 1 (March/April 1977), and Karen Wilkin, Jack Bush on Paper (Toronto, Ontario: The Kaffler Gallery, 1985).

34 Wendy Brunelle talks with Jack Bush. A Film. Alberta Access Television, Edmonton, Alta., 1977.

35 Clement Greenberg, "Jack Bush," in Wilkin, Jack Bush, 6.

36 Jack Bush. National Film Board of Canada.

37 Joan Murray, interview with Roy Kiyooka, Whitby, April 17, 1978. Archives. Oshawa, Ontario: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery. Greenberg had commented, in reference to the small paper collages that Kiyooka was doing at that time, that they had nothing to do with painting.

38 Ibid.

39 John D.H. King, interview with Ernest Lindner, August 1970, in the artist's home in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Transcribed in King, "The Emma Lake Workshops...," 376.

40 Ernest Lindner interviewed by J. Climber, Director of the Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon. The date of the interview is not given, but it had to have been done before 1972 as a transcript was included in King's 1972 thesis, "The Emma Lake Workshops...," 371.

41 King, interview with Ernest Lindner, 381.

42 Alan Jarvis, "Mostly About Greenberg," Canadian Art, 20.2 (March/April 1963), 71.

43 See also Joan Murray, interview with Dorothy Knowles, Toronto, December 6, 1978. Archives. Oshawa, Ontario: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery; Andrew Hudson, "Memories of Saskatchewan," in William Townsend, ed., Canadian Art Today (London, Eng.: Studio International, 1970), 45; Joan Murray, interview with John Nugent in Toronto, June 1, 1978. Archives. Oshawa, Ontario: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery; and Clark McDougall, letter to Joan Murray, June 18, 1979. Archives. Oshawa, Ontario: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.

44 John Bentley Mays, "Times Change at Emma Lake," Toronto Globe and Mail, August 9, 1980. Reprinted in The Flat Side of the Landscape..., 138.

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

It would appear in hindsight that Greenberg's prediction concerning the direction in which modern art was heading was not wrong, just incomplete. While Post-Painterly Abstraction attracted many artists, it merely coexisted with other art movements which did not fit Greenberg's concept of modernist art. His obstinacy in refusing to accept the validity of other artistic styles that were developing contemporaneously, was in fact reminiscent of his earlier incapacity to allow for certain developments in 19th- and 20th-century art, such as Surrealism and Symbolism. As the 1960s wore on, new art manifestations such as Pop Art, Op Art, Happenings, Installation and site-specific work, and Conceptual Art began to compete with Post-Painterly Abstraction for preeminence. As modern art moved in different directions, Greenberg became mired in the art movement that he had helped to create, unable and unwilling to accept developments in art that were outside the boundaries he had set for it. Increasingly adamant in his contention that the new art was not really art, and confident that the only valid art was to be found in Post-Painterly Abstraction, Greenberg became the guardian of a theory of modernism that was no longer as relevant to an art world that refused to be controlled within the paradigms that he tried to establish for it.

Greenberg visited Canada in the late 1950s and early 1960s while he was in the midst of formulating and consolidating his concepts of modernism. Confident in his belief in a formalist approach to art, and in his conviction that its manifestation

in Post-Painterly Abstraction was the next logical step in the evolutionary development of modern art, his association with the Canadian artistic community was first and foremost an attempt to secure the primacy of this art. This was in fact what he was striving to achieve simultaneously in the United States. In both countries he took the same steps in his effort to promote colour-field painting. While his approach might have been less forceful in the Canadian context, due to the fact that he was operating outside his own country as an invited guest, his stance remained consistent. Greenberg's involvement in Canada went beyond his self-serving promotion of modernism, however. Testimonials to his kindness, generosity, and helpfulness are numerous, even from some artists who did not agree with his concepts, and from whom he stood to gain nothing. Many members of the Canadian artistic community continued to respect and support him, long after the controversy concerning his involvement in Canadian art erupted. This loyalty must have been particularly heartening to him, as his concepts of modernism, his formalist criticism, and his practices were increasingly maligned by critics, both in the United States and in Canada. Greenberg returned the respect and friendship that was shown to him in Canada, as evidenced by his enduring friendship and association with Jack Bush, and his frequent trips to Western Canada, although after the 1960s his involvement with Canadian art consisted essentially of his involvement with Bush. From shortly after his first meeting with Greenberg, until his death in 1977, Bush's work continued to evolve within colour-field abstraction. Other artists, such as Lochhead and McKay, whose work Greenberg appreciated

and both of whom he had initially supported, began to experiment with other artistic approaches. As a result, their continued association with him was built more on friendship than on a professional basis.

Greenberg had a disruptive and divisive effect on the Canadian art community. In his effort to become modern, the Canadian artist was forced to consider international, contemporary developments in modern art. As a step in this effort, inviting Greenberg and his American artist supporters into Canada compelled Canadians to consider formalist art. and obliged them to assess Greenberg's relevance to Canadian art. Greenberg drove Canadian art out of its insularity, forced the Canadian artist to confront New York City as a major center for modern art, and fired the Canadian artistic community with controversy. Whether he was dictatorial in his promotion of Post-Painterly Abstraction, or whether his involvement in Canadian art was beneficial or detrimental to Canadian art, remains a matter of contention.

Nevertheless, Greenberg's impact on Canadian art extended beyond his promotion of a specific artistic movement. He profoundly influenced the attitude of many Canadian artists towards modern art. He made them believe that they were participants in international developments in contemporary art, and helped them gain confidence in themselves. His approbation of their work provided a tremendous source of encouragement, and an incentive to strive for greater personal achievement. Above all, he tried to convince artists in Canada that they could be more than just great Canadian artists. He implanted the notion that they

could compete with the best in the world, and attempted to build this notion into a conviction.

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