



Essays / Marian Penner Bancroft

UBC in the Sixties

A conversation with Audrey Capel Doray, Gathie Falk, Donald Gutstein, Karen Jamieson, Glenn Lewis, Jamie Reid, and Abraham Rogatnick

Abraham Rogatnick: In the last ten to fifteen years, students have approached me, and they are always interested in this period of the sixties. They are working on a thesis or some project, and I always wonder why, as they were born in the eighties or the nineties. But they come to me with an interest, a very specific interest. I always thought they were wonderful days, but it never occurred to me that another generation would have known about it.

Marian Penner Bancroft: I think that there were certain events and moments in the sixties that have spawned all kinds of current activities and actions, whether in politics, visual art, writing, theatre, dance. (We don't have someone from theatre here.) But, for example, there are overlaps such as your performance work, Glenn and Gathie, coming out of the workshop that you did with Deborah Hay in 1968, and these are overlaps that continue.

Audrey Capel Doray: The first time I met you, Karen, was in my living room, for an Intermedia meeting. And then at an Intermedia Night when I had the phosphorescent wall up. You brought your dancers in, and you decided on a metronome and then worked there for a couple days in a room of your own. Another room had Claude Breeze and his band. You did this dance, and all I have is one simple little photograph of your dancers, of the shadows of your dancers in that backlit room. It was wonderful. You know, we should have had a film of that.



Marian Penner Bancroft: We all have some memory of this period at UBC [University of British Columbia] because we all were there at various stages in our education or in our professional lives. I was a student from '65 to '67, before I went to the Vancouver School of Art, so that's the moment I have the strongest memory of, but I do appreciate that others were there before. The first Festival of the Contemporary Arts that I experienced would have been in 1966 — towards the end of the series — but I would like to hear about the beginning of the festivals, and I understand, Abe, that you had something to do with that beginning.

Abraham Rogatnick: Well, I participated in most of them, and you know that I wrote about it in the book about B. C. Binning.

Marian Penner Bancroft: Rather than list a chronology, I think we want to hear from people about their memories of the festivals and what was opened up as a result, and maybe beyond the festival, what other things were going on at UBC that were significant in terms of changing the way that you did your art, changing the way that you approached architecture, changing the way you approached dance.

Karen Jamieson: I wasn't in dance yet. I was studying anthropology and philosophy.

Marian Penner Bancroft: And all of that moved into how you approached dance?

Karen Jamieson: I saw things that were extraordinary to me — that's my memory — and I had harboured a secret belief that I was an artist, but didn't know the art form I wanted to use.



Abraham Rogatnick: To pick up what you were saying about not following a chronology — this is exactly what I thought we would be doing, transmitting the sense of excitement, the sense of doing something new, doing something for the first time, experiencing something that we hadn't experienced before, or, in many cases, what we were dreaming of being able to experience and how these things came together, not just at UBC but in the entire arts community.

Glenn Lewis: How did that idea start?

Marian Penner Bancroft: I think it came from outside. So many ideas seemed to come from somewhere else.

Abraham Rogatnick: I agree with that. It was so exciting in Vancouver because certain things were happening here for the first time. Vancouver was always referred to as “the end of the world,” and things that were happening in New York or other places in the world that were exciting in the arts were just not available here. We didn't have the artists to carry them out, and/or we didn't have the visitors from the other wonderful places where these things were happening. And then suddenly they all started to happen in Vancouver, and that was such a wonderful, emotional explosion of the arts.

Jamie Reid: There was a hunger for it here in Vancouver right from the outset . I came out of high school and knew nothing about the arts (I went to King Edward High school) except what my mother showed me. She loved the Impressionists, and she had been to art school. I came to UBC in 1961. Through a friend of mine, I was introduced to Warren Tallman and to the young writers who were later to become the Tish people. Ellen Tallman invited the San Francisco poets here. But there was a whole other set of activities going on at UBC as well. The people running Cinema 16 were bringing in foreign films. It was so exciting to go to Cinema 16 and see Jean Cocteau, and all those



wonderful films, really exciting things that you'd never seen before — it was amazing.

Marian Penner Bancroft: There were fine musicians here. At UBC there was Frances Adaskin, for example, and there were those in town such as the ethnomusicologist Ida Halpern who in the late forties started up The Friends of Chamber Music, which brought many international musicians to Vancouver. At UBC I also remember the Paul Butterfield blues band playing — it would have been '66 — so there were musicians coming up from San Francisco.

Audrey Capel Doray: And then there were dancers coming in — Merce Cunningham and Ann Halprin from San Francisco.

Abraham Rogatnick: And they came as a result of the Festival of Contemporary Arts.

Marian Penner Bancroft: So, Karen, who did you see that gave you a vision of what could be?

Karen Jamieson: I saw all those films and the concerts in the old auditorium, and there were light shows, and there were dancers — some local, some were brought in. I mostly remember this sense of strangeness. Local people were invited, as well as people from San Francisco and from New York and other places that were especially active in dance and music.

Audrey Capel Doray: John Cage....

Jamie Reid: The thing that really hit me was Jean Erdman — it was so fabulous. I remember the figure with the silver hanging from her head and the dance that she made. I looked it up on the Internet, and there was only one



reference to that whole piece, and it was one of the most astounding things that I had ever seen up to that time. I didn't know that this existed.

Karen Jamieson: I think that was my reaction — I thought that this was astonishing, I didn't know that this existed. I didn't know that this was a possibility, and of course I went back to anthropology and philosophy, but that remained as a possibility.

Jamie Reid: Stan Brakhage, the filmmaker, came as part of the festival. Robert Creeley came, I expect, under the same auspices.

Abraham Rogatnick: Robert Creeley was invited by the Tallmans.

Jamie Reid: The Tallmans would have been connected with Jane Rule and Helen Sonthoff, who were in some way connected with the festival of contemporary arts and with the literary arts.

Abraham Rogatnick: Jane Rule was working for the CBC when she first arrived in Vancouver, and it was Bob Orchard, who was a producer at CBC, who got the idea to start an arts club. He got Jane and Helen Sonthoff involved and ultimately Alvin Balkind and myself and we started the Arts Club — it opened in '58, and it was a fantastic club. Marshall McLuhan gave his first lecture in Vancouver at the Arts Club. And because the Tallmans had brought in all these wonderful poets from San Francisco (Ferlinghetti gave a performance with his orchestra at the Arts Club), we had all kinds of events. Later on when the Arts Club moved to Seymour Street there was a theatre as well, because it was an old church, and it morphed into the Arts Club Theatre. A lot of people don't understand why it has that name — it was originally the Arts Club's theatre. When we were on Pender Street we had this wonderful big space shared between the New Design Gallery and the Arts Club. Alvin Balkind was the manager of



the Arts Club because he was there all the time, and Takao Tanabe and I built a moveable wall in the space so that when the New Design Gallery had an opening we could push the wall into the Arts Club and when the Arts Club, had a big event we could push the wall into the Gallery. It was an invention of mine, but Tak was a wonderful carpenter, and he and I worked on it.

Audrey Capel Doray: My first show was at the New Design Gallery, when it was on Pender, and Victor acted in a melodrama — it was hilarious — in the theatre part. I also remember a West Indian steel drum band coming — do you remember that?

Abraham Rogatnick: It's a funny story — a few weeks ago I got an award, and there was one man who was receiving an award for International House at UBC — Jane Rule was the director there when it first opened. When they were introducing me, he heard them mention the Arts Club. And later on he came over to me, and he said, “When I heard the Arts Club, I remembered you — you hired me as a waiter for the Arts Club.” His name is Clive. He was the one that brought the Caribbean steel band that you mentioned. I'll never forget that — it was one of our marvellous parties. I always arranged the lighting and for this party. I had soft lighting, and the band arrived, and they brought in their big oil tank covers, and before the guests started to arrive they started to play on their steel drums, and the romantic atmosphere suddenly wafted me into another world that I'll never forget.

Marian Penner Bancroft: What did you show there, Audrey?

Audrey Capel Doray: I was using letters and words in bars with free-form brushwork — opposites trying to relate to each other, like calligraphy of the Orient — relating to our ticker tapes and advertising and logos. I came here in 1957, and in '61 I had a show at the Art Gallery. That was the first show. The



second one became more abstract and more pop oriented. (My house is full of these clippings and catalogues. Victor was very good at keeping everything.)

Marian Penner Bancroft: I'm curious about that moment also for you, Glenn and Gathie, when both your practices began to change from more conventional art making to something different.

Glenn Lewis: I came back in 1964. I came to teach in the Education Faculty, and Gathie was in my class in the first year.

But one thing I wanted to mention in connection with New Design Gallery: I brought back an exhibition of pots from England — Bernard Leach and Lucy Rie and Janet Leach — a bunch of very interesting pots that I'm not sure had been seen here before. (I discovered about a year later that Martin Bartlett had stolen a piece out of the show. I found it in his house.) Do you remember that show, Abe?

Abraham Rogatnick: Oh, yes, indeed I remember that show. We were all talking about it. It was one of the big events.

Glenn Lewis: Well I think about it in relation to that show that they did at the Belkin recently called *Thrown* [*Thrown: Influences and Intentions of West Coast Ceramics*, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, UBC, 2004]. I think an overlooked aspect of the Vancouver art scene was brought out in that exhibition. It's really interesting because it had this oriental influence that you saw in your own work, Audrey.

Audrey Capel Doray: Yes. An important influence was work from the West Coast. Morris Graves, for instance — an artist that I had heard of and searched out before he came here.



Glenn Lewis: So that oriental aesthetic came through in a lot of work, from various sources. And when I was teaching at UBC I came to the realization that there was a constant problem that Leach dealt with, too — the idea of the unknown craftsman — and how you could be an unknown craftsman in the modern situation. It was very difficult to be this anonymous potter making peasant wares — especially as I had been teaching it. I started experimenting — doing riffs — and experimenting with the forms of pottery. I started making things in porcelain.

Gathie Falk: There's one in the window there....

Glenn Lewis: They looked like they might have been in a strong wind or something.... Now, Gathie, you had been doing painting before that, hadn't you?

Gathie Falk: I had been painting for a very long time. Just a very few people knew about me. Most people didn't like my work because it was very expressionistic and hard edged — cool work was in. I had a very hard time getting to be cool in my painting. But I started pottery with Glenn, thinking that I needed another three courses at UBC and this was the way to do it — Pottery one, Pottery Two, and Pottery Three. I remember when I went in, I was thinking, "Oh, I can make some Christmas presents," but Glenn said "You can't keep anything you make!" and he just knocked it all down. Anything we made he just knocked it all down. We weren't allowed to keep anything until spring and then it was like one or two things from first year because you know we didn't have an eye, we couldn't do it right. They were a little too heavy, but mostly it was that the form was not good. So we learned how to make a good form.

Not only that, but we learned how to live better. Glenn lectured on how to live. He would say, "No, your wife does not need a fur coat even though she wants



one!” We learned how to go to the thrift shops and buy old clothes. Even though I had been a teacher for a very long time, and I could afford to buy new clothes. So, after a year of Glenn I found strength to stop teaching and live simply. I had another two years working with Glenn. We were expected to do some sculpture — in second year more sculpture, in third year a lot of sculpture.

Glenn Lewis: That was partly the education thing. You would go out to teach kids, and, of course, kids like to make things — not just pots, you know. The other students were involved in teaching....

Gathie Falk: I never went back to the classroom. I thought I needed to have fun. My pottery, I thought, was good. According to Glenn, and I couldn’t sell it. And my sculpture was good, and I couldn’t sell it. So things went on for some years until I no longer made pottery. I just made sculpture. Much later I went back to painting.

Abraham Rogatnick: You know — talking about ceramics — remember this was when Marguerite Wildenheim was brought up here, and she was a terror....

Glenn Lewis: She was Bauhaus, a strict modernist....

Abraham Rogatnick: Yes, she was Bauhaus, but the terror among her students was about getting rid of student work. She used to love to tell the story of how (mostly it was women) students would come to her studio to do ceramics. They’d do their little things, and then would come the day when they were to go into the kiln. So they prepared their stuff for the kiln, and she remembers going over to one table and this one woman had all her nice little pots — ten or fifteen of them at least — and Marguerite looked at them and swept twelve or thirteen of them back into the clay pot. And the woman, of course, burst into tears, and Marguerite triumphantly said, “This is what you have to teach a student — that you can’t save everything. You only fire the very best.”



Glenn Lewis: But she would say it in a German accent, right?

Abraham Rogatnick: Well, I'm sorry, but I can't attempt that.... That was another of the things that was happening in the sixties that was so exciting to us — Marguerite Wildenheim was so well-known.

Marian Penner Bancroft: And Glenn had his experience with Leach in England and then brought that influence back....

Glenn Lewis: And I tried to get Leach here but he didn't come — he was down in Oregon and in Japan.

Gathie Falk: What did it matter, Glenn? You were really good.

Marian Penner Bancroft: Exactly.

Glenn Lewis: Who were some of the other students in the class?

Gathie Falk: Well, in second year, Charmian [Johnson] and John [Reeve].

Glenn Lewis: And there was Darcy Henderson.

Marian Penner Bancroft: So when and how was it that you did the workshop with Deborah Hay?

Gathie Falk: In '68-I had a show at the Douglas Gallery, and that was the year that she came-in June.

Glenn Lewis: Yes, that was the result of various people. I think Intermedia brought Steve Paxton the year after, but Doug Christmas brought [Robert]

Rauschenberg, and I think Deborah Hay and some of those people trailed along. Now, who brought Yvonne Rainer?

Gathie Falk: Intermedia and Douglas Gallery and the Vancouver Art Gallery brought all those people. They collaborated on bringing them.

Glenn Lewis: It's interesting. I was just in New York for a week and I phoned up Yvonne. She's teaching at UCLA and she's kept her studio in New York. She happened to be there, and she said, "Oh, it's a coincidence that I'm here." She is doing a work at Yale, and she's gone back to dance. And she invited me to the rehearsal. It was fabulous, amazing.

Audrey Capel Doray: Helen Goodwin was involved in dance, and she was going periodically to New York and working with people there.

Karen Jamieson: That's when I first started dancing. It was with Helen. She came out of England and the Laban School — [Rudolf Laban] who had fled Germany and ended up in England. He had a huge influence and still has an influence, and his lineage goes from Mary Wigman to Hanya Holmes. That's what Helen was drawing upon — he used classification systems and improvisation. Helen was a master of improvisation and had a huge influence on me. I started dancing with her and did the Intermedia workshops, and then I went to SFU and started working with the people they were bringing from New York. Merce Cunningham, the Alwin Nikolais people, who had a very strong influence on Helen — Nikolais also came from the Laban/Hanya Holmes line. Merce Cunningham comes from ballet and Martha Graham. And then Zen philosophy came in at right angles to ballet and Graham to create Merce Cunningham — but it's a whole different line and quite distinct.

Glenn Lewis: When Helen started, did she have a company?



Karen Jamieson: I first saw her at UBC with her company — I think it was very much a group.

Glenn Lewis: When did she name it TheCo?

Donald Gutstein: That would be '68 or '69.

Karen Jamieson: She was at UBC. Before that she was in some of the festivals — and then when Intermedia started, that was when I crossed paths with her, and that was when I began to work with her.

Marian Penner Bancroft: Donald, could you talk a little bit about coming from Toronto, studying architecture at UBC, and then getting involved in all these other areas?

Donald Gutstein: I was on the third floor of the Laserre Building between 1966 and 1972, and all of these great ideas were coming up from the second floor. To counteract that, the dead hand of the fourth floor was lain down on us — the planning department influence. But anyway, I felt very privileged at the time to have Henry Elder as the director of the School of Architecture. It was such an open and creative time, and I was just talking to Abe before about how the highlight for me was our trip to Venice in '69. There were problems, but it remains a highlight. I saw through all those years the creative potential of architecture. However, when I looked out at the reality of architecture, I saw that it could never be fulfilled. I turned my back on architecture and began working with a citizens' group in Kitsilano beginning in about '69 to '76, writing a book about Vancouver [Vancouver Ltd. (Toronto: Lorimer, 1975)] which was really a rejection of architecture. I was saying that the city is planned and designed by the financiers and the developers. The architects, in my view



at least, come in late in the day and do the cosmetics. I was sad that that's the way I saw it, so I moved away from that and into another area of interest.

Marian Penner Bancroft: But while you were at UBC?

Donald Gutstein: It was fascinating. We were quite close to Helen Goodwin, and we spent a lot of time with her, Evelyn [Roth] and I.

Glenn Lewis: Evelyn Roth started with Helen, didn't she?

Abraham Rogatnick: Evelyn Roth and Helen Goodwin came to the first [UBC School of Architecture] study abroad program that I instituted in 1969. I want to mention something about that period. We have to remember that '68 was the great year of revolution around the world. I remember being in Paris and seeing on the sidewalk the impression of a burnt-out Volkswagen burned into the asphalt. That was the beginning of the end of the interest in the arts, curiously enough. And the reason was that there was this tendency to give up on the arts, as Donald has mentioned.

There was something not completely fulfilling in what the arts were doing. There was a turning toward politics, toward a political atmosphere, and Alvin Balkind at the Fine Arts Gallery at UBC began to suffer from that in those later years. Because he always had — in the early sixties — all these exciting ideas that attracted crowds of students. *The Ubysey*, the student newspaper, would always write up the things that used to happen at the gallery. Gradually, from 1968 into the early seventies, they stopped coming, and *The Ubysey* stopped writing about the arts — because they were only interested in “revolution.” There was a shift towards revolution.

Audrey Capel Doray: There was another shift taking place at the Vancouver Art Gallery. My husband Victor [“Bud” Doray] was on the board of directors around that time. Tony Emery fled. He had no choice, and the collectors were coming in, and the director from Montreal came in....

Glenn Lewis: The collectors took the upper hand....

Audrey Capel Doray: ... and wanted to get rid of this board that my husband was on because it was too artist directed. Everything fell apart. And they didn’t want any more of this stuff in the gallery. For me, my work consisted of “things,” and at this point it kind of stopped. I made some films and some slide work and that sort of thing and eventually went back to painting. But that was a cut-off — it’s interesting to hear you say that, too.

Glenn Lewis: The VAG [Vancouver Art Gallery] was so open in the sixties. It was amazing.

Audrey Capel Doray: These shows would go on. You could do whatever you wanted. The invitations were made by the artists themselves, and there were all different kinds of invitations....

Glenn Lewis: What was amazing about the Intermedia shows is that people were lined up around the block....

Audrey Capel Doray: People just poured in.... It was so exciting. I found myself just so churned up because it was that sudden participation of people in something you’ve done, which led to another idea and another idea. I just wonder what it could have become. But nothing lasts forever. Victor was also on the board of Intermedia and so was Joe Kyle, and I remember Joe saying,



“This will not last forever — things like this have a time span, and then it will fall apart.”

Glenn Lewis: But it spawned so many things....

Audrey Capel Doray: Right. It branched out again. So it never did end, but it did....

Karen Jamieson: I have a distinct memory of that pivotal moment because this whole time was like a doorway. I entered dance as an adult — which you can't do, usually — being in my twenties and starting dance. So it was like an open doorway — and just at that time I remember one of those events at the art gallery with someone posting some vicious diatribe against art, against Picasso, just as things were opening up, this hand coming towards it saying “this is inconsequential.”

Abraham Rogatnick: It would be '70 or '71. You see, Tony Emery was running a very laid-back gallery. In fact the gallery visually was falling apart because he wasn't interested in a pretty gallery. But it was that period in which Doris Shadbolt was really the mover behind it all. She brought in Evelyn Roth, who crocheted with videotape a cover for the front of the gallery. I think it was the same period that Eric Metcalfe painted the front of the gallery with leopard spots. So he was carrying on this free atmosphere that we were wallowing in — the freedom of earlier sixties. And Emery's downfall was not quite the same as the downfall of the arts as a result of people turning to politics. Also at the same time things always have their equal and opposite reaction. So there was this kind of conservatism that was beginning to come back. And he didn't flee — he was kicked out. He was fired by the board.

Gathie Falk: I was on the board in the year that he left. What happened was that all these people on the board who were monied — had very good jobs and lots of money — maintained to me privately that Tony Emery didn't respect them for their money. He would not come up to them and be nice to them. And therefore they were getting rid of him. They didn't say that at the start. That was at the end. At the beginning they said, "Tony wants a raise and we won't give him a raise." That was the line of most of the people on the board. There were some of us who were not in agreement. Later, at the next meeting, they said, "Well, we'll give him one percent or something." This was an insult — just a total insult — to Tony since he had done so much for the gallery. So some of us disagreed with the proposal, but most of them agreed with it, so that is what went back to him. It went on like this for many meetings, all winter, until in the spring he had a nervous breakdown, and he just fled. He quit. He was not fired — he quit. At the last board meeting I got up and I laid it out. I said, "You've done it with purpose — you've got rid of him, and it was not that he left, it was you who have pressured him."

Audrey Capel Doray: Do you remember Victor on the board at that time?

Gathie Falk: Probably. There were quite a few artists. Then I had a meeting with one of the main people who opposed Tony Emery. He was an old friend of mine and was one of those who Tony had insulted, and he brought all of this forward — that they had objected to him because he did not respect them. And that was the main reason that all of that happened. I still could hardly believe it, but that's the way the world is.

Abraham Rogatnick: Well, you've corroborated what I said except that he was fired. They would have fired him ultimately, but he left....

Gathie Falk: No. They made him eat crow....



Abraham Rogatnick: They made his life so miserable that he couldn't take it. That was why I became interim director immediately after Tony Emery, and you corroborate the fact that there was this other sort of political and social influence that was not the rebellious influence, but an establishment influence couldn't stand the stuff that Tony Emery was fostering.

Glenn Lewis: They wanted to impose their own ideas in terms of their collections and their influence.

Abraham Rogatnick: They wanted the permanent shows of Emily Carr and permanent shows of works of art that they had donated to the gallery. They couldn't stand the idea that when they donated something to the gallery it was in storage and would only be shown once every few years. And they wanted the accolades and so on.

Glenn Lewis: And the tax write-offs.

Abraham Rogatnick: So that was the end of those halcyon days of the sixties.

Marian Penner Bancroft: So I'm curious — Jamie, you were involved in starting the Be-In.

Jamie Reid: In '66.

Marian Penner Bancroft: That was another exciting moment in which you, like Donald, became more political and less involved in the arts for a period of time.

Jamie Reid: I was always political. When I was younger I was not always actively political, but I had political ideas. They were not very well formed

political ideas, but I was against nuclear war, for example, and the idea of war, and I always voted for the candidates that were against nuclear war. I participated in the organizing of the Be-In is a better way to put it, because it represented to me a kind of social movement. In the end, I came to the conclusion that that social movement was too narrowly based — that it didn't go far enough, that its social objectives were too narrow to do what I wanted done in the world. I thought that the changes that were going to come about could only come about through political activity. I ran into political people and they convinced me, and for years afterward I didn't do any art, and I didn't write anything but political cant during the whole twenty years — because I didn't have a way of working the language of politics into the language of poetry. From actual experience, if you know what I'm saying.

Glenn Lewis: You had Country Joe and the Fish at one of those Be-Ins.... I heard Janis Joplin singing at the PNE....

Marian Penner Bancroft: That was the Trips Festival.

Jamie Reid: Sam Perry organized that.... Sam Perry, Linda Crane. Before Intermedia, I believe. I'm not entirely sure.

Glenn Lewis: There were the gels, the projections....

Jamie Reid: Well Sam organized all the visuals there, and he was the main organizer, and Linda Crane was behind it, and Ken Ryan and people associated with the Special Events committee at UBC, who were also behind many of the events for the Festival of the Contemporary Arts. That was the first time I heard Janis Joplin — at the Trips Festival. Gregg Simpson just sent me a picture of Michael Maclure reading on the stage at the Trips Festival.

Audrey Capel Doray: Wasn't [Andy] Warhol's *Sleep* projected?

Jamie Reid: Well, they played Warhol's *Sleep* and the one with the bananas in it and a whole bunch of stuff that you had never seen before. Everybody was impressed with Janis Joplin. I mean, we had heard blues players like that, but that's a blues player that can do it, you know. Jefferson Airplane was there and so also were the Grateful Dead. I remember going up to Linda Crane's place and smoking a joint with these guys and thinking oh, yes, they're just my generation.

There was a guy called Terry Cruise or Jerry Cruise who ran dances out of the Russian Hall, and he had contact with the bands, and he organized to have Country Joe and the Fish come to the first Be-In, which took place in a miraculous kind of fashion in Stanley Park. We just said we're going to have it, and it just kind of happened. I didn't have anything to do with making it happen. There were all kinds of other people that were talking about it, and I was the one who was on the spot to go to the Parks Board to ask for permission to hold it. And then to be refused. And then I said, "I can't stop it from happening — even if I want, to I can't tell them not to go there," and so they came.

Marian Penner Bancroft: When the Fish performed at the Russian Hall there was no license to have a dance. I remember being there, and we were technically not allowed to dance. So everyone was moving with their feet planted on the floor but not lifting them.

I was curious that you both went off in other directions, because at that point, as you say, it was too narrow — that the actions that you wanted to undertake were not possible at that point within an art context.



Jamie Reid: The hippie movement was one thing. It appeared to me that it was an outgrowth of existentialist rebellion that took place in Vancouver in the early sixties that I felt myself a part of and strongly participated in. But the other social movements — the movement against the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movement had a much more powerful effect, and also the movement for women's rights. There were a lot of Americans who came up. I don't know if they had a lot of influence. I mean, we met them, and we talked to them. Speaking for myself, my closest friend at the time, with whom I took LSD and various other things was an American professor.

Marian Penner Bancroft: Weren't all your professors American?

Jamie Reid: Many of them.

Marian Penner Bancroft: I didn't have one Canadian professor, out of fifteen.

Jamie Reid: And they were all in some sense or another political dissenters. The people in the philosophy department — Bob Rowan and others were all people who had refused to take the oath of allegiance that had been asked for by the American government, and they had moved to Canada in order to avoid that. There was an atmosphere of politics that was already prepared and had been for quite a long time. For me, in any case, it turned out to be far too narrow — the liberal attitude was not going to go far enough. The assassinations of Kennedy and his brother convinced me that the American mode of politics was not going to bring democracy and freedom and peace.

Glenn Lewis: The hippie movement was different in the sense that it wasn't theoretical — it didn't have a political theory behind it other than maybe McLuhanism — but just the way they lived life was political. It's interesting to try and talk about that because ...



Jamie Reid: Yes. It was social freedom — the breakout from the McCarthy idea and Puritanism.

Karen Jamieson: But also economic freedom — from the aspirations of the previous generation.

Jamie Reid: I don't know about economic freedom or freedom from consumerism, because there was another kind of consumerism built in.

Karen Jamieson: It foundered on that.

Jamie Reid: When I went to the Haight-Ashbury district I saw it deteriorating as a social experiment. So much drug abuse and disease and so much social rapaciousness of so many kinds going on. I said no, that's not going to work as a social model. This anarchist attitude is not going to work as a social model. That you can live in a modern society without organization ...**Glenn Lewis:** Was that disintegration showing similarities to people living in South America or India?

Jamie Reid: I guess it showed that for people that live in social disintegration — that their economic base is no good, that they don't have the means to livelihood ...

Glenn Lewis: I wonder if that's like what is happening now in the States.

Jamie Reid: Well, I think it's been approaching that since the sixties in waves of one kind or another. The recent crisis — they may overcome it or they may not overcome it. The capitalist system in the United States has a lot of resources in it. Many more resources than I thought in the 1960s and seventies and eighties — much more ability to regenerate itself.



Abraham Rogatnick: One of the things that was also happening at same time was that these American draft dodgers — we used to call them — were coming and having an influence in the arts and elsewhere. There was also the development of a virulent anti-Americanism, partly as a result of the Vietnam War. A turning to Canada, not wanting to see any American influence in Canada, a nationalism, a kind of chauvinism developed, to the point where a professor at UBC who had a following....

Jamie Reid: Robin Matthews....

Abraham Rogatnick: Robin Matthews, yes — and they would look into the catalogues of all the universities, and they would look at the background of the professors, and if the professors had degrees from American universities, they suggested that they be boycotted because they were born American. Like from Harvard, where I have two degrees. It was kind of crazy.

Marian Penner Bancroft: Fortunately that was a direction that not too many people took up. For many of us there was a great appreciation of the energy that came from the U.S. and how it enabled us to imagine ourselves in a larger world.

Jamie Reid: I have that — in retrospect — and it's quite important to me. We had the sense in the sixties that if it didn't happen here, it really didn't happen anywhere. We couldn't be parasitical or create what we did on the basis of what came from outside, even though we wanted to be worldly and we wanted to be international in our attitude. I think it was a generally Canadian attitude that we wanted to understand ourselves in a much wider world and not the parochial world that Canada was in those days and still is in many respects. So the American influence was very important to me for sure. American jazz

meant so much to me. It was so different from the American rock 'n' roll or the Canadian rock 'n' roll. It spoke to an adult world of people living in cities.

Glenn Lewis: It's actually a few cities — New York, Los Angeles, and maybe Chicago.

Jamie Reid: Detroit, Kansas City, New Orleans.

Glenn Lewis: But not many. We were open to Americans from those places, in fact. San Francisco for sure. But generally the idea of anti-Americanism was for the politics that were going on — not the influence of the artistic centres.

Jamie Reid: Speaking for myself, up to about 1967 or '68, I felt closer to people in San Francisco than people in Toronto. When I became a Marxist-Leninist I became a Canadian nationalist, and I'm still a Canadian nationalist — supporting the maintenance of Canadian culture through Canadian state institutions as a bulwark against American influence of various kinds. We were influenced by Charles Olson and Allen Ginsberg — people who were part of a dissident, oppositional trend in the United States. It was the oppositional aspect that appealed to us.

Glenn Lewis: Conservatives hate New York and San Francisco.... They attribute all their problems to people in New York and San Francisco.

Audrey Capel Doray: One person who came from the States was Dave Orcutt. He was quite important. He got the huts at UBC through Koerner and he started doing projections and puppetry, and hordes of people moved in on that psychedelic thing. He moved that over to the first building on Beatty where Intermedia was located.



Glenn Lewis: Did the festivals at UBC have a direct influence on Intermedia forming?

Abraham Rogatnick: I don't think that the festivals had an influence on Intermedia. There was an interest in the integration of the arts — of all the arts....

Audrey Capel Doray: I think it happened over and over. I remember a meeting at our house. It was Helen Goodwin, Dave Orcutt, my husband, and I, and there were a few other people. Michael deCourcy was younger. He says he grew up on all this.

Marian Penner Bancroft: Gary Lee-Nova, Dennis Vance.

Abraham Rogatnick: All these things were happening separately but with the same philosophy.

Glenn Lewis: And some of the same people.

Abraham Rogatnick: But they did not all come together. It was in the air. It was something that people were dreaming of. As Jamie mentioned, Vancouver having a hunger for avant-garde art....

Jamie Reid: We felt completely ignorant.

Abraham Rogatnick: It was a hunger that Alvin and I discovered when we came here. We had no idea. We thought Vancouver was just as sophisticated as Boston, where I came from, or Baltimore, where he came from, or New York. We assumed they had all kinds of art galleries. A few days after we arrived we went to the art school [Vancouver School of Art] to ask who the artists



were and where the galleries were because we wanted to go gallery hopping. [laughter] And we walked into the office, which was upstairs on Hamilton Street, and asked the secretary, “Who are your main artists and where do they show?” and the principal, Fred Amess, heard us from his office. So he came running out and he said, “You want to know who the artists are? Come on upstairs — they are all upstairs.” We went and met Jack Shadbolt and Gordon Smith and John Koerner. And they asked us to come to lunch at a little greasy spoon across the way....

Marian Penner Bancroft: The Savoy Grill.

Abraham Rogatnick: And we asked them, “Where do you like to show your work?” and they all laughed. “There was a gallery here for about six or seven months, but we sell from our studios.” And I opened my big mouth and said, “Maybe we should start a gallery.” I was not being serious, believe me. But Jack said “Great idea,” and they all said “Wonderful!” and immediately Jack said, “Let’s have a meeting.” We had a meeting a few days later at John Koerner’s house. Six weeks after arriving we opened the New Design Gallery.

Jamie Reid: I used to live on Pender Street, and I used to stop in.

Abraham Rogatnick: It started in West Van, on Marine Drive, in 1955, and it wasn’t until 1958 that we moved to Pender Street.

Jamie Reid: New Design was to my knowledge the only art gallery in Vancouver.

Abraham Rogatnick: It was the only gallery showing contemporary art.

Marian Penner Bancroft: When did the Bau-Xi open?



Glenn Lewis: 1965. I had a show there in '65 — one of the first shows.

Abraham Rogatnick: Paul Wong, who opened the Bau-Xi, came to us at one point and said “I’m so inspired by the New Design Gallery, and I would like to open a gallery.”

Marian Penner Bancroft: And he opened across the street from the art school on Hamilton.

Where was the Douglas gallery?

Abraham Rogatnick: On Georgia Street. Originally it was on Davie Street.

Gathie Falk: First it was on Denman Street. Then he built the gallery on Davie Street ...

Abraham Rogatnick: ... in 1966. By that time Alvin was teaching and had the gallery at UBC, and it was getting impossible to run New Design, so we turned it over to board of directors in 1962. Betty Marshall was running it, and she got ill, and the directors could not bother looking for another director, so they turned the whole stable over to Doug Christmas.

Audrey Capel Doray: At one point the Bau-Xi was at the corner of Burrard and Pacific ...

Marian Penner Bancroft: ... And then Hamilton Street, where the Or gallery is now. Was the New Design Gallery the first to show people like Brian Fisher and Claude Breeze, Gary Lee-Nova?

Abraham Rogatnick: Yes. All these people. A couple of them are sitting at the table here.

Gathie Falk: There was Doug Christmas. He was kind of a snake in the grass, but he loved art. He said to me “Gathie, all I am interested in is having the best art.” At that point he was showing American art. He had bought out the New Design gallery. He was not able to buy out the Bau-Xi gallery, but he wanted to be THE gallery in Vancouver.

Abraham Rogatnick: When he bought out the New Design he was already bringing in Rauschenberg, Frank Stella, Warhol.

Gathie Falk: Then he got tired of the best of Vancouver, and got his hands on the best of America, starting with LA, then New York. Then he was no longer interested in the best of Vancouver. . **Glenn Lewis:** Michael Morris had the same story about that. Actually we were talking with Joanne Birnie Danzker, and Michael was saying that when he met Doug, Doug was pretty young — didn’t know anything about art particularly, didn’t know anything about American artists — and Michael said, “Well, I’m going down to Los Angeles — why don’t you come down with me?” And so Michael introduced him to Gemini — the printmakers — and to Rauschenberg. And that’s how Doug started with his American artists.

Gathie Falk: At the same time the VAG had the LA 6 and the NY 7 or something. so it all sort of worked together. We became aware of American art.

Jamie Reid: The first time I became aware of the Abstract Expressionists was in the basement gallery at the library at UBC [Fine Arts Gallery]. And I remember that it was controversial among the people I was speaking to that this could be art, and I didn’t know anything about it, but it excited me, so I was defending it.

Abraham Rogatnick: Alvin curated those shows. B. C. Binning hired Alvin and gave him carte blanche. He simply did not interfere with any of the ideas Alvin had and let him do what he wished, and, of course, it was a great blossoming for Alvin. He ran the New Design Gallery from '55 to '62 but hated being a salesman. He hated the idea of having to sell things. And when he got to UBC he could just show things and encourage young people and, of course, he put the UBC gallery on the map as a result. But it was due to the hands-off attitude of B. C. Binning.

Glenn Lewis: I think that tradition has been kept because at the Belkin. I don't think Scott [Watson] gets any pressure from anybody either.

Abraham Rogatnick: As a matter of fact, I gave a talk there just a few months ago, and I mentioned that very thing, about how Binning had a hands-off attitude and that Scott has been able to carry on. In those days the Fine Arts Gallery was still under the aegis of the Fine Arts Department. Binning turned over the the title of Director to Ian McNairn, and at one point McNairn — who was old fashioned and had narrow ideas about art — was constantly pushing exhibits on Alvin until he couldn't take it any longer. Alvin wrote a letter to Binning asking him to please take McNairn off his back — and Binning did. He gave McNairn something else to do because he wanted Alvin to have the freedom, because he understood that Alvin was doing important things. So I give Binning a lot of credit, aside from Alvin's creativity and devotion to avant-garde art.

Abraham Rogatnick: That was from when the paper was writing up all the shows, before it turned political and to go to art shows was an "establishment" idea.

Marian Penner Bancroft: I like the way it is written — something like — "The UBC Art Gallery ... during the 'three-man' exhibition including Capel-Doray,"



etc. Of course, Capel-Doray being Audrey, a woman. “Woman has ascendancy — it is Capel-Doray all the way.”

There is a moment in that couple of paragraphs from *The Ubysey* where the woman as an artist is moving forward. And that’s something that we haven’t talked about a whole lot — how much the work of women was beginning to be respected and looked at in a way that it hadn’t before. I think of Gathie’s performances and how you were pulling apart some of the domestic rituals, whether it was sewing or....

Gathie Falk: Well, it had a lot to do with food....

Marian Penner Bancroft: *Red Angel* [performance piece at the VAG].... There were six treadle machines with women sewing....

Gathie Falk: And four office desks and people sitting at the office desks....

Glenn Lewis: And eggs....

Gathie Falk: And they were reading books and turning the pages at the same time, and then at one point they picked up an egg and cracked it....

Karen Jamieson: It was a huge influence on me, Gathie....

Jamie Reid: And what is your explanation for that — how did you originally arrive at the idea?

Gathie Falk: Okay, in 1968 I had an exhibition at the Douglas gallery. It was an installation that took up the entire gallery made up of various things — food, clothes — and in the middle of making that Deborah Hay came from New

York and told us about artists involved in performance art. And she had some strictures on what is performance art or rather good performance art. It had to have a beginning, a middle, and an end — and she gave us lessons every day. You had to make performance work on the spot. The second instruction she gave us was, “make a performance whose structure is based on something to do with the sound of your voice.” Now, that’s a big thing, right? But, you know, it was just right up my alley. I asked everyone to take off their shoes and put them in a pile. And then I counted floor-boards — one, two, three — one, two, three — and so on. That was a tiny little bit of a performance — but she thought it was perfect. That was the beginning of my knowledge about what makes a good performance. It has to be visual and possibly aural.... My thinking in art and my painting had been in that direction and area. So this was just an extension of that, and I went on doing it for years.

Donald Gutstein: The question you were asking Marian about when were women artists making gains.... I was just Googling the Festival of the Contemporary Arts, and I can’t remember who it was, but some writer was complaining about how difficult it was for women to get Canada Council grants in those days, and she gave a list for one year that included all the male artists, and then she made a claim that Helen Goodwin’s frustration in not being able to fund her dance company is what drove her into the ocean. I don’t think that’s true.

Audrey Capel Doray: There were other things....

Donald Gutstein: Things were starting to change around....

Audrey Capel Doray: I think at that meeting with Intermedia people downtown, they didn’t care if it was a man or woman, and previous to that, it had made a difference.

Marian Penner Bancroft: What made the difference?

Audrey Capel Doray: I got a job at the art school when I first moved out here, and the only reason I got it.... There were no women teaching there at the time. I never even thought that it was unusual, but it so happened that Orville Fischer, who taught etching, was taking a sabbatical, and I had just arrived back from Paris and had studied with S.W. Hayter for three months, so I came back with such credentials that I walked in and I got it. In the next year I got moved on to something else when Orville returned. But they didn't question it. That was '59.

Abraham Rogatnick: Wasn't Grace Melvin teaching at the art school before you?

Glenn Lewis: She was already gone by then. I graduated in 1958.

Abraham Rogatnick: I knew Grace Melvin. She taught with Charles Scott. They both came from Glasgow. There were very few women teaching. The guys we were introduced to at the Vancouver School of Art in 1955 — they were all men, all men.

Karen Jamieson: It was a time when doors opened. Gathie, you were huge, and what you were doing was huge — and you, Audrey. I began to see a whole potential, and I wasn't even thinking in literal terms about feminism or women. Only that I could move through this door. Other big movements that were influencing me at that time were in the political direction, and my experience was that they were closed to women. It was very, very male dominated. This was the hippie movement, where women were reduced to chicks. There were the two possibilities — you could be a chick, or low in the hierarchy in the political movements that were going on — but art was a place that had infinite possibilities.



Audrey Capel Doray: Joan Balzar was making her neons in the late sixties, and she went to Guatemala. I'm not sure what influence she had on people, but I'm sure she did because those works were quite astounding. Incidentally, my studio is half full of her work. She has nowhere to put it.

Abraham Rogatnick: Alvin was a remarkable person. He always did whatever he could to show women artists long before the feminist movement, and when it began he was almost like a woman — he was that much of an advocate of the feminist movement.

Glenn Lewis: It had to do with the end of the wartime effort. Women had to fill in, and I think there was a huge clamp-down in the fifties.

Karen Jamieson: My mother and I were talking about that just the other day, about the fifties and the clamp-down after the war.

Glenn Lewis: Men coming from the war all had to get jobs, so that is why there were so few women....

Audrey Capel Doray: And the situation now is that there are more women in the work force than men — making far less money.

Glenn Lewis: Women have surpassed men in the States in terms of people actually working.

Gathie Falk: A lot of women were laid off in the first first couple of years of this century and in the nineties. They were already gone, they were gone a long time ago, so now they are in positions like teachers and nurses, and they are not going to be laid off.

Glenn Lewis: Actually the first bill that [Barack] Obama signed was the Lilly Ledbetter Act, which will give women equal pay for equal work.

Marian Penner Bancroft: Lots of unfinished business left over from the sixties.

Abraham Rogatnick: The important thing is that we are experiencing the result of the revolution of the sixties. Feminism and all the other things we are talking about that are so common today were born of the movements that were born in the sixties.

Gathie Falk: I'd like to make a statement about the Canada Council. Because I had no trouble getting Canada Council grants, and I notice other women don't now either. It seems to be the place where things are evened out. When there was the *WACK!* [*WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, 2008] show of mostly American feminists, I noticed that most of the work was focused on a woman's body — their own or somebody else's. That seemed to be the theme throughout almost all of the American work. The work was tiny, tiny images, one after the other, in rows, and hard to look at.

Gathie Falk: At any rate some Canadian artists were also shown in that group, and there was almost no focus on women's bodies. There was nothing feminist about their work at all because they had been freed — they had the Canada Council to support them, whereas the American women had not. American men got lots of support from business, and American women did not. The Canada Council has had an even hand for men and women. Women artists in Canada do not need to make feminist art because that's not a problem.

Audrey Capel Doray: I did a lot of female forms, but I'm not a feminist. I did it because I thought it was beautiful.



Glenn Lewis: These are probably not water-tight compartments, but still....

Abraham Rogatnick: I'm glad Gathie mentioned the Canada Council, because that is something we have to include as a great influence on Canadian art, supporting avant-gardism in the arts all through the fifties and sixties and beyond. The Council was a very great enabler of people who wanted to do unusual things, with very open-minded jurors who vetted the applications for grants. They were very generous.

Marian Penner Bancroft: If we come back to thinking about UBC in the sixties, we need to remember there was not a real studio art program outside of the Education faculty. Only in second year could you take one studio-type course, either with Herb Gilbert or Lionel Thomas.

Gathie Falk: There was no fine arts studio program until much later.

Gathie Falk: I was a teacher there in its first year — 1970 — in the studio program.

Glenn Lewis: I went over to teaching in the Fine Arts Department in 1974. Iain Baxter started teaching there....

I remember Ian Wallace and Jeff Wall turning up at Intermedia once, and they were interested in the Roneo machine. I'm just wondering if that's where he ran off the Landscape Manual. I should ask him. They weren't really interested in Intermedia, other than maybe a few things like that that they could use, perhaps. They were products of UBC rather than the art school [Vancouver School of Art].



Marian Penner Bancroft: They were products of the UBC art history program, although it was then called Fine Arts.

Glenn Lewis: And he [Wallace] remembers the festivals really well — because he tells me he remembers a performance I did out there that he liked. They started around the end of the sixties, right?

Abraham Rogatnick: Jeff Wall was one of Alvin's students, in his curatorial program.

Glenn Lewis: And they were much more theoretical in their approach.

Marian Penner Bancroft: And they were making contact with people like Lucy Lippard and Robert Smithson. Jeff was studying with Ian. Other students of Alvin's were Chris Dikeakos, Robert Kleyn, Dennis Wheeler.

Glenn Lewis: They were certainly critical of Intermedia and the hippie mindset. I remember Jeff called it "island art."

Karen Jamieson: Probably anything that didn't have a strong theoretical underpinning....

Marian Penner Bancroft: I do remember that Buckminster Fuller came to UBC and spoke to the architecture students.

Donald Gutstein: I do remember that — between 1965 and '67.

Gathie Falk: In 1969 I made a crocheted geodesic dome at UBC with an audio tape of Buckminster Fuller's text.

Abraham Rogatnick: I was his interpreter in Venice. I invited him and [Isamu] Noguchi. I didn't know that both of them were active in the twenties, with Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham and T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. They came to Venice because they wanted to see Ezra Pound before he died.

Glenn Lewis: I saw the Warhol show in Montreal, and one of the things that really surprised me was that he was terribly interested in dance and was influenced by Cage, and I saw these tapes that he made about Cunningham.

Karen Jamieson: I remember Warhol at Cunningham's studio when I was there.

Glenn Lewis: And his films were a direct result of that — like *Sleep* — that kind of Zen attitude.

Abraham Rogatnick: One of the great things about Vancouver then were the people who came like Merce Cunningham and John Cage, mostly invited by the Festival of the Contemporary Arts.

Glenn Lewis: I'm particularly interested in oriental influence, and I like to see how it comes from different points, because we are here at the edge of the Pacific — certain influences come about because of that.

Jamie Reid: Two people that I wanted to mention in this context are Al Neil and Bill Bisset because there was this indigenous art movement — I call it indigenous because it was the people here who were doing it. It was of course influenced by all the trends from outside, but the art that came out of Vancouver and the West Coast has its own distinctive character. You can point to Jack Shadbolt, and you can see some of it there. But Al Neil is a typical West Coast personality — he studied with Robert Motherwell, and then he did this

Dadaist performance art in the sixties, based on his understanding of jazz and Thelonious Monk and Bill Bisset, whose inspiration comes from who knows where.... It's vast. And *blewointment* magazine was probably the best thing in terms of literature. It was so varied, and Bill's taste was able to pick those things that had real character. It has more in it that probably any other literary magazine. Live, fresh influence is what I'm talking about.

Glenn Lewis: They were both part of Intermedia, too.

Abraham Rogatnick: When you ask about Bill Bisset's inspiration, we have to mention the enormous influence of Dadaism and the huge influence it had on sixties avant-garde from a hundred years ago — which is still going on, by the way. It's become very tiresome because all these young people think they are doing something new, and it was done already a hundred years ago. I have to give them credit.

Glenn Lewis: It came from the Fluxus artists, too — [Robert] Filliou and others.

Gathie Falk: Everyone, however, did something new with the idea of Dada.

Glenn Lewis: And some of the young artists, Abe, are really looking at the Intermedia artists from the sixties. Luis Jacob from Toronto did a piece at the Belkin where he did this dome — like an appropriation of *The Dome Show* [Intermedia exhibition, Vancouver Art Gallery, March 1970] — and then he projected video on it and had people lying around on it in sleeping bags. Vincent Bonin is publishing a book with MIT on artist-run centres. He used to be the archivist at the Langlois Foundation in Montreal, and he exhibited minutes from some of the artist-run centres. There's a lot of interest from younger artists in the sixties. They've turned away from the theoretical stuff

that's more recent and are looking back to that. There's Kristina Lee Podesva with her colourschool project — looking at Michael Morris's thing about the colour bars and translating that into racial colours.

Abraham Rogatnick: I notice Jamie's books — homages to Picabia and one to Tristan Tzara....

Jamie Reid: *DaDaBaBy* was a magazine that I began when I came back to Vancouver about 1990. I'd had minimal contact with Dadaist work, and I was inspired by it, and I wanted to start a magazine that would have some relation to that. The original idea was to do publicity for local poets, to pick up local poets and to produce them, and so in the end I was able to produce eleven issues. I had a computer for the first time, and I would produce photocopies and sell them in bars. But I ran out of energy for going to bars. But the eleven issues had a Dadaesque quality — like Quinley's *Western Story*. And then there was some stuff that was closer to surrealism — I don't know quite how to describe it — more multi-media concrete poetry. I would look for something that I could build an issue around, and I had hoped to have more participation, but generally I found people who were unknown. I would include other stuff that people gave me or stuff that I did myself.

Marian Penner Bancroft: Do you remember at UBC being introduced to Dadaism?

Jamie Reid: I remember seeing Hans Richter's book on Dadaism. I saw all the surrealist films, of course — all the films that Cocteau made and the people who were associated with the surrealist movement — [Paul] Claudel and various others. When I came back to Vancouver I ran into Gregg Simpson, who was very much influenced by the surrealists. He showed me the work of Max Ernst, which I had seen before but hadn't yet had an effect on me, and Kurt

Schwitters, who reminded me of Bill Bissett, and I could see that Bill had been influenced by him. It was the influence of that that I wanted to carry out in *DaDaBaBy*, but it was in the main only a semi-successful experiment.

Abraham Rogatnick: I don't want to give myself credit for having re-introduced Dadaism to Vancouver — however — it was in 1959 that Doris Shadbolt asked me to give three lectures on art movements that I was interested in. I decided to do one on the Pre-Raphaelites, who were completely out of fashion at that time, and then one on art for art's sake — the aesthetic movement — and one on Dada. I named them "The Pre-Raphaelites: The Passion for Agony" — that was the name of a book on the Pre-Raphaelites at the time — and "Art for Art's Sake: The Passion for Decadence," and "Dada: The Passion for Suicide." Nobody seemed to even know what it was — at least in the audience I had at the Vancouver Art Gallery. It was something completely out of the blue for them. But I think my interest in Dada coincided with Vancouver's interest in Dada. It was in the air. 1959 was the height of abstract expressionism with Jack Shadbolt, and there was already the feeling that, "Isn't there something else, something more rebellious?" There was need to break away from modernist theories, which were very heavy on theory. Glenn, Jamie — you were interested in Duchamp at the time....

Jamie Reid: But, of course, that was the theoretical wing of Dada....

Glenn Lewis: And had a residual connection to Cubism. I notice that you mention Gerry Gilbert. He had aspects of Dada in his Roneo machine stuff, and he was quite active in Intermedia. He wouldn't let people at the Roneo machine unless they signed a waiver or something.

Abraham Rogatnick: One of the things that he did — it's now become so common that it's boring — in Alvin's *Concrete Poetry* show [UBC Fine Arts

Gallery, 1969] was to write a poem on the wall. He wrote in long hand on the wall. Michael Morris was very important in that show. That was when they brought in that wonderful guy Ray Johnson.

Glenn Lewis: Then there was the Black Mountain College. It wasn't an Intermedia — it didn't have the technology thing going on. A very rich grouping of people and all kind of sparks came out from that.

Abraham Rogatnick: Black Mountain started in early forties....

Jamie Reid: So many people had a relationship to Black Mountain: Rauschenberg, Cage, Creeley, Duncan, Olson.

Abraham Rogatnick: Black Mountain was a forerunner to all the things we're talking about — but an influence because a lot of these people came here.

Marian Penner Bancroft: And they came here, but not to other places in Canada. You won't find that same kind of activity in other places at that time. It was not going on in Winnipeg or Toronto or Montreal the same way.

Jamie Reid: On the literary front, Ellen Tallman was the key to this. It was her connection to the San Francisco renaissance.

Abraham Rogatnick: I'm glad Marian mentioned that it was just in Vancouver. Alvin Balkind was the curator of contemporary art at the Art Gallery of Ontario in the early seventies, and he tried to bring in some things that were already common in Vancouver — *The Chair Show* [Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, 1975] — which very much scared a lot of the Torontonians, especially the board members, who thought he was a crazy rebel. So in Toronto it was something new in the seventies, whereas it was already getting to be old stuff for us.



Gathie Falk: The car show that Emery did — it was the next decade before it was in central Canada.

Marian Penner Bancroft: I remember returning from Toronto in 1971 and coming to visit you Gathie and seeing for the first time the ceramic pieces — you had two fish on either side of hearth, and on the coffee table was a blue ceramic Birk's box lined in silk, and inside a set of gold ceramic uppers, dentures, and in the fridge, ceramic chickens....

Gathie Falk: Birds in the freezer....

Marian Penner Bancroft: I thought, I'm back in Vancouver!

Author Bio

Marian Penner Bancroft

Artist. Marian Penner Bancroft was born in 1947. She studied art and science at the University of British Columbia (1965-1967), photography and painting at the Vancouver School of Art (now Emily Carr University of Art + Design) (1967-1969), and photography at Ryerson Polytechnic University (now Ryerson University) (1970-1971). Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally and is included in public and corporate collections across Canada. She has taught at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (now Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University) (1980), Simon Fraser University (1984), and Emily Carr University of Art + Design (1981-present), where she is currently an Associate Professor in the faculty of Visual Arts and Material Practices (photography). Bancroft's photographic work (which periodically includes text, sculpture, sound, and drawing) explores both cultural and family histories, and their overlaps with the uses and representations of landscape.