CORE SAMPLES

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA
VISUAL ARTS FACULTY 1966 -1986

Legacy Art Gallery
June 19 – October 26, 2013

Caroline Riedel
University of Victoria (B.C.), issuing body
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Caroline Riedel.

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Foreword

Before concluding the University of Victoria’s 50th anniversary year, curator Caroline Riedel felt strongly that it was our responsibility as the university’s art gallery to honour the history of the Department of Visual Arts as one of the institution’s leading contributors to local, national and international arts. While over the last three decades we have regularly exhibited recent works of the Art Education instructors who work in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction through the Faculty of Education, we felt that the past and present of the Visual Arts department has been underrepresented. As a result, we decided to develop two consecutive projects this year: Core Samples, which documents the early decades of the Visual Arts department and celebrates the work and personalities of those who toiled to establish it; and Paradox, an exhibition that will feature new work of the current faculty.

Caroline Riedel spent many hours over the course of this year interviewing the artists and teachers who contributed and witnessed the first two decades of what is now a world-class undergraduate and graduate studio art program. Her goal was to come to an understanding of how it developed and who were the players within it who drew students to its programs. At times the stories she heard (of frustration, resentment, political struggles between faculty and administration, resignations, and personal disagreements erupting into fistfights on more than one occasion) concerned her. She questioned how the narrative could be told without offending or reviving long-dormant hard feelings.

However, as we all have come to learn from witnessing history (and art history for that matter), nothing new arises from complacency. Any situation, however pleasant, left unchallenged and in stasis inevitably becomes outdated, irrelevant and at times toxic. The formation of the Department of Visual Arts as a break-away unit of the Faculty of Education in the 1960s is a story of upheaval and a desire to introduce new options to the field of fine art studio education in Victoria. It is therefore incumbent upon us not to gloss over this natural process, that, in its conflict, brought opportunity for renewal, innovation and choices within both departments. As a consequence of this seemingly rocky start, UVic today has two streams of visual art practice in two separate faculties (Fine Arts and Education), each of which offers unique programs, approaches, and outcomes, allowing many options for art-minded students to learn directly from practicing artists. This exhibition celebrates the art and the richness of practice emerging from the early years of the Department of Visual Arts at UVic, and celebrates the legacy of pedagogy it has established over the last four decades.

Mary Jo Hughes
Director

Core Samples: The Department of Visual Arts 1966-1986

The University of Victoria’s Department of Visual Arts has a longstanding reputation for both the teaching excellence and the artistic achievements of its faculty. Some of its earliest members are inductees into the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, have received honorary degrees and are represented in collections around the world, including the National Gallery of Canada, the Museum of Modern Art and the Tate Gallery. The university’s own permanent collection includes the work of many of these founding members. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the University of Victoria and provides the ideal opportunity to look back at the origins of the department, and to honour the contributions of selected faculty both in artistic practice and pedagogy during its first two decades.

While most of the early work included in this exhibition is quite different from the artists’ later output, it provides an overview of the high calibre of work from this time. Thirteen of the early core faculty members, including founders John Dobereiner and Donald Harvey, as well as acclaimed artists Dana Atchley III, Mowry Baden, Pat Martin Bates, Roland Brener, Gwen Curry, Peter Daglish, Fred Douglas, Eric Hilton, Douglas Morton, Gord Smith, and George Tiessen are featured. The work of a number of sessional instructors and visiting professors from the university’s permanent collection includes the work of many of these founding members. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the University of Victoria and provides the ideal opportunity to look back at the origins of the department, and to honour the contributions of selected faculty both in artistic practice and pedagogy during its first two decades.

Now, a state-of-the-art, purpose-built facility houses the Department of Visual Arts, which has over 250 students and courses in video and digital media art, as well as drawing, painting, photography and sculpture. But it was not always like this. There were several incarnations and changes in location as it evolved and grew, and some of the personalities involved did not see eye-to-eye as to how the program should be structured. cramped quarters and limited funding made expansion of the department and the acquisition of new studio equipment challenging. In its earliest days, visual arts shared space with art education in the MacLaurin Building and took over basement tunnels that were originally built for storage but served myriad other makeshift uses. In the 1970s
the department was physically divided over two of the old army barracks, known as M and L Huts, as well as the MacLaurin Building. By 1979 a new building with large open studio spaces specifically for the sculpture and printmaking departments was erected on the northern edge of campus. Despite these challenges, as well as a highly political environment among the faculty members and ongoing struggles with the higher-level university administration, the department retained a core group of faculty who made outstanding artistic and pedagogical contributions.

What attracted students to the University of Victoria's program at this time certainly lay in both the professional reputations of the individual faculty members, their unique teaching approaches, and the relatively intimate size of the department, compared to other university visual arts programs in Canada. In its first two decades UVic had one of the few post-secondary level visual arts programs on the West Coast. The University of British Columbia had run a visual arts program since 1955, and Simon Fraser University offered a combined fine and performing arts program starting in 1965. Colleges of art and design, such as the Emily Carr College in Vancouver and the Alberta College of Art and Design, for example, did not receive degree-granting status until the 1990s. UVic enrollment reports from the 1970s and 80s indicate that the Department of Visual Arts frequently had to turn away close to half of its qualified applicants because of a lack of space.

1960s: Beginnings

The Department of Visual Arts actually started as a small breakaway department from UVic's Faculty of Education. Initially the education program offered general art and art history courses for teachers in Education. Initially the education program offered a separate Department of Visual Arts that offered courses in painting, drawing, sculpture (starting in 1970), ceramics, design and graphics. The department recruited British glass and plastics sculptor Eric Hilton (assistant professor of three-dimensional design, 1968 to 1971) and Americans Peter Kahn (professor of graphics, 1968 to 1969) and Richard Grooms (associate professor of design and drawing, 1968 to 1969). Kahn converted part of the basement of the MacLaurin Building into a printmaking studio, and a glass kiln, lathes and vacuum-former were added for sculpture students. Sessional instructors Pat Martin Bates and Herbert Siebner taught evening courses at this time.

All of the artists in the faculty continued to advocate for a more formal fine art curriculum. By 1969 the School of Fine Arts was successfully restructured to become the Faculty of Fine Arts and included the renamed Department of Studio Visual Arts.

At this time. But within the first two years, discussions about specialized programs separate from Education began. Alan Gowans, an architectural historian, was recruited from the United States to help with the transition. The split was, according to Donald Harvey, a voluntary decision between the four art educators. Small and Johns remained with the Faculty of Education and Dobereiner and Harvey joined Gowans to create a combined Department of Art and History in Art. These two departments, along with Theatre and Music, became the School of Fine Arts.

As with any new initiative, this was a time of debate as the three founders worked to define the direction of the program. Donald Harvey described the “meaty tussles” he and Dobereiner had with Gowans, who was, in Harvey's view, “essentially opposed to modern art.” Gowans proposed an applied arts curriculum with courses in design and sculpture. Other areas, such as architecture, interior, stage and industrial design were to be added over time. Recruiting experts in these specialized areas proved to be difficult over the next two years.

These initial challenges were alleviated somewhat in 1969 when Dobereiner and Harvey launched a separate Department of Visual Arts that offered courses in painting, drawing, sculpture, ceramics, design and graphics. The department recruited British glass and plastics sculptor Eric Hilton (assistant professor of three-dimensional design, 1968 to 1971) and Americans Peter Kahn (professor of graphics, 1968 to 1969) and Richard Grooms (associate professor of design and drawing, 1968 to 1969). Kahn converted part of the basement of the MacLaurin Building into a printmaking studio, and a glass kiln, lathes and vacuum-former were added for sculpture students. Sessional instructors Pat Martin Bates and Herbert Siebner taught evening courses at this time.

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1 Donald Harvey, interview with author, January 2013.
3 Harvey, interview with author, January 2013.
1970-1973: Challenges

The early 1970s were a volatile and politically charged time in the department and on campus as a whole. Donald Harvey was president of the faculty association during this period and called it a "difficult time all around... with association members seething with antagonism" regarding the way that the new president Bruce J. Partridge handled a number of problematic tenure decisions and tensions between some of the higher-level administrators. The Dean of Fine Arts, Peter Garvie, clearly favoured the theatre program, and documents from this time show ongoing frustrations as to how funds were allocated, as well as personal conflicts between the dean and certain faculty. His solution was to appoint Norman Toynont (associate professor of painting, 1971 to 1972) to chair the department, hire new faculty, expand the program and plan a new building complex. But Toynont and several others became embroiled in controversy, and his colleagues wrote a scathing letter of non-confidence to the president. The quality of teaching reportedly suffered during this time due to both internal tension in the department and the lack of support of the upper-level administration. In his book, *A Multitude of the Wise: UVic Remembered*, former Dean of Fine Arts Peter L. Smith wrote of this time, "There were persistent rumours that [visual arts] would be abolished – that the whole Faculty [of Fine Arts] might be dismantled and relocated." When George Tiessen (associate professor of printmaking and drawing, 1972 to 1990) arrived at this time he characterized the department as being 'on the verge of collapse'.

Despite the contentious environment, faculty brought high-level knowledge and engagement with national and international art practice. Visiting professor Eric Brown had studied with American Pop artist Richard Hamilton, and Michael Sandle quickly gained international recognition for his provocative monumental sculpture when he relocated to Germany the following year. Daglish, Dobretreiner, Atchley and Hilton continued as regular faculty alongside William Featherston (associate professor of sculpture and printmaking, 1970 to 1972), who had recently completed a sculpture commission for Expo 67. Acclaimed British artist Denis Bowen also came to UVic after studying with Alan Wood. Pat Martin Bates, who had received international recognition for her printmaking, was the first woman to be promoted to associate professor at this time.

In 1973, the program changed drastically both in content and faculty. The University Senate deemed the program too "professional" in concentration, and a more general program was instituted. First-year courses were decreased to one foundation course; second year offered basic courses in all of the department's disciplines (painting, drawing, sculpture, printmaking, photography); and third year allowed for specialization in one or more of the disciplines. As a result of ongoing tensions within the department and with the UVic administration, Toynton, Daglish, Featherston, Atchley, Bowen and Hilton all departed in this year.

1974-1980s: Changes

With a change in leadership, a period of relative stability followed with Peter L. Smith (classics) assuming the role of both Dean of Fine Arts and acting chair for the year following Toynton's departure. According to Smith, with an additional change in leadership in Theatre and by foregrounding the Department of Music's highly regarded program, fine arts managed to become one of UVic's growth areas in the 1970s. Smith writes about this time, "Within two years, a renewed Visual Arts Department had resumed..."
its place as a campus leader in student achievement and faculty productivity.10

One of the new appointees included Gord Smith, a trained architect, member of the Royal Canadian Academy and highly regarded sculptor from Montreal. Another major shift in the direction of the curriculum and its dynamics of the department occurred in 1974. Roland Brener (associate professor of sculpture and photography, 1974 to 1994), who had studied with Anthony Caro, brought a unique breadth of international experience and artistic interests. Brener met American sculptor Mowry Baden in the early 1970s and assisted in bringing him to UVic, initially as a visiting professor. After the short tenure of Smith, the department was firmly divided between instructors whose teaching reflected more conceptual approaches placing ideas over technical mastery. Both Harvey and Brener helped establish a regular visiting artists program at this time. This program replaced the more informal artist-in-residence program of previous years and allowed for a more vigorous exchange of ideas, techniques and approaches. Over the next decade, Jed Irwin, Mark Prent, Mel Raimus, Doug Bentham, Ted Godwin, Charles Ray and many others participated in the program. Gwen Curry explained the difference in approaches she experienced during her tenure: “The department was firmly divided between instructors who taught a classic/modernist approach including solid skills [in painting, drawing, printmaking] and instructors whose teaching reflected more conceptual approaches placing ideas over technical mastery. Both approaches were valid.”14 About his colleagues during this time Mowry Baden noted that both Harvey and Brener had great success attracting students who wanted to learn to paint, and Pat Martin Bates was “hugely popular among the printmaking students.”15 In the 1970s, according to Baden, Roland Brener “had everyone’s attention. He was charismatic, fiery and well informed. He brought interesting visitors to the program, used them in the classes and interrogated them mercilessly when they gave their presentations. The visiting artist program became the focal point for the exchange of ideas and technologies.”16 Baden himself has been credited as a major influence on world-class artists such as Jessica Stockholder, Chris Burden and Kim Adams, all of whom were former students.17 James Carl, former student and now studio art professor at the University of Guelph, noted that Baden and Brener worked and taught in close proximity: “Both had a specific kind of gravity about them, and they worked on their own stuff in the studio at school. That was the best lesson you could get, watching those guys make decisions in real time.”18

Harvey took on leading roles as the first two graduate faculty members. Each graduate student was provided with his or her own studio space, but due to tight quarters, a maximum of four students could be accepted each year. In the 1980s, changes in faculty appointments slowed somewhat. Artist and administrator Douglas Morton, formerly of the Regina Five, joined the department in 1980 and became the Dean of Fine Arts the following year. After a two-year stint at the Alberta College of Art, he returned to UVic to chair the department, and remained at the university until 1992. Fred Douglas (assistant professor of photography, drawing and art theory starting in 1983) and Gwen Curry (assistant professor, printmaking and drawing, 1983 to 1994), previously both sessional instructors, formally joined the faculty.

By 1983, nine regular full-time faculty members were charged with delivering the program, which in that year also featured an honours option. But despite the apparent stability in faculty appointments, there was a fundamental division between artistic practices and ways of teaching, which affected the dynamics of the department. Gwen Curry explained the difference in approaches she experienced during her tenure: “The department was firmly divided between instructors who taught a classic/modernist approach including solid skills [in painting, drawing, printmaking] and instructors whose teaching reflected more conceptual approaches placing ideas over technical mastery. Both approaches were valid.”14 About his colleagues during this time Mowry Baden noted that both Harvey and Dobereiner had great success attracting students who wanted to learn to paint, and Pat Martin Bates was “hugely popular among the printmaking students.”15 In the 1970s, according to Baden, Roland Brener “had

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12 Youds, 66.
13 Harvey, 21.
14 Harvey, 21.
15 Mowry Baden, interview with author, June 2013.
16 Baden, email to author, June 2013.
18 Ireland.
This exhibition's date parameters end with 1986, largely as a means to contain the first two decades of the department’s development and to create a division between the current faculty, some of whom started in the mid 1980s and will be featured in the next exhibition at the Legacy Art Gallery. In organizing an exhibition such as this, which in part documents an organization’s history, one learns as a curator that there are many perspectives on how a department begins, grows and matures. It is no small feat that each player contributed to a dynamic learning and teaching environment while maintaining his or her own artistic practices and actively participating in national and sometimes international contemporary dialogues.

With this exhibition it is my intent to pay tribute to the work of some of the earliest visual arts faculty members who contributed in their own unique ways to the individual and collectively earned reputation for groundbreaking artistic and teaching practice.

Caroline Riedel
Curator

George Tiessen with a student in the M-Hut Studio, n.d. Photograph by Pat George.

Mowry Baden leads a walking sculpture class around campus, 1980s. UVic Archives.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES
Dana W. Atchley III taught graphic design and photography at the University of Victoria from 1969 to 1971. His professional career spanned five decades and combined the fields of fine arts, education, performing arts, film production, and interactive digital media. He was formally trained in printmaking and graphic design at the Yale Graduate School of Graphic Arts Design, where his teachers included photographer Walker Evans, graphic designer Paul Rand, Fluxus artist Dieter Roth and colour theorist Joseph Albers. In addition to his teaching career, he was an artist in residence at more than fifty colleges and schools, and worked in the corporate realm on brand identities for Coca Cola and Apple, among many others.

Atchley is best known for his art collaborations, correspondence art and digital story-telling projects. During his time at UVic, he published Space Atlas and Notebook One, a correspondence art movement that derived from a desire to overcome the isolation of living on Vancouver Island and to connect with emerging international contemporary artists. Artists were invited to mail up to ten pages of 250 copies of self-selected work, with the end product then redistributed to the participants. He also collaborated with poet Jonathan Williams at this time on an illustrated book of poetry now in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art. Williams’ poetry inspired the print in this exhibition, which pays tribute to the sights and sounds of the Appalachians.

After his departure from UVic in 1971, Atchley’s projects included a half-million mile trip through the United States to enact a multimedia performance, satellite television, and an artist in residence program entitled On the Road Ace Space Company. In the 1990s he produced an interactive autobiographical performance entitled Next Exit that received international recognition. He is considered a “forefather” of the digital storytelling movement, and his pioneering work was the inspiration for the Center for Digital Storytelling in Berkeley, California.1

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Mowry Baden's sculpture is multifaceted, concerned less with objects and more with creating a physical experience for the viewer. A pioneer of body art, he describes his own work as “confronting the issue of perceiving perception itself.”

For nearly 50 years, Baden has built harnesses, furniture, pathways, rides, rooms, and other structures, all with the intent to impinge on the viewer’s movements and generate a self-awareness that was previously unconscious. In the early 1970s, Roland Brener approached Baden to do a piece at the University of Victoria. Victoria Room No. 2 was an eight-sided space with various ramps sloping almost imperceptibly upward. The centre of the room was filled with gravel which, like the muslin ceiling overhead, masked the variation in the grades, creating in participants a subtle decentering of their habitual perception as they moved through the space.

In the 1980s, Baden produced a number of task-oriented sculptures such as the Hudson Street series (1983-1984) where participants rode bikes that supplied either air, heat, or water to a plant. With Hudson Street Beet, participants mounted a modified bike frame with a pot containing a beet plant attached to the handlebars. Pedalling produced an electrical current that warmed the soil and encouraged the plant to grow. Baden filmed these events as part of a project with New York’s Artist’s Space gallery in 1984.

Baden has said, “Making art is not a career; it is a discipline, something you do everyday.” Following Baden’s example, his students at UVic immersed themselves in their work, sometimes camping overnight in their studios. Robert Youds, a UVic Visual Arts alumnus (1978) and current professor in the department, describes the students who worked with Baden and Brener as “a kind of tribe that still echoes outward.” Many of them credit the strong influences of both Baden and Brener in their current professional practices.

Baden studied at Pomona College at Stanford University, where he earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees, respectively. He taught first at Raymond College in Stockton, California, and then at Pomona College, where he chaired the art department. In 1972, he taught in the experimental Arts One program at the University of British Columbia, and in 1975, he joined the Department of Visual Arts at UVic, where he was also chair from 1991 to 1993. Retiring after 22 years, he remains a professor emeritus. Baden has received many prestigious awards and grants including the Governor General’s Award in Visual and Media Arts.

3 Ireland.
Pat Martin Bates is an internationally recognized artist known for her contemplative, mystical prints and drawings. After several years teaching evening courses at UVic, she was appointed to the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Victoria in 1965 and promoted to associate professor in 1977. She was actively involved in the university and the community, played a strong role at the Victoria College of Art, and was a member of Victoria’s Limners art group, widely recognized as having established a modern art scene in Victoria in the early 1970s. Her innovative art practice draws inspiration from both western and eastern influences, and she was known to be a dynamic and encouraging mentor to her students, some of whom are of national and international renown.

She pioneered the use of light boxes as a means to backlight her prints. Curator Annette Hurtig noted, “The lightbox works starting in the 1960s were marvelously innovative precursors that anticipated by several years the now familiar backlight advertising form” and that it was not until the late 1970s that artists such as Vancouver-based Jeff Wall and Ken Lum began using light boxes in their work. Bates also favoured the monoprint: a single edition individually crafted piece, often with metal, collage and perforated elements that challenged the notion of multiple edition prints. Her perforated works, such as Encircled Air of the Arctic Night (1969), contain thousands of piercings that make the work shimmer when backlit by a light box. Poetry, Buddhism, sacred geometry, and eastern architecture influence the logic and aesthetic of Bates’s work. She believes her artwork reaches “a point where the recognized becomes unrecognized” and she “[tries] to dance on that point.”

She studied painting and majored in sculpture at the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts in Antwerp, Belgium, and continued to study at various international schools before moving back to Canada in 1959. She was a dedicated teacher, but also continued to travel throughout her career, at various times travelling through China, Japan, India, and the Middle East, and sailing through the Hebrides in the North Sea. These destinations informed the imagery and words that appear in her work, often referencing sacred sites, texts, mysticism and “exotic” cultures.

Bates has received many awards and recognitions, including awards at the Chilean Biennale Exhibition (1963), a prestigious Gold Medal from the Norwegian International Biennale of Printmaking (1986) and the Global Graphics Award from Holland (1993), the only Canadian to have won at that level. She is a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Artists and received an Excellence in Teaching Award (1991) and the Queen Elizabeth Gold Jubilee Medal (2004). The University of Victoria recognized her achievements, pedagogy and service as a faculty member in 1994 with an Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts.

1 Annette Hurtig, Destinations, Navigations, Illuminations (Victoria: Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 2004), n.p.
Denis Bowen was an abstract painter, educator, gallery director, curator, and critic. Trained at the Royal College of Art in London, he was an unflagging champion of non-figurative art in Britain. In the 1950s he co-founded the groundbreaking, internationalist New Vision Group Gallery (NVGG), which contributed to shaping post-war modern British art. The NVGG promoted an international level of dialogue through a dynamic range of international group and solo contemporary art exhibitions. Bowen co-directed the gallery until 1966, and taught throughout this period. He also launched the Commonwealth Biennale of Abstract Art through the NVGG in 1963. In 1969 he arrived at the University of Victoria, where he was where he was an associate professor until 1972 and served as department chair.

Bowen's artistic output can be placed into three broad periods. As a pioneer of tachism (tache is the French word for spot or blotch) in the early 1950s to the mid 1960s, he used vigorous blocks of paint and free-form brush strokes. He believed in a "pure painting" technique that focused on the physical and gestural application of paint, and explored the chance patterns of poured or sprayed paint. He acknowledged the influence of German Expressionists Wassily Kandinsky and Max Ernst in this work.1 The second period encompasses his so-called "psychedelic" works created from 1969 to 1980, which were his primary focus while at the University of Victoria. Accompanied by live performances by contemporary musicians and choreographers, these works were only fully visible under ultra-violet lighting. The third phase of his work includes his "planetary" works, which comprised swirls of intense colour and discs of solid pigment: Inspired by a lifelong interest in space exploration, Bowen's work of this time took on a cosmological symbolism that depicted eclipses, supernovae, galaxies, or volcanic eruptions.

His art is in collections worldwide, including the Tate collection, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the Art Institute of Chicago as well as the national galleries of Israel and Italy.

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Roland Brener was a highly innovative sculptor and influential educator during his forty-year career. His work is in major collections across Canada including the National Gallery of Canada, Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal, the Art Gallery of Ontario, and the Vancouver Art Gallery. He represented Canada at the Biennale Internacional de São Paulo in 1987 and the Venice Biennale in 1988. Though Brener was deeply interested in formalism, reflecting his studies with Anthony Caro, he is best known for art installations that engage the viewer in kinetic participation. Inspiration came from a wide range of sources: found objects, popular culture, social and political issues, technology, music, indigenous cultures (African, First Nations, Latin American), and sailing, to name a few.

After completing his artistic training at St. Martin’s School of Art in London, Brener taught at a number of prestigious institutions in England and the United States before being appointed as associate professor of photography and sculpture at the University of Victoria in 1973. He remained there until his retirement in 1999.

His artistic practice changed significantly over his two-and-a-half decades at UVic. He created installations and environments until the late 1970s which had strong conceptual elements that questioned high art’s values. During the 1980s his work shifted back to the sculptural object, as he began to incorporate consumer items, often toys such as talking telephones, barking dogs and Teddy Ruxpin, and to experiment with kinetic sculpture driven by electronic motors or computers. In the 1990s he used the computer as a design tool to produce fantastical distortions of stock digital images and objects, which were then fabricated in wood or synthetic materials. Some of his work in the last decade of his life began to incorporate autobiography, referencing illness and death, as well as domesticity, family, and memories of his birthplace, South Africa.

His major contributions to the department included the development of the graduate program for international student applicants, strengthening the BFA program with more rigorous critiques, expanding the visiting artists program and introducing digital media coursework. Along with colleague Mowry Baden, he maintained an international level of dialogue with their innovative practices.
Gwen Curry completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the University of Victoria (1974) and a Master of Fine Arts at Arizona State University (1978). She established her reputation as a printmaker in the late 1970s before her practice expanded to include sculpture, installation, and text-based art as well as large-scale, thematically linked drawings, often displayed in linear sequences or grids.

Curry taught printmaking and drawing at UVic from 1978 until 1994. About her teaching approach, Curry said,

> What sustained me during these years were the students. Watching the deepening awareness of each student as they discovered their own concerns and the means to realize them was more fulfilling than I had expected it to be. I was fortunate that my teaching years coincided with some of the most energetic years of a person’s life . . . and I was able to maintain both an active art career and my teaching responsibilities. My style was to put the student first: draw out what was important to them, deal with it no matter how uncomfortable it might be for me, and through a discussion of contemporary art, help facilitate their vision.1

In the 1990s, Curry’s work involved the process of listing, enumeration and categorization of different bird and plant species found on the West Coast. As much as these works were grounded in environmental concerns they also explored ways in which society perceives imagery and the objectification of the natural world.

Birdlister is the first in this series. Art critic Robin Laurence wrote of this work,

> Her work suggests that to name is to claim; to claim is to colonize; to colonize is to exploit and exterminate. And yet, Curry also conveys, through both image and text, the pleasures of closely observing nature and understanding what we observe . . . Curry’s use of text and grid, the standard tools of conceptualism, is paradoxically lyrical and moving, introducing affect into the realm of the intellect, feeling into the framework of reason.2

Since teaching at UVic, Curry has focused on her art and more recently on writing. She has exhibited in Canada, the United States, Great Britain, Europe, China, and India and is represented in public, private and corporate collections nationally and internationally. She is the recipient of numerous awards, grants and residencies.

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1 Gwen Curry, email to author, June 2013.
Peter Daglish came to Canada in 1955, and from 1956 to 1960 studied art and pedagogy at École des Beaux-Arts in Montreal. He then completed post-graduate studies in Montreal and New York and at the Slade School of Fine Art in London. Oil painting was his earliest interest but he later focused on linocuts and lithography. He accepted an early teaching post at UVic in 1969, where he taught drawing and printmaking until 1971. Even at this early point in his career, he brought an international level of knowledge of contemporary art, experimenting with a wide range of media (textiles, plastics, props, performance, and mail art projects). As a jazz musician, he was also active in the music scene wherever he resided.

Daglish has been described as a methodical and disciplined artist. Former student and Governor General’s award winner Eric Metcalfe described his work as “sensuous, humorous and technically virtuosic.” Donald Harvey referred to him as “arguably one of the greatest colourists since Matisse.”

Following his time at the University of Victoria, Daglish taught printmaking at the Chelsea School of Art in London from 1973 to 1995 and concurrently taught printmaking and painting at the Slade School of Fine Art from 1973 to 1996. He also gave many courses in India.

Daglish’s work is found in public collections worldwide including the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Tate Gallery, Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal, the National Gallery of Canada, and the Portland Museum of Fine Art.

2 Winchester Galleries.
John Dobereiner was originally hired as an assistant professor in 1964 in the Department of Art Education at the University of Victoria. He became acting chair of the Department of Studio Visual Arts in the Faculty of Fine Arts, which he helped establish along with Donald Harvey in 1966 and of which he remained a core member for the next two decades.

Dobereiner studied drawing and painting at the Vancouver School of Art and the University of British Columbia before completing a Master of Arts degree at the University of Washington in 1966. He is best known for his sculptural paintings and shaped canvases. In the 1960s, he began distorting the canvas so that its three-dimensional form contradicted the painted surface. His paintings are rhythmic or hard-edged geometric shapes and planes of colour, which sometimes trick the viewer’s depth perception into alternating between projection and recession of the same plane. The illusion creates a sense of false tangibility because of the tension between the geometric painting and form of the support. He often used aircraft fabric to form parabolic curves rather than flat canvas planes.

In a 1978 artist statement for a solo exhibition at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Dobereiner discussed how “when an artist places constraints on himself and invents within a limited format, attending to what he knows that he starts to find things out and strikes the richest lodes.” Curator Greg Snider responded that constraints are central to Dobereiner’s work because his work operates discreetly, sensibly, and casually, which downplays the complexity.

Dobereiner’s work can be found in the collections of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, University of Victoria, Memorial University of St John’s, Newfoundland, and the Canada Council Art Bank. A scholarship in his name was established at the University of Victoria after his untimely death in 1985.

2 Snider.
Fred Douglas built on Uvic's photography program originally established by Roland Brener. Douglas trained as a commercial photographer but also gained a formal education in other ways. Colleague Mowry Baden explained, “Though he had no university degrees, Fred was fortunately able to persuade the Dean and other Fine Arts professors of his talents and expertise. . . . The best things about Fred were his enthusiasm and his erudition. Many students responded to Fred's ebullient personality, his consummate command of the craft of photography, and his insatiable appetite for stimulating texts ranging from Julian Jaynes to Søren Kierkegaard. He gave a lot more of his own time to the students than would normally be expected of a studio prof. Naturally a sort of clique built up around him, and his students were unmistakable in their breadth of curiosity and unusual knowledge.”

Before coming to Victoria in 1978, Douglas co-founded the Leonard Frank Memorial Society of Documentary Photographers, a group who “obsessively” shot everyday life in Vancouver. In 1972, a Local Initiative Program grant enabled him to create a more formal portfolio of images specifically from this subject matter for the photographic archives of the Vancouver Public Library. He received a second grant to document the First Nations bands in Duncan and Vancouver the following year. Douglas also wrote prolifically as part of his practice and did a number of text-based projects that incorporated visual work.

Photographs like The Dead or Sleeping Soldier are typical of a series of modified photographs entitled Catastrophe’s Sanomolies that begin with the construction of a scene with narrative possibilities. The resulting photograph is then coloured with chemical toning and paint. Douglas described his work as follows:

“I’m not interested in making pictures that can be understood as complete stories or stories as illustrations. Rather, I try to produce a picture wherein conclusive readings are constructing meanings becomes an active part of the subject. I try through the use of disjunctions, ruptures, gaps, smears, blurs, etc. to disrupt any central reading of the picture while retaining a sense of continuous illusionistic space, which I feel engages the mind’s propensity to ‘narratize.’”

Douglas’ works are in the collections of the National Gallery of Canada, the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, and the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.

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1 Mowry Baden, email to author, June 17, 2013.
William Featherston was an artist and activist who engaged in social justice causes beyond his political art. His artistic career spanned sixty years. Originally from Toronto, he lived, worked, and exhibited in Europe for over a decade. While living in St. Ives, England, he was immersed in a dynamic art community and associated with artists like Francis Bacon, Patrick Heron, and Barbara Hepworth, and with poets and playwrights such as W.S. Graham and John Antrobus. He exhibited extensively in London and took part in the Edinburgh Festival for eight consecutive years. With the exception of the creation of a public art piece for the plaza at Toronto City Hall and a commission for Expo 67, he did not return to Canada until 1971.

Featherston briefly taught at UVic from 1972 to 1973 and became disillusioned by the political climate of the administration at that time. His print *The Blind Leading the Blind* references the presidency of Bruce Partridge, who oversaw numerous conflicts among faculty and the administration. Featherston concluded that the university art department and other art schools were missing the kind of political dissertation in their art teaching and practice that he was passionate about. After UVic, he taught at California State in Hayward followed by a ten-year period at the Vancouver College of Art, where his students included Attila Richard Lukacs and Angela Grossman.

Influenced by artists he met in Europe and America, Featherston shaped much of his art around his political activism. Often a political satirist, he critiqued imperialism and corporatism and addressed difficult subjects such as violence and torture. Stylistically, he drew upon colour, process, art history, composition, material, and accessibility to create confrontational works with a sense of vulnerability, anxiety, or fear. Also a sculptor, he created works that were fundamentally abstract but that also referenced architectural forms.

Featherston’s work is held in the collections of the Canada Council, Ottawa Art Bank, B.C. Art Bank, University of Buffalo, Leeds Art Gallery in England, Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and the University of Glasgow in Scotland, among others.

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Donald Harvey immigrated to Canada from England in 1958 and joined the education department at Victoria College in 1961. With colleague John Dobereiner, he was one of the founding members of the University of Victoria’s Department of Visual Arts, which was first established in 1966. He was appointed as full professor in 1975 and served several terms as chair of the department. He maintained a rigorous schedule of teaching, administrative duties, and professional artistic practice throughout his thirty-year career at UVic.

Harvey’s paintings, prints, and drawings have received significant international recognition, and his work has been exhibited in the National Gallery of Canada, the Seattle Art Museum, the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal, and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. He is a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. He completed a National Diploma of Painting and Design at West Sussex College of Art in 1950 and an Art Teacher’s Diploma at Brighton College of Art the following year. He was an art instructor in Wales for four years and travelled to Sicily and Spain, where he painted for a year before coming to Canada.

His early work is chiefly non-representational, while his later work draws more directly from nature, both flora and fauna, gardens and landscapes in general. He once described his vocation as an abstract painter to be a lonely one, as “no one really understands what you do. Everything’s an abstraction, except the real thing.”

In the 1970s and early 1980s, Harvey spent several months in France, where he reframed his artistic representation of abstracted landscape. Upon his return, he created a series of diamond-shaped abstract works as a means to challenge the lateral landscape format and the notion of the representational “window onto the world” that rectangular paintings often suggest. Large-scale works such as Black Diamond No. 3 include an off-centre inset shape, sharply defined wedges of bare canvas, hard-edged areas of flat smooth opaque paint and areas of more painterly brushwork.

His work in the late 1980s often referenced the environment. In 1988, he and colleague Douglas Morton joined a host of artists who painted the Stein and Carmanah Valleys and donated the proceeds of their work to the Western Canada Wilderness Committee. Harvey also painted a large-scale mural, The Carmanah Valley Experience, an installation of thirty-one abstract expressionist painted panels that are five feet high and up to six feet wide, which was exhibited at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. It is now in the collection of the University of Victoria.

Notes from the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria artist's file on Donald Harvey, no author or date cited.
Eric Hilton received a Master of Fine Art from Edinburgh College of Art in 1960, and was subsequently appointed as a faculty member. He also taught at several other art colleges in Scotland and England around this time and received national recognition for his work in glass sculpture. He came to the University of Victoria in 1969, where he developed a program in three-dimensional design in the newly formed Department of Studio Visual Arts. He taught at UVic until 1971 before moving to the New York State College of Ceramics, where he stayed until 1977.

Speaking about his contemporary work, Hilton emphasizes the creative process — building, molding, etching, cutting, and polishing — rather than subject matter. For him, the finished piece is “a vehicle that synthesizes order into the awe of existence. . . . It represents the soul of human consciousness.”1 His early work Obelisk, held at the University of Victoria, was made by grinding, carving and polishing a block of plexiglass.

Throughout his career, Hilton has produced works of art ranging from small intricate geometric shapes to major sculptural installations. His work has been exhibited in galleries around the world, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, and the Otari Memorial Art Museum in Nishinomiya, Japan. He is the co-founder of Pelucida, a fine art glass-manufacturing studio in upstate New York.

Peter Kahn was an active participant in the Abstract Expressionist movement in New York in the 1940s. He trained under Hans Hoffman, a pioneer of “action painting.” He also attended New York University, where he completed a master’s degree in philosophy in 1951.

Kahn held several short-term teaching positions in the United States before he came to teach in the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Victoria from 1968 to 1969. He admitted that part of his motivation for accepting the position was as a protest against the Vietnam War. Although it was a brief appointment, he created a lasting impact by establishing a specialized printing and engraving centre. At UVic, he taught book design, serigraphy, etching, and lithography.

Kahn encouraged interdisciplinary collaboration through his teaching practices and project initiatives. His own artistic practice included painting, typography, illustration, filmmaking, and book design. After UVic, he moved on to Cornell University and spent the next four decades teaching painting, graphic production typography, theatre design, as well as architectural and art history.

Peter Kahn, Toward Gonzales Hill, 1969

Douglas Morton was a member of the Regina Five and is recognized as one of Canada’s leading abstract painters of the 1960s and 1970s. His artwork has been featured in several national exhibitions, including Five Painters from Regina (1961) at the National Gallery of Canada. This exhibition was celebrated among critics as a watershed for the development of abstract art in Canada.

Morton studied in Los Angeles, Paris and London before returning to Canada in 1954 to manage his family’s business. He continued his artistic training by participating in summer workshops at Emma Lake from 1957 to 1965. These workshops included a long list of distinguished visiting artists from Canada and the United States, such as Barnett Newman, Kenneth Noland and Laurence Alloway. They captured the attention of modernist art critic and theorist Clement Greenberg, who at the time, characterized Saskatchewan as “New York’s only competitor.”

He spent the next two decades as a professor of visual arts at the University of Saskatchewan and York University. He was appointed as dean of Fine Arts at the University of Victoria from 1980 to 1985 and was chair from 1990 until his retirement in 1992. During his time at the University of Victoria, Morton’s work was shown across Canada in solo and group exhibitions in such galleries as the National Gallery of Canada, the Norman Mackenzie Gallery in Regina, the Vancouver Art Gallery, and the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.

Morton said of his artistic style, “My primary interests are in integrating colour, form and symbols; it may be less obvious that in large part the imagery has its origin in nature, whether intentional or not.” Morton has also drawn inspiration for his works from the artistic styles of the indigenous peoples of the Pacific coasts of North and Central America. Fellow Regina Five painter Ken Lochhead described him as “probably the most underestimated contemporary painter in Canada… He was pushing the frontiers of colour more than any other painter.” The prints in this exhibition were part of a commissioned set of prints by the University of Victoria for its twenty-fifth anniversary. George Tiessen and Pat George were the printmakers for these works.

1 Roald Naasgard, Abstract Painting in Canada (Vancouver, Douglas and McIntyre, 2007), 143.
Gord Smith is a Canadian sculptor whose work draws into question the viewer’s understanding of mathematical concepts like geometry, form, and harmony. He summed up his design philosophy in a statement to Canadian Art Magazine in the 1960s, saying, “Everything—materials, texture, size, design and statement in a work of art—welds together to a point where there exists only the work itself. It just happens. A work of art does not need interpretation. It does not matter who or what I am, it is the work that is important—it should be timeless and with a power of its own. If it speaks, it will be heard and what I say about it is not important.”

Smith was born in Montreal in 1937. He studied engineering and architecture but only practiced for a brief time, though much of his future sculptural work was collaborative with a number of prominent architectural firms. He received his first sculpture commission at the age of 21 for an eight-foot welded bronze piece for the Frazer-Hickson Library in Montreal. Over the next 25 years, Smith worked on 38 commissions for various galleries, museums, public spaces, universities, and embassies. Among his most prestigious commissions came from the Canadian government for Canada Screen, a 110- by 12-foot sculpture for Expo 67 in Montreal. The work placed second in the Monuments and Fountains category.

Smith was elected to the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts in 1967. From 1972 to 1975, he was an assistant professor at UVic. In the early 1980s he further explored the articulation of geometric space with a three-dimensional design he called the supersall, a form that merges the tetrahedron and sphere and contains four centres of gravity. After becoming known as one of Canada’s most prominent post-war sculptors, Smith received little critical or curatorial attention from the late ‘80s to the early ‘90s. His return to prominence came through a bricolage style of woodworking using wooden dowels as well as traditional media of bronze and welded steel.

Smith’s works can be found at art galleries across Canada, including the National Gallery of Canada, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the Montreal Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Confederation Centre Art Gallery. He also has sculptures at the Canadian Embassy in Germany and at various Canadian universities, such as Victoria, Queen’s, Wilfred Laurier, McGill, and Concordia.

George Tiessen is a painter and printmaker whose work in the 1970s and ‘80s often reflected an interest in landscape themes and imagery. He has described past work as being ‘of no one particular place’, but could be best described as landscapes of the imagination.”

Tiessen’s studies began at Toronto’s Ontario School of Art followed by New Brunswick’s Mount Allison University with a major in printmaking. While at Mount Allison, he studied under Lawren P. Harris (son of Lawren Harris of the Group of Seven), whom he has called an influence for his knowledge of hard-edge colour field painting. Tiessen subsequently studied with artists Stephen Poleskie and Arnold Singer at Cornell University, where he completed a Master of Fine Arts in screen-printing in 1971. After returning to teaching at Mount Allison, he then moved to Victoria in 1972 to teach printmaking and painting at the University of Victoria. He also served as department chair from 1983 to 1987.

Tiessen saw his teaching role as both a technician and an educator: “Printmaking can be an arduous technical process. It can take weeks to see the result of what you are trying to get. There are no instant results.” He maintained his own artistic practice throughout his tenure, with particular focus during the summer months.

Tiessen has been featured in solo exhibitions at the University of Victoria, Cornell University, and the University of Moncton, as well as in group exhibitions in galleries and universities across North America. His work can be found in collections of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, the Canada Council Art Bank, Mount Allison University, the National Gallery of Canada, and the New Brunswick Museum.

2 George Tiessen, interview with author, July 2013.
Faculty
All works in the University of Victoria Art Collections except where noted.

Dana W. Atchley III
Poem by Jonathan Williams
1969
48.5 x 48.5 cm
Serigraph on paper
University of Victoria Acquisition Fund (1969)

Mowry Baden
Hudson Street Beet
1984
121.0 x 40.0 x 116.0 cm
Steel, rubber, plastic beet plant
Private Collection

Mowry Baden
Maquette for the University of Victoria: Room No. 2
1974
181.1 x 51.8 x 46.5 cm
Mixed media; wood, illustration board
Gift of the Artist
On loan from the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria

Pat Martin Bates
Encircled Air of the Arctic Night
1969
105.4 x 75.0 x 10.8 cm
Lightbox with painting, drawing, white inks, needle perforations, grommets on handmade BFK Rives paper
Private collection

Pat Martin Bates
Fanfare Tra-La
1988
65.0 x 49.5 cm
Intaglio, etching on paper, 2/25
Commissioned by the University of Victoria on its 25th anniversary

Denis Bowen
Gemini (Black Light Series)
1971
150.0 x 60.5 cm
Oil on canvas
Private collection

Roland Brener
Special Delivery
1988
166.0 x 124.5 x 71.1 cm
Mixed media sculpture
Gift of Edward and Lillian Ripley
On loan from the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria

Gwen Curry
Birdsister
1991
51.5 x 51.5 x 7.0 cm
Oil stick, asphaltum, charcoal, lead, bolts, wood
Private collection

Peter Daglish
Palm Alarm
1965
122.0 x 91.5 x 2.0 cm
Molded plastic
Gift of Robin and Sylvia Skelton

Exhibited Works

Michael Sandle, Railway Engine Monument, 1972
George Tiessen
Stelly’s Ridge
1988
35.0 x 29.0 cm
Planographic, lithograph on paper, 48/50
Commissioned by the University of Victoria on its 25th anniversary

Sessional Instructors and Visiting Faculty

James Gordaneer
Coastal
1978
31.2 x 32.2 cm
Oil on canvas
Gift of Michael C. Williams

Glenn E. Howarth
Guns and Knives: The Gun Collector’s Daughter
1975
118.0 x 118.0 cm
Acrylic on canvas
Gift of Michael C. Williams

Flemming Jorgensen
Fort Rodd Hill, #1
1978
19.5 x 25.5 cm
Graphite, eraser on paper

Flemming Jorgensen
Fort Rodd Hill, #10
1978
19.5 x 25.5 cm
Graphite, eraser on paper

Herbert Johannes Joseph Siebner
Bella-Belle
1972
67.0 x 99.0 cm
Planographic lithograph on paper, 2/10
Gift of Derk and Eva Wynand

Michael Sandle
Railway Engine Monument
1972
67.0 x 99.0 cm
Serigraph on paper
University of Victoria Acquisitions Fund (1972)
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