



Artistic Development 1970–2008

BY THE 1970S, I HAD ESTABLISHED A STUDIO in a small house on campus, where the Telus building now stands. The earliest works I made there were a group of striped stained paintings which I titled 'Striations', inspired by the work of Kenneth Noland. I began to hone my colour, focusing on the contemplative and expressive proportions of one colour against another. The paint surfaces were expanded by applications of thick and thin variations, and transitional modulations, influenced by the paintings of Mark Rothko. The 'Striation' paintings combined spraying, taping and brushing making both loose and hard-edged bands of colour (pages 331-333). I held exhibitions of these works at The Edmonton Art Gallery and at the Alberta College of Art Gallery.

BY 1973, I HAD BEGUN TO GRASP the nature of the practices of Kenneth Noland, Morris Louis, Helen Frankenthaler, Jackson Pollock, Larry Poons, and Jules Olitski. I was inspired by their work and I was experimenting, looking for a direction for myself, hoping I would come up with something that I had not done before. Ideally this would contain a full palette of strong colour contrasts like Matisse, Louis, Hofmann and Noland, yet would involve a painting process with the all-over painterliness which I admired in the work of late Monet, Pollock and Poons. I refer to this as my 'Matisse vs. Monet' combination, or as 'Divisional vs. All-Over Painting'. Although I had this notion of what I wanted to do, I had no idea of how I could achieve this but at least I had by now a hypothetical objective.

I MOVED MY STUDIO IN 1973, to the Kelly Ramsey Block on Rice Howard Way, an empty, turn of the 19 century building first used by Eatons department

store and then the Workmans' Compensation Board in downtown Edmonton. The building had been sitting empty for a long time and a collector friend Al Pyrch alerted me to the possibility of renting space. I looked at a large open light second floor space covered with pigeons feathers and debris and my offer of \$125 per month including utilities was willingly accepted. Although I was moved within the building two or three times during my stay, I eventually was able to expand my space to 7600 sq. ft. My rent increased but I was in that building for 34 years on a month to month basis, with only one lease ever, for 5 years. Page 341 shows the length of buildings second floor which I occupied until 2005. This initial 3000 sq. ft. space opened up new possibilities for working. I commenced by painting on 35 ft. lengths of canvas, sometimes up to four lengths at a time. By working on these lengths without setting up boundaries, new compositional possibilities were explored. This way of working allowed me to capitalize on and make selections from compositions that arose, during the process of painting and at the end from the dried formations.

I CAST PAINT IN THICK ALL-OVER LAYERS, and worked with any number of tools, scrapers, brooms, and rollers and began to pour colours in thin puddles on the top. The painting *Heller* 1973, now in the collection of The Edmonton Court House, is an example of work from this time (page 334). I cropped and cut out formations from painted lengths, and tried somewhat unsuccessfully to combine wide contrasts of colour with painterliness, only to find repeatedly that my colour became muddy, and that many of the paintings were compositionally weak. I learned a great deal about overcoming or working



Striation 7 1971
101 x 51 inches; acrylic on canvas
Collection: University of Alberta, Canada

Kelly Ramsey studio in 1977, Edmonton.

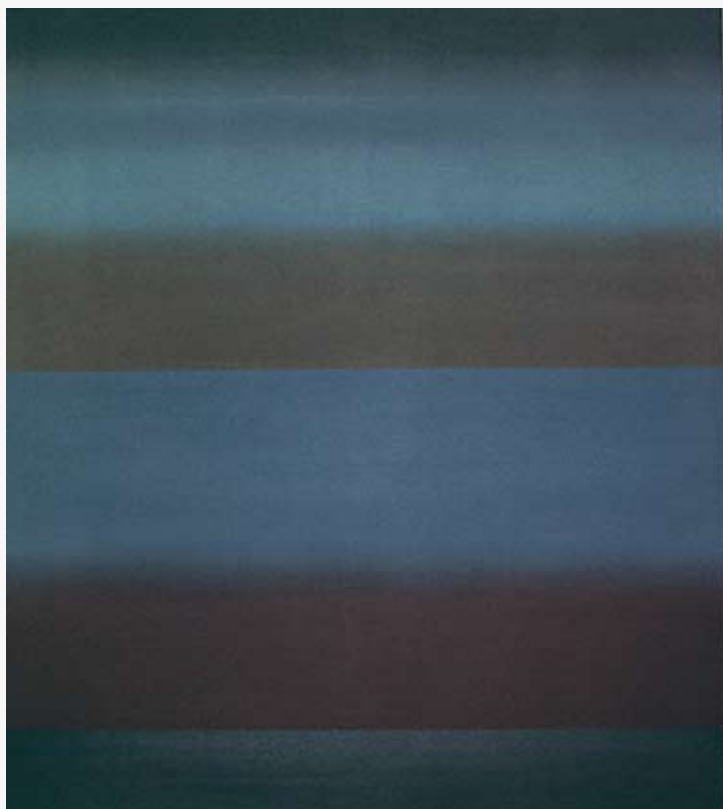


outside of a predetermined concept of the picture's edge and exploring variables of scale, but my inability to devise a way to keep the colour clear while painting remained problematic, given my objective of clear colour contrasts.

IN 1973, AS PRESIDENT OF THE ALBERTA SOCIETY OF ARTISTS, I collaborated with The Edmonton Art Gallery in inviting Michael Steiner to lead an artist workshop, held in conjunction with the 'Alberta 73' provincial exhibition, for which he was to be the juror. I attended that workshop, and subsequently in 1974 was invited to New York where I met Larry Poons and Jules Olitski. The visit to their studios remains memorable as I saw their working processes that riveted my attention and provided me with insights into how their approaches to painting brought about the creation of their finished work. I also met renowned art critic Clement Greenberg and painter Dan Christensen for the first time.

Striation 12 1972
36 x 84 inches
Acrylic on canvas
Collection: Alberta Art Foundation

Poons and I became friends, and I stayed at his studio on my next several visits. He once remarked that I reminded him of Gordon Lightfoot. I think he had met him as Poons moved in musical circles and knew Dylan. In fact Dylan had reportedly jammed at his studio in the early days. Poons was a trained pianist before turning to painting. I had heard stories of his studio being literally covered with paint. On Church Street he occupied a four story building and when I visited him only the top floor was not bathed in paint. He would use a room until it became overladen with paint, buckets and debris and move on to the next. He had no regard for the everyday and lived to paint. Larry's working process at that time was to hang the canvas on the wall, establish a vertical emphasis to the compositional movement, and then sequentially, spontaneously cast buckets of coloured paint up and across the surface allowing them to cascade down the canvas. He would paint periodically over a number of days, allowing the layers to dry and/or encouraging the paint to run down like a waterfall, forming an all-over, late Monet-like fusion of colour.



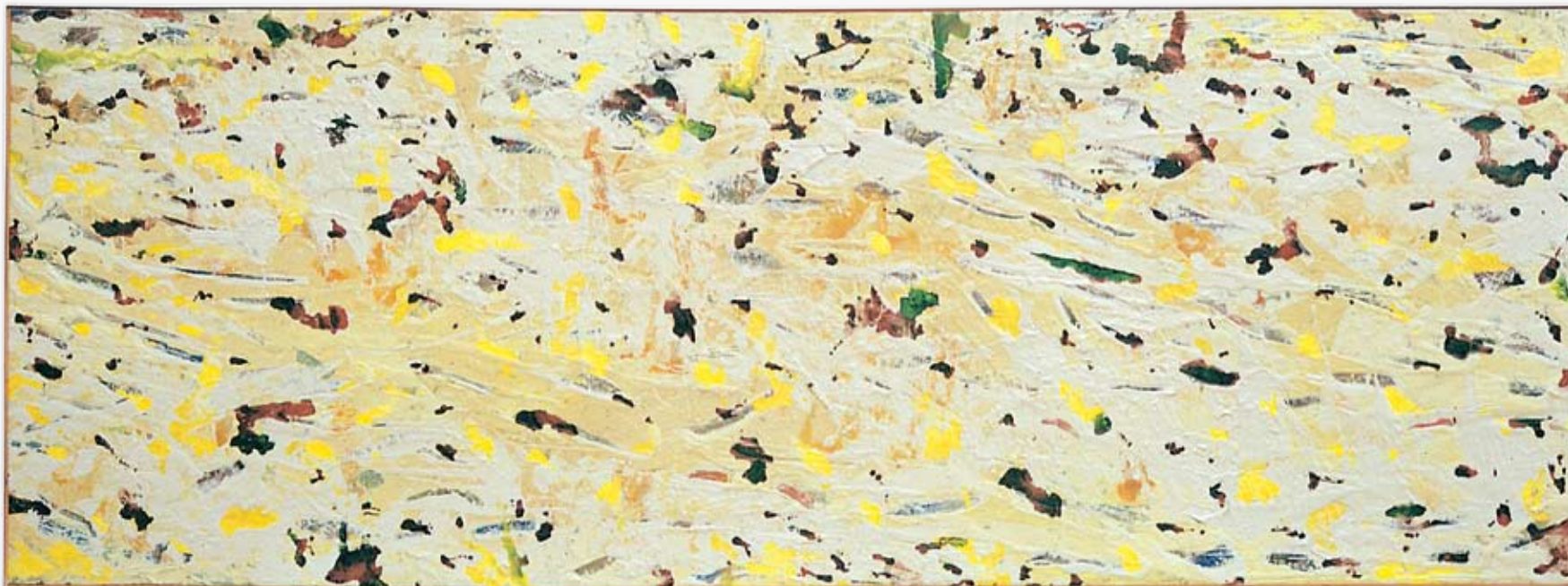
Striation 6 1971
44 x 50 inches



Brown Crunch 1973
35 ½ x 71 ½ inches
Acrylic on canvas
Artist's inventory

Seeing Poon's studio with one continuous canvas surrounding three walls of wet cascading colour was a truly amazing experience. I knew then that I needed to find such a way to paint, one that would offer me the potential for discovery in a process of pictorial risk that was at the same time open and spontaneous. Poon spoke to me of abandoning composition and I think what he meant was preconception of the final composing of the work which he left to cropping. There was no need for him to pre-compose as he had in his painting process a vertical canvas with top and bottom horizontals covered with diagonal arcs made by his casting of paint. The basic elements of composition were inbuilt. He was free to concentrate on the colour. All that remained was for him to get the colour right, the surface generally also took care of itself, being as implicit as was his composition. These 'Cascade' paintings are brilliant.

On one visit to his Church street studio Larry asked me to look at some finished rolls of painted canvas. This simple request turned into a session lasting hours, as all of the rolls of painted canvas were unrolled. While I stood on the stairs, we experimented with the choices as Larry laid and stapled drywall tape, masking my selections. I was excited by the work and I cropped, at his urging, all of the rolls. I think there were 26 paintings in all. What Larry didn't tell me was that Clement Greenberg, sculptor Michael Steiner, and Knodler Gallery Director Lawrence Rubin were coming the next day to select work for his show at the gallery. The trio made their visits and loved the paintings, changing only one picture. Larry was pleased. He told me I had a good eye. He asked if I would consider staying in New York longer and working with him. I was deeply moved by his invitation and very tempted to do so as I was enthralled by Larry's work. But given that



I had just achieved a tenured professorship at the University of Alberta, which gave me the security and time to make my own work, I could not bring myself to accept his invitation. Michael Steiner was supportive, which helped me say no to Larry's very flattering offer. Michael said, rightly, "Larry would get tired of me" as he had reportedly done with many of his assistants, and then where would I be. It was hard to let go of the opportunity, as I considered Larry to be a genius of painting, and his 'Cascade' paintings, as they were dubbed, to be amongst the greatest painting made at that time. I still think so today. His working method has had a profound influence on my work, and made me realize that I needed to search for a working process combining the freedom and discovery that I saw in Larry's work, with the colour I felt compelled to use. Those experiences confirmed that I knew then how I wanted to paint.

THROUGHOUT MOST OF 1973 AND 1974, after repeated unsuccessful attempts to find my own way by painting experimental lengths of canvas that were subsequently destroyed years later, I returned to a banded circular motif and made a small group of works, of moderate size (50"), mostly squares and rectangles, entitled 'Centres'. In these circular works I found the freedom to apply all the mark-making and surface applications I had acquired, into bands or rings of colour.

IN 1975, I CONTINUED WITH THE BANDING OF COLOURS but expanded the size of the works and made horizontal and vertical compositions entitled 'Fans and Pillars'. These combined my desire for colour with much of the painterly vocabulary I had now acquired. I poured colours directly on one end of the canvas, and rolled and scraped colour in bands across its surface, often floating these configurations

Ring Jolly 1975
34 x 38 inches; acrylic on canvas
Collection: Art Gallery of Alberta, gift of Karen Wilkin, 1985
GRAHAM PEACOCK — A Retrospective

Heller 1973
49 x 136 ½ inches; acrylic on canvas
Collection: Edmonton Court House, Alberta, Canada

in the middle, bordering them with bare canvas. *Pillar XII*, 1975 and one other from the series was shown in the National Gallery of Canada's 'Abstraction West, Emma Lake and After' exhibition in 1976, curated by Terry Fenton. *Come Forth* (pages 335-336)

WHAT FOLLOWED IN 1976 WAS A GROUP OF PAINTINGS ENTITLED 'SCREENS', which were made in much the same way as the 'Fans and Pillar' paintings, pouring the colour onto the canvas (mostly glazes), restricting its colour range, and using large brooms to sweep and drag the colours together but with a more all-over surface, eliminating much of the banding and replacing it with shapes emerging in the screened fields of glazes. These actions produced a screen of colour with woven ridges made by broom's bristles. The group was shown in a solo exhibition at Latitude 53 Gallery, Edmonton, in 1976. *Rumaz* (page 338)

LATER IN 1976, I embarked on a series of works that further restricted my use of colour to a black or brown glaze. Inspired by Rembrandt's drawings, I began by working into the glazed colour with sticks, rollers, brushes, and all other sorts of tools. Again, I was looking for a new way to draw. I was also inspired by the contemporary work of painter Jules Olitski. This suite of paintings, entitled the 'Memorial Suite', is dedicated to my father who had passed away that summer. *Redhill Booker* (page 337)

IN LATE 1976 AND INTO 1977, I also produced a group of large, loose, stained Monet/Frankenthaler-type paintings, exploring a very fluid process by pouring buckets of stain (paint let down with lots of water). The New York art critic Clement Greenberg saw these works in my Edmonton studio, and said he found them to be "too gratuitous". What I understood from his observation was that the staining lacked tension, that the marks were overly soft and somewhat decorative, being easily and obviously obtained. This approach, however gratuitous it admittedly was at the time, was really the beginning of the direction that in the end was to lead to the innovation of the work I make today.



Fan II 1977
70 ½ x 80 inches; acrylic on canvas; artist's inventory

I poured colours directly on one end of the canvas, and rolled and scraped colour in bands across its surface, often floating these configurations in the middle, bordering them with bare canvas.



Come Forth 1975
70 x 98 ½ inches; acrylic on canvas
Artist's inventory

Greenberg's observation was correct, but the solution actually lay in continuing in that direction with more paint – that is the difference between the critic and the painter, the critic only reacts to what is in front of them without necessarily the need for any insight or regard for the process. At the time, I was thrown off track by his observation. These works, entitled the 'Patricia Suite', remain rolled in the studio and have so far never been shown.

1977, 1978 AND 1979 continued to be very experimental years involving scattered influences, including my return to brush, which resulted in a heavily, thick brushed group of Abstract Expressionist type mark-making canvases, influenced by the Canadian Group of Seven. But then in 1979, I came back to the pouring, beginning on paper.

IN 1979, **KENWORTH MOFFETT, THE CURATOR OF 20TH CENTURY ART** at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, visited my studio. Moffett was searching for work for an exhibition entitled 'New Generation', which he was curating for André Emmerich Gallery in New York. He did not include me in the exhibition, but he was very enthusiastic about my newly poured crazed circles on paper.

I had met Ken briefly on a visit to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in 1971 (a meeting he does not recall) when he was newly appointed first Curator of 20th Century Art, a position he held until 1984. I was with Al Pyrch, President of The Edmonton Art Gallery and Doug Haynes and we were looking for work for the new Edmonton Court House. We met Motherwell in New York at Emmerich's and on the same visit to Boston, viewed the exhibition Moffett had curated as the first show of 'Abstract Painting in the '70s' at the M.F.A.



Redhill Booker, 'Memorial Suite' 1976
80 x 55 inches
Acrylic on canvas, artist's inventory

This manipulation of the medium through the act of mark-making or drawing is therefore inherent with original art and particular to each artist's search for originality.

Graham Peacock, "Thoughts on Painting"



Red Rock 1978
45 x 35 inches
Acrylic on canvas



Untitled 'Screen' painting 1967
Acrylic on canvas
Private Collection: Toronto, Canada
GRAHAM PEACOCK — A Retrospective



Rumaz 1967
55 x 25 inches
Acrylic on canvas
Artist's inventory



Cushion Pink 1981
87 x 41 inches
Acrylic on canvas

Following the visit by Moffett to my studio I continued by pouring thick semi-transparent acrylic gels moving to canvas. These round shapes 'crazed' in the middle as they dried (a fissure opening in the surface allowing the under colour to show through). I combined these poured circular discs with screened grounds in a group of works I exhibited in 1981 at the Hett Gallery in Edmonton, *Ease* (this page).

IN 1980 I HAD ATTENDED THE EMMA LAKE ARTIST WORKSHOP led by Kenworth Moffett and Daryl Hughto, a much acclaimed painter from Syracuse, New York. I had began the workshop by painting over carpet circles, screening gels and pouring circular discs on the top. Painters Lucy Baker and Susan Roth, the wives of the leaders were also at the workshop. Both were very accomplished painters who influenced my work. Roth's early folded canvas paintings with there assertive surfaces were very insightful works held in high regard by many. A strong rapport developed between Ken, Lucy and I and at their invitation I visited with them in Boston. Lucy was actively involved in forming the Boston Group of Artists and introduced me to many members of the group including Marjorie Minkin, Jerald Webster and David Shapiro. I also met Steven Brent and Irene Neal, who were visiting from New York with rolls of new paintings for Ken to see. Ken was and remains, actively interested in viewing artists' work, and was always open to looking at slides and visiting studios if the work moved him. For me this discovery and contact with new artists and their work was very stimulating, and marked the beginning of continuing dialogue. Edmonton had been equally stimulating to this point but this new perspective allowed me to discover my own potential. My work was also changing, in that the poured discs I was painting had an 'otherness' of something I had not seen before.

Although I had not realized the potential of the crazed fissures to allow for high colour contrast and all-over painterliness, I had begun to find my own approach to painting.

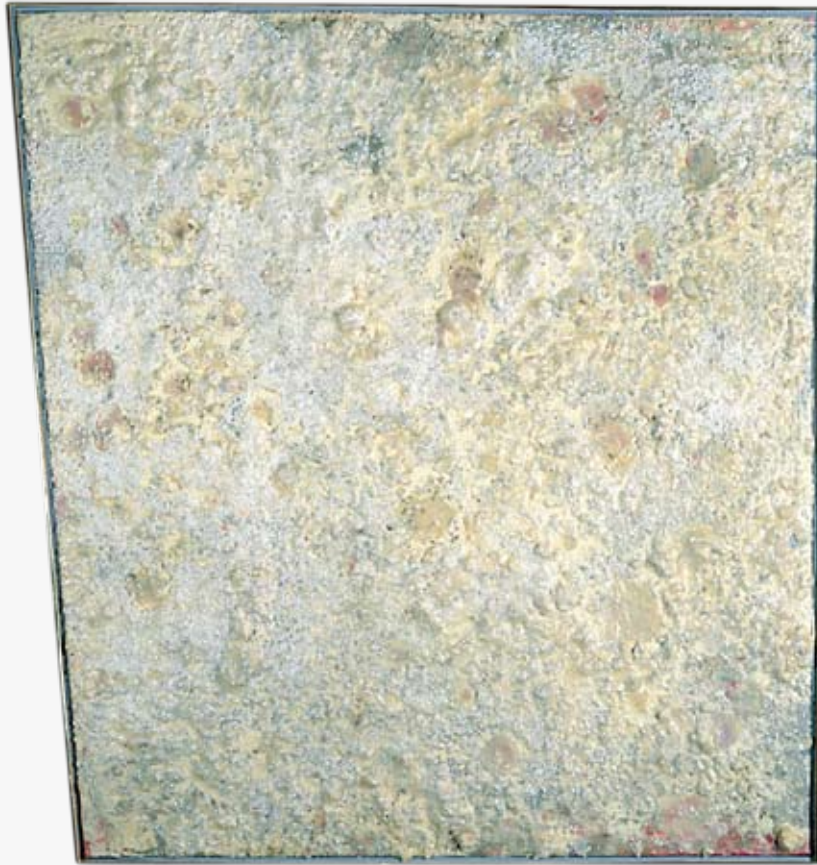
IN 1981, I was again experimenting with making my own mediums, something that had been ongoing since the early seventies, in an attempt to further induce the crazing that had occurred in the centre of the poured circles of the work from 1980. At first, these surfaces were very dry, and textured, resulting in mostly small crazing, allowing for some long and narrow rectangular canvases to be made. *Spring Breeze* (page 340)

BY 1982, I had begun to be able to enlarge the areas of crazing and began pouring layers of colour all over the canvas. I produced a varied crazing that allowed one colour to be seen through another colour, a way to place colours side by side in and all over layers. I soon found that this worked best with palettes of mostly highly contrasted colours. I had discovered what I now saw as the beginnings of the free process that I admired so much in the painting process of Larry Poons.

POLO I, II, III, IV, AND V ARE THE FIRST EXAMPLES OF THIS WORK. This early crazing technique is not unlike the 'Elephantine' paintings of Poons, although they differ substantially in process and colour. Poons gave up this approach and, coincidentally, I have never seen any of these works aside from a glimpse of the end of a rolled canvas at his Church Street studio in 1974, a recollection I had many years later. Although our approaches are completely different, there are some similarities in the type of crazed surface created by the paint when it dried.



Ease 1981
26 x 54 inches
Collection: Art Gallery of Alberta



At first, these surfaces were very dry, and textured, resulting in mostly small crazing, allowing for some long and narrow rectangular canvases.

Candle 1983
51 x 48 inches
Acrylic on canvas, artist's inventory



Spring Breeze I 1981
75 x 11 ¾ inches
Acrylic on canvas, artist's inventory

IN 1982, I WAS INVITED TO ATTEND THE INAUGURAL TRIANGLE WORKSHOP organized by Sir Anthony Caro. The aim of this workshop was to create an exchange of ideas between English, American, and Canadian artists. Visitors included Clement Greenberg, Kenneth Noland, Helen Frankenthaler, Walter Darby Bannard, James Barron, Naomi Press and Terry Fenton among others. I painted some high contrast blue and white, yellow, violet, and white paintings. My colour, in works such as *Triangle One* (page 23) received a positive response from Kenneth Noland who said “I like your colour”. Helen Frankenthaler also responded favorably. She said, “something very strong is going on in your work”, and “I am not ready for it but you should not listen to anyone and keep on going”.

This was in contrast to the disapproval of Terry Fenton and Greenberg, who took issue with my high contrast colour. Fenton was encouraging me to use a more naturalistic palette. I painted alongside Walter Darby Bannard, who had been supportive, but became very upset following Greenberg's arrival and the critique of his own work. Darby had tried some deep glazed colours, on his shell-like paintings of that time. I thought these were very successful, as did others, and encouraged him to do more, which he had. Greenberg did not agree with the colour, and preferred the opaque tan ones Darby had made when he first arrived. I felt he could do both, the tan ones were very good too but I thought that the glaze paintings had fresh colour and were more original. He was breaking with the refinement of close value painting mastered by Olitski.

Following the workshop I continued pouring my colour in layers and expanded the colour range and the shaping to include curves. The first of these ‘Polo’ paintings were cropped (a selected composition), mostly as asymmetrical diamond shapes. Spraying on the layers and using small pieces of collage was a common practice at this time. A piece of pre-painted and dried canvas was often adhered to the canvas surface and used to change the scale of the crazing as the paint passed over it, revealing the shape below as a composition element in the painting.

In 1984, Ken Moffett left the M.F.A. Boston, moved to Stamford, Connecticut, and was commissioned to acquire a collection of Impressionist art. He also began to write about contemporary art, and for the first time in his life he was no longer a curator bound by the politics and restrictions of a Museum, but able to give his opinion as an independent art critic. This gave rise to his writing of Moffett's *Artletter*, which he and his wife, painter Lucy Baker, as editor, published for two years until Ken accepted the Directorship at the Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, U.S.A. He wrote two very significant *Special Supplements* in 1986 “#1 Post-Color Field Painting” and “#2 Abstract Art and The Present Situation”, about contemporary art as he saw it.

These opinions created a strong reaction from the artistic community, as his ‘take’ on things, departed from the popular view and from those of Greenberg, as he argued for a new perspectives on the present. These writings brought my work, along with the work of the artists who were later to show together as ‘New New Painting’, into major focus for the first time. They also created considerable rancor and praise within artistic and critical circles as Moffett, as it were ‘reshuffled the pack’. While myself and others were encouraged still others felt, re evaluated, passed over and as always ignored, all this within a circle of artists who generally were all being ignored by the popular art scene.

During the time Ken and Lucy were in Stamford, I visited them several times. Their living room table would be covered with catalogues, invitations, and slides from artists wanting to have his advice in the hope that he might wish to see their work. While looking at all these slides, I discovered work by artists which interested me and whom I asked to meet. Ken might

sometimes have works on loan for his consideration from artists he had been interested in enough to visit, so I was able to see some of their work firsthand. These works changed continuously, as Ken returned them and selected new and better works to look at.

It was in this manner that I saw new artists developing and made the acquaintance of Bruce Piermarini, John Gittins, Roy Lerner and the sculptor Tom Fertig, and was able to visit their studios. Bruce traveled with me in 1986 to see my solo exhibition at the Waddington Shiell Gallery in Toronto. Steven Brent and Irene Neal, who I had first met in Boston, also worked near Stamford. Lucy had a large studio in the house that Ken and she had purchased on their move from Boston. Jerald Webster would often arrive with new works to show at Anne Low’s studio. These were the years of critical viewing and discussion that were the catalysts for many of us.

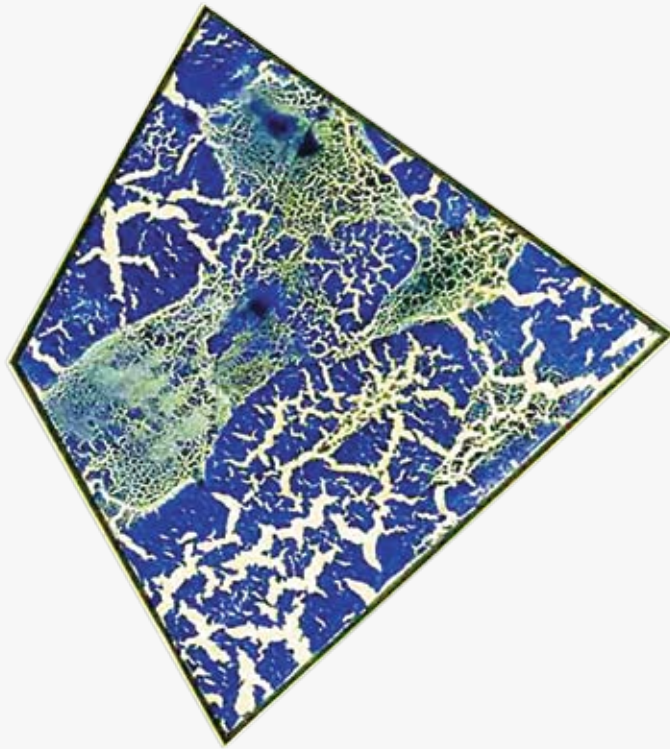
Ken Moffett also saw my exhibition, as he was in Toronto while attending a Jack Bush estate meeting. Greenberg was in town for the same meeting but refused Ken’s invitation to see my exhibition. There had been a minor tiff between Greenberg and I at the Triangle Workshop in 1982 over my colour and Clem telling me in front of everyone that “You don’t know what’s good”, I challenged him on my right to choose and he was still mad at me when he was in Toronto with Ken for the Bush estate meeting. Ken was upset at Clem’s refusal and they came to words. I saw Clem in my studio on his next visit to Edmonton, and we made up and from then on we had a stronger rapport.

Ken, who had for many years been very close with Clem, gradually drifted apart largely due to Clem’s health and age but also due to differences in their opinions on the artists that Ken had begun to champion. Ken found



View of Graham Peacock’s studio from 1973 to 2004, Kelly Ramsey Block on Rice Howard Way in downtown Edmonton.

what he perceived as Clem’s latent competitiveness upsetting but he eventually accepted Clem’s reluctance to support him. However, he was very disappointed that his long time mentor and friend, whom he deeply admired, and whom he had spent so many years learning from in artists studios, had he would say “stopped at Olitski”. Clem once said to me “I’ve done my bit. If Ken wants to do his, let him”. But then Clem could never quite bring himself to accept Ken’s doing so.



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IN 1983 AND 1984, having regard for the comments expressed by Terry Fenton, then Director of The Edmonton Art Gallery, and Greenberg, I tried again painting with some close value palettes (less light-dark and colour contrast), only to find that this produced more Olitski-looking works where the crazing subsided and the unique identity of the drawing was lessened (although I did make a few excellent works in this way, *Cameo Oval* page 33). But weighing the possibilities it did not look like 'the Olitski palette' was the way to go. That year Clement Greenberg visited my studio in Edmonton, and liked the close value works.

Ken Moffett also visited, and agreed with my own assessment that, while we agreed with Greenberg that the close value works were very good, the aggressive crazed paintings were somehow better, for as strange and difficult as they were, they appeared in the end to be more fresh and sustaining.

THE 'POLO' SERIES OF WORKS REPRESENT THIS BEGINNING, and were the works that signified the strength of this direction, along with *Damson One* (page 25), and *Seville Diamond* (page 30). I also had added small plastic beads to some colours and pieces of foam, styrene, and used transparent glazed colour as in *Lacy* (page 35), and *Hallow* (page 32). *Lacy* is a close-value work, while *Hallow* is a high contrast saturated colour work, both were chosen by Ken Moffett for the Hines Collection Boston.



IN 1984 AND 1985, I DEVELOPED PAINT MEDIUMS which could produce larger separations in the paint and make it possible to up the scale of the crazing. Opaque colour was contrasted with transparent glazes, as in *Mediterranean* (page 54), sometimes with sprayed, mixed opaque top colours as in *Ascent Blue* (page 68). Fissures, or separations, which had been on average 1 inch across, were now opened some 6 to 12 inches. The result being the paintings' movement and expressive drama was substantially increased.

Colour covered a range from earthy grey/brown/black combinations, clear transparent blues, greens and reds, plus opaque blues and pinks with a series of red paintings, like the 'Polo' works, called 'Reds'. Cropping remained a combination of diagonal and curved shapes, as in *Damson Star* (page 40), with both concave and convex curves, and *Tripoli Blue Oval* (page 50). Most of the canvas shapes were vertical and horizontal diagonal canvases with a number of cone top-shaped pieces and a few ovals.

Polo III 1982

The artist's studio in 1991.

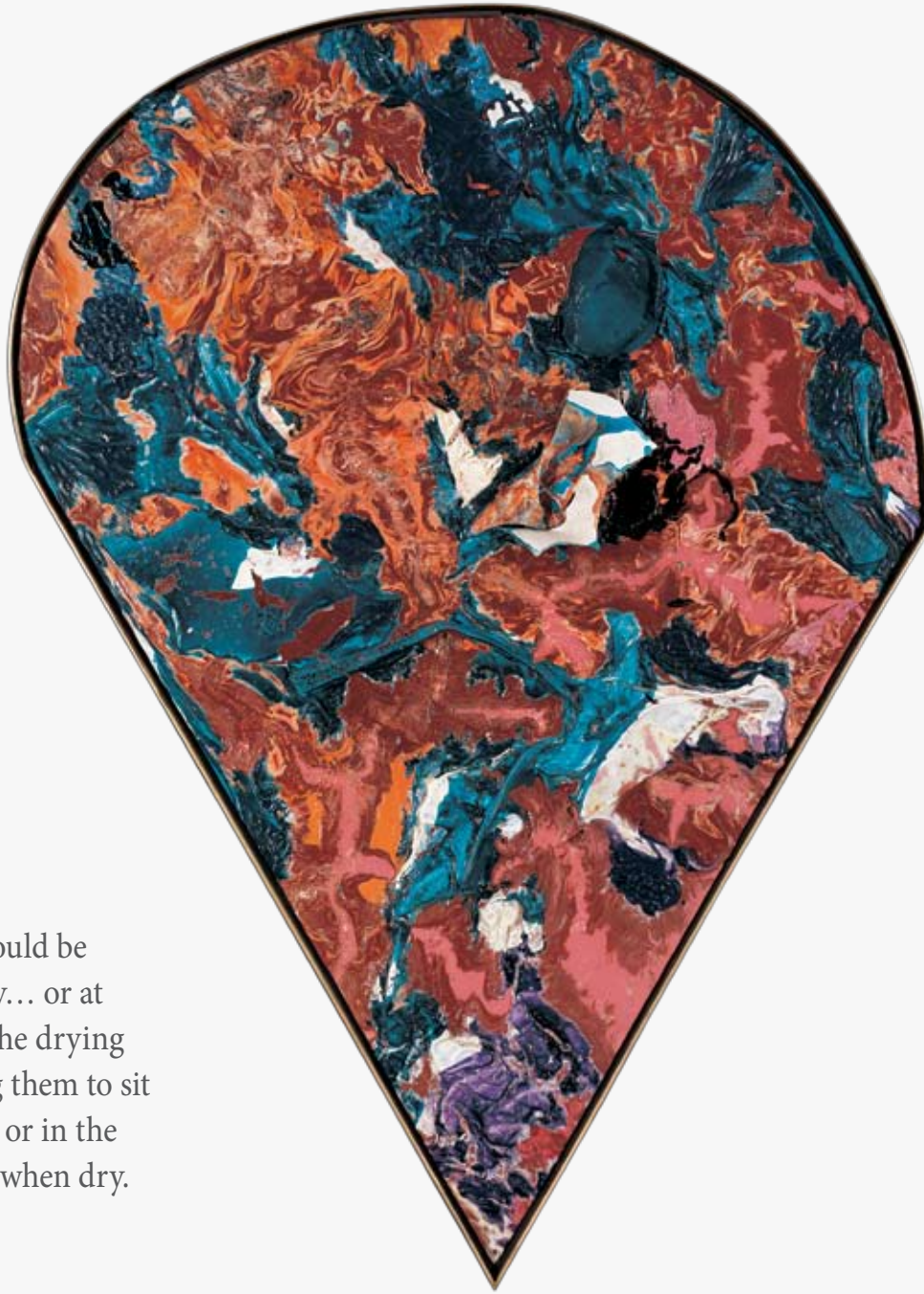
In 1986, Ken Moffett took up the directorship of the Museum of Art in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and curated a year long exhibition of abstract art entitled 'New Acrylic Painting'. The exhibition included the younger group of Gittins, Drapell, Piermarini, Lerner, Neal, Roth, Minkin, Webster, and myself along with the established artists, Olitski, Noland, Poons and Darby Bannard. The show was seen by many in the art world, and it created a buzz of excitement around what was felt to be an emerging group of unknown younger artists, just as Ken's newsletter had done a few years earlier but It was also not without a degree of hostility. One critic went so far as to write that, in her view, the New New Painters (as the younger group came to be known in 1991) all looked the same and tried to dismiss their individuality as simply being

about the materials, unusual shaping, and pronounced surfaces. Noland, Olitski and Poons became reluctant about their work being seen with the NNP. All were resistant some years later to showing with the group at their New York, Armory Exhibition in 2000. Moffett was somewhat taken a back at their reaction having offered these artists the support he had for so many years, that they would be ungenerous in supporting him and the younger artists. Especially since their support was meaningless in terms of their market profile being as equally out of favor as they all were.

BY 1986, I HAD MOVED FROM PAINTING FLAT ON THE FLOOR to working on raised platforms, so that air could pass beneath the canvases and increase the rate of drying. I also introducing the use of large fans to aid and control the drying.



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Since 1982 I had made adjustments to the formulation of painting mediums and now was formulating my paint to promote more pronounced surfaces and larger scale crazing. I was now also making the collage elements become more assertive. These collage pieces could be introduced early (as in the works of 1982) or at a later stage in the drying process, causing them to sit on top or under or in the painted surface when dry. Pouring paint on the drying paint surface was also introduced, and generally larger quantities of paint were applied in layers.

Examples of this are *All Out*, *Indian Fire* and *Cluster*, all cone shape canvases from 1986. (pages 61, 65 & 344) The outside stretcher shapes in all these works were curved or rectilinear, 'hard edge' forms, more referential to the geometric 'Colour Field School' of the 1970s, especially the shaping of Kenneth Noland.

TOWARDS THE END OF 1987 AND INTO 1988, I became more interested in the irregular shapes, suggested by how the poured paint formed in the paint bed. I began a group of papers works entitled 'Rocaille' (rock-like, cluster), of paint poured onto paper. These paper works were poured individually in small troughs and they allowed me to play with varieties of colour, composition, and the outside shape. Some of the papers warped on drying, causing the surface to undulate. This added dimension, I felt, complimented the irregular outer shaping and eventually led to my undulating future canvases by working with the outer shape and following the painted movements of the formations. This way of working began with a group of 1987 rectangular canvases entitled 'Slabs'. (pages 72-81)

Indian Fire 1986

86 ½ x 61 ½ inches

Collection: 21st Century Masterworks of Art, New York-Paris-Geneva

In these works I allowed the inner shape to hang as a slab of painted canvas with its irregular edges of bare canvas, made by the edges of the paint troughs, left as margins.

BY 1989 I BEGAN MAKING CANVASES WITH IRREGULAR OUTER SHAPING by first folding the canvas behind itself, and then mounting this onto another backing canvas. I then proceeded to cut out the shape, mounting it on another canvas backing, in both cases stretching these onto plywood supports. The mounting of the canvas on a backing canvas allowed for the undulation of the surface by introducing fillings between the two canvas layers — the painted layer and the backing layer. *Solstice* (page 104) and *Dance of the Equinox* (page 111) were early irregular shaped canvases, folded under and mounted on a backing canvas.

The undulation, together with the irregular shaping, allowed me to increase the characteristic expression and adjust the formal resolution of the work. If a colour dried weaker, I now could physically move it forward and give it shape or surface prominence by the under-filling, allowing me to rebalance and unify the composition at will. The outer shape being the final drawing of this conclusion.

These innovations were to launch me in a direction that would become a lasting pursuit, throughout the 1990s.

IN 1989, feeling that the artists with whom I had become acquainted works should be seen in Edmonton, I curated an exhibition entitled *'Outside New York'*, of the work I was responding to. The title reflected the fact that most of these artists, Steven Brent, Irene Neal, Jerald Webster, Roy Lerner, Lucy Baker, Bruce Piermarini, and John Gittins – worked outside of New York City, but it also highlighted the fact that these artists painted outside the prevailing trends of mainstream abstraction and the marketplace. The exhibition was well received at the summer, 'Works Visual Arts Festival' in Edmonton and was exhibited again at The Edmonton Art Gallery the following spring. A few of the works were subsequently acquired for the gallery's permanent collection.

The next year, 1990, John Gittins and Bruce Piermarini were planning an exhibition for the Atwood Gallery in Worcester, Massachusetts, and they asked to exhibit with them. John Gittins, who was working on producing a catalogue and suggested we title the show *New Painting*. I had returned from NYC where I had seen so many exhibits of new painting which contained nothing new. I joked with John that we would need to call our show *New New Painting*, if we were to make our claim of true innovation. He thought it a good idea, and Bruce agreed, so we did just that, we titled the exhibition *'New New Painting'*, to emphasize our claim of true innovation. At the exhibition I presented a group of works, *Bat Black Back* (page 147) and *Pointer Red* (page 116), *Sherwood* (page 117), *Oosie* (page 109), and *Big Dipper* (page 146) which showed the transition from the canvas folded under mounting, to a beveled edge, with the canvas edge completely hidden when hung flat to the wall.



Crushed Pink 1987
62 x 31 ½ inches



Installation photos from the exhibition Graham Peacock at 60—A Retrospective, Art Gallery of Alberta, 2005.

KENWORTH MOFFETT ATTENDED THE OPENING, loved the work and praised the show to Gerald Piltzer, a French collector/dealer who was interested in contemporary abstract painting at that time. Piltzer had had some dealings with the Colour Field School as a young art dealer in Paris in the 1970s and he was interested to see the work of the younger group of artists he had been reading about in *Moffett's Artletter*.

Piltzer visited the exhibition and acquired a work from each of us and installed them with a collection at one of his residences, the Trump Tower, New York City. They were hung alongside works by Olitski, Noland, Hofmann, Paul Jenkins and Odd Nerdrum. This was extremely encouraging for us, especially when he said the work “stood up” and he “wished to acquire more”.

Piltzer then announced his intention to open a new gallery in Paris and began renovations to a 10,000 sq. ft. space on the Champs Elysées. He arranged to travel to artists' studios to acquire their work for his inventory. He came to Edmonton and invited me to return with him to Paris, which I did. We became friends and I visited with him on a number of occasions at his Avenue Foch home in Paris and at his family home in St. Tropez, and his vacation home on Harbour Island, the Bahamas.

IN DECEMBER OF 1991, he opened a large exhibition entitled to our surprise ‘*New New Painting*’ and released a large Éditions Française hardcover book by the same title, with articles by Kenworth W. Moffett and Belgian Philosopher, Marcel Paquet. The exhibition included work by Baker, Brent, Gittins, William Gruters, Joseph Drapell, Tom Fertig, Lerner, Marjorie Minkin, Piermarini, Webster, and myself. Gerald Piltzer was the one who decided to launch the ‘New New Painting’ title for the ‘New Acrylic Painting’ group that Moffett had shown at the Museum of Art Fort Lauderdale in 1990.

In the following decade, the Galerie Gerald Piltzer became the Galerie Piltzer and relocated to the prestigious Avenue Matignon and he continued to promote and exhibit New New Painting in many major art fairs and Museums throughout Europe and in New York. This also included an exhibition in Seoul, Korea and at the opening of the new Musée d'Art moderne et d'Art Contemporain Nice in 1992. He placed my painting *Purple Rain*, (page 148) in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art Vienna and in a number of French and German collections.

IN THE FOLLOWING YEARS AS MY WORK PROGRESSED, the canvas edge became an important part of the illusionistic character of how the shapes worked on the wall. In future works, sometimes the edge was cut at a 45 degree angle to the wall or a straight 90 degree angle, and possibly with an undercut lifting the edge at a 45 degree angle from the wall, depending on the visual weight the edges required.

THE PERIOD FROM 1990 TO 1993 is well documented in the *Colour and Dimension* catalogue of 1992. In the previous year, on a year's leave from the university I had been fortunate to have the use of a large 6500 sq. ft. studio space with an open floor plan. The former leasing agent had demolished all the walls on the adjacent floor, thinking it would be more rentable but it had sat empty for a year or more and the agent was let go. I had a connection with the new agent and I managed to gain the month to month rental of the space for a nominal sum. That month to month turned out to be 15 year run until my sudden notice from new owners, Worthington Properties, and my departure in 2005. (The space has sadly sat empty ever since.)

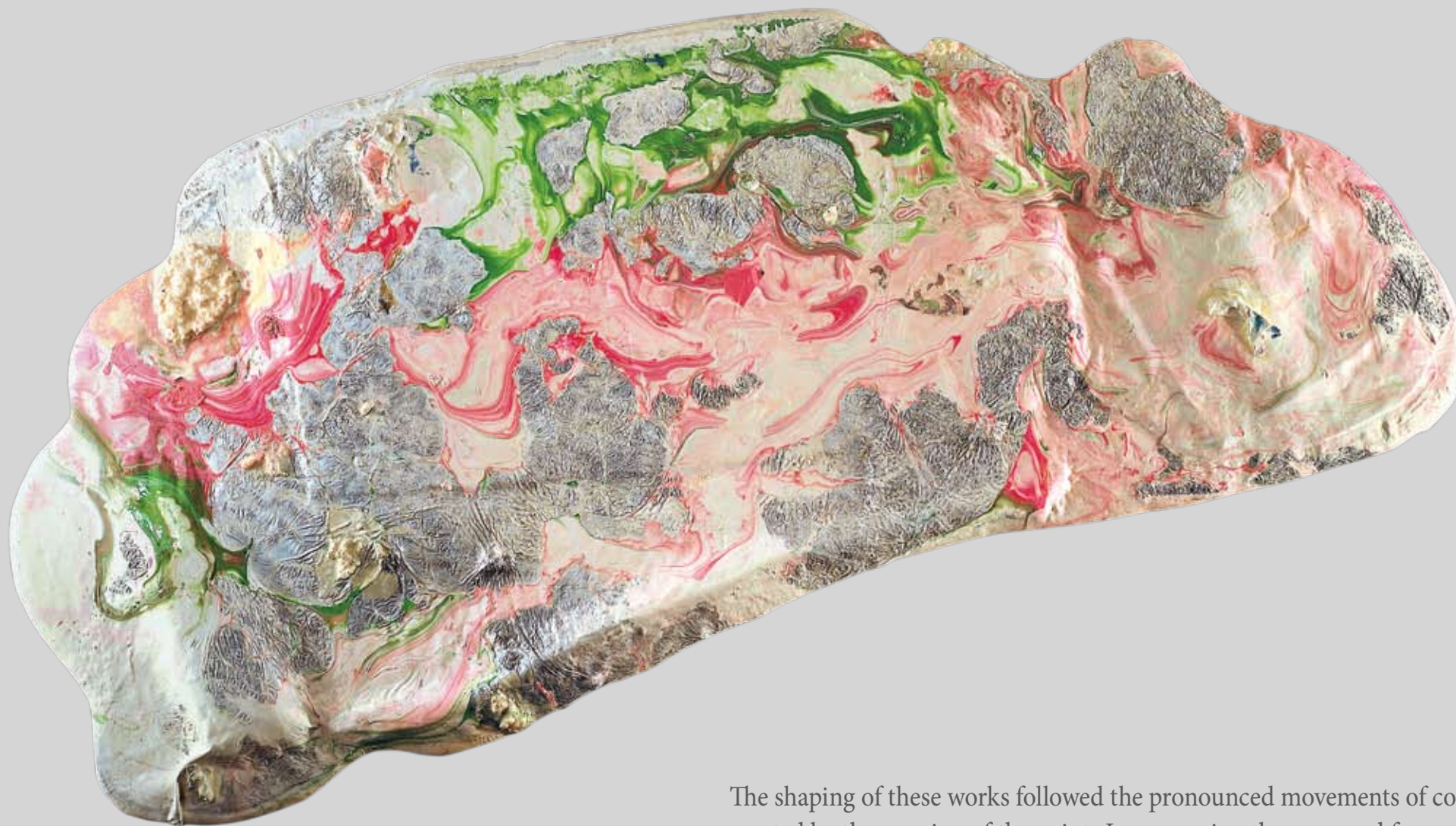
I began by painting many lengths of canvas and this continued for nearly two years before the cropping and stretching process took over. The painting of new canvases slowed to cope with the time and resources available but more importantly to see how the shaping and cropping might affect how I painted, poured and dried the formations. I was also back at the university teaching and was working in the studio with part time assistance.

IN THESE WORKS, THE POURING OF THE PAINT BECOMES MORE DRAMATIC AND OF A LARGER SCALE (more colour in one area). Sometimes I stirred the paint to create a marblization under a top layer of paint that was usually an opaque solid colour. The shaping of these works followed the pronounced movements of colour created by the pouring of the paint. In expressing these poured formations and allowing them to become the edges of the compositions, the shaping became increasingly metamorphic often suggesting animal forms such as a fish with head and tail formations. These formations were created partly by my having blocked the paint into separate pools during pouring, and then at a point during the drying, allowing them to merge. This can be seen in works like *Boomer* (pages 144-145), *Polo Sphinx* (page 122-123), *Ore* (page 124) and *Red Room* (page 140).

I also began to add more reflective materials, like glass beads and small plastic circles and diamond shapes, to punctuate the colour with optical shifts.



New Land 1994
51 ½ x 50 ¾ x 2 ¾ inches
Collection: Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Canada



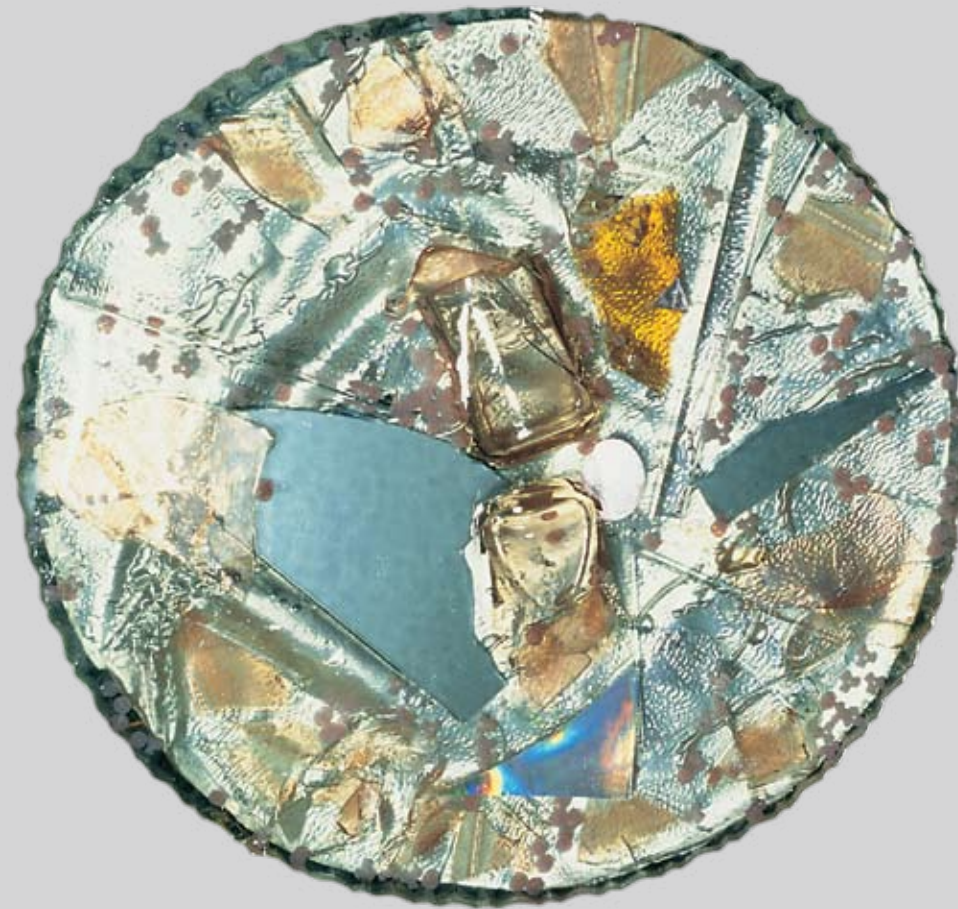
Love Bug 1991 – 1992
77 x 135 x 5 inches

The shaping of these works followed the pronounced movements of colour created by the pouring of the paint. In expressing these poured formations and allowing them to become the edges of the compositions, the shaping became increasingly metamorphic often suggesting animal forms...

Reflective and Refractive works in resin and glass

In 1996, excited by the possibilities I discovered in reflective materials and transparency, I began working with clear casting resins. I made a large group of circular and rectangular dish-shaped collages exploring the illusionistic properties of reflective and refractive materials embedded in resin.

A group of these were shown at The Edmonton Art Gallery's Project Room in 1996. The room was painted dark grey and the round castings were suspended at an angle from the wall and lit to amplify the illusionistic characteristics of the work. Some of these works also contained holographic backgrounds.



1994 AND 1995 WERE THE YEARS OF MAKING THE CIRCULARITY PAINTINGS. I began to decrease the irregularity and metamorphic shaping in favour of a more generally circular shaping. I did this as I wanted to increase the inner movements in the colour compositions and allow the paint movements to be more the focus in the work. The generally circular motif was a natural transition from the metamorphic shaping and one that agreed with the circular movements of the paint. Moving, as it does, from the inside out. Marcel Paquet made the observation of my “painting from the inside out” upon seeing my working practice. *Child of India* (page 181), are examples of this work. Solo exhibitions of this work were held at the Vanderleelie Gallery, Edmonton, Galerie Dambier Masset, Paris and The Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.



Detail of Gogh's *Baronage* showing surface and glitter.

DURING 1996 AND 1997, MY INTEREST IN REFLECTIVE SURFACES gave birth to the ‘Glitter’ paintings. Towards the end of the ‘Circularity’ paintings, I had started to work with glitter, adding this to the final layer of paint and producing a solid glitter layer and made a group of works in which glitter is featured predominately. A group of these was reproduced in the Flint Institute of the Arts’ *New New Painters* catalogue and included *The Moon’s Lair* (page 208) and *Rock Silver* (page 209).

Some of the ‘Circularity’ paintings had more glitter and were finally collaged with plastic and glass beads. The shapes of the ‘Glitter’ works became more curvilinear and simplified, and the last works were generally vertically taller and more oval than the ‘Circularity’ works of 1994 and 1995. Some ‘Glitter’ pieces have pronounced edge undercutting, and built up stretcher edges, projecting the canvas outward and adding a concave, dish-like component to the work, as in *Gold King* (page 209) and *Ruby Queen* (page 212).

FROM 1998 TO 2000, I RETURNED TO HIGH CONTRAST COLOUR, a combination of simplified, geometrically based shape, and some of the metamorphic characteristics of earlier works as in *Big Black* (page 238) (the 69th Armory Exhibition catalogue). I began to reintroduce collage, and this became a sort of camouflage application, creating pronounced shifts in surface, both actually and illusionistically. Glass beads of various sizes became the final focusing elements and I combined these with the movements contained in the paint formations and an illusionistic outer shape.



Installation photo from Graham Peacock at 60 — A Retrospective, Art Gallery of Alberta, 2005.

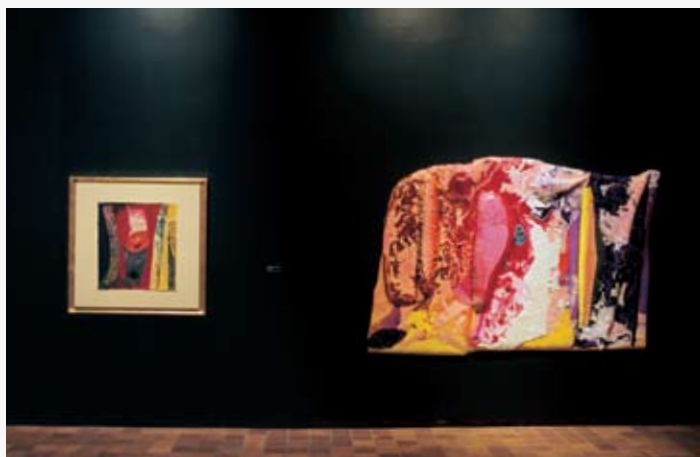
Illusionistic suggestion in these works became increasingly important. In 1999, I was working on a painting entitled *The Magician* (page 230), there was an area in the painting that was not right and it continued to bother me, and I could not see any solution. I wanted to have a very thin stained orange in the area of my concern, but the area had been painted thickly, preventing that possibility.

So I thought, why not remove the area, so I cut around it making a circular ball shape, removed the canvas, and replaced this with new canvas. I then proceeded to paint in a new colour, which eventually, I ended up shading to look like a sphere. This was, in many ways, a breakthrough act, which subsequently led to all sorts of ‘cut outs,’ including many arabesque shapes, shaded to make volumetric illusions like artist Kasmir Malevich’s geometric figures, with pronounced colour banding.

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Thunderstruck 2003
55 x 149 ½ x 4 ½ inches



Installation photos from Graham Peacock at 60—A Retrospective, Art Gallery of Alberta, 2005.

BY 2001, I HAD INTRODUCED THESE BRUSH PAINTED ILLUSIONS to most works and begun to aid these effects by painting in shadows to enhance the formations created by pourings and the canvas undulations. I also might paint out any shadows occurring from undulations themselves. The shaping remained a general combination of angular and curvilinear movements, chosen to interpret the painted formation.

IN 2001, I WAS INVITED TO SHOW A GROUP OF FIVE PAINTINGS WITH THE NEW NEW PAINTERS AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY IN PRAGUE. The works I made for Prague combined strong tonal palette shifts and have simplified curvilinear contours, with a vertical and horizontal emphasis. Arabesque cut outs shapes are featured in these works, together with undulated surface illusions, and some glass and canvas collage with painted shading. Of the five large works that were shown at the National Gallery, *Juandali* (page 246), *Slapska Dam* (page 244) *Dead Reckoning* (page 240), and *Czech Connection* (page 242), two were selected for the gallery's permanent collection.

THE NEW NEW ILLUSIONISM WORKS FROM 2002 continue from the Prague works with a generalized shaping and pronounced tonality of contrast. The works increasingly include the illusionistic qualities and the cutting out of shapes, which are then relocated within the work. Undulating the surface to create illusions that are further accented by painting in and out shadows have also been increased. The title '*New New Illusionism*' was given to the exhibition and catalogue when these works were exhibited at the New New Painting Museum, Toronto in 2003–2004.

BETWEEN 2003 AND 2006, the illusionistic shaping, collaging, and shading in the paintings continued but this was interrupted by the sudden need to relocate my studio, after having occupied the same studio for 34 years. The studio relocation took 2 weeks to dismantle, eight days with seven helpers and two 3-ton vans to move. Reorganization took three months of daily work after which I could not paint. I went on to other tasks the most pressing of which was the organization of a 25 year retrospective at The Edmonton Art Gallery. On the opening night, September 16, 2005, the announcement was made that the gallery was to be renamed the Art Gallery of Alberta.

This book is based on that retrospective exhibition. What began as a catalogue was expanded to become a full retrospective book, one that could include a well-rounded representation of my work with all the articles written about the work and my own writings appearing alongside. With the assistance of Field Law Edmonton, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and then The Faculty of Arts, and the President's Fund for the Creative and Performing Arts at the University of Alberta the book has taken shape. The last three years have seen myself working long periods on writing, fundraising and on the design and assembly of the book.

The time teaching a watercolour class in Vico Equense, on the Italian Riviera, each Spring of 2006 to 2008, took me away for six weeks at a time, but in these years, I have relocated and reestablished my studio, the retrospective has been held, the book has been completed — all of which has provided me with a beneficial opportunity for reflection on my past and future work.

A new group of works was begun in 2007 which departs somewhat from the organic, irregular shaping of the past, and returns to the flatter surfaces and more pronounced finer crazing of 1982, combined with the changes in crazing scale of the of later years. The shaping has begun to return to an off-square rectangular '*parallax*' shaping, initially on very large works, 5 feet high by 12 to 15 feet wide.

A retrospective '*Highlights*' exhibition coincided with the release of this book at Gallery One in Toronto which opened on the 29th of November, 2008.

To be continued...

Graham Peacock

November, 2008

Dates should not be taken as exact, but as general indicators of periods that drift in and out of the calendar years. Works develop sometimes over long periods and may result in some works being from former or later years. Paintings evolve over months, and sometimes years, in their various stages of completion, and on rare occasions may be reworked years later. For specific dates of individual works, please refer to the index of works. (page 386)

Thomson 2007
56 x 35 x 2 ½ inches

