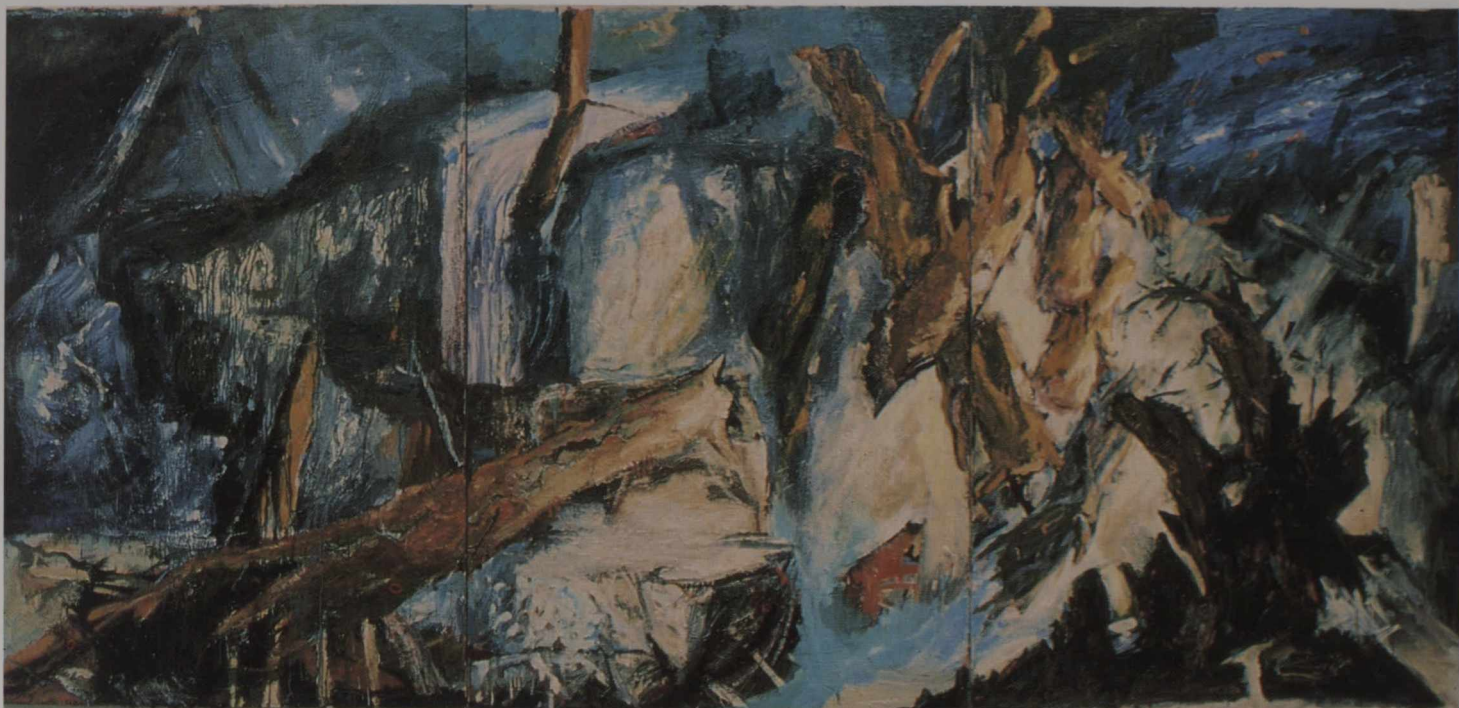


New era of painting on show at Canada House



Derek Root
Explosion in the landscape, 1985; enamel, oil and tar on canvas; 223 × 323cm

In the summer of 1984, the Vancouver Art Gallery mounted an exhibition that by many accounts was the most important to be held on the west coast of North America for at least ten years. The exhibition, featuring works by eight young Canadian artists, was one of a series of artistic events which helped to establish Vancouver as a major creative centre. It also brought to everyone's attention the most recent developments that had taken place in the figurative painting tradition in Canada.

Four of these young artists — Angela Grossman, Graham Gillmore, Attila Richard Lukacs and Derek Root — are all recent graduates of the Emily Carr College of Art and Design in Vancouver. For three years, they worked closely together, and today, they still share a studio and think of themselves as a group — so much so that they have been labelled by their contemporaries as the 'the Gang of Four'.

In the two years since their first showing in Vancouver, they have had an impact on the Canadian art world that one critic has compared

with the impact that the Young Contemporary shows had in Britain during the early 1960s.

At that time, artists like David Hockney, Peter Blake and Allen Jones helped launch the British Pop movement which came into being as a reaction against the influence of American abstract expressionism, and was to dominate British art for the next decade.

Today, critics are saying that 'the Gang of Four' are exerting a similar influence on the Canadian art scene, except in this context they are challenging the principles of the 'Realist' school of Canadian painting.

For seven weeks at the end of this year — from December 18 to February 3 — works by the four artists will be exhibited at the Canada House Cultural Centre in Trafalgar Square, London (open Monday to Friday, 10.00am to 5.30pm).

The exhibition will be coming to London after a successful showing in Paris.

Says Scott Watson, Curator of the Vancouver Art Gallery: 'These paintings rivet one's attention, for this is the first generation of Canadian artists to take a perverse stance, to shrug their shoulders in mock incomprehension when asked to account for themselves.

'They are young, at the very beginnings of their careers as artists and will lead lives well into the next century. They are cunning, talented and already, to accept them is to accept a mild poison. We can only wish them well in concocting yet stronger doses.'

Here's how Watson describes the works that will be on display in London.

In their scale and in the immediacy of their gestures, the works of the young painters owe a great debt to the New York School of the post-war years, but the belief from which the works are born is utterly different.

Attila Richard Lukacs
Il y a quinze ans que je n'ai pas su ça, 1985; enamel, oil and tar on canvas; 259 × 487cm

