

cerns, and whereas previously it was possible to identify a small group of artists in a particular place as the leading edge of new art, this is no longer as clearly described. Along with this has come a more confident approach, and more complex responses, to the relationship between international developments and regional or localized concerns. The interests of many younger artists in Montreal, Vancouver, and Toronto in figurative or image painting in recent years can be paralleled with similar moves in European and American art. But whereas, previously, such a relationship might be described — even if simplistically — as derivative, it now demands closer attention to the interweaving of such parallels with the local situations and their own histories. For instance, it is clear that current figurative painting bears important relationships to developments in video, performance and installation works from the later 1960s; and in these aspects Canadian artists have made special and widely recognized contributions.

The definition of a Canadian art remains as elusive as the Canadian identity, an identity of shifting political and economic forces based on a federation of distinct regions. What is demanded, and what must now be possible, is the culture's evaluation based on the awareness of its unique history; a political and cultural history that marks the transformation from a series of outposts for European colonizing ambitions to a dynamic complex of independence, dependencies and regional differences. The emergence of strength in the arts over the past 40 years is, if nothing else, a vital reflection of the need to make conscious that transformation.