

of meetings, called Soundings, which were paid for by the Council, changed this.

At the beginning of the sixties, less than twenty-five per cent of the moneys from the Council went to the visual arts. By the end of the decade the ratio was approaching forty-five per cent.

The excitement and achievement of the sixties reached its peak in centennial year. The national consciousness, the new sense of national identity and purpose with which Canada had emerged from the Second World War, had been growing quietly, steadily. Now it exploded in joyous celebration. And, for the first time, the Canadian public visibly shared the excitement and pride in their nation's creative achievement.

Expo art

And yet, Canadian painting played only a minor role. It was limited to a modest exhibition called *Painting in Canada*, displayed in the entrance foyer of the Canadian Government pavilion. The most important art exhibition at Expo was *Man and His World*, a selection of international art covering the full range of art history down through the ages. It included two Canadian paintings, one by Paul-Emile Borduas and one by Jean-Paul Riopelle.

From the perspective of 1974 it is possible to see that centennial year was not just a climax but another turning-point in the history of Canadian art.

The Great Art Boom, of course, turned out to be, in the words of Robert Fulford in the *Toronto Star*, "the art boom that never really happened." Dealers began to admit privately that sales of Canadian art had almost dried up. Some commercial galleries had to close down. What had happened? The main fact that escaped the art journalists during the golden years was the real size of the market. Those who cared enough to buy numbered only a few hundred. At the same time gallery operating costs were rising sharply and though the average price-tag on a painting had risen in the same decade, survival had become a hand-to-mouth affair.

And yet art is more than ever alive and well and living in Canada. The facts are clear:

1. Toronto continues to be the commercial art centre of Canada and one of the major centres for contemporary art in North America.
2. Artists in Canada have formed a union, the C.A.R. (Canadian Artists Representation) which is currently pressing the art museums of Canada for rental fees for exhibiting and other "fair exchange"

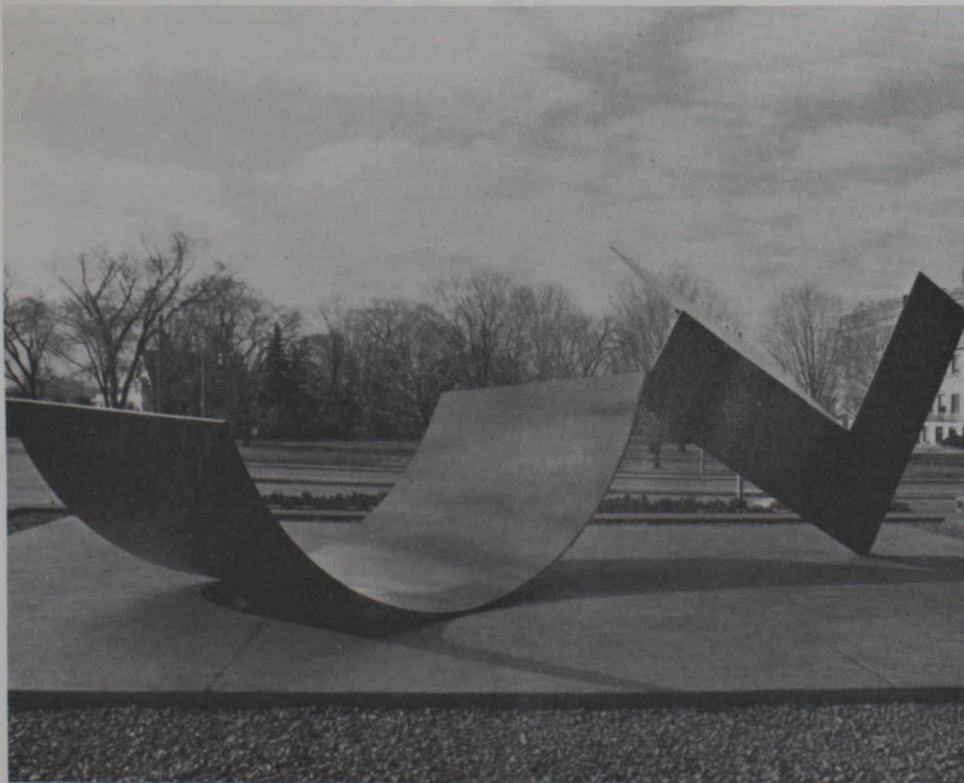
practices, including copyright remuneration for the reproduction of their works.

3. No living artist has stopped contributing, in one way or another, to the sum of our collective aesthetic experience. Some are painting better than ever, reaching new heights. Some are blazing important trails in other, related, fields. And, what's more, the new technology embraced by the artists is being matched by a public acceptance of new forms and aesthetic modes.

The title of this article might more accurately be called "Painting in Canada" and yet it would appear that "Canadianism" is absent in contemporary Canadian painting. The nationality is simply not there. Contemporary Canadian paintings remain both individual to their creators and international in their approach. But if Canadian art has gone beyond any current definition of nationalism, perhaps more important than this, it has lost its early innocence and come of age.

Yet, paradoxically, there is a kind of nationalism in Canadian painting. A non-objective painting by Borduas is Canadian — not because anyone other than a knowledgeable critic could recognise it as such. That doesn't matter. What matters is that as a Canadian I know it was painted by a Canadian: I know that such a Canadian painting exists. ♦

New policy puts art in public buildings



'Haida' by Robert Murray, outside the Lester B. Pearson building. House in the background, left, is the official residence of the British High Commissioner in Ottawa.

In 1973 the federal government of Canada decided to establish a policy to deal with the installation of art works as part of building projects undertaken by the Department of Public Works (DPW), the agency responsible for most federally funded building. Under a cabinet-level memorandum, guidelines were established allowing for the expenditure of up to one per cent of the cost of a building used by the public for fine art. The programme, however, really got underway in 1968 when a Fine Art Advisory Committee was established and the first members appointed.

Since 1966 the federal government has spent over \$700 million on new buildings, of which over \$2 million was spent on fine art. This is only about three-tenths of one per cent of the total of all capital construction but of course not all construction was for buildings with artwork.

Chief architect for the DPW, Kelly Stanley also administrates the Fine Art Programme. Recently he was asked about the motivation for the programme: he replied, "I don't know if I can answer directly why it came about except that we had a sympathetic atmosphere (in Canada) at the time."

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