



Carmen Lamanna Gallery

August 4, 1990

Philip Monk  
Art Gallery of Ontario  
317 Dundas Street West  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5T 1G4

Dear Philip,

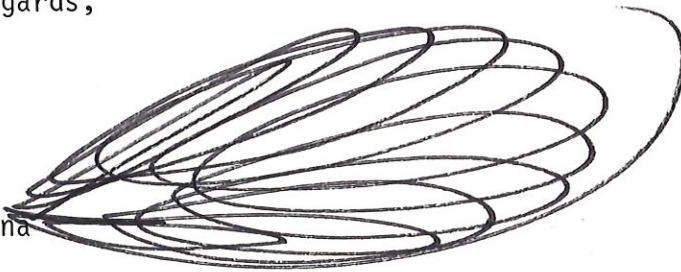
Recently, I began collecting various correspondence, statements, articles, and reviews from over the years for your reassessment. The enclosed material represents "Installment #1". I would appreciate you highlighting any quotation which you consider important for the CLG publication.

I furthermore hope this will prevent the possibility of summing up the history of the Carmen Lamanna Gallery over a coffee break!

I hope you have had a pleasant long weekend, preparing for our next meeting (Wednesday August 8th, 7 p.m.).

With best regards,

Carmen Lamanna



CL/sh  
encl.



Carmen Lamanna Gallery

February 17, 1981

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

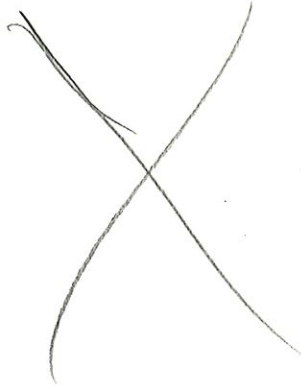
Dear [REDACTED]

Re: Your letter dated 11 February 1981  
Personal and confidential observations and  
reassessment of co-editor/artist [REDACTED]

*Personal*

...../2

February 17, 1981



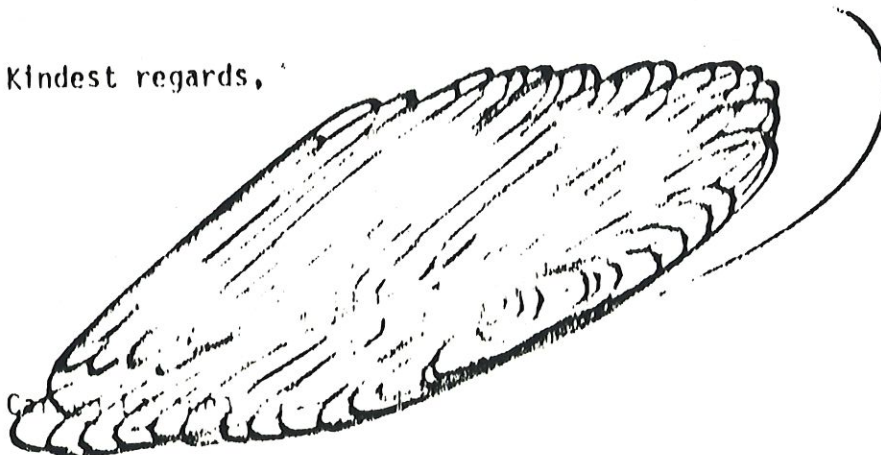
Before we proceed with a studio visit, there is one important misconception to clear up. For the past 15 years our space has been well-publicized as the Carmen Lamanna Gallery and not, as you have indicated in your letter, the 'Art Gallery'. The mass of our artistic society has, as the occasion permitted, called our space a hardware store, a greenhouse, a lumberyard, a construction site, a woodworking shop, a vacant store or a house of ill-repute. Therefore, I would direct you to seriously re-examine the implications of exhibiting your work here to determine whether your work would be suited to any of the proposed venues, or understood as a work of art.

If it is an 'Art Gallery' you are looking for, you might be advised to look to another of our prominent and popular cultural institutions... public or private.

Please note that the preceding observations on the merits of your position as co-editor/artist are professional and do not reflect adversely on my personal admiration for you as an individual.

Without prejudice, please accept my humble and profound love.

Kindest regards,





Carmen Lamanna Gallery

31 March 1979

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

It has come time when I must bring to your direct attention certain matters which are of daily, personal concern to me as director of the Carmen Lamanna Gallery. My interest in these matters is based solely on the conviction that only through the consideration of individual merit will we be successful in strengthening the growth of the visual arts in Canada.

While my concerns are critical, they are not to be construed as insults, nor are they meant to infer that the circumstances under which they have arisen are hopeless. I have no desire to waste time criticizing a situation which cannot be resolved. This would not be constructive. I am only interested in ensuring that the crucial factors involved are given your immediate attention.

The crux of the matter is directly related to the recognition and acceptance of the individual responsibilities by those individuals who daily perform in such capacities as directors, curators, administrators, dealers, artists, critics and so forth. In a Canadian Institute, one would assume those responsibilities would be concerned with the continued healthy growth of Canadian visual arts; in which case, one of the greatest responsibilities of each respective position would be to guarantee that the general public is given the fullest opportunity to confront and experience the genuine contemporary art being created in Canada through the extensive representation of those individual artists through exhibitions and its collections.

Unfortunately, however, in the majority of cases, the individuals performing within the above-stated capacities are doing so irresponsibly and without apparent regard for the welfare of contemporary Canadian art. The public, as a result, is being treated to the worst in Canadian visual arts instead of the best. The intellectual enrichment and stimulation which should be the mainstay of the art the public views has been shunted aside and replaced with hollow banalities.

...../2



31 March 1979

Page 2

I realize that the supine and negligent character will be present in every facet of our society; and, therefore, I should not be surprised to find this type of personality within the field of art. However, what disturbed me most and what I cannot accept is that the Art Gallery of Ontario is at the forefront of those who support the mediocre; and I must hold you - in your capacity as curator of the A.G.O. - responsible for encouraging this support which is undermining contemporary Canadian art. Either you are unaware of the responsibilities which accompany your position or you have chosen to overlook them.

One is filled with an acute sense of despair and discouragement when one realizes that

you have denied the qualities which would seemingly be inherent in the individual appointed to your position by continually failing to indicate any recognition of the artistic merit of the unique and important strides in Canadian art being created by genuine artists such as those supported by the Carmen Lamanna Gallery. Instead, you have focused the direction of your curatorial interests towards the pursuit of courting popularity with the hackneyed, uninspired proponents of third and fourth rate Canadian art while shunning the truly genuine artists.

It is appalling to see the insipid and mediocre benefit and flourish as a result of the A.G.O.'s yearly exhibition programmes and acquisitions for its permanent collection while original and unquestionably the most innovative artists wallow in near-oblivion; and it is outrageous to watch the general public daily confused and manipulated through misinformation, misrepresentation and ambiguities.

Certainly the A.G.O.'s activities are in direct conflict with the policies of the Carmen Lamanna Gallery which have been strictly based on the artistic merit of the individual; and it is due to this conviction, that we must remain critical at all times of those individuals who, as curators, directors and so forth, abuse their positions in favour of self-perpetuating interests.

It is a well-known fact that for the past number of years, the A.G.O. has benefited from the multi-million dollar support of a taxpaying public. Based on a programme of subtle, self-perpetuating propaganda centered around the need to construct a special area to house and showcase its comprehensive collection of Canadian art, the A.G.O. was successful in acquiring a new "Canadian" wing at the taxpayers' expense. However, nowhere in this "bastion" for Canadian art can one find works by Robin Collyer, Ian Carr-Harris, General Idea, Mary Janitch, Vincent Tangredi and Reinhard Reitzenstein to name but a few. Here are artists who, through long and prolific careers and their unique artistic gifts, have made invaluable contributions to Canadian art; and yet they are ignored by the curator of the A.G.O.

...../3

31 March 1979

Page 3

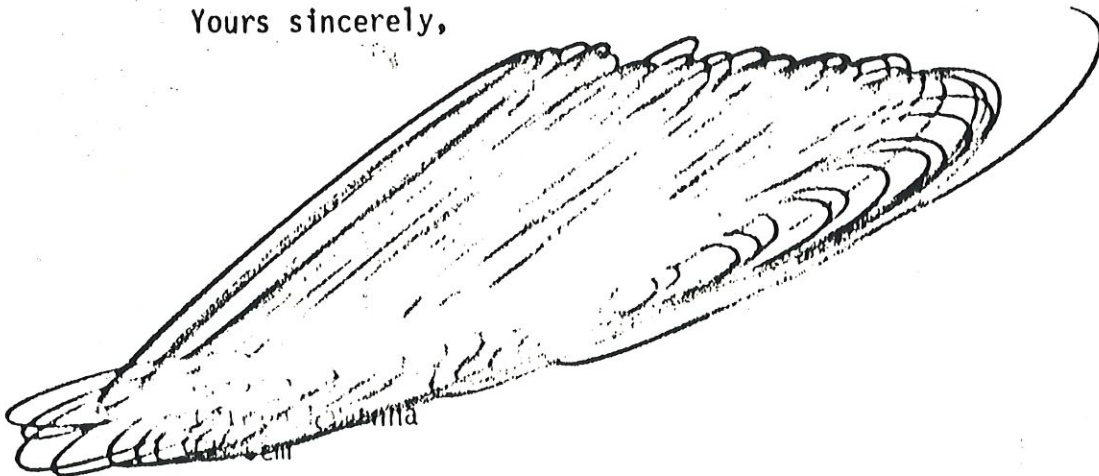
The absence of these artists from the A.G.O.'s permanent collection and the fact that the A.G.O. has given only token support to artists the calibre of Murray Favro, Paterson Ewen, Ron Martin, David & Royden Rabinowitch, Colette Whiten, Robin MacKenzie and Shirley Wiltasalo to name a few is an insult as well as an embarrassment. The fact that these artists have been appreciated nationally and internationally by the most discriminating audiences of critics, directors, curators and dealers and still remain unrecognized by the A.G.O. clearly demonstrates the lack of responsibility and indifferent attitude of its curators, directors, and so forth towards our most innovative Canadian art.

I, therefore, urgently recommend your immediate attention is given to the critical evaluation of the A.G.O.'s permanent collection through and by the extensive representation of works by these artists whose recognition by the A.G.O. is long overdue and who have gained international reputations for the genuine value and originality of their work from the most discriminating European and Canadian audiences.

Furthermore, since those named artists to date remain obscure to the A.G.O. and its patrons, I urge that the A.G.O. give serious consideration to placing these artists at the forefront of its exhibition programmes on the basis of the value of their individual artistic merit as well as on the basis of the ready audience eager to confront such unquestionable innovators in contemporary Canadian art.

My concern in this matter is great, although this is just a part (albeit an essential one) of matters which need to be personally discussed and questioned at length with you.

Yours sincerely,







Carmen Lamanna Gallery

June 7, 1983

CANADA COUNCIL  
255 Albert St  
P.O. Box 1047  
OTTAWA, Ontario K1P 5V8

ATTENTION: EDITH GOODRIDGE, HEAD-VISUAL ARTS

Dear Edith Goodridge:

As you will recall, at the end of April '83, I had no alternative but to share with you my crucial financial difficulties in operating the CARMEN LAMANNA GALLERY as a vehicle for young, innovative, contemporary, Canadian artists. This letter is intended to reiterate and expand upon some of the issues raised in our conversation. My prime objective is to impress upon you the crucial nature of the gallery's immediate needs and, in light of some of your comments, to offer recommendations aimed at improving communications, understanding, and mutual support.

The efforts of the CARMEN LAMANNA GALLERY have long been recognized internationally by discriminating curators and art critics without any committed support on the national level, despite persistent attempts to solicit assistance for the truly innovative Canadian artists we represent.

This situation is becoming intolerable....

How can Canadian artists ever command a place for themselves on the international art market if, on the national level, there is no firm commitment to the cultural potential contained in their work?

How can our cultural objectives be met if we ignore the needs of struggling artists and the too few dealers and art critics who share their commitment?

.../2

In this regard, a very troublesome lack of concern has become evident in my various dealings with the Canada Council and other government institutions over the past 17 years.

Recently it has become painfully obvious that the prominent attitude within the Canada Council, despite our dedicated efforts, is indifference.

This attitude surfaced during our recent telephone conversation when I attempted to express the gallery's urgent financial difficulties to both yourself and William Kirby. I was told that before our needs could be considered justifiable, a new program would have to be created; and, Mr. Kirby added that no support would be extended to cover our immediate financial need because he had "...10,000 other artists to consider.." Not only is this mental attitude disheartening; it is also banal and reeks of bureaucratic charity. I do not appreciate this sort of off-handed comment in response to my own serious predicament and, moreover, I think it is reprehensible that an officer of the Canada Council should exhibit such critical apathy. No one with any measure of judgement would believe or suggest that there are 10,000 innovative and truly worthy artists in Canada!

It is this same lack of concern, commitment, critical judgement and moral certitude which weakens Canada's cultural image abroad. At the heart of the problem is the fact that, under present conditions, the Canadian government would be hard pressed to curate an exhibition of 20 interesting and innovative Canadian contemporary artists capable of international scrutiny. We would, I'm afraid, be placing ourselves in a position of irreparable international humiliation and mockery. One needs only to refer to the experience of the "O KANADA" show in Berlin ('83) to understand what happens when decisions are made without critical judgement, moral commitment, and curatorial expertise.

Assuming that steps are taken to rectify this situation and a new program is implemented by the government to assist commercial galleries, such as mine, two questions need to be asked:



- i) Is the Canada Council prepared to extend support critically and intelligently on the basis of artistic merit?
- ii) Is the Canada Council ready to redefine its standards of selection?

In view of these considerations, I offer the following recommendations:

- 1) The Canada Council/Art Bank should carefully reconsider the main reasons it was initially conceived by Mme. Suzanne Rivard LeMoyne (Head-Visual Arts, 1972) to "..provide a stimulus to the commercial galleries which have long made an important contribution to Canadian art.....in all visual arts media....."

I would like to point out that support was extended to the CARMEN LAMANNA GALLERY at the time in recognition of our own crucial needs, followed by the official formation of the Art Bank.

Incredibly though, 11 years later the original ideals of the Art Bank appear to be faded if not lost to the point where now you seem unable to perceive and respond to needs that are profoundly obvious.

When you review the original objectives of your organization, ascertain in all honesty which of 2 things still apply today:

- i) are they motivating you to support Canadian culture?
  - ii) are they sheltering you from the accountability inherent in moral and critical judgements?
- 2) The Canada Council/Art Bank should reassess its current state of complacent attitude. It is my belief that no one with a sincere and dedicated commitment to Canadian culture could fail to acknowledge the CARMEN LAMANNA GALLERY'S role and the present financial need associated with the maintenance of that role.

The Canada Council/Art Bank should recognize that the CARMEN LAMANNA GALLERY provides a service to the art community in this country and is invaluable in its promotion nationally and internationally.

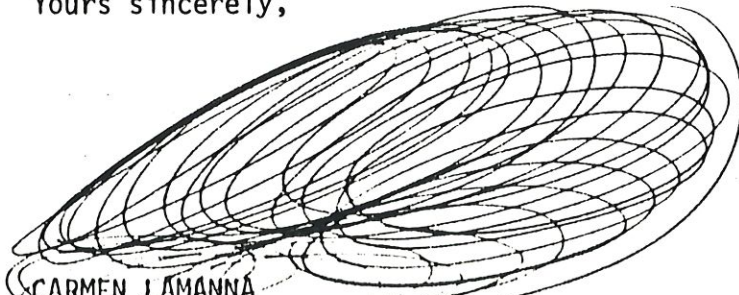
The Canada Council must also acknowledge that it cannot duplicate what the CARMEN LAMANNA GALLERY does.

- 3) The Canada Council/Art Bank should acknowledge in a positive and constructive way the needs of the CARMEN LAMANNA GALLERY, keeping in mind that the criteria should not be based on exclusivity, but, on our ability to recognize, support, and promote the art which is truly innovative and intergral to the ongoing development of our Canadian culture.

It is essential that this letter is not misrepresented.  
Nor should it be filed away as just another indiscriminate criticism of the Canada Council/Art Bank system.

That my intent and needs are serious, should be very clear;  
and, with all due respect, I expect the Canada Council/Art Bank to respond in a like manner.

Yours sincerely,



CARMEN LAMANNA  
DIRECTOR, CARMEN LAMANNA GALLERY

CL/as

cc: Timothy Porteous  
William Kirby  
Rene Blouin  
file





Carmen Lamanna Gallery

October 3, 1978

The Right Honourable  
Pierre Elliot Trudeau, P.C., M.P.  
The Office of the Prime Minister  
Ottawa

Dear Sir:

The recent announcements by Treasury Board President Robert Andras of cutbacks in federal spending within the area of cultural programmes no longer shocks me. Nevertheless, I remain profoundly disturbed by them and their very implications for the future. Indeed, these cutbacks have only reaffirmed the fear of the entire artistic community that the present government in Ottawa has neither an adequate understanding nor regard for that community.

The government and its various civil service officials have ostensibly been ensnared by their own collective vision of life. This vision has resulted in an age of limited growth with a carefully monitored, integrated economy, prefabricated "quality of life" packages and an imminently manageable population. We have entered a period of the "corporate mind" where, for the sake of survival, one must forsake individuality for an institutionalized identity. One must belong to something if one is to exist at all; and this mentality is perpetuated by a political sector who itself offers support only through identification with a specific institution.

The prevailing assumption seems to be that the larger the institution and its constituency, the greater the benefits to be realized by all. As degrees of "collective return" supercede individual contribution, more effort and money are poured into a system which is then force-fed to society as something benefiting the whole. However, instead of promoting a true collective vision, we are in actuality being subtly told not that "this will benefit society as a whole" but rather that "this will benefit you"; for beneath the empty rhetoric of "the public good" is the pessimistic, if not outright cynical, belief that the ruling motivation for most Canadians is to secure the most advantageous situation for oneself to the exclusion of any consideration of the rest of society and culture. It becomes easy to understand why individual initiative and contributions cease to be recognized as valid since the product is not as easily identifiable or considered to be as "vital" as those of streamline bureaucracies.

..../2



Such an overview is wholly compatible with a government whose operating definition of culture appears geared to purely mass entertainment and whatever innocuous forms of public and private diversion currently appeals to the idiosyncratic predilections of the various regional grassroots communities. The government's recent actions re: Art Bank would indicate that it sees serious individual artistic endeavours as a superfluous adjunct to the real business of life, a luxury to be jettisoned with the coming of "hard times".

How else can one view the current actions of a government who over the previous 25 years evolved one of the most innovative and productive support systems for the arts in the Western World (i.e. Canada Council) and now appears willing to discard those achievements and considerable potential in order to demonstrate its fiscal toughmindedness? Unless, of course, it had utterly failed to grasp the value and significance of those achievements in the first place.

As director of the Carmen Lamanna Gallery, I have witnessed the continuous growth of our culture during the past 12 years. A driving force behind this growth has been the numerous talented contemporary artists emerging across Canada; and yet this very group has been consistently ignored by our society. Contemporary art is often both difficult and demanding; and unfortunately, the general public may often find its meaning, let alone its significance, next to incomprehensible. The temptation on the part of public officials to exploit this lack of sympathy and understanding for political purposes must be resisted. All genuinely innovative creative works become widely appreciated only with time. Even the most simplistic, least cerebral forms of art in man's history have gone years before their value has been recognized. The responsibility of the government is to ensure that as much of the art as possible being created today is preserved for posterity's judgment and evaluation. Contemporary art's function is to keep the culture in touch with the profound changes left in the wake of an advancing world. The new work, in effect, represents soundings of the deeper levels of the public psyche. It is an articulation of the present technological and industrial conditions in their fuller ramifications. What may appear to have a disconcerting affect on the viewer is often the prelude to the shock of recognition.

For the first time in our history, the federal government in 1972 set aside an annual budget of \$1,000,000. for a government agency called the Art Bank. This allocation was to be used to support the artistic sector through the sale of the artist's works. The Art Bank, along with the National Capital Commission, became the only major purchaser of contemporary visual art in this country. It should be stressed that the support it provided was marginal compared to any other sector; but the Art Bank was all we had and we lauded its arrival.



After a brief period of trial and error, the Art Bank became a source of judicious critical evaluation and positive support. Unlike the Welfare and Unemployment programmes, it encouraged the continuous production and expansion of unique artistic endeavours. By and large, support money came only to the innovative artist by and through the purchase of that artist's work: it introduced an incentive to work, providing a stimulant to the creation of works of increasingly greater originality and quality. It was significant to us and gave us a sense of government credibility because the creative individual's contribution was finally being recognized. It was also an indication of an opportunity for cultural growth: its discriminating purchase of contemporary Canadian art made it both a source of sound financial investment and an effective means for storing up artistically important work for future generations.

The programme was officially extended until 1981; but now in 1978, Robert Andras has announced an 80% cutback in the funds to be made available to the Art Bank. With a budget already pitifully small, it is ridiculous even to consider Andras' announcement as a cutback. What Mr. Andras is, in effect, saying is that the government is virtually closing its doors on the artistic community. In an agency with an annual budget of \$350 - 400,000. for administrative overhead and \$600,000. for actual purchases, the government is taking away all but \$200,000., thus leaving an agency possessing an office and no value to the people it was established to serve. In doing so, the government has destroyed any credibility it may have had with its constituents in the art community.

The absurdity of this decision defies the imagination. It is more ridiculous than disturbing to realize that the Art Bank support, the smallest and poorest of any sector of government spending in the arts, has been reduced to nothing. Even at the best of times artists, including those with major international reputations, are forced to exist in the lower half of the economic spectrum. It is difficult to imagine them in a position to make further sacrifices. Since the well-being of prison inmates and welfare recipients are matters of continuing public concern, as they should be, surely then the plight of active contributors to our society should be as well. It is unfortunate - no, tragic that this alleged cutback should occur at a time when the question of Canadian unity and identity is most pressing. What better step backwards from the cause of national self-awareness could have been taken than to discontinue the support and discourage the work of Canadian artists who are an integral part of the culture and heritage of the country? In this light, I can only view Mr. Andras' decision as an act of thoughtless and negligent short-sightedness.

Even if this so-called "cutback" was deemed justifiable and unavoidable by the government - what is to be done for the visual arts community? Since the programme was created to support the artist not the administration, what is the sense of wasting \$200,000. on an agency only able to preserve its own administration and fulfill its secondary function of a governmental



October 3, 1978

- 4 -

rental agency? Moreover, a crisis situation of such magnitude has been created within the visual arts community that immediate positive steps are required to rectify a potentially irreparably damaging situation. As an individual supporter of the artistic community, I demand a reconsideration of the cutback and the immediate reinstatement of the funds allocated to both the Art Bank and the National Capital Commission which will allow them to fulfill the scope of their original programmes.

An artistic existence is an arduous one. The visual arts community will persevere in its struggle despite large scale government ineptness and preposterous excuses of economic instability; and it will not be content to sit silently and watch itself and its promise obliterated. Artists are a restive, questioning lot - continually striving for individual growth and perfection, seeking to express images that a less contemplative individual may not begin to see. When they are done, their accomplishments reflect the realities of all men and in time shall stand as testimony of a nation's maturity. It is time that the political sector stops ignoring the artistic community and openly recognizes its valuable contributions to this country. Art may be enjoyed or deprecated, but it cannot be ignored without jeopardy.

Yours sincerely,



Carmen Lama  
CL:s

c.c.: Mr. Robert Andras, Treasury Board President  
The Hon. Jean Chretien, Minister of Finance  
Mr. Joe Clark, M.P., leader of the federal Progressive Conservative Party  
Mr. Ed Broadbent, M.P., leader of the federal New Democratic Party  
The Hon. John Roberts, Secretary of State of Canada  
Mr. Eugene Giossan, Head of the Visual Arts Department, Cultural  
Affair Division, Department of External Affairs  
The Hon. Douglas Everett, Chairman, National Finance Committee

..../5



c.c.: The Hon. William Davis, M.P.P., Premier of the Province of Ontario

Dr. Stuart Smith, M.P.P., leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario

Mr. Michael Cassidy, M.P.P., leader of the New Democratic Party of Ontario

Mrs. Ursula Appolloni, M.P.

Mr. Charles Lussler, Director, Canada Council

Mr. George Ignatieff, Chairman, National Museums of Canada

Mr. C. M. Bud Drury, Director, National Capital Commission

Dr. Hsio-Yen Shih, Director, National Gallery of Canada



Carmen Lamanna Gallery

March 25, 1981

Nancy Hushion  
Visual Arts Officer  
Ontario Arts Council  
151 Bloor St. West  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5S 1T6

Dear Nancy:

As you know I was not able to attend the meeting held at the Ontario Arts Council on February 24th to discuss the proposal for grants to individual critics. I want to take this opportunity not only to reaffirm my fullest support for such a program but to stress the urgency for its earliest possible implementation.

If we expect to effectively support the most outstanding art being produced in this province we must make every effort to insure that it receives the highest quality of critical attention. We must keep in mind that just as exceptional and enduring art is created by gifted individuals committed to articulating their unique personal visions so criticism has to be thought of as the work of totally engaged creative individuals who strive to the utmost of their ability to understand the art that compells their interest. Criticism at its best is, of course, a deeply considered, richly imagined examination of art; but it is also a personal, living response to it as well. Like the art it discusses, criticism continues to grow and change.

If the general public is ever to think of the visual arts as a serious and important part of tis culture then that art cannot continue to be written about as if it were simply another form of entertainment or a harmless weekend diversion. This applies to any attempt to develop future generations of critics. Potentially talented young writers have to be able to

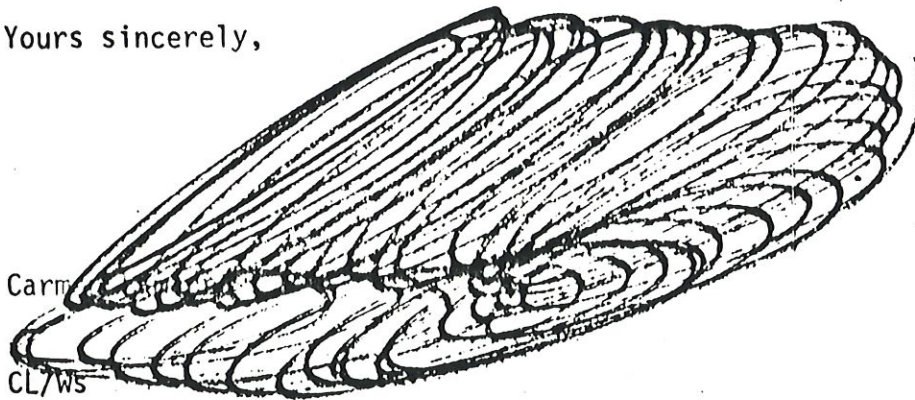
.../1



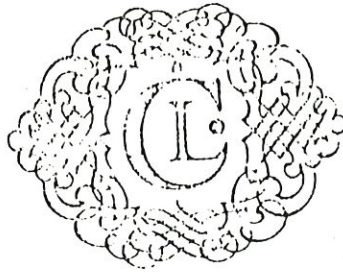
see excellent examples of serious discourses on art to know that criticism can exist and that it is, to some extent at least, appreciated, that there is an emerging tradition of art writing to which they can add to and enrich with their own contributions. That is, they must be able to see that the people who write about art regard it as something more than a mere pastime or as a minor adjunct to their full time occupations.

Enlightened and sensitive programs have helped to encourage and sustain a community of strong individual artists in Ontario; it is time to acknowledge that the development of a community of independent critics also requires thoughtful and diligent cultivation over the years.

Yours sincerely,



Carmel  
CL/ws



Carmen Lamanna Gallery

STATEMENT: SEPTEMBER 3 , 1975

A prevalent misconception in Canada today is that cultural development can be encouraged through a systematic distribution of government subsidation based on regional and institutionalized divisions. This belief is beginning to manifest itself with increasing frequency in various federal and provincial cultural institutions, such as the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council, despite the fact that the only assured means of stimulating a culture lies in the individual efforts of those persons who possess a genuine artistic genius.

Although the work of such artists often requires a certain amount of time and effort before being absorbed into the mainstream of culture, it nonetheless provides an essential articulation of our common experience. The enduring value of these individual artists stems from the fact that the materialization of their observations and philosophies is not part of an implicit formalized revolution, not part of a collective group affected by dogmatical systems, not part of a formularized body subject to definition. Their visions and statements are innovative and mutually exclusive, and the appearance of their work is never a criteria for membership in an 'artistic' group or category. Ultimately, any classification or definition of true artists is a task for historians, art critics and organizations who wish to either preserve or take advantage of the artist's individual inspirations.

Unfortunately, the Canada Council has, of late, become too accessible to the persuasive force of these cultural promoters, and in so doing, the priorities of government cultural subsidation have turned from the genuine needs of Canada's individual artists to the fulfillment of persistent demands for financial assistance from those groups who are able to wield the weapons of persuasion: social position, patronage and political loyalties. These organizations continue to be financed, despite the fact that their collective and dogmatical views no longer represent any individual expressions but are merely responses to the public's demand for familiar themes, movements, symbols, images and philosophies represented as 'Art'.



Unfortunately, when presented in this context, contemporary art is usually not well received; innovative expressions are seen as 'abnormal' responses to the present experience in that they hardly ever correspond to the public's general conception of 'cultural history' or 'art'.

This situation naturally places the artist in a dilemma, for unless he avails himself of those organizations who are in a position to classify his work and present it neatly packaged, it is almost impossible to receive recognition or financial aid from the government's subsidation agencies.

For instance, if an artist is invited to exhibit at a large subsidized public art gallery, both the artist and the gallery are given assistance without the Canada Council's acknowledgement of the artist's particular and personalized needs. In such a case, government subsidation would cover the artist's fee, the cost of any publications and the gallery's administrative expenses during the exhibition. On the other hand, if the same artist chose to exhibit work at a small non-subsidized gallery or a private artistic enterprise, neither the artist nor the gallery would be automatically entitled to special government consideration in the form of financial aid. In effect, the Canada Council discriminates against both the small independent artistic enterprises and the artist by offering assistance, not when personal need is the greatest, but only when the artist is connected with an organization given privileged support from the Canadian government.

The misfortune of the present system is that these organizations are able to dictate, through a complex politically conceived and supported beaurocratic structure, superficial images in the guise of 'culture'. Firstly, placed in an enviable position within our present society, organizations such as theatre and music festivals, dance companies, symphonies, orchestras, museums, large funded art galleries and educational institutions are able to monopolize both government and private financial (and moral) support, and in so doing insure their own stability with a constant influx of grants from the Canada Council, Ontario Arts Council and various other government subsidation bodies. Secondly, the government's concession to demands for financial assistance from these organizations has established, in our opinion, a dangerous precedent. The present policies of the Canada Council and Ontario Arts Council are encouraging groups who recognize a financially profitable return in the formation of a corporate or institutionalized body which relegates individual effort (the artist) to a minor position in its structure. I am fearful that if the present policies of our government are continued, the state of our culture will suffer as a direct result.

I feel that those funds originally set-aside for the promotion of Canadian culture should not be concentrated primarily on corporate bodies, for the simple reason that, by and large, these corporate bodies (organizations) do not encourage innovative or creative forms of expression. There are many individual artists in our country who are presently unable to function properly due to lack of funding while the government persists in its support of politically motivated organizations which are nothing but 'monuments' to tried and tested forms of 'art'.

Although I am aware of the importance of a genuine concern with our country's historical roots, I yet do not believe that a Canadian culture is to be found, revived or nurtured within organizations that are primarily involved in the preservation of conventional artistic 'symbols' rather than the creation of contemporary artistic expressions.



Furthermore, under the present system of financial subsidation, artists have been subjected with increasing frequency to injurious demands from political agencies that seek to promote regionalism, the segregation of French and English-speaking communities, and the division of Canada into small, easily administered dependencies. On one level, such an approach can be seen as an honest attempt on Ottawa's part to breakup the traditional concentration and domination of cultural activity in the country by large metropolitan centres like Toronto and Montreal. However, on a more realistic level, this program is nothing less than an imposition of current federal policies concerning economic regional development; policies that have manifested themselves blatantly in the recent re-organization of the Canada Council.

I refer specifically to the instance in 1972 when Andre Fortier, upon taking up the position as director of the Canada Council, stated publicly that there were too many English-speaking members on the board of the Canada Council. Mr. Fortier was very concerned that certain individuals be removed immediately, despite their individual qualifications, and that their positions be filled by French-speaking people. At the time, this petty and prejudicial decision astounded me as it had nothing whatsoever to do with the integrity of Canada Council members, nor did it directly affect the future of our cultural growth. Nonetheless, the implications of this decision, which was nothing but a political move reflecting the persistent policies of our government in 1972, were considerable. Ultimately, this one political intervention in cultural affairs was able to undermine the original ideals of the Canadian government, when the Canada Council had been envisaged as an independent body that would be able to acknowledge and provide financial support to certain Canadian artists, without regard for their language or national origins.

However, with the intervention of governmental policies, the Canada Council became, in effect, nothing more than a distribution centre for cultural 'equalization payments' to the formerly neglected parts of the country, and ceased to deal with cultural matters per se. I am convinced that this approach illustrates a serious lack of commitment to and a fundamental misunderstanding of artistic excellence.

Essentially, it must be kept in mind that an artistic community, or a culture for that matter, does not develop over-night. Only after a community has acquired the necessary conceptual and technical tools, through a complex process of experimentation, exploration and exposure, can a meaningful culture begin to take root. Indeed, if a government granting agency proceeds to portion out its funds to each and every region, without due consideration of this natural and unavoidable process, it will most



certainly lead to a methodical destruction of individual effort and self-determination.

It is my belief that the object of our government's subsidization policies should be to build on and to give coherent artistic form to the raw, elemental sensibilities which distinguish the work of artists from different parts of the country. These diverse forms of 'expression' should not be regarded as 'tokens' or 'facsimiles' of our culture, but rather as exclusive expressions of exclusive processes. Genuine artists do not work in regions or in dialects. Their concerns are universal ones and cannot be divided by regional borders.

If government financial support to the arts in Canada is to provide a vigorous and healthy stimulus to the cultural life of the nation, encroachments on the independent pursuit of artistic excellence must be recognized and checked. A re-assessment and a reformation of our government subsidization agencies is in order.

Firstly, all government cultural institutions (Canada Council, Ontario Arts Council etc.) must free themselves from all political connections in order that the allocation of funds is never dictated by government policy decisions. Cultural institutions should not be political tools, but should protect Canada's artists from political pressures by acting as impartial bodies.

Secondly, advisory panels for these cultural institutions should be composed of those citizens who have made a positive contribution to our culture as visual artists, performers, art critics, editors, art dealers etc. They should be able to refer to their own rationally formulated concepts of artistic excellence in order to select those individual artists whose work warrants financial subsidization.

Thirdly, with the removal of all political influence, the scope of cultural institutions (should be limited to) facilitate the funding of all emergent artistic endeavours; not only those that comply (in form, philosophy or content) with a multi-cultural or regional view of expression. Regional origins, native tongue and previous connections with established organizations, communities, religious bodies or secular groups should be of no consequence in the granting of funds to individuals. A distinction must be made, by the Canada Council and by all government subsidization agencies, between those individuals who create souvenirs of a culture and those individuals (artists) who are actively involved in the broader and infinitely more valuable pursuit of human expression, from which cultures are made. Our government should recognize this and distribute grants solely in response to the artistic merit of the individual.



Fourthly, all funding to those organizations which are, in essence, nothing more than commercial enterprises concerned with their own financial stability rather than the pursuit of artistic excellence, should be discouraged and eventually stopped. These organizations should become self-supporting so that the funds which they presently monopolize may be granted to needful individuals, the true exponents of art.

In conclusion, artists should no longer be treated, by our government institutions, as insignificant parts of regional, linguistic, corporate or political categories. Nor should Canadian citizens be excluded from active participation in the cultural process. Our country must not be made a series of disparate units divided by government policies, but it must remain a country of inter-connected, yet completely individual, responses to unique experiences. Culture should be a source of pride for all people and should not be, in any sense, a product of bureaucratic calculations. It should be allowed to develop naturally through a process of individual effort followed, in time, by public acclaim.

CARMEN LAMANNA

