“BETTING ON SASKATCHEWAN”
NATIONALISM, CULTURAL IMPERIALISM AND THE EMMA LAKE ARTISTS’ WORKSHOPS

By

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Abstract

The Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops from the 1950s to the 1970s were a series of professional workshops held in northern Saskatchewan, under the auspices of the University of Saskatchewan and Regina College, for the creation and advancement of a dynamic arts culture in the province and as a way for the individual artists there to overcome feelings of isolation from the Canadian cultural hubs. Throughout the course of the Workshops provincial and federal attitudes, and cultural policies and perspectives on cultural nation building exerted an overarching influence in the shaping of the Workshops.

The Workshops drew the attention and support of many established celebrity U.S. artists and it is due to their presence and influence at the Workshops that it is possible to examine the provincial and national response to perceived U.S. cultural imperialism. The founding and maturity of the Workshops is a case study of the ways in which the politics of Canadian nationalism and the effects of U.S. cultural imperialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries interacted to impact the growth and development of art communities across Canada. The Workshops serve as an example of the effects, on a regional art movement, of Canada’s relationship with the United States, and Canadian response to the perceived threat of cultural imperialism from the U.S. Because the Workshops were a microcosm of cultural production, involving artists who, aside from their participation at Emma Lake, were often fairly isolated from the ebb and flow of art currents inherent to larger cultural centers, the Workshops are also an important case study of the effects of national and provincial policy on the regional arts. The Workshops’ history reveals that ideas of nationalism, regionalism and continentalism can come together to have a profound and unique effect on the development of an art community.
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Chapter 1: Introduction to Nationalism, Cultural Imperialism and the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops

The Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops were founded in 1955 by Kenneth Lochhead through Regina College and the University of Saskatchewan. Situated about fifty kilometres north of Prince Albert, in the Lakeland area of northern Saskatchewan, the Workshops at Emma Lake have run almost continuously on an annual basis with a brief interruption for a few years in the 1990s. The Workshops began as, and remained until the 1970s, a two-week, informal professional development opportunity for artists in western Canada who wanted to interact with their peers and learn about contemporary art techniques and theories from prominent artists, theorists and critics. Often considered the birthplace of the Regina Five and the training ground of the Canadian landscape painter Dorothy Knowles, the Workshops were also the foundation of a community of artists who did not become nationally known.

This thesis focuses on the founding and running of the Workshops up to 1972. After 1972 the premise, focus and format of the Workshops changed significantly to accommodate the needs of student artists rather than those of professional artists. While these changes are an important part of the history of Emma Lake, they reflect accommodation of different set of needs and attitudes that are beyond the scope of this work.

The founding and initial development of the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops is a case study of the ways in which the politics of Canadian nationalism and the effects of U.S. cultural imperialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries interacted to influence the growth and development of art communities across Canada. The Workshops serve as an example of the very real effects, on a regional art movement, of Canada’s relationship with the United States, nationalist ideas about what Canadians should be, and Canadian response to the perceived threat
of cultural imperialism from the U.S. In the existing scholarship, and in the popular mind as well, the Workshops are known primarily for the role they played in the formation of the group of artists known as the Regina Five. However, because the Workshops were a microcosm of cultural production, involving artists who, aside from their participation at Emma Lake, were often fairly isolated from the ebb and flow of art currents inherent to larger cultural centers, the Workshops are also an important case study of the effects of national and provincial policy on the regional arts. The Workshops’ history reveals that ideas of nationalism, regionalism and continentalism can come together to have a profound and unique effect on the development of an art community.

The Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops have been part of the scholarly dialogue involving Modernism and U.S. cultural imperialism in Canada since the Regina Five had its first show in 1961. More often than not discussion of Emma Lake has been cast in terms of the experiences of the members of the Regina Five and, when discussing these artists, Emma Lake is almost always mentioned: the two entities are inseparable from each other. Conversation regarding Emma Lake and the Regina Five usually revolves around the presence of Modernist painter Barnett Newman and Modernist critic Clement Greenberg at Emma Lake and their resulting influence on Canadian art. However, the history of Emma Lake involves much more than just a few artists, and this thesis strives to look at and beyond the popular narratives of the Workshops.

In survey texts and historical treatments of Canadian art from the 1970s, art is often considered as a national cultural product, the producers are ambassadors of regional attitudes, techniques and ideals and U.S. influence are closely monitored. In overviews such as Dennis Reid’s 1973 edition of *A Concise History of Painting in Canada* and J. Russell Harper’s 1977 book, *Painting in Canada: a History*, Canadian art is constructed in canonical terms as cultural
production that reflects the “push and pull” of national, local, and regional affinities.¹ The importance of Emma Lake in these national narratives of Canadian art is located not in the day to day operation of the Workshops or in the actions of most of the artists who participated, but rather in the role the Workshops played as a regional representative in the national art scene. Both Harper and Reid position the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops as a centre of intense new artistic growth that spread through the western provinces and both use the Regina Five as representative of the art and artists in southern Saskatchewan in the period. Neither addresses concerns regarding U.S. influence at Emma Lake, but rather they focus on the technical aspects of Modernism, the effect of Newman and Greenberg on the individual members of the Regina Five and how the Workshops influenced art in the region. In their 1978 book, Modern Painting in Canada: A Survey of Major Movements in Twentieth Century Canadian Art, Terry Fenton and Karen Wilkin build on this position, placing Canadian art in an alliance with nationalism through the development of Modernism.² Unsurprisingly the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops play an important role in this narrative. The authors position the Workshops as a reaction against the idea made popular by the Group of Seven that Canadian art should be influenced only by Canadian-ness. The Workshops’ direct communication with the New York City art scene is considered as a conscious decision by workshop organizers and artists alike to challenge the more traditional ideas of Canadianism in art and to disregard older ideas of nationalism in favour of the new. However, Fenton and Wilkin explain that by the late 1960s, continentalism of this variety had grown less appealing as worries about U.S. cultural imperialism grew.

One text from the 1970s regarding Emma Lake and the Regina Five stands in marked contrast to the other secondary works that address the Workshops, and for this reason bears

¹ Published by Oxford University Press and University of Toronto Press, respectively.
² Published by the Edmonton Art Gallery.
examination. Barry Lord’s reductionist Marxist reading of Canadian art history from 1974, *The History of Painting in Canada: Towards a People’s Art*, positions Canadian art against the background of U.S. cultural, economic and political imperialism. Accordingly, it pits continentalism against nationalism with a definite bias towards considering nationalism free from U.S. influence and control as the only acceptable national model. In this telling of the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops, Greenberg is considered the agent of imperial domination and Emma Lake is placed in a lineage of cultural takeovers and almost systematic U.S. influence over the arts in Canada. In this history of Canadian Art, Emma Lake is nothing more than an insemination point for New York City Modernism, the birthing place of the Regina Five and prominent Saskatchewan artist Dorothy Knowles and, in consequence, just another stage in the colonization of Canada by an American Empire. Because of Lord’s U.S. imperialist focus the depth and breadth of the Workshops’ history is overshadowed by Greenberg’s presence. What Lord calls the “branch-plant school at Emma Lake” is considered unproductive and irrelevant after Greenberg leaves Saskatchewan.

A 1983 survey considers Canadian art as less insular than earlier studies and sympathetically examines the bi-cultural and internationally-influenced nature of the arts in Canada. The Regina Five and the Workshops play an important role in this consideration of external influence and international interest in Canadian art. David Burnett and Marilyn Schiff’s *Contemporary Canadian Art* examines Emma Lake as a local history and the U.S. artists who came to it as being responsible for development of the Regina Five and Dorothy Knowles’ work. They position the Workshops as a contemporary undertaking that influenced the Saskatchewan art scene right up to the date of publication, including ‘up and coming’ young artists who had

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3 Published by NC Press.

recently attended workshops. In Burnett and Schiff’s book, the Workshops are not only considered in the context of Newman and Greenberg’s participation, but also as the founding place of a new community of young sculptors drawn to Emma Lake by the Steiner workshop. For Burnett and Schiff, the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops served as an example of the then current and vibrant art community in Saskatchewan.

In the 1990s the discussion regarding the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops began to focus more specifically and critically on politics and cultural policy than it had in previous decades. David Brian Howard’s 1993 PhD dissertation, “Bordering on the New Frontier: Modernism and the Military Industrial Complex in the United States and Canada, 1957-1965,” examines the relationship between Greenberg and the artists at the Workshops in an international context that includes issues relating to the balance of political and cultural power. Howard considers Greenberg’s influence in Saskatchewan against the backdrop of the Soviet-U.S. space race, the Cuban Missile Crisis and the politics of the Cold War generally. In short, Howard presents a case study of the complicated and contradictory history of Modernist art theory and the intersection of politics and art accompanying the decline of Modernist elitism. In Howard’s discussion of the Workshops, Greenberg’s participation at Emma Lake was not so much that of a cultural ambassador from the U.S., or even an agent of imperialism, but an attempt to relocate the heart of Modernism to Canada at a moment when the U.S. was moving towards the seemingly more democratic and egalitarian Pop Art. Whereas Howard specifically positions Emma Lake as a place where Greenberg attempted to transplant American Modernism, not necessarily to subjugate Canadian culture but to save the relevancy of the art movement, Daniel Currell, in his 1995 M.A. thesis, places Emma Lake and Greenberg on a collision course between U.S. cultural imperialism and Canadian anti-Americanism. In “Modernism in Canada: Clement Greenberg and

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5 Published by Hurtig Publishers Ltd.
Canadian Art,” Currell considers Greenberg as an agent engaged in a broader U.S. cultural imperialist agenda.\(^6\) This position is tempered by the admission that Greenberg was a strong influence but not a dictator---when the community in Saskatchewan grew resistant, Greenberg did not attempt to stay within it.\(^8\) Currell’s arguments center on Greenberg’s presence in Canada and not specifically on Emma Lake and the Saskatchewan art scene; he positions Emma Lake as the western centre of Greenberg’s influence in Canada and the place where he was more generally accepted on a local level.

Gender politics and feminist approaches to the history of the Workshops also became part of the Emma Lake discussion during the 1990s and 2000s. Maria Tippett, in her 1992 book, *By a Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women*, positions the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops as a place where women could work with prominent (male) artists to whom they would not have had access in a national art community that largely disregarded female artists and the work they produced.\(^9\) Tippett follows the story of Knowles as an example of a female artist who benefitted from the attention and instruction offered by international figures such as Greenberg and Newman. Terry Fenton’s 2008 study, *Land Marks: The Art of Dorothy Knowles*, also considers the Workshops as part of the artistic education of Knowles.\(^10\) Fenton positions the Workshops as an influential backdrop for Knowles’ development as a landscape painter, starting with Greenberg’s workshop and ending with the John Cage workshop. For both Tippett and Fenton, the Workshops were an important part of Knowles’ artistic life.

The discussion of politics and Emma Lake continued into the 2000s, but the Workshops also found their way back into conversations regarding Canadian art trends and the development

\(^6\) Published by the University of British Columbia.
\(^7\) Published by Concordia University.
\(^9\)Published by Viking Books.
\(^10\)
of art movements in Canada. April Britski considers the Workshops as a negative influence on the development of art in Saskatchewan in her 2005 M.A. thesis, “The Edge of the Painting: The Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops and the Politics of Location.” She positions the Workshops as a response to isolation from the national and international art discourses of the time. She argues, however, that, in turn, the Workshops created an isolation of their own in the province by creating a strongly dominant abstract art influence that limited the freedom of younger artists to experiment successfully with new techniques. Roald Nasgaard’s 2007 book, Abstract Painting in Canada, does not problematize the Workshops in this manner, but uses them as a regional representative of the province in response to international influences. Nasgaard considers the Workshops the western front of Greenberg’s influence, to whom he gives credit for making abstract painting the premiere style in Canada in the mid-twentieth century. Following earlier interpretations he also emphasizes the importance of the Workshops as the birthplace of the Regina Five.

There are two particular scholarly studies that are devoted entirely to the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops. John King’s undergraduate thesis from 1975, “The Emma Lake Workshops 1955-1970: A Documented Study of the Artists’ Workshop at Emma Lake,” is at best a source of “raw history,” providing readers with a wealth of primary evidence: it is an impressive collection of interview transcripts, questionnaire answers, letters and stories. It follows the Workshops from their founding in 1955 to the workshop in which King participated in 1970. King’s thesis tells the story of the Workshops through the comments and anecdotes of the participants without, as is often the case with works relaying events in very recent history, discussing the Workshops’ position in broader contexts such as the national art scene. King positions the Emma Lake

10 Published by Hagios Press.
11 Published by Carleton University.
12 Published by Brandon University.
Workshops as an important contemporary event on the Saskatchewan art scene simply by recording it through his edited presentation of the primary source record. The second work, John O’Brian’s exhibition catalogue, *The Flat Side of the Landscape*, is a series of essays compiled for an exhibition that was held at the Mendel Gallery in Saskatoon in 1989. O’Brian’s catalogue is the single most powerful and thorough analysis of the Workshops published to date. It positions them against the political development and history of the province of Saskatchewan and considers the Workshops as a regional phenomenon in a centre-periphery relationship within Canada.

The history of the regional art community in the province of Saskatchewan, how it emerged and the influences on its development, has bearing on the development of the Workshops. While a detailed consideration of the Regina, Saskatoon and Saskatchewan art communities, boards, societies and councils and the intra-provincial regional rivalries and alliances is beyond the scope of this thesis, a brief consideration of the literature that deals with this topic is necessary to help ground the discussion of Emma Lake within its broader provincial arts scene. The provincial history of arts and cultures is not widely developed at this point, but studies do exist. Often these works are prefaced by the argument that the development of art societies and infrastructure for the support of art was largely disregarded by the federal government and that the resulting isolation created an environment of creative problem-solving in the development of the arts community. Of the few works that explore this history, some discuss the development of the first societies and artists’ groups, while others study the emergence of specific artists and art champions in the province. Studies of the first kind are helpful in reinforcing the belief that the emergence of an artists’ workshop in the province was not an unprecedented event. Works of the last variety are useful to understanding the environment that

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13 Published by the Mendel Art Gallery.
gave rise to the workshops, as the individuals mentioned in them often had influence on or participated in the Workshops.

One of the most thorough works to deal with the broader art environment of Saskatchewan is Cheryl Meszaros’ 1990 M.A. thesis, "Visibility and Representation: Saskatchewan Art Organizations prior to 1945." In her study, Meszaros outlines the development of cultural communities in the province beginning in the late 1880s and the loose alliances created by artists who would meet to discuss their art practice. Meszaros’ work presents cultural undertakings in Saskatchewan, especially those of the early 1900s, not only as a product of isolation from the cultural scene in central Canada, but also as an attempt to create a regional identity. Meszaros’ thesis builds upon the work of earlier authors who advanced the idea that Saskatchewan has a unique and vibrant art history, much of it identified with the province’s two major cities, Regina and Saskatoon, and their competition for provincial preeminence in cultural, industrial and economic matters. By considering this work in conjunction with the Workshops’ history, it is clear that ideas of national isolation and provincial solidarity, as well as rivalry between the two major provincial centres, have been identified as themes in the developmental history of Saskatchewan’s art communities.

Scholarship that deals with the art history of Saskatchewan through the emergence of individual artists and art organizers often ties directly into the history of the Workshops as important figures in Saskatchewan art history frequently were involved in some way with the Workshops. One work that illustrates this is David and Walter Murray’s 1984 book, The Prairie Builder: Walter Murray of Saskatchewan, which follows the development of the arts community through the expansion of the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon and the efforts of Walter

14 Published by Queen’s University.
Murray to build a provincial university. Murray was responsible for fostering the art career of Augustus Kenderdine and for the creation of the Fine Arts Department at the University of Saskatchewan. Through the teaching efforts of Kenderdine and the fiscal competence of Murray, the Murray Point Art School was founded, which eventually became the site of the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops. Murray is also identified as an important patron of Ernest Lindner, a future Emma Lake participant who would eventually become a well-known Canadian artist. By tracing the organizational impact of one influential person The Prairie Builder provides insight into the immediate provincial circumstances surrounding the founding of the Workshops.

In addition to scholarly studies that examine the province’s art history or deal directly with the Workshops, my reading of the history of the Emma Lake Workshops is pinned critically to historiography that addresses the U.S.-Canadian relationship, cultural nationalism in twentieth-century Canada, and the development of provincial and federal infrastructure in support of arts and culture in Canada. The discussion regarding nationalism in Canada, Canada’s relationships with the United States and Canadian attitudes regarding continentalism and anti-Americanism begins, for this thesis, with S. F. Wise’s 1993 book, God’s Peculiar Peoples: Essays on Political Culture in Nineteenth-Century Canada. Wise considers the origins and development of political culture in Canada during the founding era of Canadian nationality. Wise’s essays explore the earlier history of nationalism in Canada that eventually created the specific climate necessary for cultural policy developments that produced the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops. Wise positions early Canadian identity as being caught in a binary clash with the U.S.——positing that the core of Canada’s national identity more often than not was simply ‘not American’——and follows the

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15 Published by NuWest Press.
16 Published by Carlton University Press.
evolution of that inflection from pre-confederation days to the twentieth century. The Muses, The Masses and the Massey Commission, Paul Litt’s 1992 study, follows the founding, sessions, reporting and implementation of The Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, later referred to as the Massey Commission, of 1951. In it the Massey Commission is presented as a culturally elite, nationalistic, class-based initiative supervised by the steady hand of noted British loyalist Vincent Massey. Litt positions the commission and the report it generated against the backdrop of national fears of Americanization and a burgeoning movement for cultural nationalism. Litt’s book considers the specific responses and outcomes of the Massey Commission. Thomas Thorner’s essay, “‘Ingested into the Eagle’s Gut’: Canadian-American Relations” from the 1998 collection of essays and documents, “A Country Nourished on Self Doubt”: Documents in Canadian History, 1867-1980, contends that Canadian national identity as a historical idea was founded on self-doubt and threatened by disintegration that evolved and developed into the multicultural ideal that is found today. The essay argues that national identity in Canada is built on the ‘not-American’ foundation. In the middle of the twentieth century, this idea of Canada burst into a full rebellion against U.S. cultural dominance. Norman Hillmer and Adam Chapnick’s 2007 collection of essays, Canadas of the Mind: The Making and Unmaking of Canadian Nationalism in the Twentieth Century, explores how Canada’s ideas of nationalism have at times contributed to, and at other times detracted from a unified popular understanding of what it is to be Canadian. Hillmer and Chapnick’s introduction explains that Canada is a pluralized state with divided histories and identities.

Between Canada’s definition of self in opposition to its powerful U.S. neighbours and the

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18 Published by University of Toronto Press.
19 Published by Broadview Press.
20 Published by McGill-Queen’s University Press.
pragmatic reality that Canadian survival is so strongly tied to healthy relations with the U.S. Canadian national identity has become wrapped up in terms of geography and climate as well as multiculturalism.

Culture was used purposely and strategically to promote national identity in the early twentieth century in Canada. In *Canada's of the Mind*, Sandra Campbell’s essay, “The Real Discovers and Master-Builders of This Nation”: Lorne Pierce of Ryerson Press and Nationalism in Canadian Art, 1920-1950,” describes, through the publishing practice of Lorne Pierce, how arts and literature began to be used as a unifying factor for the purpose of nationalism in Canada.21 Pierce, in Campbell’s telling, was an advocate of cultural nationalism who used his presses to help develop and foster a sense of cultural nationalism through his book series on national arts and literature. To Pierce, writers and artists—the heart of the intelligentsia—were the real creators of national identity. Without such structures of support as Pierce’s Ryerson Press, Campbell argues, there would be no hope for a meaningful, unifying sense of cultural identity.22 Campbell explains that Pierce, through his publishing, helped structure what made ‘Canadianness’ in art—representational, conservative, diffident and linked to the land and society.

Pierce was not the only leader to express concern for Canadian cultural sovereignty and to build structures to foster the development of Canadian art and literature. From long before the formation of the Massey Commission in 1949 many members of Canada’s cultural and intellectual elites repeatedly argued that Canadians needed to be responsible for the greater portion of art production and instruction and that public funding for the arts and letters was

21 Published by McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007.
necessary to the creation and maintenance of a national cultural identity. In his 2005 book, 
*Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Canada: American Philanthropy and the Arts and Letters in Canada*, 
Jeffrey Brison explains how the Carnegie and Rockefellers helped push Canada toward the 
development of a funding system for the arts and letters in the 1940s, which aided in creating the 
impetus for the Massey Commission of the 1950s.²³ He explores how U.S. corporations, such as 
the Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation, supported regional cultural 
development in western Canada and had an integral part in the foundation of cultural 
undertakings such as the art school at Emma Lake in the 1930s. Brison discusses how federal 
patronage of the arts in Canada was to some extent a response to the level of involvement of U.S. 
institutions in the funding of the Canadian arts. In the 2008 book, *Canadian Content: Culture 
and the Quest for Nationhood*, Ryan Edwardson discusses anti-Americanism and Canadian 
cultural policy and the arts.²⁴ Edwardson explains how state funding for culture was initiated as a 
nation-building tool by nationalists through specific eras of Canadian development. These 
nation-building measures were influential in the development of arts programmes in Canada and, 
indirectly, the formation of the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops, including their original 
acceptance and eventual rejection of US artists and critics.

Against the historiographical backdrop I have summarized in the preceding literature 
review, and drawing on an extensive program of primary research in the University of Regina’s 
Archives, as well as the University of Saskatchewan’s Archives, this thesis examines the Emma 
Lake Artists’ Workshops and their significance in the broader histories of regional arts and 
Canadian national culture, with reference to U.S. influence. To address these points, this thesis 
retells the history of the Workshops by looking beyond the construction of the Regina Five, and 
by focusing instead on the Workshops each year they were held between 1959 and the early

²³ Published by McGill-Queen’s University Press.
1970s. This retelling is important because, I argue, it is by examining the year to year history “on the ground,” that we develop a better understanding of the Workshops’ significance than previous writers have provided with their focus on the exceptional moments in the life of Emma Lake. By clarifying the events and responses to each Workshop and considering the national and provincial cultural policies that were relevant to that time the overall significance of the Workshops can be defined. My reconstruction of the history of the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops takes into account the existing secondary literature but makes use of the unpublished letters, reports and statements that are on file at the University of Regina and University of Saskatchewan archives. The correspondence between workshop administrators, workshop leaders, participants and various funding boards provides important information regarding the motives behind the choices that were made each year and the outcomes as they were perceived by those who participated. The broader issues that are examined through this history of the Workshops include the development of cultural nationalism in Canada, the ambiguity that characterizes Canada’s cultural relationship with the United States, and federal policies designed to regulate that relationship. This thesis argues that it is as an arena for the local art scene, for a regional arts movement, and as a conduit for interaction with external forces, including those emanating from the United States, that the Workshops of the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s gain their true historical and historiographical prominence. This account of the lived experience of the Workshops and their participants makes a case for an expanded definition of “Canadian art”---a definition that challenges an existing central Canadian hegemony.

In Chapter 2: Nationalism and Cultural Policy, the history of Canadian nationalism and Canada’s cultural relationship with the United States is explored. This chapter summarizes the history of Canadian attitudes towards the United States beginning before Confederation. There
has been ebb and flow in popular opinion in Canada regarding the U.S., and at certain points Canadians were more accepting of U.S. influence and aid than at other times. The formation of nationalism in Canada built upon a pre-confederation base of anti-Americanism and eventually became defined in large part as a binary opposite to U.S. ideals and identity. As the need for practical interactions with the U.S. increased in the face of Canada’s growing independence from Britain, and simple anti-Americanism was no longer tenable, the seemingly unique geography and climate of Canada became strong national identifiers. As this perception of climate and geography gained more traction in the formation of a national identity, the relationship between art, especially landscape painting, and the growing nationalism of the country prepared the political realm for the Massey Commission and its effects. The Massey Commission, and the relationship between culture and politics that followed it, are important to discussion of the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops. This thesis argues that the Zeitgeist that followed the Massey Commission is partially responsible for the creation of the Workshops and also, ironically, for their subordination as a national and nationalist art movement.

Chapter 3: The Founding of the Workshops, explains how the isolation of Saskatchewan from the larger cultural centres of Canada and the U.S., as well as the province’s unique political history, helped establish the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops. Saskatchewan, because of its distinctive political landscape, was one of the few places in Canada that would have embraced U.S. cultural influence as readily as it did in the 1950s. The apparent dichotomy between Canada’s history of distrust of the US and the explosive growth in popularity of the Workshops when famous Americans were introduced as leaders was possible only because of the attitude of the participants at the Workshops. That collective attitude---shared by organizers and artist participants alike---can only be explained with reference to a unique brand of western Canadian
regionalism that viewed cultural ties with the United States differently than did the leading central Canadians who dominated the leadership of the Massey Commission.

In Chapter 4: The Newman Workshop and Its Effect, the singular effects of the Newman workshop on the participants are discussed. The Newman workshop is significant not only in the founding and rise to prominence of the Regina Five, but also as an example of how Canadian identity, although not articulated as such, was a factor in the working habits and attitudes of the Canadian artists involved. Newman confronted a national identity that had become central to the personal and professional personalities of the artists he worked with at the Workshops---an identity pervaded, according to Newman, by diffidence and self-doubt. Through his confidence in art, his reverence of the act of creation and his encouragement of those at the Workshops, Newman helped start a fire of self-confidence that resisted the national norms and led directly to the creation of the Regina Five.

In Chapter 5: The Greenberg Workshop and Its Effect, the controversy surrounding the presence of the New York City art critic Clement Greenberg at Emma Lake is the central theme. The Greenberg workshop is one of the more famous workshops and certainly the most prominent in the existing scholarly literature and Greenberg’s attendance at Emma Lake created an apex of popular awareness of the Workshops. The year after his visit to Emma Lake, Greenberg published an article, “Clement Greenberg’s View of Art on the Prairies: Painting and Sculpture in Prairie Canada Today,” in Canadian Art, which created a stir in the art community in Canada. Greenberg’s article articulated what Newman had noticed two years earlier---that the Canadian artists lacked confidence---and what the artists at Emma Lake had been saying since the formation of the Workshops---that the artists in Saskatchewan were isolated. However, while some artists were energized and empowered by Greenberg’s presence in Emma Lake, he was not nearly as effusively accepted as previous Americans had been. The largely negative reaction to
Greenberg’s article on the part of readers in the prairie provinces is an example of change in the provincial attitude regarding foreign influence in the arts in Saskatchewan, in that his influence was not fully embraced as was Newman’s. Arguable, this shift in attitude came in response to a more integrated national identity and a re-emergent sense of distrust of US economic and cultural influence in Canada.

In Chapter 6: The Workshops Post-Greenberg, the Workshops from 1965 to 1972 and the changes that were instituted to their structure during that time are examined. In large part due to the departure of Kenneth Lochhead from the position of director soon after the Greenberg visit, the Workshops experienced a series of rapid changes. Whereas they had been started in the 1950s to address individual artists’ personal feelings of isolation, in the late 1960s they were eventually reinvented as a place for student artists to establish a sense of community. Anti-Americanism was growing and this change affected the Workshops. As well, the changing needs of the Saskatchewan art community influenced the Workshops from the beginning. After 1972 the Workshops were completely restructured and their focus re-evaluated. The era of Emma Lake as an art community developing in response to the national cultural policies of the 1950s had ended.

The Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops provide a unique opportunity to examine the effect of national, regional, and continental cultural politics on a developing art community. By understanding how the combination of personal conflicts and influences, national attitudes and official policy can positively and negatively affect the development of an art community, it is possible to better appreciate how those forces may concern contemporary art movements. This thesis argues that the federal policies of nationalism and the place that the arts had in the national arena, combined with Canada’s tradition of anti-Americanism, and the personal lives and choices
of the participants, were crucial in the development of what has come to be recognized as an important art community.
Chapter 2: Nationalism and Cultural Policy

The Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops are indicative of the ways in which the politics of Canadian nationalism and the effects of U.S. cultural imperialism in the early twentieth century interacted to influence the growth and development of art communities across Canada. The cultural environment following the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences of 1951 (popularly known as the Massey Commission after its chair, Vincent Massey) was partially responsible for the creation of the Workshops and also, ironically, for their decline in prominence in the national art scene. The relationship between culture and politics that existed before and immediately following the Massey Commission provide a context within which to understand the events, interactions and outcomes of the Workshops. Understanding that relationship also grounds this examination of the Workshops in knowledge of the national culture that was an encapsulating force informing their development.

The Workshops were partly an indirect local and regional response to the Massey Commission. In many respects the everyday cultural life of Saskatchewan did not reflect the ideals of the Commission until later in the 1960s and earlier responses to the Workshops were a result of preexisting attitudes that were part of the national cultural impulse leading to the creation of the Massey Commission. The Workshops were both a product of the contest between Canadian cultural nationalism and U.S. cultural influence and a localized response to these dueling forces.

2.1 The Massey Commission

The Massey Commission was formed to facilitate a better understanding and definition of the arts, letters and sciences in Canada. The reason for gathering information regarding the state of
Canadian culture, what cultural and scientific services Canadians felt they needed, what was happening in each province in the arts, letters and sciences, and what areas required increased funding was partly fiscal and partly nationalistic. On the one hand, the federal government could use the gathered data to better allocate funds; on the other it was felt that if Canadians were able to define Canadian culture, the public would be better able to choose distinctly Canadian cultural options when forced to decide between Canadian and U.S. cultural products.¹ Paul Litt explains that the Massey Commission is seen by many to be the creation point of Canadian culture and cultural policy and one of the important foundation pieces of Canada’s nationalism.² However, as Maria Tippett argues in Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts before the Massey Commission, and as Litt explains in his introduction, culture in Canada did not begin with the Massey Commission, but was rather a product of cultural ideals that were living and dynamic. When the report was published and released to the public the nation was at an important moment in its growth, feeling confident of its past record as a young, growing nation, optimistic about the future and ready to discover and identify its own, unique culture.³ The report covered many important cultural areas and ideas that ranged from French-English unity to the place of sports in the cultural fabric through to the ideological importance of a national public radio service; it also considered the federal government’s role in university funding and how to properly manage the government’s national culture institutions. The members of the Commission discovered that the encroachment of U.S. culture was an everyday fact in the lives of Canadians. This was considered to be part of the problem with defining a Canadian culture and the Report suggested

¹ A full description of the process utilized by the Commission, the interviews, the interpersonal politics and personal biases of the committee members are beyond the scope of this investigation and have been clearly explained in Paul Litt’s The Muses, The Masses and The Massey Commission, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992). Therefore a brief description of the outcome of the commission will suffice for the purposes of this paper.
² Litt, Muses, 5.
³ Litt, Muses, 5.
that efforts be made, through federal control of cultural media such as radio, to stem the flow of U.S. ‘low-culture’ into the minds and homes of Canadian citizens. It was not unexpected or uncharacteristic that the Commission would identify an infiltration of U.S. culture into Canada as a negative development, as Canadians had defined their identity, in varying degrees of intensity, as ‘not American’ for a very long time and had fought, in less official ways, against any influx of U.S. culture.\(^4\)

Also considered by the Commission was the reality that many Canadian cultural endeavours had come about only because of U.S. corporate philanthropy. Massey believed that, while Canada had been busy building its own national identity and working to free itself from its more British characteristics, U.S. money, U.S. culture and U.S. values had crept steadily into national life.\(^5\) Philanthropic organizations such as the Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation had been extremely generous with their endowments to the arts and scholarship in Canada, along with other U.S. businesses which had invested in Canada’s manufacturing and resource industries.\(^6\) In *Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Canada: American Philanthropy and the Arts and Letters in Canada*, Jeffery Brison explains,

> From the early 1920s to the late 1950s the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Rockefeller Foundation penetrated deep into the Canadian cultural and intellectual scene. The two original "Big Foundations" made substantial grants to Canadian universities, to public and private galleries, and to libraries and museums. They supported individual artists and scholars directly with grants and fellowships, sponsored their art associations and scholarly research councils, and funded special projects to help recipients with research and publication. Together, they contributed almost $20 million to the economy of Canadian culture. It was

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not, therefore, surprising that the members of the Massey Commission were quick to acknowledge Canada’s debt to American philanthropy.\textsuperscript{7}

The U.S. investment in Canada’s economy and culture had been a crucial part of Canada’s growing independence from Britain’s financial support and it helped integrate the country into the international economy on the North American continent.\textsuperscript{8} As a result, the Massey Commission’s investigation into the financial side of nationalism showed that the burgeoning country had relied heavily on U.S. investment, especially in the arts, and measures were put in motion to reverse this imbalance. Partly in reaction to the presence of U.S. corporate dollars in Canadian cultural institutions, the Commission suggested that the federal government create the Canada Council.\textsuperscript{9}

Created in 1957 in direct response to the Massey Commission, the council was established to encourage and foster the enjoyment, production and study of the cultural arts and specifically designed to operate independently from direct federal government procedures.\textsuperscript{10} The Canada Council became a body that was responsible for distributing funds to Canada’s cultural producers for the furthering of a national culture.\textsuperscript{11}

Lorne Pierce’s work at Ryerson Press provides a succinct example of the attitudes surrounding Canadian art that acted as a foundation for the work of the Massey Commission. Pierce was the head of Ryerson Press from 1920 to 1960 and used his position to advance Canadian cultural nationalism. He believed that artists and writers were the real builders of nationhood and he set about publishing a series of art books that encapsulated his ideas of the best of Canadian art. Pierce and his associates at the Press had a very specific idea of what constituted

\textsuperscript{7} Brison, Rockefeller, 21-22.
\textsuperscript{8} Brison, Rockefeller, 20.
\textsuperscript{9} Brison, Rockefeller, 19-20.
\textsuperscript{11} The Canada Council has, through the years, undergone a number of slight changes to its name. However, while the name has changed in nuanced ways over the course of almost fifty-five years, the focus of the Council has not and the name has always contained ‘Canada Council’ as part of it. Therefore, for the
the “best” Canadian art; a taste that was conservative in nature and favoured representational art. With this approach to art, Pierce’s publications valued the works of Paul Kane and Cornelius Krieghoff and the similarly outdoorsy artistic lifestyle and representational technique utilized by the Group of Seven. The watercolourist Daniel Fowler was considered to be a valuable artist for the early signs of the self-conscious art that became part of the Group of Seven’s repertoire.

Some contributors to Pierce’s influential book series, *Canadian Art*, included abstract art as a proudly Canadian approach, but this perspective was contested. Marius Barbeau, an anthropologist and art connoisseur, felt that abstract art had a place in the growing Canadian art scene because abstract painters had been influenced by the Group of Seven. However, most other contributors to the art series were more disapproving of abstract work, feeling suspicious that abstraction was not only hostile and unresponsive to the beauty of the Canadian landscape, but also that it registered the unwelcomed influence of a U.S. art form on Canadian painting.  

### 2.2 Culture, Politics and the Massey Commission in Saskatchewan

The search for and early acceptance of Barnett Newman’s influence by the Saskatchewan artists at Emma Lake and the suspicion with which subsequent Workshop leaders Clement Greenberg, John Cage and Don Judd were regarded are directly related to the political landscape that surrounded artists in the province. In the 1940s the Saskatchewan population voted in the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) led by Tommy Douglas. The CCF was the only popularly elected socialist government in North America at that time, a fact that was widely publicized across the continent. The CCF’s election platform called for the creation of the

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Saskatchewan Arts Board, which was fashioned after the British Arts Council. The Saskatchewan Arts Board, in an effort to help musicians, performers and writers in the province, held a series of workshops in the early 1950s. The first Arts Board workshop was led by an expatriate American who had been the focus of a hunt by the Washington State Committee looking for ‘Un-American Activities’ in individuals of interest (such as artists and writers). While the 1950 Art Board workshops are not directly related to the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops, they are indicative of the provincial government’s concern for the development of the arts and are evidence that provincial organizers sought out recognized authorities in the art world regardless of what their political reputation or nationality might be. When the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops began in 1955, prominent British Columbia painter Jack Shadbolt’s honorarium was provided by a grant from the Saskatchewan Arts Board, which had by that point been responsible for many cultural initiatives across the province. In subsequent years the Saskatchewan Arts Board sometimes supplied supplemental funding depending on demand from the Workshop coordinators and the availability of funds.13

According to art historian John O’Brian, the pragmatic focus of the Saskatchewan Arts Board was diametrically opposed to evolving federal cultural policies. Where the Board promoted merit-based hiring of instructors, the Massey Commission clearly stated that “Canadian nationalism in the arts should be promoted to counteract the influence of American cultural values.”14 The Massey Commission, and by extension the government of Canada, felt that Canadian culture was under attack, or less fantastically, in danger of being subsumed by pervasive U.S. culture. The rejection of U.S. influence was not based on a stated belief that U.S.

culture was of less quality than Canadian culture, but that U.S. culture, in any form, was alien to what the Commission saw as the cultural needs of Canada. Instead, the Commission explained that the need to regulate the influence of U.S. culture was imperative to Canada’s burgeoning nationhood.\textsuperscript{15} While the report was not openly anti-American, Litt explains that “the message that American cultural imperialism was a threat to Canadian nationhood still came through loud and clear.”\textsuperscript{16} And while the report did not openly admit that the Commissioners felt U.S. culture was of lesser quality, it intimated that, by refusing U.S. mass culture in favour of Canadian culture, Canadians would be promoting elite cultural forms. The Commission attempted, in a way, to build a wall of cultural policy to keep the mass-producing, mass-consuming cultural hoards at bay. On another level the report also argued that “American generosity was no substitute for self-sufficiency”; this further reinforced the implication that nationhood was at stake in this issue and to fail in this area would be an acceptance of a permanent U.S. cultural crutch.\textsuperscript{17}

Before the release of the Massey Report, many western Canadians felt that they might have more in common with their U.S. brethren than with eastern Canadians. In the early 1950s, “anti-Americanism was irrelevant to prairie needs,” O’Brien explains.\textsuperscript{18} At that time, many in Saskatchewan felt that there was a possibility that they could gain more from their U.S. neighbour than from those who directed public policy in central Canada. Many in Saskatchewan felt isolated from the imperialism of the States, just as they felt isolated from the aid and cultural influence of central Canada. The threat of being taken over by U.S. culture and losing a culture particular to Saskatchewan was not something that was viewed as a possibility; residents of the

\textsuperscript{14} O’Brien, “Where the Hell is Saskatchewan,” 33.
\textsuperscript{15} Litt, \textit{Muses}, 212.
\textsuperscript{16} Litt, \textit{Muses}, 212.
\textsuperscript{17} Litt, \textit{Muses}, 212.
\textsuperscript{18} O’Brien, “Where the Hell is Saskatchewan,” 32.
province felt so out of touch with everything already and felt as if they were suffocating in a vacuum of seclusion. In the 1950s in Saskatchewan, to be staunchly against U.S. culture would have only further separated the province from the rest of the world.

By the 1960s, however, the Saskatchewan political scene was changing. Those who openly welcomed external influence into the void of isolation in the early 50s had, by the 1960s, started to revise and reverse their attitudes. Some Saskatchewan artists began to feel that the province was not as isolated as it had been a decade earlier and that their nationalist tendencies were much stronger than they had been previously.\(^19\) This was evident in 1964, when Greenberg published an article in *Canadian Art* that discussed his view of art on the Canadian prairies. (When the editors of *Canadian Art* learned that Greenberg was planning to come to Canada for the workshops, they asked the critic to write a review the work of artists from the prairies for the Ottawa-based journal.) Even though Greenberg reviewed the production of almost one hundred artists from Winnipeg to Edmonton working in abstract art, landscape painting, or sculpture, and was largely impressed with what he saw, the article proved controversial and provoked many unhappy responses from magazine readers and artists who had been reviewed in the piece. Notably, much of the objection was expressed in terms of nationalism and suspicion of an American expert. In response to the anti-American outcry generated by Greenberg’s article, Workshop administrator Arthur McKay wrote in a following edition of *Canadian Art*:

> The reaction to the tour article in *Canadian Art* revealed that most of us are terrified that someone may tamper with our image. Curiously enough, we accept political coercion, economic domination, Coca-Cola, and mass communication, while we resist exposure to the more humane and civilized arts from the U.S.A.\(^20\)

In that same year W.A. Riddell, principal of Regina College, began to pressure McKay to bring in more Canadian artists, or at the very least artists not from New York City, to act as Workshop

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\(^{19}\) O’Brian, “Where the Hell is Saskatchewan,” 32-36.

leaders. Riddell had noticed that all the leaders up to that point had been either from Vancouver or from New York, and that the majority had been American. Gently rebuking McKay, Riddell surmised that there must be artists from other places on the continent of similar reputation.

2.3 Nationalism and Other Factors Influencing the Workshops

When the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops were formed in the 1950s Canada was in the middle of a transition; there was a move from a laissez-faire approach to nationalism in the arts, at least on the federal level, to a more strategic use of the arts for nationalistic ends. As I argue in later chapters, the Workshops were created, at first, as an environmental response to the Massey Commission and ideas of Canadian nationalism and the arts in Saskatchewan. Lochhead and the other administrators of the first workshop were eager to do their part to create a place in Saskatchewan where Canadian art and a defining Canadian artistic spirit could be developed and in turn contribute to the nation. However, in their first few years, the underlying motive for the Workshops changed in focus, if not effect. While it is possible for artists in isolation to create art meant for the national scene, in this case it would appear that the Workshops quickly became driven less by nationalism than by the immediate needs of the artists who attended. Whereas the Workshop invitations had originally stated that the Art Department at Regina College was working to contribute to the production of Saskatchewan culture, an application letter from 1960 to the Canada Council stated that Saskatchewan artists were responding to feelings of isolation.

The Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops illustrate that in the years following the Massey Commission the cultural life of the Canadian Prairies gradually changed. Whereas in the 1930s

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22 O’Brien, Flat Side, 130.
the Murray Point School of Art (the place the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops were held each year) received funds from the Carnegie Foundation for slides and other art history related materials, in the 1960s even the idea of an American commenting on the Workshops prompted a vehement response from the residents of Canada. As I demonstrate in the following chapters, the positive reaction to Newman’s participation in the 1959 workshop differs markedly from the response to Greenberg’s participation just three years later. The largely negative reader response to Greenberg’s Canadian Art article was based heavily on the idea that U.S. approval of Canadian art efforts was evidence of the existence of cultural imperialism. This attitude regarding U.S. authority was not new, having been a part of Canadian culture since before Confederation. However, the resurgence of such resistance, particularly when it followed decades of openness towards the U.S.’s cultural products, was typical of pervasive attitudes following the report of the Massey Commission. The Massey Commission was not responsible for the anti-American sentiment that Greenberg brought out in some of the Canadians he dealt with personally, or in the people who responded to his article; however, it helped confirm the stance that many of those who lived north of the 49th parallel had held for generations.

It seems that the federal policies that promoted cultural nationalism in the aftermath of the Massey Commission helped, in part, to colour the view of the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops and aided in their gradual decline in popularity. As I explain in the following chapters, whereas almost all the participants at the Barnett Newman workshop of 1959 felt that they could learn and grow under the tutelage of a great American artist, by later workshops in the 1960s many of the participants viewed their American instructors with barely concealed contempt. As well, throughout the 1960s it became increasingly difficult for the administrators of the workshop to secure funding. The Saskatchewan Arts Board was reluctant to contribute funds

26 Morrison, Ann K. “Beginnings: The Murray Point Summer School of Art 1936-1955,” in Flat Side, ed. 28
on a regular basis, and the Canada Council also declined to award grants with oblique suggestions that instructors from New York were not an appropriate choice for the Workshops.\textsuperscript{27}

As I discuss in the following chapters, many factors contributed to the development and perceived relevancy, or lack thereof, of the Workshops. In part, Canada’s federal views of nationalism shifted right at the moment the Workshops began. By the time the Workshops gained momentum and began to attract international attention Canadian ideas of cultural nationalism and patriotism had rejuvenated and had found their way into the mainstream perspective of the people of Saskatchewan, rendering the Workshops slightly anachronistic. While the Regina Five became accepted in central Canada as representative of a kind of Canadian painting, the Workshops themselves never fully shook their reputation as a Modernist stronghold in western Canada. The strong presence and influence of U.S. artists at the Workshops and a focus on abstract, Modernist art helped create a reputation and niche for them, but it also placed the Workshops at odds with still widespread public suspicion of abstraction and U.S. cultural influence. The effects of U.S. cultural imperialism, or the fear of such, and the changing face of Canadian cultural nationalism, as well as modifications to the cultural policies of the country, all contributed to the founding and initial development of the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops. These political and national attitudes work as an influence, frame and backdrop for the cultural production that played out at Emma Lake in the mid-twentieth century.

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item O’Brian, 22.
\item \textsuperscript{27} URA, DVAP, 86-29, “Kenneth Lochhead Papers,” Clement Greenberg to Lochhead, 8 May 1963. McKay was the administrator of the Workshops at this time. McKay told Greenberg who then discussed it in his personal correspondence with Lochhead. The original letter to McKay from the Canada Council is not found in the extant files from McKay’s administration, which were not as meticulously kept as those of previous administrations.
\end{itemize}
Chapter 3: The Founding of the Workshops

The Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops began in the late summer of 1955 and are described as one of the most significant artistic events to have occurred in the province of Saskatchewan.¹ The Workshops were founded with the idea of helping establish the fine arts as part of cultural life in the province. They quickly became a tool for the art community in Saskatchewan to fight the feeling of isolation caused by the province’s position on the cultural periphery. Within ten years of their founding the Workshops would become a catalyst for massive art growth in western Canada. Springing up at an opportune moment in national development, the Workshops would also see the creation of a nationally known artists’ group and become a major source of inspiration for a number of recognized Canadian artists. However, while this was the destiny of the Workshops, they were founded with much more humble motives and aspirations.

Kenneth Lochhead became the new director of art at the Regina College School of Art in 1950, when there were few professional art programs in the province.² Lochhead was born and raised in Ottawa and had, by the age of 24, studied art at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia and at the Barnes Foundation in Merion, Pennsylvania.³ Moving from the cultural richness that these cities offered to the stark cultural landscape of the prairies, Lochhead brought with him a concern for fostering the arts in Saskatchewan. He began to actively build the School of Art as a thriving centre for art education and undertook plans for the creation of an art gallery

in Regina.\(^4\) The Summer School at Murray Point was of particular interest to Lochhead. He and his associates at the School of Art saw the students who attended the summer school as part of a force of artists who were going to help establish art and art making as an important and active factor in the cultural life of the province.\(^5\) Understanding the challenges these local artists experienced in surmounting isolation from the cultural centres of Canada and the United States, Lochhead decided that it would be helpful to invite artists to Saskatchewan.\(^6\) After negotiations between Regina College and the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon regarding which institution would run the Murray Point Summer School came to a close, Lochhead founded the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops there.

Emma Lake is located in the Lakeland region of northern Saskatchewan, about fifty kilometres north of Prince Albert.\(^7\) Murray Point, the site of the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops, is located in the center of the Lakeland Recreation area, surrounded by government-owned wilderness, cabin country, and private recreation camps.\(^8\) In 1936 the land at Murray Point was leased from the Crown by the University of Saskatchewan and was used to establish the Murray Point Summer School of Art.\(^9\) The building of the Murray Point campus (later to be known as the Emma Lake Kenderdine campus) was sponsored by the University of Saskatchewan, although the majority of the funds came from the Carnegie Corporation.\(^10\) Even though development funds were lacking during the Depression, the university felt that the expenditure was justifiable as the Emma Lake campus would not only bolster and reinforce the university’s growing network of

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\(^8\) “Emma Lake Recreation Site.”
influence by creating a campus in the north of the province, but it would also relate the importance the university gave to cultural education. If the Murray Point campus had been developed twenty years earlier or twenty years later, the fact that the majority of the funds for the campus’ establishment came from U.S. sources would likely have been considered a problem that would have hampered its progress. However, as the campus was established during the period of time that saw Canada willingly accept and greatly depend on American generosity to help foster its independence from Britain and boost the Canadian economy, there was very little concern that the funds that facilitated the spread of cultural influence throughout the province came from a distinctly foreign and private philanthropic corporation.

Regardless of cultural politics and foreign influence, the Murray Point site was chosen because of its geographical attributes. It was situated on twenty acres of Crown land, which included a peninsula that reached five acres into the lake. A well-timbered piece of property with waterfront on three sides, it was considered to be the perfect environment for teaching students the craft of landscape painting. The lake, the tree-line and the atmosphere of isolated wilderness were important factors in the choice of site in the 1930s. By 1955, when the Murray Point Summer School became the location of the Emma Lake Workshops, the isolation and remote location the area offered was advertised to Workshop leaders as an enticement to come and direct the classes. In 1960, the entire Emma Lake campus area was declared a game preserve, insuring the wilderness aspect of the campus would not be compromised. When the university added an ecology and botany department to the satellite campus, it only increased

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artists’ recreational interest in the Workshops. U.S. artist John Cage was very interested in the botany department in the hope of securing a donation of dried mushrooms to study and to add to his experiences as a hobby mycologist.\textsuperscript{16} When New York-based artist Barnett Newman came to lead a Workshop in 1959, he was excited just to be closer to the northern tundra.\textsuperscript{17}

For the first two decades of the campus’ existence, its administration shifted back and forth between the University of Saskatchewan and Regina College. In 1935, university president Walter Murray invited Augustus Kenderdine to find a site for the new School of Art that the university was planning to establish (hence the name of the school, “The Murray Point Summer School”). While the impetus for the art school had come from the university, its actual establishment would have been nearly impossible without Regina College, which had come under the administration of the university the following year, giving the university access to a $50,000 grant given to the college by the Carnegie Corporation. After much discussion regarding the mandate of the school, how it would operate and what type of instruction would be offered, it was decided that the university would be able to provide the best institutional support. However, when the university took control of the college in 1934, the contract required that, when funds were available, a school of art would be established at Regina College. In 1935, Norman Mackenzie, a Regina lawyer and National Gallery of Canada Board of Trustees member died and left his art collection and a large sum of money to Regina College; the money willed to the college was enough to force the university president to establish a School of Art at the College. Kenderdine was transferred from the University of Saskatchewan to Regina College as a member of its first Fine Arts faculty. Despite this faculty shuffle, the summer school remained under the auspices of the University until 1952. In 1952, after a decade-long surge of interest in art education in Saskatchewan and a difference of opinion between the faculty of art at the university

and the college over who should be the focus of the summer school (student teachers or artists), it was decided that the administration of the Emma Lake campus would alternate each year between the two institutions. The juggling of the campus between the institutions created instability at the summer school as the philosophical focus dramatically shifted from one summer to the next. In 1954 another meeting was called to discuss the administration of the campus; two years after this meeting Regina College was given official sole jurisdiction over the summer school, although in practice the college had been running the campus since the 1954 meeting. However, the campus property remained in the possession of the University of Saskatchewan and in the 1960s the University built a Biology department on the campus. The art school passed into the control of the University of Saskatchewan again in the 1970s with an agreement between the University of Saskatchewan and the Prince Albert Regional Community College; the agreement stated that the Prince Albert Regional Community College would run the art school under the supervision of the University of Saskatchewan.\(^{18}\)

Although the Emma Lake campus was founded as a place to teach student teachers how to teach art, it eventually became much more than that. In the 1930s, when the School started, art was taught in the same manner that it had been at the Académie Julian in Paris since 1890 (when Kenderdine had attended), and art history was taught as a course in ‘art appreciation’. But in 1936, art history courses began to be taught from a more historical standpoint, aided by slides, reproductions and books that had been donated by the Carnegie Corporation. With the death of Kenderdine in 1947 and the appointment of Lochhead as director in 1950, things began to change rapidly at the School. In 1954, when it was decided that the Regina College would become the sole administrator of the School, the permanent administration change paved the way for

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\(^{17}\) O’Brian, “Where the Hell is Saskatchewan, and Who is Emma Lake?” in Flat Side, ed. O’Brian, 31.

Lochhead to request a two week extension to the summer school to allow for a workshop for professional artists, led by a prominent artist or theorist.\(^{19}\)

In August of 1955 the Artists’ Workshops at Emma Lake began.\(^ {20}\) Each consisted of a two-week, non-credit, informal seminar and working retreat for painters and sculptors.\(^ {21}\) The content and form of the Workshop was decided annually by the Workshop leader brought in for the event.\(^ {22}\) The participants were artists who had either applied to attend or had been invited by the Workshop administration. Often the same core of artists came annually, with others attending individual workshops as finances and interest permitted. The policy of the administration was that no structure was to be imposed on the leader, giving him the option to apply any method he felt would best further instruction in that Workshop.\(^ {23}\) The Workshops continued in this manner annually from 1955 through to 1995, and then from 2005 to 2011 with few interruptions. Some group leaders, such as the first Workshop leader, Vancouver artist Jack Shadbolt, took a very structured and pedagogical approach to art instruction; Shadbolt brought a class syllabus, “demonstration analyses” and scheduled lectures.\(^ {24}\) Other leaders, such as Barnett Newman, were very relaxed and unstructured in their styles of instruction; Newman neither demonstrated nor analyzed, and he gave no assignments nor scheduled discussion times. He just talked (fairly incessantly it appears) about art and being an artist.\(^ {25}\) John O’Brian writes that Newman instilled

\(^ {22}\) King, “Workshops,” 2.
\(^ {25}\) O’Brian, *Flat Side*, 79.
in the Workshop participants “the moral seriousness of painting as an activity” and the “sanctity of the studio as a place of work.”

The Workshops were designed to address the isolation of western artists from the influence and activity of art centers to the south and east. The invitations to the first Workshop, possibly in response to the Massey Commission’s call for the fostering of a uniquely Canadian arts and culture foundation, had said that the Workshops were an opportunity to help create a real cultural life in Saskatchewan. While the production of Canadian culture had been part of the reason for the creation of the Workshops, the Workshops continued because of a genuine need for the creation of an art community in Saskatchewan. Arthur McKay and Lochhead, the originators of the Workshops, were both instructors of Art at Regina College and had been trained outside of the province---Lochhead in the United States and McKay in Alberta (and then later in the United States on a Canada Council grant). Because neither of the artists were from Saskatchewan, but had moved there from larger centres, they felt the seclusion keenly. Both artists felt that the isolation that was caused by the geographical location of Saskatchewan could be alleviated by bringing artists and instructors into the community to share their experience. Lochhead and McKay created the Workshops in hopes of addressing their own artistic needs, as well as the needs of other artists who may have wanted to benefit. In testimonials written to secure funding for later Workshops almost all the artists who participated referred to both the feeling and reality of isolation. Mina Forsyth, a Workshop participant and artist, stated that the Workshops seemed

26 O’Brian, Flat Side, 79.
27 Burnett, Contemporary, 127.
29 Dennis Reid, A Concise History of Canadian Painting (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1973), 269-270.
30 King, “Workshops,” 2.
31 King, “Workshops,” 2.
“to be the answer for filling the need not only for new material but also for association with other practicing artists.”

The problem, however, was not that Saskatchewan artists were unmotivated to find outside inspiration for themselves or financially and socially incapable to practice a kind of 1950s modern style ‘Grande Tour’. Saskatchewan art was thought to be beyond the reach of Canadian mainstream art for a number of reasons beyond the individual artists’ immediate control. The geographical isolation of Saskatchewan, combined with the Great Depression of the 1930s and the resulting exodus of artists from the province, had led to a weakening of the art community, which made it difficult for those tied, through jobs and families, to the province to address. To complicate matters, while the practicing art community was small, the audience for art was even smaller relative to those in other North American regions. This led to a very real isolation from inspirational stimuli and ultimately caused McKay and Lochhead to import stimulation from outside the province.

The form of the first Workshop, under Shadbolt, was similar to the Workshop the following year, which was led by Will Barnet; both were based on a tight, didactic approach.

Ernest Lindner, a participant in the Shadbolt workshop and member of staff at Emma Lake during Kenderdine’s time as director, explained that Shadbolt had a very intensely classroom-like instructional method:

> Shadbolt [was] a very forceful teacher and he lectured every morning for three hours. We got very sore sitting on our behinds on the wooden benches. In the afternoon he would give us something to do, and it was just like an art class. Then in the evening there was supposed to be discussion but it was always a monologue by Jack Shadbolt; and it was all right because nobody knew what was going to develop out of the Workshop.

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32 O’Brian, “Where the Hell is Saskatchewan,” 34.
33 O’Brian, “Where the Hell is Saskatchewan,” 34; Burnett, Contemporary, 126.
34 King, “Workshops,” 53.
35 King, “Workshops,” 53.
Yet, despite the grumblings of some of the participants about sore body parts, many found Shadbolt to be a positive influence. He seemed to have opened new pathways of exploration for the artists. In a letter to Lochhead after the Workshop, Lindner said that Shadbolt’s explanations of painting in theory and practice had “opened new vistas” to him and that he “would never be the same again.” As McKay colourfully expressed it, Shadbolt had a “diarrhea” of initiatives that were only barely held in check by the “constipation” of the systems that funded the execution of those ideas. Shadbolt taught, specifically, about the ideas of Hans Hoffman---the push and pull of space and ideals of composition, and more generally about finding artistic inspiration everywhere---and introduced mad schemes to employ a multi-disciplinary team of people to map and study a particular area of forest floor. Lindner also wrote that he, as well as everyone else with whom he had spoken, was enthusiastic about their experiences at the Workshop and that he was looking forward to more Workshops in the following years. “I would say, that this ‘Workshop’ certainly has been a milestone in the Art development in Saskatchewan,” Lindner wrote, “and that its ramification will be felt for a long time to come.”

Shadbolt’s involvement in the first Workshop made it possible for the Workshop planners to get his advice about and referrals for future leaders. In December of 1955, Lochhead wrote a letter to David Alfaro Siqueiros regarding the 1956 Workshop, suggesting that a muralist such as Siqueiros or Mexican muralist José Gutierrez would doubtless provide a wonderful learning experience for the participants and way to create closer ties between Canada and Mexico. The following March Shadbolt wrote to Lochhead expressing his hope that Lochhead had not

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37 King, “Workshops,” 53-54.
38 King, “Workshops,” 53-54.
40 King, “Workshops,” 53-54.
committed himself and the 1956 Workshop to Gutierrez as the leader.\textsuperscript{42} Shadbolt related his pointed suspicion of Gutierrez’s politics and ‘high art’ education and “taste.”\textsuperscript{43} He felt that Gutierrez’s “taste” and theoretical approach were informed by a Communist understanding of the proletariat combined with sentimentality and emotionalism and that these would be of little profit for those in Saskatchewan.\textsuperscript{44} It would appear that Shadbolt took the political ideas of the Cold War era very seriously and influenced the administrators of the Workshops to reject the Mexican artists based on their communist ties. Shadbolt was not from Saskatchewan and did not share the ideals of a merit-based evaluation system that the province had fostered since the beginning of the Cold War in the 1940s. Shadbolt, to prove that it was not just politics that he held against Gutierrez, also said that in his opinion the easel painters at the Workshop, such as Ernest Lindner, were far too “eager but unsettled learners” to handle experimenting with Gutierrez’s crude technical approach to the use of polyvinyl.\textsuperscript{45} Shadbolt then gave his advice regarding how the Workshop should be structured (suggesting a simple series of painting sessions followed by serious analytical group critiques) and which artists should be invited: George Swinton, Joe Plaskett, Jacques de Tonnancourt or Eric Freifeld.\textsuperscript{46} The following month Lochhead wrote to H. H. Ferns, the director of the Summer School, to inform the administrator that he had decided that the Mexican muralist would likely not attract much interest if he had been chosen as a Workshop leader and suggested, instead, that British Columbia artist Joe Plaskett be leader that year.\textsuperscript{47} Plaskett was the last Canadian artist to lead a Workshop at Emma Lake until much later in the twentieth century.

\textsuperscript{42} URA, DVAP, 89-5, “Emma Lake 1956,” Jack Shadbolt to Lochhead, 5 March 1956.
\textsuperscript{43} URA, DVAP, “Emma Lake 1956,” Shadbolt to Lochhead, 5 March 1956.
\textsuperscript{44} URA, DVAP, “Emma Lake 1956,” Shadbolt to Lochhead, 5 March 1956.
\textsuperscript{45} URA, DVAP, “Emma Lake 1956,” Shadbolt to Lochhead, 5 March 1956.
\textsuperscript{46} URA, DVAP, “Emma Lake 1956,” Shadbolt to Lochhead, 5 March 1956.
\textsuperscript{47} URA, DVAP, 89-5, “Emma Lake 1956,” Lochhead to Ferns, 3 April 1956.
The first U.S. artist to teach at the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops was Will Barnet. The New York City painter was suggested to Lochhead and McKay by artist and committed Workshop participant William Perehudoff, who had met Barnet during a visit to New York.\textsuperscript{48} Lochhead felt that, in order to further the high standard of education that had been provided by the Workshops, a prominent U.S. artist would be the best choice as the third Workshop leader. Accordingly Barnet was invited to teach the 1957 Workshop.\textsuperscript{49} Barnet was already connected to the Workshops through Shadbolt, who had trained under Barnet, and Barnet wrote to Lochhead, “I feel a bond of closeness to the Canadian artists who have worked with me and who’s \textit{sic} friendship I have valued so these many years.”\textsuperscript{50} Barnet accepted the invitation after negotiating the travelling stipend offered by Lochhead; the cost of travel for Barnet and his wife was more than the travel funding given to previous visiting artists.\textsuperscript{51}

Lochhead wrote the Art Committee of the Saskatchewan Art Board for a grant to help with the costs associated with the Workshop. The Art Board had supplied an annual grant of $450 for the first two Workshops and Lochhead asked for the same sum for the American-led 1957 Workshop.\textsuperscript{52} However, by that time the provincial attitude towards accepting anyone, even an American, who had something profitable to share, was beginning to fade. The Board replied by asking for more information about the Workshops, their purpose, the funding structure that Regina College and University of the Saskatchewan had worked out and who Mr. Will Baranet [sic] was.\textsuperscript{53} It was concerned that the money would be seen as an annual commitment, and speculated as to whether it was an efficient use of provincial funds. The letter stated that at the Board’s deliberation meeting, “there was general concern about how effectively this sum was

\textsuperscript{49} URA, DVAP, “Emma Lake 1956,” Lochhead to Barnet, 23 October 1956. 
\textsuperscript{50} URA, DVAP, 89-5, “Emma Lake 1956,” Barnet to Lochhead, 5 November 1956. 
\textsuperscript{51} URA, DVAP, “Emma Lake 1956,” Barnet to Lochhead, 5 November 1956. 
\textsuperscript{52} URA, DVAP, “Emma Lake 1960,” Lochhead to the Canada Council, 16 December 1960.
being spent.”

According to later correspondence between Lochhead and the Canada Council in 1960, the Saskatchewan Art Board did supply the requested $450 for the Barnet Workshop as well as the following two Workshops before the Board decided to use more of its limited funds on other projects in the province. While the Board never stated in any of its correspondence with Lochhead that it was reluctant to share funds with the Workshop because it was now hosting U.S. artists, it is noteworthy that it began to question the Workshop’s purpose and needed more information on the artists before it would agree to fund the Workshops. In the three years that had passed since the beginning of the Workshops the atmosphere in the Saskatchewan culture sector had begun to change rapidly, falling in line with the national opinion regarding what was and was not a favourable source of cultural influence.

The 1957 Workshop with Barnet was quite similar in teaching style to the Workshops led by Plaskett and Shadbolt, but unlike the first two the 1957 Workshop seemed to have started a groundswell effect that would reach its apex with the Barnett Newman Workshop. The attraction of a visiting, established, U.S. artist seems to have been a great draw, and whereas the first Workshops had accepted most artists who were financially able and eligible to participate, in mounting Workshops led by these artists, Lochhead was forced to decline the participation of many applicants. The maximum number of participants for the 1957 Workshop had been placed at twenty-five students, and by June of 1957 Lochhead was writing rejection letters to hopeful participants for the August Workshop. This interest in the Workshops would continue to grow until the Workshops saw participants from across Canada and the U.S.

Considering Canada’s history of distrust towards overtures of cultural aid from the U.S., and considering the political atmosphere regarding ideas of cultural imperialism following the

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publication of the Massey Commission report, it might seem strange that this Canadian workshop series would grow astronomically in popularity after the introduction of American leaders.\textsuperscript{56} However, there are a number of things that made this possible. In the mid-1950s Saskatchewan, although not as isolated as it had been just five years before, was still not part of the national cultural hub. Saskatchewan’s location on the cultural periphery helped create an atmosphere of acceptance of individuals that might not have found such a warm welcome in other centres in Canada. As well, art communities in Saskatchewan had a history of accepting Americans who were willing to come share their knowledge, even if that tradition was slowly changing.\textsuperscript{57} The favorable reception these U.S. artists received at the Workshops was something of a tradition in community building in Saskatchewan.\textsuperscript{58} Finally, established Canadian artists had not proven overly enthusiastic about leading the Workshops. Canadian artists from Toronto and Montreal had been invited to lead the Workshops in the years preceding the Barnet workshop but all had declined. When U.S. artists, through referral and teacher-student relationship ties, began to accept the invitation to teach at Emma Lake, the participants experienced a kind of celebrity encounter. The Workshop leaders had been featured in art magazines the participants were familiar with, they lived in New York City---the place seen to be the hub of the contemporary art scene---and, in the beginning, were the instructors of established Canadian artists that they respected. Therefore, the Workshops found a perfect trifecta of factors that boosted participant interest; the leaders were famous, from outside of Canada and willing to share their knowledge.

\textsuperscript{56} This seems especially true considering the Saskatchewan Art Board’s sudden reluctance to relay funds to the workshops---whether that reluctance actually sprang from a spirit of nationalistic suspicion or was simply the product of too many requests for funding is difficult to know for sure.
\textsuperscript{57} O’Brian, “Where the Hell is Saskatchewan,” 33.
\textsuperscript{58} O’Brian, “Where the Hell is Saskatchewan,” 33.
Chapter 4: The Newman Workshop and its Effect

Despite the suspicion with which abstract art was regarded in postwar Canada, by the 1950s it was increasingly accepted in the Canadian art scene. In Saskatchewan, though still isolated from the larger Canadian arts centres, abstraction was becoming a more common and viable art technique. The first three Workshops were led by artists who created paintings that abstracted representational subject matter; the 1959 Workshop was led by the first artist to visit Emma Lake who created completely abstract, non-representational artwork. While established Canadian artists, whether abstractionists or not, were unwilling to come to Emma Lake to lead the Workshops, Barnett Newman, who was from the centre of the American Abstract art universe, was willing to come. Saskatchewan’s unique position as the only ‘red province’ in North America was fairly well known in the politically savvy circles of New York City in the 1950s. While seeing the social-political experiment of Saskatchewan firsthand and paying a visit to ‘the North’ were contributing factors to Newman’s acceptance of the two-week position his presence was a pivotal moment in the maturity of the Workshops. Before Newman’s visit the artists at Emma Lake had felt isolated and cut off, not just from art communities in Canada, but also from each other; Newman’s presence was an intervention from their solitude and helped the individual artists realize that they had the ability to craft their own art community.¹

The Workshop of 1959 galvanized participants and led many of them to significantly alter their approaches to their art. Newman was asked if he would like the opportunity to lead the

'59 Workshop after Franz Kline refused the invitation to attend. At the time, Newman was not yet a prominent artist but was coordinating the exhibition of his work at a New York gallery that would change this. According to John O’Brian, the show at French & Co. brought Newman the critical coverage he had been missing in his career and was the exhibition that made him well-known in the art world. Paradoxically it was because Newman was on the cusp of fame that he agreed to lead the Workshop. He accepted the two-week position with the following rationale:

I have been so busy getting things ready for an exhibition of my work in New York these coming months that I have not had an opportunity to make any plans for the summer and I, therefore, will be available.

Regardless of whether Newman chose to lead the Workshop out of sincere interest in Saskatchewan artists, or simply because he and his wife needed a summer vacation (and seven hundred dollars), the offer to lead an art workshop in a beautiful, northern recreational site was too good to turn down. Newman’s decision to accept had dramatic consequences.

When Newman arrived his goal seemed to have been to use the two weeks for as much respite as possible. According to Art McKay, Newman had a degree in ornithology and took every available opportunity to see unfamiliar northern species of birds. During his first day at Murray Point, he told the coordinators of the Workshop, over a bottle of vodka, that he didn’t know how or what to teach. And for the first three days of the workshop, he did not enter the artists’ studio. Roy Kiyooka recalled that the most memorable parts of the workshop were spent

3 O’Brian, “Where the Hell is Saskatchewan,” in Flat Side, ed. O’Brian, 34.
4 O’Brian, “Where the Hell is Saskatchewan,” 34.
drinking with Newman in the main cabin and enjoying light conversation during which Newman recounted the mythology and legends of the New York art world for the Canadian artists.\textsuperscript{10}

Robert Bruce has less than fond memories of the Newman Workshop; he disliked the entire experience which began with a walk in the rain from the registration booth to the leaking screen huts that served as cabins, and was characterized by lack of instruction and Newman’s obvious lackadaisical approach to a working holiday. Yet, only one other participant went on record to complain about Newman’s laissez-faire attitude. Don Harvey participated for about two days before he lost patience with the non-didactic atmosphere and relaxed approach and left after a fit of anger. He told Newman that the workshop was a waste of his money and that Newman was not the kind of leader the Workshop deserved. Whether others shared Harvey’s viewpoint or not, the outburst created solidarity amongst the remaining participants and it is possible that this cohesion enhanced the workshop experience for many of the painters.\textsuperscript{11}

Unlike previous leaders at Emma Lake, Newman did not paint at the workshop or hold a single tutorial; however, he did facilitate intense discussion about art, artwork, art making, and the value of art.\textsuperscript{12} While Newman’s approach to teaching was unlike that of any of the previous Workshop leaders, it was, in the end, highly effective. Some artists, such as McKay, realized that Newman’s absence from the studio for those first days of the workshop was his way of giving the artists space to create a work, or at least to start painting and to get into the rhythms of the creative process, before he began to intrude upon the sanctity of their workspace.\textsuperscript{13} Other participants, specifically Ted Godwin, Roy Kiyooka, Robert Murray and Terry Syverson spoke of

\textsuperscript{10} King, “Workshops,” 87.
\textsuperscript{11} King, “Workshops,” 73-79, 87.
\textsuperscript{13} McKay, “The Last 25 Years,” 7.
Newman’s attitude and presence as being the thing that motivated them the most. 14 Whether it was a passing but perceptive comment by Newman, as McKay and Murray experienced, that caused the artists to think differently about their art practice, or simply Newman’s meticulous approach to and his passion for art, he had an irrevocable effect. His influence caused the artists, particularly the artists from Regina, to break away entirely from their former painting processes in pursuit of greater creativity. 15 As Godwin put it, “I’ve always said the most important gift Barney gave us was ourselves.” 16 Godwin found that the professionalism and confidence that Newman instilled caused him to treat his own work with a more confident attitude and to find a professional working space, instead of working on the kitchen table and in the family home’s basement. 17 Syverson related a similar sentiment regarding the effect of Newman’s influence. Before the Newman workshop, he had many questions and preconceptions that hampered his production and weighed him down with unarticulated dissatisfaction. Newman’s workshop gave him a more tangible grounding in the reality of his own paintings and left him feeling free to look for the direction that he felt was right for his own creative endeavours. 18

Because Newman did not create or show any work, teach or demonstrate in any way, or provide any in-depth critique of the artists’ work, his greatest contributions to the workshop related to his philosophical inclinations. Those who came to the 1959 workshop would have had little knowledge of Newman’s painting style or technical approach, and thus the artistic fire that he ignited at Emma Lake was based entirely on his attitude and ideology. The participants found that Newman didn’t present art as an ‘image-thing’ but more of a ‘head-thing’; this was because Newman had a distinct perspective regarding how art and the creation of art related to the

15 Roald Nasgaard, Abstract Painting in Canada (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2007), 146.
18 King, “Workshops,” 92.
physical world. He believed that art was important and that painter was responding to a higher calling. According to Newman, once created, art was something to be revered. As early as 1947, he wrote about art and picture-making as an ideographic practice. The ideographic picture is one that represents an idea or object, in the same manner that an ideogram represents an idea or object rather than a form of speech. Newman believed that the abstract shape held real truth, real knowledge and real emotion. He wrote, “The basis of an aesthetic act is the pure idea… for it is only the pure idea that has meaning.” In his article “The Sublime is Now,” Newman explained further: “Instead of making cathedrals out of Christ, man or ‘life’, we are making it out of ourselves, out of our own feelings.” In an interview a few years after his participation in the Emma Lake Workshop, Newman stated, “I present no dogma, no system, no presentations. I have no formal solutions.” While he presented no slides nor held tutorials, he instilled beliefs that had a lasting effect on the participants. Beyond his articulated ideologies, Newman also left the participants at Emma Lake with an understanding that the space of the studio was sanctified and demanded respect as such. Godwin said that the respect with which the creative environment was treated at the Newman workshop was something that greatly inspired and stimulated the participants. Given the specifics of Newman’s artistic ideology, it is not unexpected that he talked about art and art making at the Workshop rather than actually demonstrating his technical approach to applying paint. Newman’s ‘hands-off’ approach had a deep effect on Kiyooka, Murray, and the four members of the Regina Five who were able to

19 King, “Workshops,” 91.
attend the workshops—Ronald Bloore, Ted Godwin, Arthur McKay and Douglas Morton. (Kenneth Lochhead was away that summer studying in Italy.) Of the four, McKay was most influenced by Newman’s leadership at the workshop, being one of the first to decisively break with his old painting practices and begin working in entirely new directions. In the first few days of the workshop, McKay had created a work that he described as a large, tachist natural space painting. When Newman finally entered the studio after three days of letting the artists work independently, he said to McKay, “Well you have a really good painting here, bold, good colour and integrated. Is that all you want to do?” McKay said that this short comment caused him to stop and reconsider his entire artistic trajectory and to start working in a fresh and new direction.

McKay wasn’t the only artist to find his life changed by the Newman workshop. Robert Murray was struggling to balance a teaching job and a budding artistic career when Newman came to Emma Lake. When Newman told him that he was either “a painter who teaches or a teacher who paints,” it changed Murray’s attitude. Less than a year after the 1959 Workshop, the artist moved to New York to fully cultivate his artistic career.

As McKay explained it, even though Newman did not teach particular painting styles or give directions, he had a presence that was ineffable. His presence and personal power inspired Kiyooka, Murray, and the Five to adopt more professional attitudes about their work. Newman was the first full-time, advanced and dedicated artist to visit them and treat them as peers, and many of the participants answered the unspoken challenge to be artists with enthusiasm and

28 King, “Workshops,” 84.
33 King, “Workshops,” 92.
34 King, “Workshops,” 89.
commitment. Ultimately, in the lively conversation that Newman facilitated at Emma Lake in the summer of ’59, he persuaded Kiyooka, Bloore, McKay, Morton, Godwin and Murray that they were capable of making artwork at a level equal to what he saw as the best art in New York City. The artists who engaged with the ideas exchanged at the Newman workshop found that their art practices were energized and informed and something the artists could proudly claim as their own. They realized that they no longer had to suffer from self-doubt, or lack of inspiration or a fear that their finished works were unimportant. Newman effectively assisted the artists in creating a mental environment that was perfect for creation and artistic growth.

35 King, “Workshops,” 89.
37 O’Brian, “Where the Hell is Saskatchewan,” 35.
38 The Newman workshop was not such an unmitigated success for all participants, of course. Some artists were not ready to accept Newman’s influence and others were simply not of the mindset to approach their work in the manner described by Newman’s abstract theories. However, by the core of artists who went on to become the Regina Five and by other nationally and internationally known artists who attended, the Newman workshop is cited as a key moment in their respective art practices.
Chapter 5: The Greenberg Workshop and its Effect

In August of 1962, two summers and two workshops later, Clement Greenberg was introduced into this atmosphere of empowered artistic output. The Workshop leaders for the 1960 and 1961 workshops, John Ferren and Herman Cherry respectively, had also been from New York and, while the Workshops reverted to a more traditional lecture and slide-based structure, their New York influence seemed to have primed many of the participants for the changes that Greenberg brought to their art. Greenberg had such an instant effect on the participants at the Workshop and created such a ripple in the national art scene that by October of 1962 Kenneth Lochhead wrote Greenberg saying that the visit the critic had paid to Emma Lake was already regarded as a landmark in the art history of Canada.¹ Greenberg’s involvement at the Workshop, as well as an article he wrote for Canadian Art, worked on an individual level, inspiring the artists he interacted with, as well as on a national level, eliciting a response from Canadians because of the eminent U.S. art critic’s involvement in a Canadian art community.

The 1962 Workshop was not Greenberg’s first visit to Canada and his history with the Canadian art scene influenced how he and others associated with the Greenberg workshop were perceived by the Canadian art world and the art-viewing public. In 1957 he visited Toronto to tour the studios of the Painters Eleven and his trip left the Toronto-based artists with a bitter taste regarding American art criticism.² Harold Town, Walter Yarwood and their colleagues resented being told what to do by a U.S. critic, and this kind of animosity was a precursor to the rift caused

by Greenberg’s presence at Emma Lake. The Greenberg workshop functioned as a forum for discussion and deliberation and the debate regarding Greenberg and his advice raged for at least twenty years after the Workshop. Whereas Newman’s workshop had a small number of participants and all but one or two of these were from Saskatchewan, Greenberg’s workshop attracted the some of the most influential artists of the time from across North America, including Montreal, Vancouver and Los Angeles.

Greenberg was a prominent (perhaps the prominent) art critic on the New York art scene at the time and is often characterized as a kind of evil genius behind Emma Lake. While Barnett Newman’s workshop was pivotal for many Saskatchewan artists, Greenberg’s was the rocket launcher for others. Unlike the perception of Greenberg in Toronto, in Saskatchewan he was viewed as a benevolent champion by the artists who participated in the 1962 Workshop. He, like Newman, did not paint, but spoke. And like Newman, he encouraged the artists to find and transmit the essence of what made them truly individual in their work, persuading them to avoid imitation while still celebrating the ideas of the modernist aesthetic that he had done so much to popularize. Greenberg, however, had the dubious distinction of speaking from the gut; whatever his true reaction was to the work he saw in Emma Lake, he openly shared it and then supplemented it with more formal professional advice. Arthur McKay admired Greenberg’s frank and audacious approach. “I would say [Greenberg is] the best, the most perceptive U.S.

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3 Nasgaard, Abstract, 148.
6 O’Brian, “Where the Hell is Saskatchewan, and Who is Emma Lake?” in The Flat Side, ed. O’Brian, 36.
7 O’Brian, “Where the Hell is Saskatchewan,” 35.
art critic; not because he liked my work at the time but because he has the guts to say what nobody else has the guts to say,” McKay explained in an interview.\footnote{King, “Workshops,” 125.}

Greenberg’s involvement at Emma Lake went much further than simply leading a Workshop for two weeks. He invested time and influence in the artists he met at Murray Point. Upon his return to New York he told Lochhead that the time he had spent in Saskatchewan had been one of the greatest experiences in his life and that he sincerely missed the place and the artists he worked with there.\footnote{URA, PPP, 2010-11, “Greenberg,” Greenberg to Lochhead, 9 October 1962.} According to John O’Brian, Greenberg devoted more energy to Saskatchewan in the early 1960s than any other American workshop leader at Emma Lake.\footnote{O’Brian, “Where the Hell is Saskatchewan,” 38.} Greenberg so believed in the Saskatchewan artists that he even considered accepting an offer to work as an instructor at the University of Saskatchewan on the Regina campus.\footnote{URA, PPP, 2010-11, “Greenberg,” Greenberg to Lochhead, 10 March 1963.} He maintained extensive correspondence with Lochhead and other Workshop participants after the summer of ’62 and supported their artistic endeavours as much as possible.\footnote{O’Brian, Flat Side, 82.} He also wrote a preface for a catalogue for an exhibition by Ernest Lindner, and organized a major show of U.S. artists Jules Olitski, Kenneth Noland and Morris Louis, at the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina, Saskatchewan in 1963.\footnote{O’Brian, Flat Side, 82.} Greenberg juried an art show in Regina in 1965 and even proposed that a Hans Hoffman exhibition be brought to the MacKenzie gallery, although this exhibition of Hoffman’s work was cancelled by gallery director and Regina Five member Ronald Bloore, who despised Greenberg and resented his influence.\footnote{Currell, “Modernism,” 60.}

Yet it was not Greenberg’s dealings with the artists in Saskatchewan that caused the controversy about his American presence in the western Canadian art scene. It was largely an
article that Greenberg wrote for *Canadian Art* about painting and sculpture on the Prairies that created the major swirl of rancorous contention that has shrouded his involvement in the history of the Emma Lake Workshops. In the article he discussed the work of ninety-six artists, including the work of artists who had attended the Workshop, and the circumstances surrounding the production of the work.\(^{18}\) For the most part, Greenberg seemed to approve of and appreciate what he had seen on the Prairies.\(^{19}\) He stated at the beginning of his article that, unlike the American art made outside of New York City, western Canadian art was worth writing about.\(^{20}\) Greenberg was cautiously optimistic about the art of Canada’s west and described art on the Prairies as worthwhile. He was especially supportive of the art in Saskatchewan in general and Regina in particular. He wrote that “unlike Podunk or San Francisco, the place does not waste its mental energy in conjuring up illusions of itself as a rival to New York or London; it frankly acknowledges that it is in a provincial situation.”\(^{21}\)

While he wrote a fairly balanced and encouraging article, it was by no means effusive and had an unmistakable tone of condescension, and while Greenberg said that Saskatchewan had an honest opinion of its position, many readers did not pick up on Greenberg’s sympathy for the artists in the province. (Greenberg told Lochhead that he was “betting on Saskatchewan as New York’s only competitor as a center for serious art.”\(^{22}\)) The article seems to have been just and thorough, if from a critical viewpoint, but it was deeply resented by many readers and created the beginning of a rift in the Saskatchewan art scene between supporters and detractors of Greenberg.\(^{23}\) Some, who loved Greenberg and his approach, like Lochhead, thought the article

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\(^{18}\) O’Brian, *Flat Side*, 82.

\(^{19}\) O’Brian, *Flat Side*, 82.


\(^{21}\) Greenberg, “Greenberg’s View,” 90.

\(^{22}\) URA, PPP, “Greenberg,” Greenberg to Lochhead, 10 March 1963.

and Greenberg’s influence to be quite appropriate. Others, like Bloore, who deeply resented Greenberg’s statements and review of his art, had great enmity for the article and the man. Bloore was very vocal in his distrust of Greenberg. He had been in Greece during Greenberg’s visit but was still mentioned in the *Canadian Art* article. What Greenberg had to say about Bloore’s work was largely unflattering, though was still couched in terms of fact, formality and art criticism. However, Bloore always maintained that his disdain for Greenberg was purely professional and that Greenberg had putrefied the integrity of the artistic atmosphere by inhibiting the true potential of the artists.

Bloore was not alone in his distrust of Greenberg. After *Canadian Art* published Greenberg’s article the editors were swamped with letters declaring Greenberg’s opinions to be irrelevant, unacceptable and unsolicited by the Canadian people. (Yet, whatever the outcry regarding the unsolicited nature of the article, *Canadian Art* had invited Greenberg to write the report.) One droll contributor composed 151 lines of rhyming doggerel that summed up Greenberg’s nineteen page article, beginning:

> At Emma Lake, make no mistake,  
> We’d have you know we’re very pro,  
> (Clement Greenberg told us so.)  
> Provincial or Podunk? Perhaps,  
> Yet who would blame us prairie chaps?  
> Our Big Attack in a fateful way  
> Left Greenberg little else to say.

It concluded:

> We don’t like New York – Paris nob  
> Who tell us all about our jobs,  
> Yet why should I expostulate?

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24 King, “Workshops,” 121.  
27 O’Brien, *Flat Side*, 82. However, a comparison between the names of the letters to the editor and the artists critiqued in Greenberg’s article shows that most of the letters published were written by artists mentioned in the article.
Our distances are far too great.
It’s difficult enough to be
An artist on the Far Prairie.

So, Clement Greenberg, come again!
Yes bring paints and bring your pen.
Just now we are angry – but then,
Artists, like critics, are only men.28

Another contributor, Calgary artist Marion Nicoll, who had been favorably reviewed, wrote, “The article by Clement Greenberg is a lot of heifer-dust.”29 However, the more telling reactions came from a number of letter-writers complaining about Greenberg’s critique of what he referred to as diffidence, modesty, timidity and a reluctance to take themselves seriously as artists.30 Greenberg said that he had discovered that this handicap, as he categorized it, was something he found not only in Saskatchewan but was “characteristic of Anglo-Canadian art as a whole.”31 He qualified his statement by explaining that he had also discovered that diffidence was to be preferred over brashness, as the timidity promised honesty; yet he felt even this honesty was not necessarily something to be desired as the artists that were infected with this sense of depreciation could not believe in themselves and could not see the reality of their talents.32 Stanford Blodgett, one of the artists that Greenberg critiqued as well as one of the people who wrote to the editors of Canadian Art, said that Greenberg misunderstood gentleness and restraint and interpreted it as timidity.33 Rolf Ungstad, another artist accused of timidity by Greenberg, wrote to the editor with one of the most revealing comments regarding what Greenberg had said was a national problem in their approach to art, stating, “Timid or not why paint like New York painters. We are here!”34

31 Greenberg, “Greenberg’s View,” 104.
32 Greenberg, “Greenberg’s View,” 104.
33 “Letters to the Editor,” 196.
34 “Letters to the Editor,” 196.
The story of the Regina Five is an integrally important component of the broader history of the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops. The Regina Five had been christened as such in 1961 during a group exhibition that was organized, distributed and exhibited by the National Gallery of Canada; yet by 1962, the group, whose cohesion had been inspired by Newman, was under strain.\textsuperscript{35} While in Regina for a Canadian Museums Association annual meeting National Gallery of Canada staffer Richard Simmins saw “The May Show” at the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery.\textsuperscript{36} “The May Show” was an exhibition of local artistic talent and included seven local artists---five painters, a sculptor and an architect. When Simmins returned to Ottawa he proposed that the National Gallery showcase some of the Regina talent he had seen. Simmins selected the artists who were to be featured the exhibition, settling on Ronald Bloore, Arthur McKay, Kenneth Lochhead, Douglas Morton and Ted Godwin as representative of Regina talent. Godwin recalled that there was some concern regarding his inclusion in the exhibition roster. According to him, the National Gallery had an unofficial understanding that artists under the age of thirty should not exhibit at the Gallery; after many meetings and multiple back and forth decisions, the Gallery decided his talent outstripped his age and they allowed his work in the exhibition.\textsuperscript{37}

“The Five Painters from Regina” (the title of the exhibition that yielded the name ‘Regina Five’) showcased the works of Bloore, McKay, Lochhead, Godwin and Morton; these five artists were loosely associated through an abstract modernist style and more directly through their geographical location. Like other Canadian artists groups that had been named by a loose count of the members exhibiting in a group show, the Regina Five faced difficulties arising from conflicting personalities, lack of agreement regarding aesthetic approaches and stylistic

\textsuperscript{35} Nasgaard, Abstract, 146.
\textsuperscript{37} Godwin, “Memoirs,” 85-86.
conventions and a general independence from each other with regard to their creative processes.\(^{38}\) However, the Five were drawn together by their shared history at the Workshops and by the respect they had for the opportunity the Workshops presented. The Emma Lake summer Workshops were a place where each one of them worked and grew as artists, although it was their interactions, not just at Emma Lake, but also within the art community around Regina that created, and eventually destroyed, their sense of collectivity.

During the summer that Greenberg was at Emma Lake, Bloore was away and so had no direct contact with the art critic during that Workshop. However, Bloore had a fundamental distrust of Greenberg’s view of art history, with its emphasis on Anglo, Western art as the ‘apex’ of art evolution, as well as a hostility toward the critic arising from Greenberg’s review of his work in Canadian Art.\(^{39}\) Bloore had a less canonized view of art history, seeing ancient Egyptian art and other less respected art histories as equally or more important than the Renaissance-French-American version of art history taught by Greenberg. Bloore was suspicious of the inherent racial superiority imbedded in this canon and felt that the cultures ignored by it were of significance that should not be overlooked.\(^{40}\) Bloore was the exhibition director at the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery and was disgruntled to find how much Greenberg had influenced the exhibition schedule established by the acting director in Bloore’s absence.\(^{41}\) He quickly cancelled the exhibitions Greenberg had suggested and helped to arrange.\(^{42}\) Realizing Bloore’s intent to target the modernist exhibitions he had helped curate, Greenberg wrote in a letter to Lochhead that he did not bear Bloore ill-will over it but accused Bloore of being “rather sick” due to

\(^{39}\) Nasgaard, Abstract, 152.
\(^{41}\) Currell, “Modernism,” 60.
\(^{42}\) Currell, “Modernism,” 60.
Bloore’s passive-aggressive approach to the cancellations. While Bloore’s reaction was negative towards Greenberg’s influence in the curatorial realm, it was especially disapproving of his influence at the Workshops. He felt that bringing in Greenberg and his Western, Anglo, hierarchized perspective encouraged Workshop participants to substitute their creativity with an imported, even if critically secure, theory about art. As well, Bloore felt that an art critic, even one as famous as Greenberg, was an ill-fitting candidate to lead an art Workshop and that the very presence of a critic would inhibit rather than encourage artists in their artistic journeys. It was on this point that Lochhead and Bloore disagreed most deeply. Lochhead felt that if a critic had something to say, something to teach, or something to share then anyone who was ready to listen and learn should be given the opportunity to hear it. This difference in opinion is likely due to the fact that Lochhead was one of those artists who were influenced by Greenberg. This is not to suggest that Lochhead had little art history background and was thus easily swayed by the erudite arguments of a persuasive figure like Greenberg. In fact, Lochhead had travelled extensively and had been trained at the Pennsylvania Academy and the Barnes Foundation, and so he had an extensive background in the history of Western painting and the tenets of Modernism. This may have been the reason he was open and willing to accept Greenberg’s theories. However, Bloore’s history was quite different though just as highly educated. He held degrees in Art and Archaeology, having studied for his Bachelor’s Degree at the University of Toronto and his Master’s Degree at Washington University in Missouri. By 1962, Bloore had taught at universities in the U.S., the U.K., and Canada and had studied at the Courtauld Institute at the

44 King, “Workshops,” 302.
45 King, “Workshops,” 121.
46 King, “Workshops,” 121.
47 “Ronald Langley Bloore – Curriculum Vitae.”
University of London for two years. The year Greenberg was at Emma Lake, Bloore was studying and painting in Spain, Greece, France, Turkey and Egypt. Bloore did not reject Greenberg’s influence simply because it was the ‘Canadian thing to do’ or because he did not understand Greenberg’s avant-garde approach. Bloore was ideologically opposed to the foundation of Greenberg’s idea of modernism and the restriction of creativity that it caused.

Arthur McKay was also inspired by the Greenberg workshop and openly opposed Bloore. McKay, like Lochhead, had a strong art history background and was very familiar with American Modernism as well as Zen Buddhism and philosophy. McKay trained first in Calgary, then in Paris, then at Columbia University and later the Barnes Foundation in the U.S. McKay said that Greenberg was responsible for waking the old British tradition of courage, resiliency and strength because Greenberg was willing to say what he thought. McKay shared Lochhead’s belief that anyone who had something important to share should be given the opportunity to lead the Workshops; he felt that Bloore was holding a grudge for not being given acclaim as a painter by Greenberg that he felt he deserved. McKay dismissed Bloore and Godwin’s opposition to Greenberg by chalking their attitude up to “sour grapes,” at least insofar as he observed, “[Bloore and Godwin] didn’t think they got their due, so they got sour.”

Yet, McKay may have misjudged Godwin. In fact, Godwin remained in contact with Greenberg for decades after the 1962 Workshop. However, it seems that Godwin did not fully appreciate Greenberg’s ideas until 1976 when Greenberg told Godwin, “The history of Canada is written in the Landscape.” Directly after this conversation, Godwin says, “I stopped trying to lead the New York School from the third floor of the old Regina Campus building. What I have

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48 “Ronald Langley Bloore – Curriculum Vitae.”
49 “Ronald Langley Bloore – Curriculum Vitae.”
50 Nasgaard, Abstract, 155.
been doing since are abstractions cleverly disguised as landscapes.” However, why Godwin failed to notice Greenberg’s appreciation of the Canadian landscape years earlier is unclear; the critic’s regard for Canada’s landscape painting was articulated in his 1963 article in *Canadian Art*.53 Regardless of Godwin’s later relationship with Greenberg, Godwin’s opposition in the early 1960s to Greenberg’s participation at Emma Lake was enough to strain to the Regina Five’s unity. Certainly, Godwin was responsible for a good portion of the turmoil the group experienced often referring to those group members who followed Greenberg as the “Clem sez” school of art—a term that could not have helped create a feeling of fellowship between the artists of the Five.54

Doug Morton is one of the least talked about members of the Regina Five, with very little on record regarding his opinion of Greenberg or his involvement with The Five or the Workshops. Greenberg referred to Morton’s work in his *Canadian Art* article but his assessment of Morton’s work and direction is unclear. Greenberg had been impressed with Morton’s technical ability and felt that Morton was hampered by his amazing facility to paint, as this splintered his focus.55 The critic wrote that Morton was capable of doing absolutely anything with paint, but that this technical ability had caused him to move in too many different directions and he had not yet found a specific art style or approach that was distinctly representative of himself.56 Greenberg conceded that he did not know what Morton would do or where his art would go, but did recognize that he had great capacity.57 However Greenberg was not the only person who wasn’t entirely sure if they understood Morton’s art. Godwin said that Morton’s

53 Greenberg devoted seven pages of his seventeen page article to landscape painting and stated that he felt Canada’s landscape painting was its most distinctive contribution to the international art community. “Greenberg’s View,” 98-104.
56 Greenberg, “Greenberg’s View”, 93.
57 Greenberg, “Greenberg’s View,” 93.
nickname among the Five had been ‘The Fifth Member’ simply because the other four could not understand him or his art.\textsuperscript{58}

Greenberg’s involvement at Emma Lake and his article for \textit{Canadian Art} revealed the complicated and slightly confused attitude held by Saskatchewan artists at the time. The cultural landscape in Saskatchewan had changed noticeably in the two years between Newman’s workshop and Greenberg’s arrival. Artists who had been happy to interact with an American modernist in 1959 were no longer comfortable with the ideology, the history or the ‘American-ness’ of it. It is possible that the national anxiety over cultural imperialism from the U.S. had gained momentum and was again a popular enough position to be expressed through the individual beliefs of participants. As an U.S. art celebrity, Greenberg drew a large and varied group of participants to the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops and many of these artists were honored to learn from him. But others felt that his presence was unnecessary and his approval and aid was unsolicited. Many artists from across Canada articulated that they, and the rest of Canada, did not need an art critic from New York City to come to Canada to tell them how to paint or what art was ‘good’ and what was ‘bad’. Ron Spickett, a Calgary artist who had received a mixed review in Greenberg’s article wrote, “Why \textit{Canadian Art} found it necessary to call upon the missionary from the Land of the Gods to examine the error of our ways and our lack of light, and why the apostles from the same place visit the natives and leave The New York Gospel, is an unhappy but loaded question.”\textsuperscript{59} They felt that an American couldn’t really know what Canada needed or wanted from its art and was not a welcome judge. Greenberg saw the artists’ insecurity as an impediment to their ability to embrace their artistic production and he sought to enable the artists to overcome it. Some artists accepted this encouragement and built upon the foundation of self-assurance that Newman had started, while other artists felt that Greenberg may have been

\textsuperscript{58} Davis, “Journey,” 12.
correct in what he saw but wrong in trying to change it as it was a marker of Canadian-ness; as is revealed by Ungstad’s query as to why it would be profitable to paint like New York artists when he and his colleagues are Canadians in Canada. The artists felt that to change in favor of what Greenberg suggested would remove their characteristic Canadian flavor and create a homogenizing, Americanizing art culture. George Mihalcheon, a Calgary artist reviewed as a “Gorky-infected” and “flashy” artist in a single sentence in Greenberg’s article, wrote about the article, “This was a quest for the All-American painting as seen through New York-rimmed glasses.”

Echoing this sentiment and reproaching Greenberg’s accusation of provincialism, Blodgett wrote,

We were accused of provincialism, but Greenberg in bringing his too-small-New-York-eye to focus on the prairies, proved himself Provincial---Seeing gentleness he confused it with timidity---Seeking New York Brashness he found restraint and confused it with nothing.

Frank Palmer, whose opinion was similar, wrote,

It is unfortunate that Mr. Greenberg has completely preconceived ideas as to what he considers acceptable as contemporary works of art. In his search for works to support these ideas he has, I feel, been guilty of an extremely provincial attitude.

Ultimately, this difference of opinion about Greenberg---one side attempting to accept and implement Greenberg’s ideas, the other rejecting them---served to fuel the controversy surrounding Emma Lake and its place in the Canadian cultural landscape for many years.

59 “Letters to the Editor,” 196.
60 Greenberg, “Greenberg’s View,” 96; “Letters to the Editor,” 196.
61 “Letters to the Editor,” 196.
62 “Letters to the Editor,” 196.
The Workshops held in the years between 1965 and 1972 revealed a change in direction and purpose and a deviation from the founding principles of the Workshops. While the Workshops held immediately after Greenberg’s visit operated under the same motivation as earlier ones, a change in the administration of the Workshops and a shift in focus from professional artists to student artists led to a gradual but complete make-over of the Workshop format and location.

The need in Saskatchewan for the professional art community to overcome isolation was no longer as pressing. However, administrators of the Workshops felt that the need to foster a sense of community and help educate student artists was growing. Increasingly in the late 1960s, participants found that they were not enamored with the idea of being told by U.S. ‘experts’ how to create art, or what constituted good art. In the interviews John King conducted for his research into the Workshops, the participants in the 1950s and early 1960s rarely made vindictive comments about the U.S. Workshop leaders based on their nationality. This contrasts greatly with the comments by participants---even ones who had appreciated the Workshops and what the leaders had offered---in the late 1960s and early 1970s at Emma Lake. It appears that nationalism had caught up with Saskatchewan by this time and the provincial Zeitgeist changed to fall more in line with it. The Workshops had been founded, at the very beginning, to aid in the creation of a vital cultural community in Saskatchewan and to help alleviate the isolation the artists in the province felt from the rest of Canada, and this goal was met in 1972 when art students from across Canada came together at Emma Lake. After 1972 the Workshops were completely restructured and their focus re-evaluated. The era of Emma Lake as an art community developing in response to the national cultural policies of the 1950s had ended.
When Clement Greenberg went back to New York City after his two weeks in Saskatchewan in 1962, he maintained close contact with members of the Regina Five and with other Workshop participants, freely offering them his support and advice. The next two Workshop leaders were artists he thought very highly of and whom he had included in the Modernist painting show that he organized to be shown in Regina in 1963, “Three New American Painters: Louis, Noland and Olitski.” The 1963 Workshop was led by Kenneth Noland. Greenberg wrote to Lochhead outlining his hope that Noland would find leading the Workshop beneficial. The 1964 Workshop was jointly led by the painter Jules Olitski and the composer Stephan Wolpé.

Neither Workshop was considered particularly successful by the participants or the leaders. Ernest Lindner said that he met Noland in New York after the 1963 Workshop and that they agreed that the Workshop had been a bit of a failure; Noland had not known what to do with the free structure of the Workshops and had chosen the wrong subject to teach and discuss---the business of art.\(^1\) None of the participants at the Workshop were full-time professional artists and a full two weeks of business-related information was not particularly useful to most of them. The Wolpé-Olitski workshop in 1964 was the first Workshop to have two leaders, one specializing in art and the other in music composition. Olitski was unique amongst Workshop leaders in that he painted and continued creating work while he was at Emma Lake. The only other leading artist to do any work at the Workshop had been Jack Shadboldt, who had made a number of drawings while there.\(^2\)

While the change in leadership structure was a new development, the amount of attention that Greenberg’s earlier visit brought to the Workshops may have also brought an unintended

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change in atmosphere. Whereas many of the artists who returned to the Workshops year after year before Greenberg attended because they craved both the art community the Workshops offered and the insights of the visiting artists, new participants seemed to come for interaction with art celebrities. Donald Reichert heard about the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops from Greenberg’s *Canadian Art* article and felt compelled to attend. Ted Godwin said that, whereas during the Newman workshop the studio and the practice of art production was considered almost sacred, at the Olitski workshop he could recall participants playing poker in the studio while others attempted to create work; Godwin believed that those who were not return participants at the Olitski workshop did not take the opportunity seriously. For example, Reichert, who had never been to a Workshop before, said that he found the environment very exciting because there was no ‘busy atmosphere’ or urban distractions and he felt everyone was communicating with each other about art and art making. Without previous Workshop experience, Reichert had no firsthand knowledge of the contrast between the ramped-up excitement of the bohemian art holiday environment and the solemn and serious atmosphere typical of the previous Workshops.3

After Greenberg, the two Greenbergian artists who followed him as Workshop leaders and the controversy related to his involvement, the Emma Lake Workshop coordinators actively sought artists to lead subsequent Workshops who were not under Greenberg’s influence. Even Lochhead, who had been strongly swayed by Greenberg, believed that artists who offset Greenberg’s theoretical approach were best suited for future leadership.4 Donald Judd, Lawrence Alloway, John Cage and Frank Stella were all Workshop leaders at some point after Greenberg’s tenure as leader; the Workshop administrators hoped that their presence would act as a

counterbalance to the influence of Greenberg’s Modernism as these artists practiced under ideologies that were different than or in opposition to it.\(^5\)

Despite this shift, Greenberg’s prominence and the controversy occasioned by his foray into Canadian cultural politics made it difficult for the Canadian public to forget the visit. He was not personally responsible for everything that came out of Emma Lake after 1964; as John O’Brien puts it, to give Greenberg that kind of significance “would be to assign him to a power that he never requested, never was granted.”\(^6\) Greenberg may have both helped create a reputation for the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops and taken a great interest in some of the artists that attended, but he did not watch over the subsequent Workshops like a guardian angel or cackling evil genius. The Workshop administration remained as it always had, under the direct supervision of art instructors at Regina College, and sometimes the Workshop leaders followed Greenberg’s ideology while others followed other theories and ideas. However, changes came to the Workshops in unanticipated ways. The Workshops—fairly free of criticism or scrutiny before Greenberg’s visit—had matured to a point where they were becoming institutionalized and caught up in the politics, analysis and critical tradition that institutionalization brings.

A significant factor in the change in the Workshops after the Greenberg workshop can be attributed to the departure of Lochhead from his position as director at the School of Art at Regina College to teach in Manitoba. This administrative shift, falling so soon after the Greenberg workshop and during a lull between hugely successful Workshops, created a marked change in them that is often attributed to Greenberg’s influence but is more likely to have been caused by the sudden shift in administration leadership. While the new administration did not change the way things were done at the Workshops, the tenor of the Workshops was different—less serious and less cohesive. The administration shift was not the only thing that changed over

the course of time; many of the core participants who had come year after year were moving away from Saskatchewan following their art or teaching careers and had found it impossible to return to the Workshops every summer. Many of these artists had found what they had needed at the Workshops and used the skills and confidences they developed there to advance with their endeavours. The vacancies left by these participants were quickly filled with first-time attendees who were looking for answers to a number of artistic needs, and so the Workshops continued and artists continued to find a sense of community at them.

When John Cage and Lawrence Alloway agreed to lead the Workshop in 1965, the result was possibly one of the strangest Workshops ever held at Emma Lake. The Workshop was divided between study of the musical theories of Cage and Alloway’s artistic critique. Cage and Alloway had very different approaches to those of previous Workshop leaders, and the successful outcome of the Workshop was a result of the response of the individual participants, who displayed nothing close to unanimity in their views. About the only thing most seemed to agree on was that Alloway was a nice person who knew art. Sharing a love of fishing with the Workshop leader, Godwin was closest to Alloway. His presence, however, had little lasting effect.7

In contrast, Cage’s leadership was an inspiration to many. Artist Ricardo Gómez, an instructor at Regina College and a Workshop participant, said that the atmosphere at the Cage Workshop was electric, with many artists experimenting with Cage’s ideas of chance and chaos.8 He said that he personally benefitted more from discussions regarding jazz and musical theory than he did from exposure to Alloway’s critical pop art theories; Gómez also said that he felt

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6 O’Brian, “Where the Hell is Saskatchewan,” 36.
7 King, “Workshops,” 162.
8 King, “Workshops,” 166.
Cage was an influence on his own work and how he thought about art production. However, Terry Fenton, assistant director at the Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery and Workshop participant, felt that the Workshop was only challenging on the surface and that nothing coming out of it had a lasting effect on anyone.

While Fenton seemed sure that Cage’s influence was evanescent for all the participants, at least one of the artists begged to differ. The works produced by Ted Godwin in the years following the Cage-Alloway workshop were greatly influenced by Cage’s ideas of indeterminacy and chaos; Cage taught about flux and chance and Godwin felt that these ideas reflected what he had been attempting to explore in his own work and gave him the intellectual gumption to embrace these ideas. Cage’s letter recounting his experiences at Emma Lake makes special mention of Godwin’s straightforward manner and his paintings. Cage’s musical theory and ideas about art and music meshed well with Godwin’s developing ideas of transcendence (a concept regarding things that can be referred to but are outside consciousness) and his experiments with a contrapuntal technique (an concept that brings two independent design or musical elements together at the same time as an approach to abstract visual composition). His Tartan paintings, created between 1967 and 1976, were directly related to what Cage taught about indeterminacy (a perpetual interest of Godwin’s) and indeterminacy’s inherent suggestion of a lack of hierarchy. It would appear that, at least for Godwin, Fenton’s conclusion that the Cage

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9 King, “Workshops,” 166.
10 King, “Workshops,” 162.
workshop was ephemeral was incorrect. Godwin later credited Cage with inspiring his Tartan Series.\textsuperscript{15}

Noteworthy in the discussion of the 1965 Workshop were the strange events, accidents and illnesses that occurred during the two-week Workshops. John Cage, in a letter to one of the Workshop organizers, asked if the University of Saskatchewan’s Emma Lake Botany Department would be willing to supply him and the other artists with some dry mushrooms to, as he put it, “make ourselves useful to the science.”\textsuperscript{16} When the botany department declined his request, he decided to go in search of the fungi himself and got temporarily lost in the muskeg.\textsuperscript{17} Godwin related that if Cage, rather than wandering in confused circles, had mistakenly travelled due north-east he would have met no roads, civilization or landmarks until he reached the Hudson Bay.\textsuperscript{18} The incident of Cage getting lost in the wilderness for the night made such an impression on everyone at Emma Lake that many of the participants related the story when they were interviewed by John King and other researchers.

Yet, Cage’s adventure in the muskeg with the mushrooms and mosquitoes was not the only attention-grabbing event. During the course of the two-week Workshop, McKay fell ill and was hospitalized, a forest fire broke out in a nearby community---which caused many to leave the campus to help put out the fire---and destroyed cabins in the area, the camp manager-cook created a stir with a terrible attitude and even worse food, and other participants had to leave early due to health problems. Dorothy Knowles had been at the Workshop only a few days when illness and exhaustion prompted her to leave.\textsuperscript{19} However, Knowles’ presence and subsequent absence was hardly noticed by the male Workshop participants partly due to the fact that, at that time,

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\textsuperscript{15} Ainslie, “Ted Godwin,” 55.
\textsuperscript{17} King, “Workshops,” 163.
\textsuperscript{18} King, “Workshops,” 163.
\textsuperscript{19} Terry Fenton, Landmarks: The Art of Dorothy Knowles (Regina: Hagios Press, 2008), 33.
\end{flushright}
Knowles was known simply as ‘that housewife from Saskatoon who did good paintings.’\textsuperscript{20} The cooking made such an impression on Cage that he mentioned the condition of the food in his article titled \textit{Composition}, for \textit{Canadian Art}, and Gómez referred to the cook as “an uptight old bag.”\textsuperscript{21} The fire caused so much anxiety that Godwin, the interim Workshop organizer while McKay was hospitalized, remembered trying to alleviate his stress by watching his child playing in front of his cabin.\textsuperscript{22} Fenton, Gómez, and Reichert all mentioned in their interviews with King that they felt that the unsettling events of the Cage-Alloway workshop, combined with the chaos of Cage’s chance and indeterminacy theories, were so trying and emotionally exhausting that many participants did not return the next year. The sudden drop in attendance contributed to the decline in popularity of the Workshops and eventual revitalization and re-evaluation of them in the late 1960s.

The 1966 Workshop was led by Harold Cohen. Cohen wrote to McKay, the Workshop administrator, that he was familiar with the Workshops at Emma Lake through his friendship with Clement Greenberg.\textsuperscript{23} He knew, from Greenberg, that the standard of work, attitude, and vitality of artistic spirit was high, and he hoped to be a useful addition to what had already been accomplished by a prestigious list of Workshop leaders.\textsuperscript{24} Cohen had a perspective on art that differed from Greenberg’s; he was interested in and encouraged by the art scene beyond North America and did not use New York City art as the benchmark for comparison of other contemporary art communities. He was particularly curious about the contemporary art world in England. He brought hundreds of slides and spoke every day about contemporary advances and

\textsuperscript{20} Fenton, \textit{Landmarks}, 33.
\textsuperscript{21} King, “Workshops,” 165.
\textsuperscript{22} King, “Workshops,” 163.
\textsuperscript{24} Cohen, “Letter,” 173.
current trends in Great Britain.\textsuperscript{25} He explained in a letter to McKay before the Workshop that he believed the direction (and subsequent success or failure) of a Workshop would be determined almost solely by the group’s focus and dedication rather than by the leader.\textsuperscript{26} Once Cohen arrived at the Workshop he was disappointed to find that the participants did not inspire him to lead in the way he had imagined they would, and he found himself doing studio work, something he said he had no plans to do while there.\textsuperscript{27} Some professional artists, such as Godwin, were disappointed to find that Cohen was relating information that would have helped them ten years earlier, but was redundant given their current level of artistic development.\textsuperscript{28}

Gómez, who was camp manager and assistant to McKay for the Cohen workshop, mentioned in an interview with John King, that he, McKay and Godwin had discussed a possible need to change the focus and direction of the Workshops.\textsuperscript{29} They had noticed that the original concept for the Workshops—the idea that the Workshops would provide professional artists with the opportunity to get away from their regular, day-job lives and immerse themselves in their art practice for two weeks—was possibly not as necessary as it had been when the Workshops began. However, with the Cohen workshop they discovered that the Workshops evolved by themselves into a more student-teacher structure as the professional artists began attending with less frequency and artists who had recently graduated from art colleges began attending in greater numbers. Gómez said that the focus shifted organically, without any help from the administrators, and that Cohen acted more in the role of an art instructor than a mentor or

\textsuperscript{25} King, “Workshops,” 179-180.
\textsuperscript{27} Cohen, “Letter,” 174-175.
\textsuperscript{28} King, “Workshops,” 177.
\textsuperscript{29} King, “Workshops,” 178.
The Workshops that followed echoed this change in focus, style and organization as the Workshops evolved into something more instructional than they had been earlier.

In the time between the Cohen workshop in 1966 and the Frank Stella workshop the following year, the administrators of the Workshops attempted to revive them as a site for the development of professional artists. Gómez, on behalf of the director of the School of Art at Regina College, wrote to the Canada Council in February of 1967 stating that the Workshops were not intended to attract people from only one type of socio-economic and geographical background; nonetheless, the Workshops were attracting only people of financial comfort from the Regina area who could afford the cost of travel and accommodation. Gómez explained that the lack of participants of lesser means or from farther away did not mean that artists of other class backgrounds and other locales did not know about the Workshops or were not interested in them, but simply that the costs associated with travelling from one province to another were prohibitive. He also explained that, while the administration was accustomed to choosing the Workshop leader, the 1967 Workshop administrators were also negotiating who would participate and had plans to invite students from arts programs across Canada who had been nominated by their schools, explaining that they planned for a “student element” of up to 20% of the total of fifteen to eighteen participants. In previous years participants had been required to apply to attend the Workshops and, as long as they had been able to prove that they were established or establishing artists (not students) and their application was received before all the vacancies were filled, they had been welcomed to the Workshop. The inclusion of student artists at the Workshops was an entirely new approach. In later letters to the Canada Council, Gómez asked the Council to be sympathetic to applications for Canada Council travel grants from Emma Lake

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Artists’ Workshop participants in order to make it possible for those who were less financially able and from farther away to attend.\(^\text{34}\)

The outcome of the 1967 Frank Stella-led Workshop was not what the administrators had hoped for according to what Gómez had explained to the Canada Council. Fenton, one of the Stella workshop participants, said that the atmosphere that year was no more solemn, serious, or less instruction-based than it had been the year before. He felt that the most successful leaders had been people who had viewed anyone willing to pay the admission price of the Workshops as a serious artist worthy of their time. However, in his opinion, the Workshops that didn’t work so well had been led by artists and critics who had picked favourites or felt that those who paid to be there (instead of being paid to be there) or worked in a medium or style that they did not appreciate were inferior to themselves. Reportedly, Stella was a leader who did not treat individuals at the Workshop equally. He apparently discriminated in particular against landscape painters and female participants. Fenton felt that Stella did not value serious, hard-working artists if he did not approve of their style or subject matter, and that he was more likely to spend his time with those who were far less productive and serious about art but who had the ability to sound more substantial than they really were. Other participants did not share Fenton’s estimation of Stella, but overall, between the small participant numbers and the general atmosphere of the Workshop, it was not heralded as a major success.\(^\text{35}\)

The 1968 Workshop marked the beginning of more tangible changes in the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops. Whereas the changes to the Workshops that have been discussed already were more subjective in nature---based almost entirely on the participants’ response to different leaders and the attitudes of participants after their two weeks by the lake---the 1968 Workshop

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\(^{34}\) URA, Department of Visual Arts Papers (hereafter DVAP), 89-5, “Emma Lake 1968,” Gómez to Dwyer, 11 April 1968.
was the first one to have physical, objectively observable changes. To begin with, it was held somewhere other than the Emma Lake campus. The Workshop was moved from Emma Lake to a fishing camp at the north end of Lac La Ronge and shortened to a single week from the traditional two.\textsuperscript{36} The Workshop was also reformatted, in that the Workshop studio structure was replaced by a more formal seminar structure.\textsuperscript{37} The reason given in the invitations to participants for the change of location was that the traditional Emma Lake location was simply not big enough to accommodate the number of applicants who had applied to attend the 1968 Workshop.\textsuperscript{38} However, as the administrators had been declining applicants for years, it seems that over-popularity was not the main reason for the change in location. In a letter to the Canada Council regarding the 1968 Workshop, Director Doug Morton explains that the change in location was part of an attempt to limit participation to fifteen specifically invited people with similar interests and experience.\textsuperscript{39} The intent behind this change in practice was to limit the amount of difference in experience and focus that had been present in some of the earlier Workshops.\textsuperscript{40} For the first time a sculptor, rather than a painter, musician, writer or critic, was selected to head the Workshop.\textsuperscript{41}

The 1968 Workshop could have marked a new epoch for the Workshops, but the leader, minimalist sculptor Donald Judd, was ill-suited to facilitate the type of seismic changes the administrators were hoping for. Judd brought his wife and infant with him to Lac La Ronge and seemed to enjoy the week away from the city as a holiday. While participants may have enjoyed the opportunity to fish and holiday around the lake, the Workshop was not judged a great success.

\textsuperscript{35} King, “Workshops,” 185-186.
\textsuperscript{36} URA, DVAP, “Emma Lake 1968,” Gómez, to Dwyer, 11 April 1968.
\textsuperscript{37} URA, DVAP, “Emma Lake 1968,” Dwyer, 11 April 1968.
\textsuperscript{38} URA, DVAP, “Emma Lake 1968,” Gómez, to all participants, 15 May 1968.
\textsuperscript{39} URA, DVAP, 89-5, “Emma Lake 1968,” Morton to David Silcox, 1 May 1968.
\textsuperscript{40} URA, DVAP, “Emma Lake 1968,” Morton to Silcox, 1 May 1968.
\textsuperscript{41} URA, DVAP, 89-5, “Emma Lake 1968,” Morton to Silcox, 22 May 1968.
Judd was not a particularly communicative person, and some participants felt that his personality matched his approach to art. McKay, who did not attend the Workshop for the full week but dropped in periodically with his girlfriend to see how the Workshop was going, said in an interview with King, “Minimal art is minimal man and minimal communicator; minimal exposure. I mean, a guy who shows as little as that, a guy who can dictate something over a telephone and have it built, is both a minimal artist, and a minimal human being, and a minimal creator.” McKay explained further that Judd had not seemed interested in talking about art much; participants had brought slides to show him and after spending a few hours looking at slides of their work Judd had not given any comments or started any discussions. Judd later said, in response to a questionnaire by John King, that the participants had not been very knowledgeable or interesting and that their work was underdeveloped. He said that one participant, whose name he no longer remembered, had shown some work that had looked somewhat promising, but Judd had not found discussions with the artist particularly interesting and, as a result, had completely forgotten everything about the artist, except that he may have been from Saskatchewan and French-Canadian. Judd also noted that his relationships with participants had generally been enjoyable except when the focus was on art. He felt that many of the participants at Lac La Ronge disliked him based on, as he assumed they would, a provincial animosity towards someone from New York. Russell Yuristy, a painting instructor from the University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus, who attended the Judd workshop as a representative of the School of Art at Regina, said that the Workshop could have been something

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42 King, “Workshops,” 194.
44 King, “Workshops,” 246.
45 King, “Workshops,” 246. There seems to be no way to guess who this artist may have been. In their interviews with King, no one mentions showing Judd slides of their work and no one artist seems to stand out with the characteristics Judd described.
46 King, “Workshops,” 249.
47 King, “Workshops,” 246.
amazing had there been a more verbal and participatory leader.\textsuperscript{48} He shared McKay’s sentiment that Judd was a personification of his minimalist work and, in so doing, suggests that it was the relative failure of the Lac La Ronge Workshop that encouraged the administrators to turn their attention in subsequent Workshops from established artists to students.\textsuperscript{49}

The shift of the Workshops’ focus from established artists and community to younger and less established artists came by way of the 1969 Workshop. Although the Workshops had, from their inception, focused on already trained and established artists, in 1967 a plan had emerged to change the format of the Workshops so as to concentrate on younger or student artists. When director Morton wrote to the Canada Council in May of 1968, he explained that the professional Workshop at Lac La Ronge would be a single-year affair with a student-based Workshop at Emma Lake the following year.\textsuperscript{50} He explained that he and the administration of the Workshops had decided that it would be best if a professional Workshop were run at a separate time and place from the student Workshops held at Emma Lake.\textsuperscript{51} He and the other administrators felt that, by separating the professional artists from the students, the Workshops would be able to meet the divergent needs of the participants and remedy the negative impact that the variation was having on the outcome of the Workshops.\textsuperscript{52}

The 1969 Workshop was not an easy Workshop to facilitate and very nearly didn’t happen when a number of invited leaders declined their invitation or cancelled at the last moment. Michael Steiner was the leader eventually chosen for the student Workshop, although he had not been the first choice for the role. Russell Yurisity was the administrator for the Workshops that year and his first invitation had been extended to the Pop artist R.B. Kitaj, who had been forced to

\textsuperscript{48} King, “Workshops,” 196. 
\textsuperscript{49} King, “Workshops,” 196-197. 
\textsuperscript{50} URA, DVAP, “Emma Lake 1968,” Morton to Silcox, 1 May 1968. 
\textsuperscript{51} URA, DVAP, “Emma Lake 1968,” Morton to Silcox, 22 May 1968. 
\textsuperscript{52} URA, DVAP, “Emma Lake 1968,” Morton to Silcox, 1 May 1968.
decline because he was booked a year in advance for all engagements. (He was extremely interested in leading the 1970 Workshop, however.) The second choice for Workshop leader was Ron Davis, an artist from California, who originally accepted the invitation to lead the Workshops but then reneged early in July, leaving Yurisity with no leader for the Workshop, which was due to open in less than two weeks time. In the search for a leader the administration discussed having Canadian artist Jack Bush lead the Workshops, but he also declined. Finally, Terry Fenton suggested the 24-year-old Mike Steiner, a young New York sculptor who, through his painter friends, also had a thorough knowledge of contemporary painting. Yurisity said in a report following the Workshop that he felt the choice to have a younger artist lead a group of younger and enthusiastic artists was a very good choice. He recommended that for future Workshops the administration invite promising, young artists who would also benefit from the experience the Workshops provided, while helping create the a dynamic and expectant environment.53

The 1969 Workshop was held at Emma Lake and the participants who had been invited to attend were all recent art school graduates, advanced students or young artists, and there were very few participants that had attended previous Workshops. One of the participants, Don Chester, said that he thought a lot of people who would have gone to the Workshop had chosen not to attend after they heard that Ron Davis had cancelled. He surmised that they feared that they would have a second-rate experience as a result and that those who did attend had nothing to lose because they were young and knew that they might have something to gain. Although Steiner was not the Pop artist the administrators had hoped to hire, it turned out that he was an effective leader for a group of young and new artists because, while he was part of the same artistic tradition as previous, more dogmatic leaders like Greenberg and Newman, he felt that

anything was possible in art. To Steiner, there was only high quality art and art that the artist had not fully developed.54

Steiner worked on sculptures at the Workshop, which was possible because of his unique approach to creating pieces. He worked first with plywood and then had full-sized steel models fabricated by steelworkers. Chester said that it was like watching a painter work on a painting; instead of planning the piece completely before creating the model, Steiner would put together a structure and then change it by adding more pieces or cutting off chunks, shapes and curves with a jig-saw.55

The dedication of the Workshop leader impressed many of the participants to use the Workshop time wisely, and some of the participants felt that their hard work was rewarded by Steiner at the Workshop; Chester stated that Steiner “had no interest in people who weren’t working” and “he waited until people started working and then he started talking to the ones who were working”.56 Yurisity explained that Steiner was the kind of leader who felt that anyone who paid the registration fee to attend was worthy of his time and at the end of the Workshop he told the group that many of their painters were good enough to sell in the premium galleries in New York City. He then challenged the artists to question whether that was good enough for them or did they want to surpass, through hard work and dedication, their current quality level for new heights. Yurisity said Steiner was talking about “the difference between being ‘pretty good for Regina’ or being ‘pretty good for Canada’, or ‘pretty good for a student’,” and that the artists should try to be the best they can personally be, not simply good for their environment.57

Participants in the Steiner workshop regarded it as a success. Others who did not attend, or who attended only part of the time, felt differently. Ted Godwin, a part-timer at the Workshop,

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55 King, “Workshops,” 205.
56 King, “Workshops,” 204-214.
felt that Steiner had been a terrible leader with terrible ideas and that it had been participants like Cliff Enright and Don Chester that had made the Workshop work. Godwin seemed to think that Steiner was an ineffective leader, not motivating students or spending time with them. However, Chester said that Godwin was mistaken in his assessment of the Workshop and that Steiner was a good leader who rewarded and encouraged hard work with his attention. Chester also said that once people began to work it was obvious that Steiner was leading the Workshops and that the detractors of the Workshop were people who had not been there. Yurisity, who had been at the Workshop for the full two weeks, seemed to concur with Chester’s perspective and wrote in his report after the Workshop that he felt it was a fortunate turn of events that Davis had cancelled and Steiner had filled in, saying that Steiner was intelligent, hard working and honest. Fenton, who may have been biased regarding Steiner’s involvement, considering Steiner’s involvement had come at Fenton’s suggestion, wrote in a 1976 article for the National Gallery of Canada Journal that the Steiner Workshop revitalized the languishing Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops and brought a new, “third-wave” of abstract artists to western Canada. It is possible, that while the Steiner workshop was not as immediately significant to the participants as other milestone Workshops had been to their participants, in retrospect, it marked a significant and permanent shift in direction and vitality for the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops.

The 1970 Workshop proved to be the final stage of an alteration that had been occurring over the previous few years and that saw the strategic and planned transition from meeting place for professional artists to space for interaction between professional artists and recent graduates.

59 King, “Workshops,” 200-207.
and, finally, to a Workshop setting solely for advanced art students. In an invitational letter to art schools across Canada, Jack Sures wrote that the 1970 Workshop, led by R.B. Kitaj would be directed exclusively towards senior art students instead of professional or establishing artists.

The original plan for the Workshop was to have art schools from across Canada nominate their most promising senior students for participation in the Workshop. In the plan, the artists would be funded by the Canada Council and the Workshop would culminate with a student exhibition held at the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery. The plan was designed to allow students to experience an environment in which art from across Canada was being produced and thought about. However, the proposed plan was rejected by the Canada Council and many art schools explained that they could not afford to send an undergraduate art student to the Workshop without external funding. The schools that did send students were obliged to use their own funds to support the costs or apply individually to the Canada Council for travel expenses. While there were students from across Canada at the Kitaj workshop, the number of students was far fewer than would have been possible with the funds originally requested from the Canada Council. An exhibition was held at the Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery, but many of the exhibitors were unable to see the exhibition due to their travel arrangements to and from the Workshop. The exhibition did travel out of the province---to the University of Lethbridge in Alberta and to the Alberta College of Art in Calgary, Alberta--- but much of the opportunity for students to experience contemporary student art from across Canada was greatly diminished by the lack of funding. The administrator of the Workshops felt that there was a serious threat that the Emma

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60 John King, in his BFA thesis, refers to this workshop simply as the “1970 Workshop,” whereas all previous workshops were referred to as the “19** Artists’ Workshop.” In doing so, he distinguishes this workshop as having been attended by art students, rather than by established artists, as the full title suggests; King, “Workshops,” 218.
64 King, “Workshops,” 216.
Lake Artists’ Workshops initiative would die completely without the interest and funds supplied by the Canada Council.\(^{66}\) In the months before the Workshop, the administrators were forced to appeal to the Saskatchewan Arts Board to supply the missing funds to allow the Workshop to go forward.\(^{67}\) In the end, the individual university art departments were responsible for the financial responsibility of sending their selected student to the Workshops but, as the funds were tight, the students had time only to attend the Workshop and very few were able to attend the exhibition of their work.

The Kitaj workshop was attended by students from across Canada---only missing students from the Maritimes (with the exception of Nova Scotia) and the northern territories---who had mixed reactions to the experience. Some students felt that there was an invisible barrier to communication with their colleagues. One participant said that she felt as though she were spending time with first-year undergraduate art students who found it impossible to talk about their work or art in general.\(^{68}\) The students felt that there was no liberty to begin a conversation about their work or the work of their peers, as they explained they felt it would be awkward to just walk up to someone and start talking about their personal art philosophies and theories.\(^{69}\) And when conversations about their art did start, neither person seemed to be able to carry their end of the conversation with interest.\(^{70}\) Some students felt that a few older and more confident artists would have helped ease the tense atmosphere that seemed to cause individuals to scurry away to activities that were not conducive to conversation. Frances Cardiff said,

> I really have come to the conclusion that a lot of these students are accustomed to being talked down at, and are accustomed to listening, and are accustomed to

\(^{65}\) King, “Workshops,” 216.
\(^{68}\) King, “Workshops,” 221.
\(^{69}\) King, “Workshops,” 224.
\(^{70}\) King, “Workshops,” 226.
talking up to, instead of just saying: ‘I’m as good as you. These are my ideas – they’re going to change – given who I am, the situation I’m in, let’s don’t write that off, that’s important – but right now, this is how I feel about things and it’s valid. And so let’s talk about how you feel about things.’ And there isn’t time.\textsuperscript{71}

Cardiff felt that one of the only bright spot of the Workshop was the realization that, if her fellow Workshop colleagues were considered the best and brightest of the upcoming Canadian artists, then she was going to have a very easy time excelling as a professional artist in the future because she felt that none of them were really competition in any sense.\textsuperscript{72} Some participants who had been interested in figurative painting were excited at the prospect of interacting with Kitaj, who was known for his figurative works, and saw him as a resource more than a leader.\textsuperscript{73} Richard Prince from the University of British Columbia felt that the Workshop was a “degenerating” Workshop and not particularly intellectually challenging but that it was not a waste of time, because no experience is a waste.\textsuperscript{74} However, he also felt, and probably rightly so, that it was highly unlikely that the Kitaj workshop would affect anyone’s artistic life or the course of Canadian art.\textsuperscript{75}

Despite the mixed and mostly lacklustre response of the students to the 1970 student-based Workshop, the new format carried over for the 1971 Workshop. However, after invitations for nominations from art schools across Canada were sent out, the Fine Arts Department at the Regina Campus of the University of Saskatchewan decided to cancel the 1971 Workshop and hold a series of three Workshops on campus instead. The Canada Council had, for the second year in a row, denied the University’s application to subsidize travel and operation expenses and it was decided to use internal funding for three smaller Workshops. The Workshops that were

\textsuperscript{71} King, “Workshops,” 226-227.
\textsuperscript{72} King, “Workshops,” 227. After graduation Cardiff appears to have dropped out of the art world completely.
\textsuperscript{73} King, “Workshops,” 233-238.
\textsuperscript{74} King, “Workshops,” 232.
\textsuperscript{75} King, “Workshops,” 233.
proposed and accepted by the university were as follows: a film workshop specializing in lighting and cameras, a three day sculpture workshop, and a glass blowing workshop. Very little documentation exists regarding the success, outcomes and interest in these three smaller workshops. The Associate Dean of the Fine Arts Department promised that the new format was only in force for the summer of 1971 and that the regular two-week Workshop format would be reinstituted for the summer of 1972. The 1972 Workshop was led by one of the original Workshop participants, Roy Kiyooka, and was held on the Regina campus instead of at Emma Lake. The Kiyooka workshop was one of the last in the traditional format; the Workshop administration found it was more financially feasible to hold shorter Workshops on campus with art production, rather than art theory, as the focus.

The Workshops after the 1970 Kitaj workshop varied greatly from year to year. As stated, the 1971 Workshop was cancelled in favour of a series of three mini-workshops, and the 1972 Workshop was not held at Emma Lake but in Regina instead. The 1973 Workshop was held at both the Emma Lake and Regina campuses with different leaders and participants at each Workshop. In the five years following the 1973 Workshop, the Workshops were held infrequently. The years that the Workshops were held, they were divided into three two-week periods, each with a different leader, often at the Regina campus (although still called “The Emma Lake Workshop”). The available space and equipment for more technical art approaches helped create a less vacation-like atmosphere. The Workshops were held yearly throughout the 1980s, following the dual leadership model founded by the Olitski-Wolpé workshop of 1964 and then discontinued for the majority of the 1990s. The Workshops resumed in the late 90s and

78 O’Brian, Flat Side, 142.
continue in the spirit of the original Workshops with freedom from a prearranged programme, and participants coming together to exchange ideas and to experience Emma Lake as a time of personal art development. In the years that have passed since the founding of the Workshops, the incidence of art workshops, art schools and art-related community building has increased across the country, which has led to the Emma Lake Artists Workshops integrating into this mosaic of art community, rather than defining it for an entire province. The era of Emma Lake as an art community developing in response to the national cultural policies of the 1950s had ended.

The late 1960s were a period of transition and maturation at Emma Lake. In 1959 Kenneth Lochhead established the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops to help create a cultural community in Saskatchewan and to help alleviate a sense of isolation from the rest of the country and this goal was met in 1972 when Emma Lake hosted art students from across the country. The Workshops changed and matured as they met needs, or as these needs disappeared due to outside developments. The professional artists who had so needed the interaction the Workshops provided had found places in national or international art communities and many of them had moved away from the area for careers and family. No longer needing to respond to the national cultural policies of the 1950s or the provincial cultural attitudes of the 1940s, the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops changed direction in the first few years of the 1970s. The artists that came to the Workshops after Greenberg’s visit were, in general, more closely aligned with the national suspicion of U.S. cultural imperialism than the artists that had attended before the 1962 Workshop. When the artists that the Workshops had been designed for no longer needed them the Workshops were allowed to evolve into a format that catered to student artists and those that were not yet established. This change in focus likely coincided with a change in the nation’s

focus, and the direct influence of the cultural policies of the 1940s and 50s was no longer a driving force.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

The founding and initial development of the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshops is a case study of the ways in which the politics of Canadian nationalism and the effects of U.S. cultural imperialism interacted to influence the development of art communities in Canada. The Workshops serve as an example of the effects, on a regional art community, of Canada’s relationship with the United States, nationalist ideas about what Canadians should be, and Canadian response to the perceived threat of cultural imperialism from the U.S. Because the Workshops were a microcosm of cultural production created in response to the need of artists fairly isolated from the ebb and flow of art currents inherent to larger cultural centers, the Workshops are also an important case study of the effects of national and provincial policy on the regional arts. The Workshops’ history reveals that ideas of nationalism, regionalism and continentalism can come together to have a profound and unique effect on the development of an art community.

In an effort to better understand the significance of the Workshops and to clarify the events of and responses to each Workshop this thesis has examined most of the year to year history of the Workshops until 1972. Through this workshop-by-workshop consideration of the incidents, results and national and provincial cultural policies and attitudes that were relevant to the development and outcome of each Workshop it is possible to follow and clarify the changes that were seen in this Saskatchewan art community between the 1950s and the 1970s. The first workshops were formed as a response to the isolation of the province and the province’s artists from the cultural centres of the rest of the country and as part of an effort to contribute to the creation of a thriving and unique Saskatchewan cultural community. The province’s socialist
stance and young cultural sector’s tolerant attitude created an atmosphere that was accepting of influence from sources other Canadian centres may have rejected. The distance between a federal outlook of suspicion and introspection useful to the creation of cultural nationalism and the province’s openness to outside influence may only have been possible because of the province’s position on the periphery of Canada’s mainstream. However, as the isolation of the province declined due to greater integration into the national whole with advances in communication technology and increased and improved infrastructure, provincial perspectives gradually came into line with the federal ideology over the course of the early 1960s.

Barnett Newman’s visit to Emma Lake was an intervention in the solitude of the artists there and constituted the first real instance of personal empowerment at the Workshops. Newman’s presence and the confidence he inspired allowed the participating artists to overcome their feelings of isolation---from the larger art scene as well as from each other---and showed them that they were really capable of crafting their own art community. He inspired them to embrace their art production as a real, viable and a significant practice; one that they could take seriously as a productive future. Newman was the first established artist to treat them as peers and the first to show them that he was confident in their abilities and potential as professional artists. While the rest of Canada, because of early implementation and integration of the values inspired by the Massey Commission, may not have been as willing as the Emma Lake artists were to accept the advice of a U.S. artist, the artists at the Workshop found that Newman opened a whole new perspective about art for them.

However welcoming the Saskatchewan artists had been of Newman, in the two years between the Newman workshop and Greenberg’s visit to the Prairies, attitudes had changed. Newman had been widely welcomed and accepted by the participants at the Workshop (and those who had found his workshop of little value had not disregarded his influence because of his
nationality, but rather because his approach or ideology was not conducive to their personal art practices). Greenberg’s presence evoked a drastically more mixed reaction. Newman had suggested to the artists that they had something to be confident about and they had embraced that attitude. However, when Greenberg suggested that Anglo-Canadian artists suffered from a general lack of confidence, many of the same artists argued that it was unnecessary for anyone to change to conform to a U.S. ideal. The difference between the responses to the two Workshop leaders reveals the changing and evolving perspectives and attitudes in Saskatchewan and the prairie provinces. Greenberg’s workshop also reveals the paradoxical attitudes of the artists in western Canada; for while the Greenberg workshop was one of the best and most widely attended, it also generated the most contempt and controversy. The celebrity critic had caught the artists in a moment of transition---some accepting and implementing the national attitude of anti-Americanism and Canadian patriotism, some still holding to the provincial acceptance of anyone with something to share, while others were caught in various stages in between these two standpoints.

The workshops that were held from 1963 to 1972 show a cultural community in flux. The era of the Workshops developing in response to the cultural policies of the 1950s was quickly coming to an end and a number of the workshops during that time were an attempt to find and fill a new position in what was increasingly perceived as a national art scene. Towards the end of the 1960s it gradually becomes clear that with greater incorporation into the national cultural scene and less need for professional artists to generate their own community, but having the ability to select their own local and national communities, the need for the Workshops to cater to professional artists diminished. At this point, dictated by the needs of the art community and as the needs of professional artists were no longer a driving factor, the possibility to foster a student-artist community came to the forefront. The artists who came to the Workshops after 1962 were,
for the most part, more closely aligned to the national perspectives of suspicion and abhorrence of U.S. cultural imperialism than participants in the 1950s had been and this general change in attitude helped solidify changes to the Workshop structure.

The formation of Canadian nationalism, cultural identity and Canadian-U.S. cultural relations played an important part in the development and success of the Workshops. The apparent dichotomy between Canada’s history of distrust of the U.S. and the explosive growth in popularity of the Workshops when famous Americans were introduced as leaders was possible only because of the attitude of the participants at the Workshops. That collective attitude---shared by organizers and artist-participants alike---can only be explained with reference to a unique brand of western Canadian regionalism that viewed cultural ties with the United States differently than did the prominent central Canadians who dominated the leadership of the Massey Commission. While Saskatchewan’s cultural sector was separated from the national scene, the province created its own, largely autonomous, cultural environment. However, while isolated, it was not completely ignorant of federal cultural developments. The administration of the Murray Point Summer School in the early 1950s was excited to integrate the nationalistic goals and ideals published in the Massey Commission Report into their summer class programmes and the Emma Lake Artists’ Workshop administration was motivated to foster a provincial arts and culture scene. The slow influence of national beliefs, through the actions of individuals, were an overarching effect on the Workshops and ultimately shaped their development in ways the first organizers could never have guessed was possible.
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