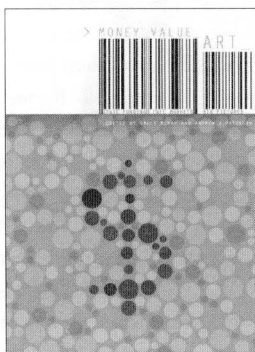


# Money Value Art: State Funding, Free Markets, Big Pictures

Edited by Sally McKay and Andrew J. Paterson  
Toronto: YYZ Books, 2001.

Review by Emily Andreae



*Money Value Art: State Funding, Free Markets, Big Pictures*, edited by Sally McKay and Andrew J. Paterson, is a collection of literary and visual commentaries by and about artists and writers affected by the infrastructure of the Canadian art industry. Each entry explores a different perspective on the relationship between money, value and art. Often filled with personal references, the commentaries offer highly individual and informative views of the effects of capitalism on alternative culture in Canada. Much of the book deals with key breakthroughs and setbacks of the Canada Council for the Arts, Canadian Arts Council (Canadian Conference of the Arts), and the Ontario Arts Council. The funding decisions handed down by these bureaucracies ultimately determine the national character of cultural production and threaten to restructure the daily existence of members of the arts and culture communities throughout the country. The editors provide a valuable resource for analyzing this ongoing struggle and a source of comfort in tough times. The diversity of voices, views and visions gathered by this text position it as a material and intellectual site of resistance to mainstream cultural policies and policymakers, adding much to its currency in this funding climate.

#### *The politics*

A timeline, beginning in the year 1941, runs from the top left corner across almost every page. In this way, Paterson indicates a main stream of cultural events leading up to the current struggles at issue. This device also

effectively unites these *other* texts that speak from diverse standpoints. The writers, artists and academics who contributed to this anthology write a history of Canadian culture that is vital and dynamic, but none of it is mainstream. The landscape, readers discover, is marked by a history of volatile relations because the Canadian public has been, and continues to be, outspoken and forceful in the policy-making process. Take, for example, Kevin Dowler's "In the Bedrooms of the Nation: State Scrutiny and the Funding of Dirty Art" and Barbara Godard's "Resignifying Culture: Notes from the Ontario Culture Wars." Both cultural critics discuss recent controversial changes and events in Ontario, with Godard suggesting problematic consequences of the oxymoronic thinking that she identifies as underlying Ontario's present cultural policy making:

Transformations currently underway at OAC reconfigure citizens as consumers while contradictorily promoting a quest for beauty separated from the complexities of life. Culture is disembedded from the economy as its longstanding discourse of socio-economic relations is reframed as one of individualized aesthetic excellence.

Current transformations at the OAC do contrast with earlier political agendas, which held Canada's internal and international (economic) relations to be, as Paterson states, "paradoxically tied to [its] colonial heritage and an idealized past."

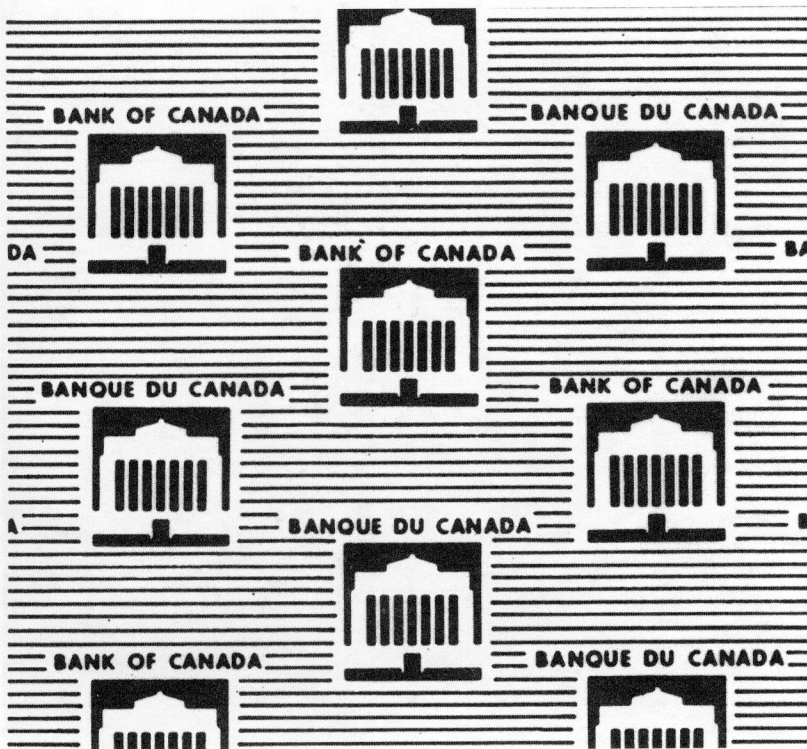
In the early 1950s, cultural policies were amended and discarded, leaving "Canadian arts or cultural sectors [almost unprotected] from the lowest common denominator values of uncontrollable free market capitalist economies." Two essays, Andrew Johnson's "The House Always Has the Edge: The Art Gallery of Windsor and the Ontario Casino Corporation" and David McIntosh's "Memes, Genes, and Mono-culture," discuss the consequences of such policy changes to the value systems and philosophies of government agencies in the present context of two cultural enterprises, the Art Gallery of Windsor and the Canadian film industry. In each case, the writers argue that the boundary between business and art is blurred by debates arising from economic issues over annual net revenues. Johnson questions the integrity of accepting revenue from cross-border gamblers to support the gallery, and McIntosh discusses the effect of trade agreements with Britain and the United States on the culture of the film industry. Whether an institution or an individual, Johnson argues, recipients of cultural funding must be free to govern its use. He cites problems in Windsor where joint funding provided by the city and casino

compromised the gallery, specifically its right to reside in a new space, originally designated for the gallery (but occupied by the casino in the meantime as a cultural money-raising strategy). "I don't think the fact the AGW receives money from the city means that it should serve the interests of a private developer," a statement by *Artcrite's* Christine Buchnall, succinctly expresses a stance on arms-length funding shared by other contributors.

*A living*

The beginning. The day that you first imagine that you could be an artist. In your dreams you conceived of your future as a giant gameboard. You climbed ladders as you honed artistic skills, made contacts in the art world and sold works to major museums. You imagined avoiding the slippery, snaky slopes, bad reviews from repressed critics, and the devious strategies of competitive peers. In your dreams ...

This text challenges romantic views of the artist's life, for example, by questioning the notion of a lifestyle of fortune and fame on



Bank of Canada (from security series), Scott McLeod, n.d. given.

an international scale. Repeatedly, readers are reminded of the lack of public support and funding from government agencies and private foundations. This is especially apparent in "Stakes and Tatters" by Michael Balsler and Andy Fabo. As readers are invited to play the game, it becomes clear that the rewards and punishments for landing on certain squares are directly related to the comical, quantitative and qualitative ups and downs of a hypothetical artist's life—well, perhaps not so hypothetical.

Bernie Miller notes in "Red Goods, White Goods" that however unfortunate such low points are for an artist, they reinforce the romantic idea of artistic sacrifice, and serve the needs of mainstream art markets. He states: "the sufferings of artists, whether physical or mental, have always been marketable." Jan Swinburne tells reality-based stories that address the difficulty of disengaging an artist's daily life from her/his practice. She describes the existence of disabled artists as sometimes requiring them to be names without faces. Some intentionally detach their living situation from their artistic production in

order to have their work assessed a market value that is not influenced or distorted by prejudice.

Is the life of the artist in Canada a calling of passion? Must artists live for the moment? Live for their art? Pierre Beaudoin expresses the inner turmoil he experiences as he strives to maintain his focus:

Even subway ads torture me with their temptations. My head spins round and round... Who can pull me back to the surface? The only things you can turn to are your noblest sentiments, the stirrings of your soul, the ardent desire to persist without doubting yourself.

That artists suffer needlessly, particularly as they embark on careers, is clearly unfair. A lasting remnant of the romantic ideal of the poor, starving (and disabled) artist, it allures the neophyte with promises of belonging, prestige and potential (though temporary) financial gain. Clearly, ongoing self-sacrifice reinforces such a mystique. These romantic expectations also contribute much to the marketing of the



*Evicted Studios at 9 Hanna Avenue, November 1999, Luis Jacob, silver print, n.d. given*

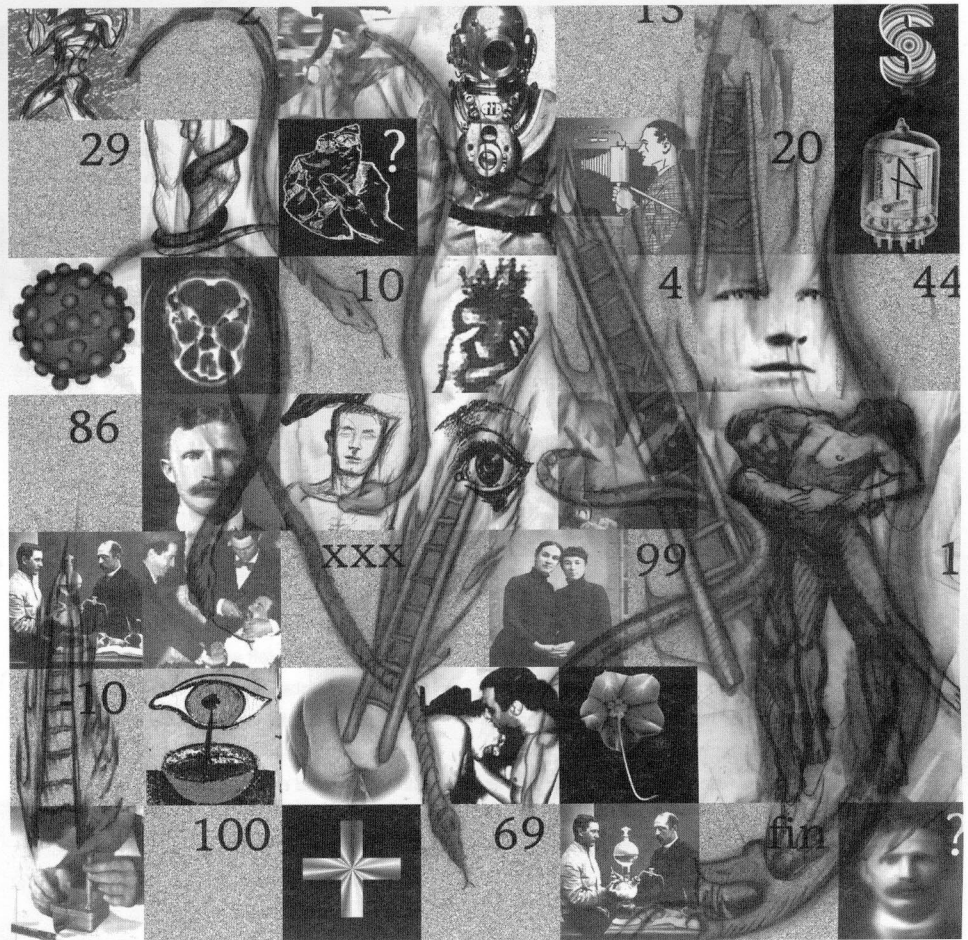
artist's lifestyle, as in inhabiting the places where artists live. Paterson discusses how the neighbourhoods where artists live become commodities:

It is paradoxical that artists, who have traditionally justified their lives and lifestyles by claiming that their processes and products should be evaluated by alternative values to the purely material or economic, have themselves served as agents of gentrification, a process which displaces affordable housing or accommodation for various low-income citizens.

Rent increases and evictions that result from gentrifying artists' dwellings displace many from their homes. Luis Jacob documents the banishment of a community in his piece "Evicted Studios at 9 Hanna Avenue, November 1999."

#### *The product*

Funding art-making, and where and how it gets presented, is problematic; making art is equally so, because issues of living are inseparable from practical issues of production in the daily existence of an artist. Sales are still valued most by our market-driven economy. Cliff Eyland's "Mixed Funding, Mixed Markets, Little Pictures" provides one of the few discussions about assessing artistic production, in other words, putting a price tag on art. He advocates consideration of sentimental, material and market values in order to arrive at a price. Whose work gets bought is another issue, especially when the buyer is the Canada Council Art Bank. Writers Jan Allen and Rinaldo Walcott explore the dealings and shortcomings of the Canada Council Art Bank and its services for artists; Walcott, especially, speaks to the inadequate funding and representation of Black and minority artists within the Art Bank collection. Scott McCleod's bookwork "Security" reminds readers that the impact of the dollar is inescapable. By visually documenting the contrasting patterns of line and hatch-work used to secure official documents, he directs his reader/viewer's attention to the familiar use of these visual (art) signifiers of



*Stakes and Tatters* (game board), Michael Balsler and Andy Fabo, n.d. given.

national economic security, and that visual enterprise is art work.

*Money Value Art: State Funding, Free Markets, Big Pictures* provides a context for making connections between economic factors, political and aesthetic issues and production in the visual arts, and for considering the disturbing effects on the private and public existence(s) of visual artists. This collection is eclectic, offering different voices, ideas and experiences. The strength of the collection is that the array of topics covered provides readers with a solid foundation for considering the relations between art and politics, economic sacrifice and artistic practice, and cultural production and Canadian society. It constructs a framework for further inquiry.

*Emily Andrae is currently interested in the revitalization of urban communities and culture. She writes about issues of gender and practice in urban architectural disciplines.*

# obituary

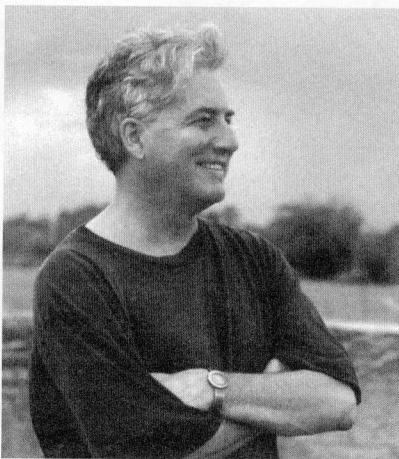


Photo: Almerinda Travassos

Colin Campbell (1942 – 2001)

Colin lived with a rare fluidity and an unflinching courage. This was apparent in all aspects of his life, his videomaking, his novel writing, even his cooking. He was a techno-klutz yet stepped up to the techno plate when he needed it to do his work. Deliberate, never careless, he lived his life very consciously, with generosity, wisdom, wit and insight.

Colin was the kind of friend you wanted.

There was that way he had of inspiring you to be more like yourself—simply because he valued just who you were. He saw things that others (or even you) might see as flaws or foibles or somehow undesirable character traits to be the real you, to be the foundation that made you whole and true. It gave you confidence. You would wear that hat or take that chance or write that story.

So it was with his life as an artist. From the beginning of his work in video, Colin's devotion to detail, his ability to keenly observe life around him lent his scripts, his performances and his videotapes a kind of richness unknown to the artworld at that time. His ability to listen—not just to record amusing dialogue for later use—but to actually listen as when your body opens and absorbs something of the other person. That's what he did and in doing it, he found the humorous, the heroic and, sometimes, the truly harrowing embedded in the everyday.

Colin himself was elegant, *soigné*, full of grace with a confident, empathetic presence. But his

video personae were at the other end of the spectrum. Self-absorbed social klutzes of various persuasions emerging as much out of the zeitgeist as out of Colin's experience.

His characters—from *The Woman From Malibu* to Robin to Coleena—have been described as alter-egos. They seemed more complicated than that. They orbit around his nuclear whole like so many positive and negative electrons, drawing energy from him but never depleting him. Usually Colin cast himself in the starring roles. Occupying the central space but never self-centered, he remained on camera throughout—without a hint of narcissism.

The lasting gift of Colin's work is his ability to remain focussed on his innate abilities. He was, foremost, a storyteller. In pure terms this meant a passage in and out of fashion. Yet he stayed. The works we are left with represent a lifetime of listening and absorbing his immediate environment. His loyalty to his own voice and adherence to his own sensibility infuse the work with a rare authenticity and resonance.

Colin Campbell, Canada's premier video artist, died in Toronto on October 31, 2001, after a brief and valiant battle with cancer. Born in Reston, Manitoba, 1942, and based in Toronto since 1973, Colin received his B.F.A. from the University of Manitoba (Gold Medal) and his M.F.A. from Claremont Graduate School,

California. His work was exhibited internationally in such prestigious venues as the Venice Biennale (1980), Documenta and the Toronto International Film Festival. His works are in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa), the Museum of Modern Art, (New York), the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Winnipeg Art Gallery, the Vancouver Art Gallery and others. In 1990, a national touring retrospective of his videotapes (Colin Campbell: Mediaworks, 1972-90), was co-curated by the National Gallery of Canada and the Winnipeg Art Gallery.

Colin taught at Mount Allison University, Sackville, N.B., the Ontario College of Art & Design and at the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Toronto. In his role as an educator, he was inspirational to generations of young artists and was seminal in the implementation of a graduate program in Visual Studies at the University of Toronto.

He is greatly missed by his friends, his wives and family including his partner George Hawken, his son Neil, his siblings Greg, Neil, and Judy.

On December 2, 2001, a memorial in celebration of Colin's life was held at Latvian House in Toronto. It was, as it should have been, standing-room only.

*Lori Spring and Lisa Steele*

## correction

In issue 24.3, we inadvertently omitted this image from the article on Greg Curnoe.



Group photo at opening of the exhibition from London, Ontario, at La Casa de Las Américas, Havana, Cuba, November 1988. Left to right: Ron Benner, Hugo Rivero (Assistant Director of La Casa de las Américas), Jamelie Hassan, Greg Curnoe, Carmen Bedia (translator), Murray Favro, Fern Helfand, Christopher Dewdney and Michael Kergian (Canadian Ambassador in Havana, Cuba). Photo: Lesbia Vent Dumois/Fern Helfand. Courtesy of Archives of Ron Benner and Jamelie Hassan.