

Tammi Campbell and Kara Uzelman, *concerning certain events*

The exhibition *concerning certain events* is just that: artists Tammi Campbell and Kara Uzelman sift through archives, anecdotes and the histories of art to create new expressive forms. Uzelman's practice explores the lives of objects – her work is often aligned with archeology and anthropology – and her enigmatic assemblages and installation works are charged with narrative potential. Tammi Campbell's work similarly pivots on historical references, and the two artists' research coalesced in this exhibition. With a mutual interest in the complex histories of the region that witnessed Saskatchewan's self-realization as a modern and progressive province, the exhibition brings together references to the Emma Lake Artists' Workshop, LSD research and exploration of new frontiers.

### **Modern Art & New Frontiers**

Typically associated with art produced from the mid-1800s to the 1970s, Modern art is characterized by a rejection of tradition and a restless, inquisitive approach to art making. Many artists were seeking new modes of creating art and rethinking the role of art and the artist. In painting and sculpture, there was a move away from representation towards abstract forms.

Modern art came of age during a period of unprecedented international exchange. With increased air travel, the new medium of television, and expanding circulation of news magazines, artists working outside of large urban centres enjoyed increased access to developments in the international centres for art, such as New York and Paris. Galleries, museums, and art schools responded to these developments, organizing exhibitions of abstract painting and sculpture and teaching classes and workshops on the practice.

In the 1950s, abstract painting found a receptive home at the Regina College. Among the faculty were a number of prominent painters, including Roy Kiyooka, Kenneth Lochhead, Ronald Bloore, Art McKay, Douglas Morton, and Ted Goodwin, a group of artists (sans Kiyooka) who became known as The Regina Five. The University of Saskatchewan also had advocates for abstraction, including faculty members and practicing artists Otto Rogers and Eli Bornstein.

The Murray Point Summer School of Art was established at Emma Lake in 1935 and became the site of the Emma Lake Artists' Workshop in 1955. The leadership and guidance of visiting international artists such as Barnett Newman, Kenneth Noland, and Frank Stella emboldened local practitioners and helped abstract painting gain a foothold in the province. A workshop with Clement Greenberg, the polarizing critic and champion of Modern art who coined the term post-painterly abstraction, was instrumental to the development and promotion of abstract painting in Saskatchewan.

The push into new frontiers of artistic expression coincided with similar developments in the sciences, spirituality, and political movements. Saskatchewan was at the forefront of many innovations including public support of the arts, cooperatives, and universal health care. The province also supported cutting edge research. Psychiatrists in the 1950s studied the effects of the hallucinogenic drug LSD as a means to explore alternative perception and provide insight into mental illness. The personal and professional papers of pioneering researcher Duncan Blewett held in the University of Regina Archives and Special Collections were a key resource for Uzelman's research.

## Tammi Cambell

In her paintings, drawings and media work, Tammi Campbell engages with the art of Modernism with an eye to the Emma Lake workshops. Her paintings and drawings demonstrate a clear affinity for eloquent forms while posing an irreverent criticism of the heroic, masculine rhetoric that supported Greenberg's "big attack" painting. Her work *Pre Post-Painterly (Notched-V series #1 to #14, After Stella)*, appears to be one of Frank Stella's Notched-V Series with its precise geometric composition taped off and ready for paint. Upon closer inspection it is revealed that the tape is in fact paint and the work opens to further interpretation: It may be read as both an homage to hard edge, geometric abstract painting and a playful barb aimed at the fetishization of painting practice and the mythology of the artist.

Tammi Campbell's audio piece responds to a legendary mishap that took place during John Cage's Emma Lake workshop in 1965. An avid mushroom hunter, the American composer made frequent expeditions into the woods in search of fungi. One particular hunt went awry and Cage became lost in the forest. He mentions his ordeal in *Diary: Emma Lake Music Workshop 1965*, first published in *Canadian Art*: "Found a large stand of *Hydnum repandum*. When others left for a nearby lake, refused to leave. Arranged to meet on road at 4:00. 3:30 started back, 4:00 hurried. 6:30 lost... Search organized by Jack Sures, potter. DNR men. Fifty people, mostly artists. Helicopter. Dog. Jeep. At night, searchlights, shouts, horns."

Tammi Campbell revisited the Emma Lake campus to produce a field recording based on Cage's famous "silent" composition *4'33"*. The four minute and thirty three second audio recording captures the sounds of the wooded environment as a sort of reimagining of the composers time spent lost in the forest. The audio has been duplicated on an acetate reference plate. Since these records are not designed to be permanent, the physical wear of playing the record degrades the audio quality. Over time, the physical recording will change and ultimately be lost, a poetic tribute to Cage's silent composition.

The exhibition also includes a series of drawings from Campbell's *Dear Agnes* series. This ongoing drawing project is based on the work of Agnes Martin, one of the central figures in the history of abstract painting. Born in Saskatchewan, Martin gained international acclaim for her minimalist paintings that featured light graphite grids drawn over the surface. Campbell produces a drawing each day she is in the studio. The drawings are quiet and contemplative and serve as a record of the dedicated rhythms of making. Though Campbell has an abiding interest in Martin's practice in general, these drawings are inspired by her suite of prints, *On A Clear Day*, two of which are on view in the adjacent gallery.



Frank Stella,  
*Empress of India*, 1965  
Metallic powder in polymer emulsion paint on canvas  
Dimensions: 6' 5" x 18' 8" (195.6 x 548.6 cm)  
Gift of S. I. Newhouse, Jr. Collection of Museum of Modern Art  
Copyright: © 2015 Frank Stella / Artists Rights Society (ARS),  
New York

## **Kara Uzelman**

In her installations, Kara Uzelman uses found and altered objects to activate networks of relations. Her configurations of things are brought together with artistic purpose to generate new narratives. The objects are otherwise ordinary—discarded possessions and obsolete gadgets—and reflect on how we understand our world through things and the shifting value we assign to them.

Uzelman's recent series *The Frontiers of Being* is based on her research into Saskatchewan's LSD experiments in the 1950s. The artist was inspired by the recorded accounts of LSD experiences in which she states "patients and subjects described a changed perception of the objects around them, an underlying unifying principle, and a connection to the cosmos." These experiments into altered perception took place within a broader social context that was seeking new frontiers and new ways of looking at the world: from technological advancements and space exploration to human rights, environmentalism and alternative forms of spirituality.

Named after constellations, her works *Fornax (the furnace)* and *Antlia (the pump)* draw a connection between the cosmos and everyday objects. Uzelman develops these associations in a number of ways. The static playing on a television is captured radiation and electromagnetic noise. Physicists have suggested that a portion of this radiation originated with the 'Big Bang' in which the Universe was born 13.7 billion years ago. The repeated projection of a found photograph suggests the rhythms of daily routines, small rituals or unseen patterns in the world around us. Behind the image of the coffee cup, Uzelman has traced the Fornax constellation.

The exhibition also includes an archival display of objects titled *The Frontiers of Being (Poems, Notes and Background Materials)*. Comprised of artifacts, documents and recordings gleaned from archives, the Internet, personal accounts and published materials, this collection gives insight into the artist's research process and the little known history of LSD experiments in the province.