MICHAEL SNOW

Life & Work

By Martha Langford

Contents

BIOGRAPHY

Michael Snow traces the dualistic structure of his work to his Canadian upbringing between two cultures—English and French—and his early awareness of the different qualities of sight and sound, learned from his parents. Having studied at the Ontario College of Art in his native Toronto, he travelled in Europe in the 1950s and lived in New York in the 1960s. Snow's contributions to three spheres of cultural activity—visual art, experimental film, and music—have been recognized internationally.

TWO SOLITUDES

Born in Toronto, Ontario, on December 10, 1928, Michael Snow is the son of Gerald Bradley Snow, a veteran of the First World War, a civil engineer and surveyor, and Antoinette Levesque. The couple met in Chicoutimi, Quebec, while he was consulting for a construction firm in the Saguenay region. Their relationship bridged a number of Canadian divides—language, culture, and religion—though they also found much in common. Both came from highly accomplished families, and each had recently lost a close sibling (his brother to the war, her sister to the Spanish flu).

Antoinette was an adventurous young woman and an anglophile who was immediately embraced by the Snow clan. While her marriage to a Protestant caused a temporary rift with her devout Roman Catholic father, she worked hard to repair it, giving her two children, Denyse and Michael, a dual heritage and strong connections to both family and place. Especially memorable were their summers at the Levesque family cottage on Lac Clair, near Chicoutimi.

Bradley Snow's profession kept his family on the move. The Snows were living in Montreal when an explosion on a work site instantly blinded him in one eye and brought on the deterioration of the other, eventually leading to total blindness. Michael, who was five at the time of the accident, would one day attribute his engagement with sound to his mother's talents for music and language, and his fascination with vision to his father's disability. His juvenilia, which include drawing, painting, and writing, reflect these positive and negative inspirations.

Antoinette Levesque and Gerald Bradley Snow, Michael Snow's mother and father, in the mid-1920s in Chicoutimi, Quebec.

EDUCATION

Snow's formal schooling was at Upper Canada College and the Ontario College of Art (now OCAD University), both in Toronto, but his education was far broader than this orderly statement implies. A self-taught musician, Snow supplemented his income by playing jazz in a series of bands and solo, as an intermission pianist. In Toronto, Detroit, and other centres, he sat in with some of the greats, his taste and style evolving from the New Orleans tradition through the more creative forms of bebop. This was his training for musical improvisation, and he would continue to perform, record, and even compose for an international audience, though he has never learned to read music.

LEFT: Ken Dean's jazz band Hot Seven, with Michael Snow on the piano, playing at a frat party at the University of Toronto in 1955. RIGHT: Michael Snow, *Jazz Band*, 1947, gouache/tempera on paper, 61 x 49.5 cm, collection of the artist.

At OCA Snow was studying design; his training there as a painter can be credited to the Bauhaus model of interdisciplinary foundations, a curriculum generously supplemented by the advice and mentorship of John Martin (1904–1965), a design teacher and recognized watercolourist. Snow the painter was attracting some attention even before he graduated from OCA. He took a job in a graphic design office, where he learned to hate the business. His education then continued during a year of travel in Europe (1952–53), where he saw a wide variety of both historical and modern European painting and sculpture. His immersion in the work of Paul Klee (1879–1940) confirmed his decision to become an artist.

On his return to Toronto he was hired by an animation firm, Graphic Associates, where he learned many of the principles of cinema while producing his first short film, *A to Z*, 1956. Snow was by then wholly committed to developing as an artist. Building a following as part of the founding stable of the Isaacs Gallery, Snow supported himself as a professional musician, playing nightly with the Mike White Imperial Jazz Band (1958–62). He can be seen in this dual role—on stage and in his studio—in Don Owen's impressionistic documentary film *Toronto Jazz*, 1964.

Paul Klee, *Fire in the Evening*, 1929, oil on cardboard, 33.8 :x 33.3 :cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York / Art Resource, NY. Exposure to Klee's work confirmed Snow's decision to become an artist.

Snow and his first wife, the painter and filmmaker Joyce Wieland (1930–1998), decided in the early 1960s to move to New York to expose themselves to its vitality, to "get better" at their work. They remained there for nearly a decade, and for Snow the gamble paid off handsomely in an explosion of ideas, connections, and recognition. Two of his films, *Wavelength*, 1966–67, and <–> (*Back and Forth*), 1969, were included in the first selection of the Essential Cinema Repertory collection of the experimental film centre Anthology Film Archives in New York. In 1970 Snow was given a mid-career retrospective at the Art Gallery of Ontario and was the first artist to be featured in a solo exhibition at the Canadian pavilion of the Venice Biennale. He returned to Toronto in the early 1970s as an established figure, multiply defined as a visual artist, a filmmaker, and a musician.

LEFT: Michael Snow in New York in 1964, photographed by John Reeves. RIGHT: Michael Snow and Joyce Wieland in 1964, photographed by John Reeves.

LIVING AND WORKING

Snow came back to Canada at a time of growing optimism in the arts: new galleries and performance halls, including a burgeoning network of artist-run spaces; public and private commitments to Canadian cultural production in both traditional and experimental media. His energy and versatility found appreciative audiences and supporters in different communities. As a visual artist Snow was associated with the increasingly lively Toronto art scene through the Isaacs Gallery, and recognized worldwide through major exhibitions. As a filmmaker Snow maintained his close connections to the American experimental film scene and contributed through his work, writing, and collaboration to the consolidation of a Canadian avant-garde cinema and its institutions, such as the Funnel Experimental Film Theatre and the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre. Snow the musician was invited to join the Artists' Jazz Band, a group loosely affiliated with the Isaacs Gallery. As well, by 1974 he and eight other musicians had come together as the Canadian Creative Music Collective (later known only as CCMC), a free-music orchestra that founded Toronto's Music Gallery, evolving into a trio (Snow, Paul Dutton, and John Oswald) that continues to tour and record music to this day.

The 1976 album cover of Canadian Creative Music Collective's *Volume One*. The group is pictured in front of Toronto's Music Gallery; Snow is second from the left.

In 1967 Snow said (and has frequently been quoted as saying),

> My paintings are done by a filmmaker, sculpture by a musician, films by a
> painter, music by a filmmaker, paintings by a sculptor, sculpture by a
> filmmaker, films by a musician, music by a sculptor ... sometimes they all work
> together. Also, many of my paintings have been done by a painter, sculpture
> by a sculptor, films by a filmmaker, music by a musician. There is a tendency
> towards purity in all of these media as separate endeavours.[1]

Whether writing scripts or creating soundtracks for his films, making
three-dimensional objects to be photographed, or performing as an actor
or a musician for his own camera, Snow, ever conscious of the particular
nature of each medium, has sought to intensify the spectator's
involvement with art and near-art experience.

A frequent flyer who also retreats into nature every summer, Snow, his
wife, Peggy Gale, and their son, Alexander Snow, have made their lives in
Toronto and Newfoundland since the 1980s. Major exhibitions,
numerous public art projects, and lifetime achievement awards allow
Toronto to claim this artist, who has also been honoured by
retrospectives, commissions, and prizes elsewhere in Canada, the United
States, and Europe, including an honorary doctorate from the Université
de Paris I, Panthéon-Sorbonne, in 2004. In 2008 the artist-run centre
Séquence in Chicoutimi, Quebec, inaugurated a new exhibition space,
the Galerie Michael Snow. An honorary native son of the Saguenay
region, Michael Snow has never forgotten his roots.

Michael Snow chopping wood in
Newfoundland in 1994, photographed by
Peggy Gale.

KEY WORKS

The work of Michael Snow spans more than fifty years of intense production, including paintings, sculptures, photographs, films, books, holograms, projections, installations, musical recordings, performances, and essays. Already recognized in Canada for his trademark series *Walking Woman*, which he began in 1961, Snow came to international attention in the late 1960s with his groundbreaking film *Wavelength*, 1966–67. Selected in collaboration with the artist, this brief survey demonstrates the great variety of perceptual questions that his work has raised, as well as the themes and strategies that unify his artistic production.

LAC CLAIR 1960

Michael Snow, *Lac Clair*, 1960
Oil and paper adhesive tape on canvas, 178 x 178.3 x 3 cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

This abstract painting belongs to a family of works by Snow that also includes collage and sculpture created between 1959 and 1961. Influenced in his early years by the German-Swiss painter Paul Klee (1879-1940), Snow had set aside— temporarily, as it turned out—any reference to the figure and was deeply involved in both the process and the materiality of artmaking. What was this object called "a painting"? For Snow at that moment, it was a single-colour surface, whose textures and brush strokes served as evidence of its process of creation. So the blue surface of *Lac Clair* retains the memory of the painter

applying the paint, which is more concentrated at the centre—not darker or lighter but simply more worked than at the four corners, which are the measure of his reach. This measurement—a human presence without representation—is emphasized by the application of adhesive tape to each edge. This can be seen as a framing device, though imperfectly, as the perimeter line is not continuous. To locate the tape, imagine the painting in rotation. The tape will always be at the upper right edge. This simple device, combined with the arc of Snow's brush strokes, sets the work in motion without disturbing the serenity of its blue centre.

Green in Green, 1960, oil and Lucite on canvas, also falls within this family of works. The title and the painting's lively surface refer not just to colour but also to the use of medium, to process, and gesture: the darker of the two greens is the underpainting, which, protected during the next application by strips of tape, rises as a geometric form onto the surface. Also in the same vein is *Years*, 1960, a gouache on paper collage on a painted corrugated cardboard support. In this work Snow proceeds additively, covering one surface with another that floats above it, like a membrane or a curtain. The tape in *Lac Clair* is also an "addition," in that without adding much thickness, Snow nevertheless underscores the object-ness of the work. His more overtly three-dimensional works of this period—*Shunt*, 1959, and *Quits*, 1960, abstractions in painted wood—also seem bent on questioning their sculptural identities, as their elements flow or tumble from the wall (the place of painting) onto the floor.

Michael Snow, *Shunt*, 1959, wood with paint, 274.3 x 335.3 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Michael Snow, *Quits*, 1960, oil on wood, plywood, 240 x 40 x 66 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Lac Clair was intended to represent its own making, but once completed the work reminded Snow of his Levesque grandparents' cottage on a small lake near Chicoutimi, Quebec. Built on an island, and almost entirely covering it, the cottage was surrounded by water, gently lapping on all sides, reflecting light onto the walls and ceilings of the rooms. Snow's painting places the blue medium at the centre of this deeply internalized childhood memory. Water and light themes would continue to feature in Snow's work, notably in his film *Wavelength*, 1966-67.

VENUS SIMULTANEOUS 1962

Michael Snow, *Venus Simultaneous,* 1962
Oil on canvas and wood construction, 200.6 x 299.7 x 15.2 cm
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

Venus Simultaneous belongs to the first generation of Michael Snow's Walking Woman works, and thus to his early years as a painter and sculptor. This large body of work comes with a creation story of experimentation and insight. Sometime in 1955 Snow began to use the matte knife as a drawing instrument; a series of figurative works on paper (collages) resulted from his combinations of cut-and-painted shapes. A period of abstraction followed, Snow re-engaging with the figure some five years later. In 1961, working with a large sheet of cardboard, he first drew a rectangle 5 feet (152 cm) high; he then drew and cut out the figure inside it: a walking woman or, more precisely, *two* walking women, one positive, the other negative. This duality interested Snow, and he was struck with the idea of working with these stencils, rigorously following a set of rules. The first rule was that the original cut-outs would be used to make all Walking Woman works, and with no variation in size: 5 feet high, as measured from forehead to ankle; 20 inches (50.8 cm) wide, as measured between the handless swinging arms.

For Snow, establishing this rule was an important intuition because it clarified for him something about abstraction. The Walking Woman was never the representation of a woman but the representation of a matrix (a template or form for creation, sometimes defined as a "womb"). The dimensions of the works (height, width, or depth) might vary, as the figure could run edge to edge, float in a larger field, appear cropped (vertically or horizontally), or be folded, rolled, boxed, tiered, or suspended. Combinations of figures created dynamic figure-ground relationships. As the series progressed, Snow broke the rule about size, and the figure that started out flat sometimes obtained voluptuousness.

Venus Simultaneous is difficult even for its creator to categorize: it is painting, collage, relief, and sculpture all in one. The cut-out is powerfully asserted in this work, in both its positive and negative modes, its entrances and exits forming irregular side and top edges; the work's thickness, or depth, stems from the projection of one figure off the surface. At the time of its making, the Canadian critic Arnold Rockman observed that the figures seemed simultaneously to be inhabiting different kinds of space: moving back and forth across the spectator's field of vision; receding; projecting, trespassing on each other's turf; intruding into the real world![1] One figure is nothing but an outline. Another is layered, a collage. Still another is built up with impasto to a sculptural thickness. There are eight variations in all, not counting the shadow cast by the projected figure. But it must be counted because this impossibly thin and endlessly variable Walking Woman—a creature of light—foreshadows important directions in Snow's work.

Altered front page of the *New York Post*, 1962, reproduced in *Biographie of the Walking Woman / de la femme qui marche* (2004).

SLEEVE 1965

Michael Snow, *Sleeve*, 1965
Oil, canvas, wood, 366 x 366 x 305 cm
Vancouver Art Gallery

First exhibited in December 1965 at the Poindexter Gallery in New York, *Sleeve* is an assemblage of Walking Woman treatments in different media and materials: paint (including spray enamel), wood, vinyl, Masonite, acetate, photograph, canvas, polyethylene, and Plexiglas. Twelve separate elements are organized in planned relationships, so that the work is now referred to as an installation. This work demonstrates Snow's use of the form in an instrumental, conceptual, and representational framework that blazes the path to his more abstract perceptual themes.

Sleeve exhibits a variety of approaches to the form: it realizes many of Snow's ambitions for the project, as outlined in his brilliant prospectus of 1962–63, "A Lot of Near Mrs."[1] Three years later the form had become Snow's "trade*mark*." He had made the rules for its usage, and he felt very free to break them. The figure appears in different sizes. In one variation she is curvaceous, fully modelled. In another, a *real* woman is stepping into the cut-out; she is a fellow musician, the American jazz composer and performer Carla Bley. Her split-second performance for the camera nests one representation in another—a compressed version of the Russian doll. In "A Lot of Near Mrs." Snow writes, "It was not designed for uses which could be foreseen."

Michael Snow, *Carla Bley*, 1965, offset lithograph, rubber stamp, 66 x 51 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Sleeve, with its framing device for a coloured gel—a standing stone with a window—made the figure into something that could be altered by spectatorial performance, by a glance through a coloured pane. The spectator could "make light of the figure." Snow, who had already produced his Walking Woman film *New York Eye and Ear Control*, 1964, considered the use of spray enamels as another means of projection. Rigorously conceived, *Sleeve* also gives evidence of an artist crossing boundaries while respecting the perimeter of the white box.

The Walking Woman's leading historian, Louise Dompierre, reckons that between 1961 and 1967 Snow made some two hundred individual Walking Woman works, as well as a vast number (later estimated by Snow at around eight hundred) of "site-specific" or what he called "lost" works. This was a play on the "found objects" of Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968)—Duchamp being a major influence on Snow's and his generation's thinking. The fugitive lives of these non-gallery pieces are documented in Snow's *Biographie of the Walking Woman / de la femme qui marche, 1961–1967*(2004): the Walking Woman can be spotted at subway entrances, on hoardings; in newspaper ads and appropriated graphics; screened on banners and T-shirts; crafted as jewellery and needlepoint cushions; cut into cookies and other comestibles; as a trademark, licensed, and also liberated by the artist to turn up anywhere. As indeed it did in Snow's subsequent production, making the conventional end-date of the series (1967) somewhat premature. The artist's book *Biographie* is a case in point, but the Walking Woman is also an active agent in Snow's 2002 film **Corpus Callosum*.

WAVELENGTH 1966

Michael Snow, *Wavelength*, 1966–67
16mm film, colour, sound, 45 min.
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Filmed over one week in December 1966, edited and first screened early the following year, *Wavelength* was not Michael Snow's first film but the groundbreaking work that catapulted him out of the painter's studio, where it was shot, into the international avant-garde. The film was recognized on sight as having resolved in a perfectly integrated and remarkably efficient form the emerging desire among experimental filmmakers for simplicity and directness of cinematic expression, and for making imaginative use of the specific properties of the medium.

Wavelength is anything but simple, however, as Snow's statement of intention suggests. He describes the film as "a summation of my nervous system, religious inklings and aesthetic ideas."[1] The spine of the film is its famous zoom from a fixed camera position facing a wall with four tall sash windows. Over the course of the film, the angle of view narrows until the frame is filled with a black and white photograph of waves pinned up between the middle two windows. Other features of the room, in which four events involving people take place, are sloughed off. The spectator is led to concentrate on this central element, the photograph—it has been there all along—until the image is washed out and the film comes to an end.

The four events that take place before the camera are the installation of a shelving unit, under the supervision of a woman; the return of this woman with a female companion and the playing of the radio; the sound of shattering glass, followed by the collapse on the floor and presumed death of a male figure; and the discovery of that figure by another woman, who places a telephone call and leaves the loft. The camera, surely the main protagonist, is a presence sensed over the course of the film, as it sometimes stutters in its cinematic language while making its way to the conclusion, a journey ruled and intensified by the sound of a rising

Michael Snow, *Wavelength*, 1966-67, 16mm film, colour, sound, 45 min., National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

sine wave. The colours of light (achieved through the use of gels), the artisanal quality of Snow's ghostly montage, and elements of pure chance, such as sound drifting up from the street, offer escape and consolation to the spectator who is inexorably drawn to the watery depths of the final scene.

Since its release *Wavelength* has inspired writing by leading film critics and theorists, including Manny Farber, Jonas Mekas, Annette Michelson, and P. Adams Sitney. The curator Philip Monk titled his contributions to *The Michael Snow Project*—an exhibition and catalogue essay on Snow's sculpture, film, and photo-work (1967–69)—"Around *Wavelength*." The art historian Elizabeth Legge wrote a study of *Wavelength* for the One Work Series, published by Afterall Books.

In the early 2000s, as Snow became interested in digital media, he created *WVLNT (or Wavelength for Those Who Don't Have the Time)*, 2003, by cutting the film into three equal lengths and superimposing them. Initially conceived for theatrical presentation, the work also became a continuously projected gallery installation in 2005.[2] *Wavelength*'s much pondered sequence of events, which was a scaffolding, not a plot, is compressed in *WVLNT*—the body is discovered before the man staggers in. But this concern could arise only from memory of the original work or in theatrical presentation. In a gallery projection, the visual effect of the superimposition is enthralling. The silvery waves, at three different scales, remain at the heart of the film.

BLIND 1968
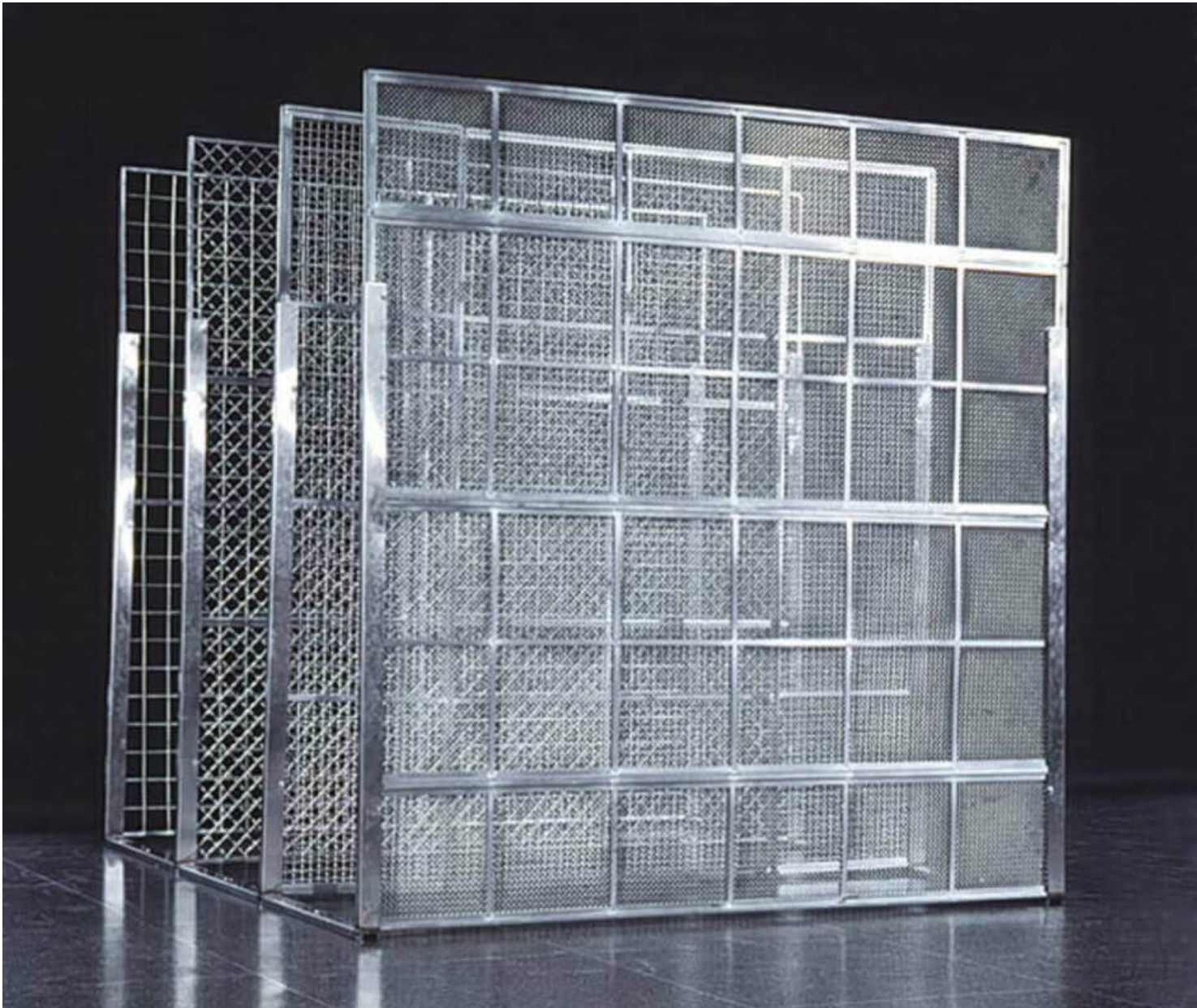
Michael Snow, *Blind,* 1968
Steel and aluminum, 246.4 x 245.7 x 246.4 cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Michael Snow made his first group of sculptures in 1956. It was a series of small tables and chairs, with soft or melted edges, closely related in style and content to drawings, paintings, and an animated film, *A to Z*, 1956, produced at the same time. His next sculptures were painted wooden constructions—something between bas-relief and free-standing objects—making the link between wall and floor. The Walking Woman series contained many three-dimensional works, including an important group of stainless-steel figures commissioned for the Ontario Pavilion at Expo 67. *Blind* gives sculptural form to Snow's preoccupation of those years with sense perception and its translation into form. In 1966 he had told an interviewer, "I want to make seeing palpable."[1]

Blind consists of four porous partitions framed in steel and clad in aluminum mesh. The construction might remind viewers of a chain-link fence. Snow specified four different gauges for his panels, which are mounted in parallel, forming a cube open on three sides. Visitors are encouraged to walk between the panels as if through corridors or a maze; they see the texture of the interior mesh panels, and they see through them to the gallery beyond. Those standing outside are seeing the people in the maze as part of the work, figures atomized or blurred as they move between the panels. Snow compares this effect to a cross-hatched drawing and to a camera going in and out of focus. The effect is also similar to the graininess of a photographic enlargement or the quality of offset printing as those technologies existed at the time.

Viewers inside the sculpture *Blind*.

Another comparison, suggested by the title and effected in stages by the panels, is to progressive loss of vision. This might be a biographical reading, related to Snow's father, but it also reflects the artist's sensitivity, his awareness of vision in relation to the other senses (other media). And this is not all, for "blind" can mean other things besides the physiological or psychological loss of sight. A blind is a shelter for concealing hunters. To blind is to confuse with bright light. Blindness can be the unwillingness to see. Snow the punster puts all these meanings (and others) into serious play with this performative work of sculpture.
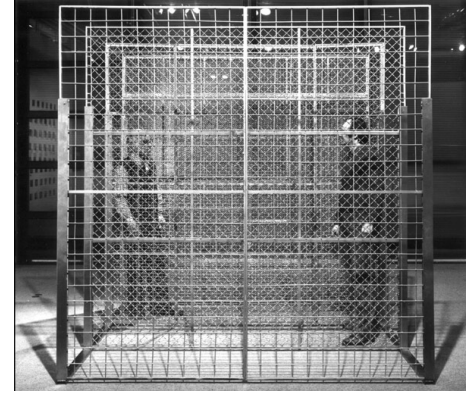
AUTHORIZATION 1969

Michael Snow, *Authorization*, 1969
Black and white Polaroid photographs, adhesive cloth tape, metal frame, mirror,
54.5 x 44.5 cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Sometimes mistaken for a self-portrait, *Authorization* is better understood as a
staged performance of the photographic act. The work consists of a framed
mirror onto which Snow has applied grey adhesive tape, forming a rectangle
proportioned to hold four Polaroid photographs. There are five Polaroids in
the finished work, the fifth affixed to the upper left-hand corner. The use of
Polaroid technology is not incidental here. Before digital photography, the
Polaroid was *the* camera of nearly instant results. The making of *Authorization*
depended on Snow's ability to see the image he had just taken and to
integrate it immediately into the work.

Snow placed the camera directly in front of the mirror, its reflection centred in the adhesive frame. The camera thus becomes the subject, the artist the camera operator. Looking through the camera, and focusing on its mirror image, he took the first photograph, which he then mounted in the upper left-hand corner of the adhesive rectangle. The image of the camera-subject is blurred because Snow has broken the fundamental rule about photographing a mirror image: one is supposed to focus on the mirror surface (the tape or the frame), not on the reflection. As he continued through the steps of filling the rectangle, the camera and its operator become more blurred; they disappear into the work-in-progress. The Polaroid in the upper left-hand corner is the image of the rectangle filled in. The erasure of man and machine is virtually complete.

Interpretations of *Authorization* properly insist on its display of photographic process as a comment on photographic

William Anastasi, *Nine Polaroid Portraits of a Mirror*, 1967, black and white instant print, 36.8 :x 28.6 :cm, © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York / Art Resource, NY.

representation. Snow made a number of works in this vein, as did other artists he was not aware of, including the American Conceptualist William Anastasi (b. 1933). Anastasi's *Nine Polaroid Photographs in a Mirror*, 1967, now held by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, shares some, but not all, of *Authorization*'s intricate program. Snow's use of tape to assert the picture plane –the field of action and its boundaries–and his doubled ambiguation of the subject set *Authorization* on its own path. First shown in Snow's exhibition at the 1970 Venice Biennale, *Authorization* was praised for its autonomy and reflexiveness: the content of this photographic work was purely and simply the history of its creation. The work was thus seen as the logical extension of Snow's paintings about painting–for example, *Lac Clair*, 1960–and it was acquired by the National Gallery for its collection of contemporary Canadian art, the first photographic work to be so designated.

LA RÉGION CENTRALE 1971

Michael Snow, *La Région Centrale,* **1971**
16mm film, colour, sound, 180 min.
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Michael Snow's tenth work in film continues the exploration of camera movement that is the hallmark of his award-winning *Wavelength*, 1966–67, with two significant differences. His earlier works in this vein, which include *Standard Time*, 1967, and <–> (*Back and Forth*), 1969, were created in enclosed spaces—a loft, an apartment, and a classroom—and each featured a single camera movement: the zoom (changing the focal length to make the subject come closer) in *Wavelength*; and the pan (the camera rotating on a horizontal line) in the later two. The film that became *La Région Centrale* was set in a remote location that he found north of Sept-Îles, Quebec.

Michael Snow, *La Région Centrale*, 1971, 16mm film, colour, sound, 180 min., National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

From the perspective of a mountaintop, this cinematic landscape features vast prospects and a rocky terrain recorded by a camera rigged for movement in any and all directions, including turning, rolling, and spinning—a landscape that defies gravity. To achieve this effect in the wilderness, Snow conceived of a remote-controlled camera-activating machine that he commissioned from the engineer Pierre Abeloos. Camera and crew were dropped by helicopter onto the surface of planet Earth. Snow shot five hours of raw colour footage, which he then edited into a three-hour film intended for theatrical distribution.

La Région Centrale transports its audience to a rugged Canadian landscape that is discovered at noon and then explored in seventeen episodes of dizzying motion as the machine's shadow lengthens, night falls, and light returns. The soundtrack, composed by Snow for a quasi-synthesizer, refers to the sine waves and electronic pulses that had set the camera in motion and heightens the sensation of being under the power of an all-seeing machine. The experience is vertiginous, hallucinatory, and defining of the technological sublime.

The camera-activating machine does not appear in the film, except occasionally as a shadow, but its engineered beauty was not to be wasted. It was adapted to become the central element and motive force of the kinetic video sculpture *De La*, 1972. The 16mm camera was replaced with a video recorder that transmits a continuous flow of images to four television monitors placed along the perimeter of the sculpture's virtual space. Visitors attracted to the beauty of the machine in motion become part of *De La* as its roving eye captures them on camera and scatters their images to the four winds.

Michael Snow with the machine he and Pierre Abeloos designed to film *La Région Centrale*. The photo was taken by Joyce Wieland in October 1969 on the fifth and final day of the crew's presence on the mountaintop in northern Quebec where the film was shot.

RAMEAU'S NEPHEW BY DIDEROT 1972–74

Michael Snow, *Rameau's Nephew by Diderot (Thanx to Dennis Young) by Wilma Schoen*, 1972-74
16mm film, colour, sound, 270 min.
Collection of the artist

The "authentic 'talking picture,'" as Michael Snow describes *Rameau's Nephew*, is an epic treatment of the spoken word and other sounds generated by the human body that are susceptible to recording. The film is a segmented series of encounters with figures in recognizable or at least nameable settings who are conversing, reciting, reading, discoursing, or otherwise generating sound. Some of these emissions are effortful, such as tapping, whistling, or smashing. Others seem simply to emanate from the body—the best example would be farting—while still others, from the same corporeal region, need to be staged in such a way that amplifies their qualities and enables them to be recorded: a pissing duet is amplified by the use of buckets.

All manner of cinematic sound is under consideration, including voice-over and an off-screen voice giving direction. The apparent source of the sound is pictured—a speaking figure—but this is no guarantee that the voice will be in sync; the film intends to counter such common assumptions. The language of this film is primarily English, though French, Spanish, and German are also spoken, and the spoken English can be broken down into its various dialects.

Intense communication is leavened by miscommunication, whether from garbled speech, pedantry, weak signals, dubbing gaps, reversals, voice-over, or secret code.

An incorrigible punster and talented writer, Snow has a fascination with, and enjoyment of, verbal play that long predates his preparations for *Rameau's Nephew*. It goes back to his childhood, when his art production was the adventure cartoon. When he began to write this film, he scribbled down folksy expressions, advertising slogans, clichés, and snatches of conversation, which he translated into text and then reprocessed into scripts that are curious evidence of the oral/aural divide. He also created anagrams of the participants' names, as well as his own, which becomes Wilma Schoen.

Michael Snow, *Rameau's Nephew by Diderot (Thanx to Dennis Young) by Wilma Schoen*, 1972–74, 16mm film, colour, sound, 270 min., collection of the artist.

Rameau's Nephew is episodic, situational, without plot or reprise. It is a long film—four and a half hours—but is cleanly divided into segments that take up various aspects of the theme. The players are mainly gifted amateurs, though Snow did engage professional actors for the so-called Fart scene, which involved learning to perform their lines backward. Elsewhere he featured already developed skills, such as the ability of the Canadian painter Dennis Burton (1933–2013) to speak "Burtonish," a language based on English but different in its arbitrary fracturing of words and repurposing of punctuation, or his own capacity to make music at the kitchen sink.

The work is sometimes described as polyphonic in its musical sense, for at this stage in his cinematic work Snow was averse to any storytelling structure. His desire, frequently expressed, was to make image-sound compositions. *Rameau's Nephew* is generally analyzed as a "talking film," but its images—Snow's settings and framings—are unforgettable, for their colour, if nothing else. Holding this film together, leading the viewer from scene to scene, are the extraordinary breadth of its variations on the theme and its sometimes mute comedy.

COVER TO COVER 1975

Michael Snow: Cover to Cover, 1975
Book, 23 x 18 cm
Published by the Press of Nova Scotia College of Art & Design and New York University Press

A work of art by Michael Snow can be difficult to put into words; this is especially true of his recto-verso works, for instance the intriguing two-sided simultaneous projection *Two Sides to Every Story*, 1974, and a large family of photographic works, including transparencies such as *Shade*, 1979, and *Powers of Two*, 2003, and the back-to-back photographic panels of *Line Drawing with Synapse*, 2003, a design to short-circuit the viewer's brain. All these works hang in the open space of a gallery, making them sculptures. Here's the rub: we are accustomed to contemplating sculpture by moving around the object; these works seem somehow to insist that we stand in two places at once. *Cover to Cover* sets up the same irresistible challenge. As a bookwork it presents as a set of bound signatures, meant to be read cover to cover, meaning front to back, delivering a sequence of images printed full bleed (printed to the edge of the page, without borders). There is no text, so the title printed on the spine must be our guide. One can see at a glance that a single male figure, possibly the artist, is present throughout. From this one might assume that there is narrative structure—a following of this figure from cover to cover, as familiar from memoirs, diaries, or novels. This impression is both right and wrong, for the journey is not smooth.

The book is entirely composed of images made by two photographers aiming their cameras at the object-artist who is caught in a photographic crossfire; sometimes we see the photographers, mostly we do not. Their synchronized exposures result in two parallel sequences. They form a pair that is presented back to back, or recto-verso, on each leaf of the book. In creating this work Snow underlines two characteristics of the photographic image in print: how photographic representation compresses three-dimensional objects, and the thinness of the printed sheet. To do so he had to break the reader's habits.

Page after page, and spread after spread, *Cover to Cover* is a mind-twisting arrangement that engages the spectator in an intense game of concentration. To make the connections and move forward, the spectator must remember what is now hidden from view on the previous page. That doesn't sound so complicated, but it is, because of the kinds of actions executed by the artist. In one passage the figure is recorded moving through a door. On the two-page spread, we see the back of the figure on the left, and the door on the right, though seen from the other side—a suspense-building form of montage. But as the scene "progresses," an action is not completed within the spread, but loops back in the next one, so that the minimal "progress" extracted from reading left to right is systematically stalled each time a page is turned, and the verso page recapitulates the photographic event printed on the recto side from the opposite angle. This is the disorienting part: to be denied "progress" as one turns the page seems oddly like flashback, which it patently is not; it might be called "extreme simultaneity." Two versions of the same thing (two sides of the story) are happening at the same time.

And if this seems puzzling, more is on the way: sometime after the midpoint of the book, a rotation occurs within the two-sided system. The images are now upside down. Readers who flip the book over and start paging from the back soon realize that they are looking at images of images produced by the two-sided system, and indeed the very book that they are holding in their hands. This double play of simultaneity underscores Snow's fascination with the book as *object*, which he had previously explored in book-shaped sculptures such as *Membrane*, 1969, and *432101234*, 1969. From those early titles, one is alerted to Snow's awakening interest in the thinness of the sheet and the echoing potential of binding. He began to explore these features, and others, in a catalogue published by the Art Gallery of Ontario, *Michael Snow / A Survey* (1970), and they are exquisitely displayed in *Cover to Cover*.

PLUS TARD 1977

Michael Snow, *Plus Tard #20,* 1977
1 of 25 framed dye coupler prints, each 86.4 x 107.2 cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Michael Snow took the photographs for his serial work *Plus Tard* at the
National Gallery of Canada in a gallery dedicated to the paintings of Tom
Thomson (1877–1917) and the Group of Seven. These works are embedded in
Canadian cultural memory as the foundations of a national school of distinctly
Canadian character. They are canonical, in other words, and Snow's use of
them has sometimes been interpreted as an appropriation of the canon,
possibly Oedipal in its desires. The apparent nationalism of this reading is
deflected when we learn that Snow first came up with the basic concept as
something he might develop for the room dedicated to Henri Matisse (1869–
1954) at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

What initially appealed to Snow about both sites was the possibility of translating painterly gestures to the camera: blending colours, for example, by moving the camera during a long exposure. The National Gallery installation seemed promising because of the pure colour and active surfaces, especially the evidence of brush strokes in many of the Thomson and Group of Seven landscapes. Regardless of the subject, this was not to be a work about the nature of painting, but something purely photographic. *Plus Tard* is explicitly about time as it creates images that only a camera can "see." The landscape paintings are the subjects, but Snow is *the* subject as an artist using a machine to record his gestures and movements in the gallery space. The photographs are composed with considerable energy and variety, from close tremulous studies to angular groupings that include features of the room. That room, incidentally, is itself part of Canadian cultural history, being in the *old* National Gallery, the Lorne Building on Elgin Street in Ottawa.

Michael Snow, *Plus Tard #15*, 1977, 1 of 25 framed dye coupler prints, each 86.4 x 107.2 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Snow extended these spatial considerations in his framing of the photographs, which is inextricably part of the work. The prints are suspended or sandwiched between sheets of Plexiglas, making the walls of the gallery in which *Plus Tard* is hung part of the work. The frames themselves are dark and heavy, drawing black rectangles around these lively, colourful images of the past. This decision encourages the interpretation that *Plus Tard* is an elegy. Perhaps "memory" is a better word for a work that in Canada prompts recollections of much-reproduced modern paintings, and elsewhere in the world evokes the aura of an original work of art, now absorbed into another, to be seen *later* (the English for *plus tard*).

FLIGHT STOP 1979

Michael Snow, *Flight Stop*, 1979
60 suspended fibreglass Canada goose forms surfaced with tinted black and white
photographs, 32 x 20 x 16 m
Toronto Eaton Centre

Over the course of a long and distinguished career, Michael Snow has sought and received numerous commissions for public sculpture. With the exception of a group of Walking Woman sculptures commissioned for the Ontario pavilion of Expo 67 in Montreal, most of these works are still viewable on their original sites in his native city of Toronto.

Unveiled in 1979, *Flight Stop* is a permanent sculptural installation at the Toronto Eaton Centre, a downtown shopping mall and office complex. The work was commissioned by the centre's developers, Cadillac Fairview, in concert with the architect Eberhard Zeidler. The design problem was to create a hanging sculpture for a skylit galleria, visually accessed from several storeys of wide balconies, as well as from the ground-floor corridor running between Dundas and Queen Streets. The north-south axis of this consumer palace caught Snow's attention, and he conceived of a flight of geese breaking formation to land at the south entrance to feed.

Flight Stop looks like a sculptural representation of sixty geese, but the work is in fact a combination of fibreglass forms and photographs of a single goose, one of two culled from a flock living on Toronto Island. Snow photographed this dead bird, adjusting the neck, wing, and tail positions and the cylindrical parts of the body. Based on other photographs and drawings of geese in flight, three different body sizes were then carved in Styrofoam and, using pattern-making techniques, two-dimensional photographic goose costumes were printed and assembled. In the meantime the Styrofoam bodies were cast in fibreglass, ready to be suited up in the photographic costumes. These three-dimensional objects were then varnished in a slightly tinted brown that has yellowed somewhat over time. Strung from the roof on individual wires, the objects form a dynamic group: the poses lend variety; the play with scale maximizes depth; photographic detail heightens a sense of realism. The objects are somehow more naturalistic—goosier—than conventional sculptural representation could be, and this quality accentuates Snow's artistic comment on the nature of photographic illusion, on the tendency to suspend disbelief.

As a public sculpture in a busy shopping mall, *Flight Stop* is visited daily by thousands of people. A great many more who have never seen the work know of it because of the civil suit that ensued in 1982 when the Eaton Centre's Christmas decorators tied ribbons around what they thought of simply as the necks of the geese. Snow sued the Eaton Centre to have the ribbons removed from *Flight Stop* and won on the argument that his moral rights had been violated. The decorations were judged to have distorted or modified the work. This was a precedent-setting case, settled some six years before formal recognition of moral rights in the 1988 amendment to the Copyright Act of Canada.

STILL LIFE IN 8 CALLS 1985

Michael Snow, *Still Life in 8 Calls*, 1985
Installation: 8 rugs, wood table legs, 8 wood chairs, 8 transmission holograms in metal frames, white light illumination, approx. 1.52 m long; rugs: 259 x 182 cm; holograms: 71 x 61 cm
Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

For the Québécois critic Gilles Rioux, Michael Snow's holographic exhibition *The Spectral Image*, presented at Expo 86 in Vancouver, was the contemporary equivalent of the *Pavillon du réalisme*, mounted by Gustave Courbet (1819–1877) at the Universal Exhibition of 1855 in Paris.[1] Snow conceived his artwork as a unified sculptural installation, in which he included photographs, three-dimensional objects, holograms, and a repurposed machine shop. *Still Life in 8 Calls*, a work combining real furniture and part-furniture with holographic still lifes, was part of this "realist" complex.

Snow made what the photographer and filmmaker saw as a natural transition to holography in the mid-1980s, producing individual works as well as monumental installations. The ghostliness of the holographic image intrigued him, as did its immediacy. In *Still Life in 8 Calls* the spectator is invited to contemplate an orderly everyday scene: a lamp, a rotary dial telephone, a cup and saucer, a spoon, a pencil, keys, and eyeglasses. As the visitor works down the line, this domestic banality is seriously disrupted. All other things (the real things) remaining equal, the elements in the holographic still life fly up into the air and ultimately self-destruct before the viewer's eyes.

The traditional still life that becomes enchanted and unruly returns to Snow's first film, a short animation titled *A to Z*, 1956, produced by moving and photographing cut-out elements on the animation stand. In *A to Z* the furniture began to make love. The mischief has continued in a video installation, *Serve, Deserve*, 2009, which chronicles the service of a restaurant meal. This fluid still life arrives after the usual restaurant wait, flows across the projection surface, and just as fluidly disappears. No tip is left at the end of this endless meal.

IMMEDIATE DELIVERY 1998
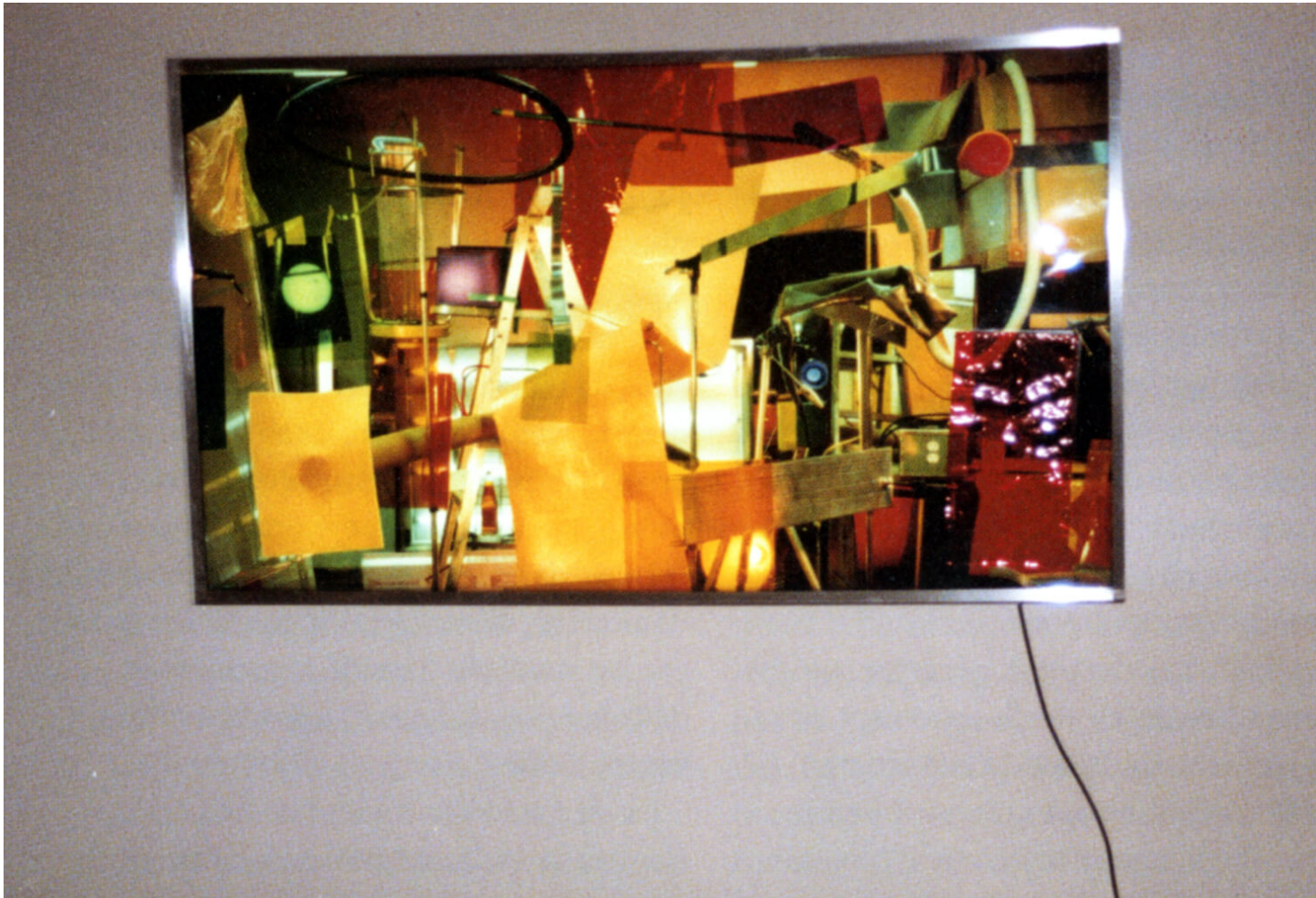
Michael Snow, *Immediate Delivery,* 1998
Back-lit transparency, 116.1 x 191 x 16.8 cm
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

Transparency is a key theme in Michael Snow's production, as well as the actual medium for a number of works, beginning in the late 1960s. In *Sink*, 1970, Snow not only plays with repetition, or re-presentation, but he does so in a series of transparencies: an accumulation of brushes and containers around a stained painter's sink is recorded under different colours and intensities of light. In *Recombinant*, 1992, a tray of 35mm slides is projected on a bas-relief panel that contains and alters the radiant image-forms. Both these gallery works highlight mechanism by including carousel projectors as part of the piece. Transparencies have also been featured in Snow's theatrical presentations, or auditorium works, including *Slidelength*, 1969-71, whose subjects are the colours of light and shadow-casting forms.

A Casing Shelved, 1970, is an image-sound work for theatrical projection. It features a single vertical image of a shelving unit in an artist's studio whose contents the artist (Snow) is heard to carefully describe and explain. Finally, *Imposition*, 1976, is a large composite image featuring two figures, a man and a woman, seated on a couch. The picture has been taken in landscape, or couch, orientation, but the work is hung as a portrait–that is, vertically. As doubly depicted, the man and woman are both clothed and nude, and they cock their heads to the right to look at a picture within the picture that may be of them, while the spectator does the same to "turn the work" lengthwise.

As a back-lit transparency, *Immediate Delivery* also makes a subject of transparency: the nature of the material is emphasized in the way Snow uses it. He explains the work as "a transparent photograph of a construction made with transparencies, metal and various objects which occupied a space 7 m x 5 m x 5 m in my studio, all of which press towards, or onto, the picture plane." The transparencies that he mentions are present as representations and as "real coloured plastic gels applied to the surface of the photograph."[1] They are tangible references to the process: a monumental construction, erected as a set in Snow's studio and struck when the picturing was done. This process ties *Immediate Delivery* to his earliest works in collage and assemblage, while extending a body of work undertaken in the 1980s, when he made a number of photographic works about scale based on objects handmade from plaster, clay, or Plasticine. His aim was to make the entire contents of the photographic image.

Michael Snow, *Sink*, 1970, 80 projected slides and one mounted still photo, each 63 x 63 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York / Art Resource, NY.

SOLAR BREATH 2002

Michael Snow, *Solar Breath (Northern Caryatids)*, 2002
Video projection, colour, sound, 61:32 min., looped, 2 m wide; filmed at the artist's
summer cabin in Newfoundland

Solar Breath (Northern Caryatids) is a video projection based on an unedited 62-minute recording of image and sound made from a fixed camera position. The projection is looped for continuous play in a gallery installation. *Solar Breath (Northern Caryatids)* is an innovation in Snow's practice, though not entirely unprecedented. His first gallery projection, using 8mm film, was a Walking Woman work titled *Little Walk*, 1964. In addition, while most of Snow's films were made in 16mm, he would occasionally use live-feed video for gallery works such as *De La*, 1972, and *Observer*, 1974. In 2001 he produced *Sheeploop*, a pastoral work shown on video monitors that are dispersed around a gallery. *Solar Breath (Northern Caryatids)* asks for and accommodates with seating a more absorbed spectator.

Snow situates *Solar Breath (Northern Caryatids)* in a family of works involving processes of recognition and translation into photography, film, or video. He describes this kind of artmaking in Duchampian terms: ordinary things that materially accrue, or are observed to repeat, are "taken-by-surprise" into the realm of art.[1] *Solar Breath (Northern Caryatids)* was conceived when Snow recognized that a fascinating natural phenomenon, occurring in a man-made dwelling, had the potential for transformation into art. The site of this

discovery was a casement window built by Snow in his Newfoundland cabin; his wife, Peggy Gale, made the curtain. Half of the window is screened, and when that half is open around sunset, and all other atmospheric conditions are just right, the curtain begins to move, billowing out and then snapping back, sucked flat into folds against the screen.

Snow observed and listened to this performance for years, waiting for the perfect set of conditions, which he then recorded—and not just the vision but also the sound, which is strangely powerful, a force of nature. The combination is enthralling, and there is more: as the curtain rises and falls in beautiful folds against the screen, sound bounces off the glass, sound that emanates from the interior of the cabin. And this sound is also beautiful: soft murmuring voices of a woman and a man; the occasional clink of a dish or a glass; the sound of dailiness from which "near-art" experience comes.

The art experience offered by *Solar Breath (Northern Caryatids)* belongs to yet another family of works in Snow's oeuvre. His window works span the entire course of his career and appear in all media. In *Solar Breath (Northern Caryatids)* the curtain flutters inward, revealing trees, stacked firewood, and a solar panel—a landscape and a still life to which this window directs our attention.

THE VIEWING OF SIX NEW WORKS 2012
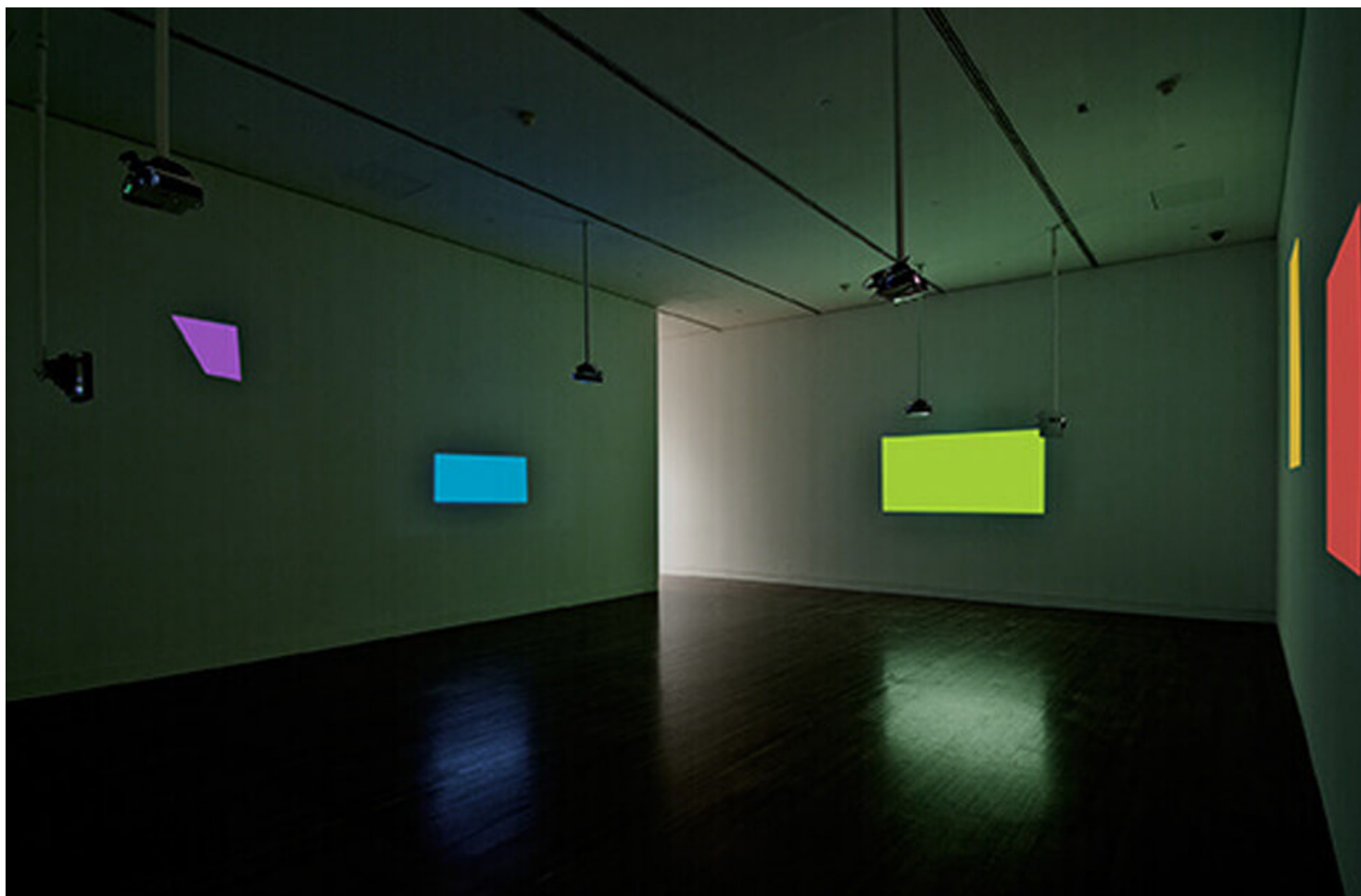
Michael Snow, *The Viewing of Six New Works*, 2012
Video installation, 6 looped video projections, colour, silent
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

A multi-channel video installation, *The Viewing of Six New Works* creates a gallery of moving abstraction. Each projection is a single-colour field of light, coming and going, stretching and contracting, performing for the spectator. The work can be considered in relation to Snow's single-colour paintings of the early 1960s, such as *Green in Green* and *Lac Clair*, as well as works by younger painters that he admired, such as Ron Martin (b. 1943), originally from London, Ontario. But this comparison goes only so far. Attention to surface, as lavished by Martin and Snow the painter, is not the focus here. Rather the experience of viewing wakens memories of iconic artworks based on geometric forms. The ghost of the Suprematist Kazimir Malevich (1878–1935)—his desire to attain "the supremacy of pure feeling"[1]—haunts Snow's gallery, especially the Russian painter's *Red Square*, 1915, in which the red patch is in fact slightly *out of square* with the canvas, thereby infused with contagious energy. Likewise with Snow's pure colour light-forms whose shapes, generated by 3-D animation software, are continuously changing. Locating this work in an art gallery makes the point that even a static form, a painting or a sculpture, is an ephemeral experience. It is continuously changing in the perception of a living, breathing spectator. In this case the spectator is Snow himself. *The Viewing of Six New Works* was created with touchscreen-capture software that tracked and recorded his eye movements as he imagined looking at images on a wall.

How do we encounter those nonrepresentational geometric forms that, in the 1960s, came to be known as "primary structures"? The key has always been the position of the viewing body, knowing where to stand or where to sit. Snow first plays with this observation—it is serious play—in a film titled *Side Seat Paintings Slides Sound Film*, 1970, whose pretext is the late arrival of a spectator at an artist's lecture about his work. The only remaining seat is off to the side, which means that the projected slide seems "distorted," not playing square with the screen or the audience. Much more goes "wrong" over the course of this lecture, each misadventure underscoring the nature of this cinematic experience as a projection of coloured light, synchronized with recorded sound. *The Viewing of Six New Works* is silent, allowing conversations to take place in the spectator's mind, conversations that illuminate much of contemporary art experience. As a spectator, how do I engage with a painting? These dynamic fields of light encourage the idea that the eye is constantly checking and tracing the perimeter, seeking to define a work by the relation of its edges to the core, which is itself continuously shifting. These are not paintings, of course, but other kinds of "new works."
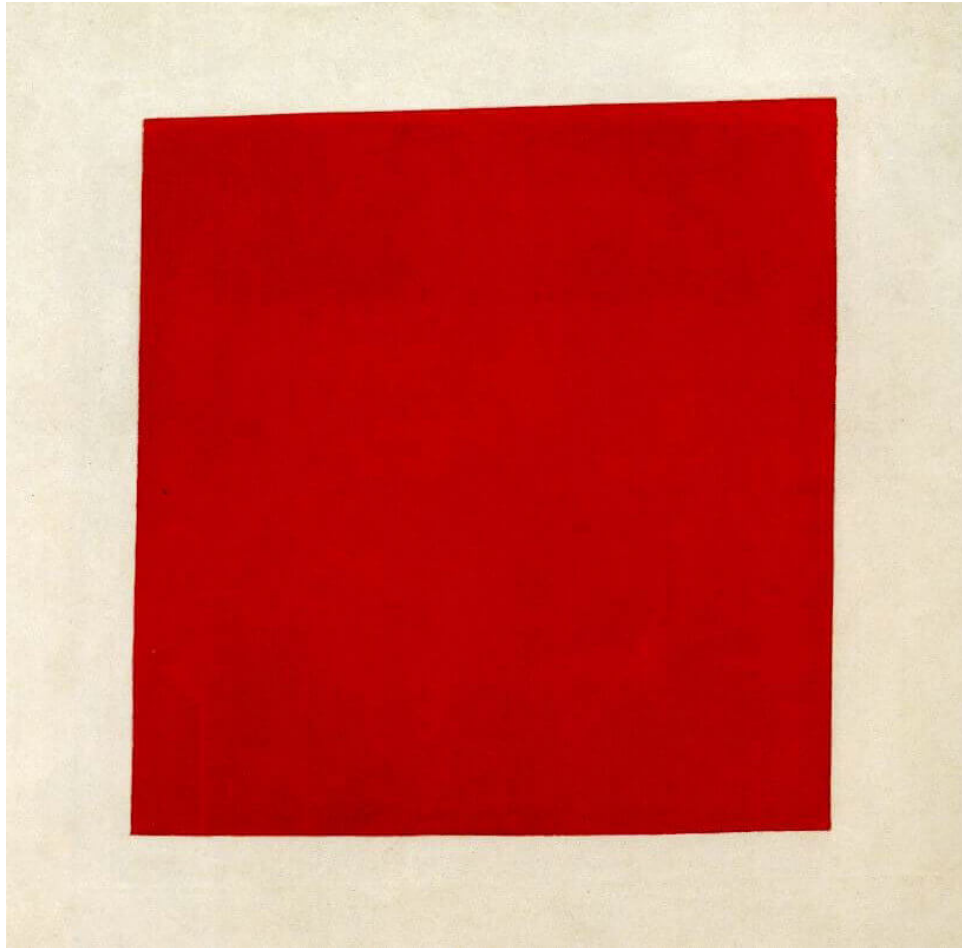
Kazimir Malevich, *Red Square: Painterly Realism of a Peasant Woman in Two Dimensions*, 1915, oil on canvas, 53 x 53 cm, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.

SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES

The defining moments of Michael Snow's life and career illuminate the history of Canadian art since the Second World War. In concert with the development of a unique culture, a national identity, and an international presence was the creative impetus among Canadians to rethink art in relation to process, technology, and everyday experience. Snow's process has been additive. A leading figure in new media and Conceptual art, Snow has never rejected painting and sculpture, measuring his own achievements alongside the work that inspired his generation.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Since the 1960s Snow's work has been at the leading edge of visual art and experimental film. The first Canadian artist to be given a solo exhibition at the Venice Biennale, he also introduced photography as an art form to the Canadian pavilion, and his award-winning films were screened as part of the official program. The National Gallery of Canada's acquisition of Snow's photographic work *Authorization*, 1969, established a new direction within the area of contemporary art; the museum also acquired prints of his major films.

Michael Snow: Cover to Cover, 1975, book, 23 x 18 cm, published by the Press of Nova Scotia College of Art & Design and New York University Press.

Over the course of his long career, Snow's work has ensured a strong Canadian presence in important European and American collections, such as the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and at international film festivals. Snow was a visiting artist during the heyday of the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design in the 1970s; he occasionally taught there, and it was also where he edited the raw footage of *La Région Centrale*, 1971. NSCAD's famed Lithography Workshop issued his Walking Woman photolithograph *Projection*, 1970, and its press published his artist's book *Cover to Cover*, 1975.

In Canada Snow's work has been championed by curators such as Louise Déry, Louise Dompierre, Dennis Reid, Brydon Smith, Pierre Théberge, and Dennis Young. It has been pivotal in world's fairs and thematic exhibitions organized by Thierry de Duve and the curator and writer Peggy Gale. The unprecedented *Michael Snow Project*, co-organized by the Art Gallery of Ontario and The Power Plant in Toronto, displayed those institutions' curatorial strengths: the encyclopedic knowledge of Canadian art history commanded by Dennis Reid, the theoretical acumen of Philip Monk, and the research into contemporary practice deployed by Louise Dompierre.

Three volumes published on the occasion of the *Michael Snow Project*, co-organized by the Art Gallery of Ontario and The Power Plant in Toronto. *Left to right: Music/Sound, 1948–1993* (1994); *Visual Art, 1951–1993* (1994); and *Presence and Absence: The Films of Michael Snow, 1956–1991* (1995). A fourth volume was also published, *The Collected Writings of Michael Snow* (1994).

Critical attention to Snow's work has been steady and influential, generating articles in specialist journals and magazines, such as *Artforum, artscanada, Border Crossings, Canadian Art, Film Culture, October, Parachute*, and *Trafic*, by key theorists such as Raymond Bellour, Thierry de Duve, Bruce Elder, Annette Michelson, Chantal Pontbriand, and P. Adams Sitney. The emergent generation of media artists and theorists also finds much to appreciate in Snow's work, as evidenced by homages, appropriations, and continuous activity on the blogosphere.

DEFYING CLASSIFICATION

In notes published to accompany the DVD-ROM *Anarchive 2: Digital Snow*, 2002, Michael Snow lists twelve key themes in his work: light, materiality, representation (variation that alters meaning), reflection, transparency, duration, look, framing, scale, recto-verso, improvisation, and composition. Each of these themes, explicitly or on inspection, contains its opposite: duality is a guiding principle in Snow's perceptual and conceptual system. From his earliest professional activities, we see combinations of materials and methods producing objects that are difficult to classify as painting, sculpture, or photography; we are constantly faced with hyphenations, or categories that imply pairs, such as "bas-relief"; these pairs are invariably complicated by other considerations that keep Snow's audiences active and inquiring, as he challenges stylistic and institutional boundaries.

Michael Snow, **Corpus Callosum*, 2002, digital video, colour, sound, 91 min., collection of the artist.

Snow himself is an intellectually restless man. The various trajectories of his mature work can be difficult to untangle. Before the Walking Woman series, and with increasing focus over the Walking Woman years, his ideas took the shape of questions about the very nature of art. As a young painter and sculptor, beginning in the 1950s, Snow maintained a traditional studio practice, one project leading systematically to another, with regularly scheduled exhibitions. This process became far more complex during the New York years, 1962–72, as he added photography and film to his repertoire, working simultaneously along parallel tracks.

His notebooks are storehouses of recognitions and injunctions—flashes of insight to which he intends to give form. Some sketches signal his persistent attachment to painting and sculpture, while others previsualize a photographic image or a scripted scene. Snippets of language offer early intimations of his monumental sound film *Rameau's Nephew by Diderot (Thanx to Dennis Young) by Wilma Schoen*, 1972-74. Other insights are plainly on hold until a technological solution can be found for their execution. This was the case with *Corpus Callosum*, 2002, which called for cinematic effects to stretch, compress, mould, and melt figures, objects, and sets. Snow had thought about this film for nearly a decade before digital technology caught up with his vision.

During that time he produced a number of works—paintings and sculptures— that relate to the film, and there are also multiple indications in the first decade of his career of his fascination with what we might call visual or material "distortion"—a term that he categorically rejects. These works form clusters, or multi-generational families of resemblance, that challenge disciplinary conventions of genre or style, making it more fruitful to look for patterns. Most were established quite early in his work.

REPETITION WITH A DIFFERENCE

In 1961, before moving to New York, Snow had embarked on the long-term project that for six years would be his trademark: the Walking Woman. His insight was that a single form, considered as both a positive (a presence to be looked at) and a negative (an absence to be looked through), offered an infinite number of creative possibilities. He also recognized that an artistic practice arising from this intuition was both timely and original, participating in and commenting on a capitalist culture of innovation, industrialization, and communication.

Michael Snow, *Four Grey Panels and Four Figures*, 1963, oil on canvas, each panel approx. 152.5 x 51 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, photographed by Brian Merrett.

Artists associated with Pop art or the later Minimalism shared this awareness, appropriating popular culture's emblems and industry's processes. Snow distinguished himself by creating his own trademark, which was a significant difference and a broadly appealing form of serious play. The creative uses of the Walking Woman—what Snow puts the iconic form through—always translates into new ways of looking, whether he is using it as a surface or a window, whether varying its colour, texture, pattern, material, or scale, whether presenting it on the street or in the cinema.

Michael Snow, *Four to Five*, 1962, 16 silver gelatin prints mounted on cardboard, framed, 68 x 83 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; shot in Toronto.

Repetition with a difference, or re-presentation, became an important feature of Snow's photographic work. *Sink*, 1970, can be read biographically as symbolizing his transition from painting to photography, or, more persuasively, as demonstrating the coherence of his work. The work involves eighty colour slides—the full contents of a carousel projector tray—of a painter's sink shot from a fixed position, but the image is varied through the use of gels. The slides are projected beside a photographic print of the same subject. But the work is also concerned with problems of representation—the translation of sense perception into language as mediated by photographic technology.

Contemplating *Sink* leads quickly to the conclusion that two photographic objects—a print and a slide—are very different, but the work just as quickly becomes a meditation on light and its transformative agency, whether through direct human intervention (a gel) or through human attention to the quality and quantity of light as it changes over the course of a day. *Recombinant*, 1992, uses another fixed reference, a framed bas-relief, its etched lines reminiscent of the Walking Woman's torso. Onto this marked rectangular surface are projected eighty slides. As the light image and solid surface enact a process of mutual alteration, a viewer might feel that the variations are unlimited, but the presence of the machine also suggests the ruling force of technology—how it doles out and disciplines our pleasures.
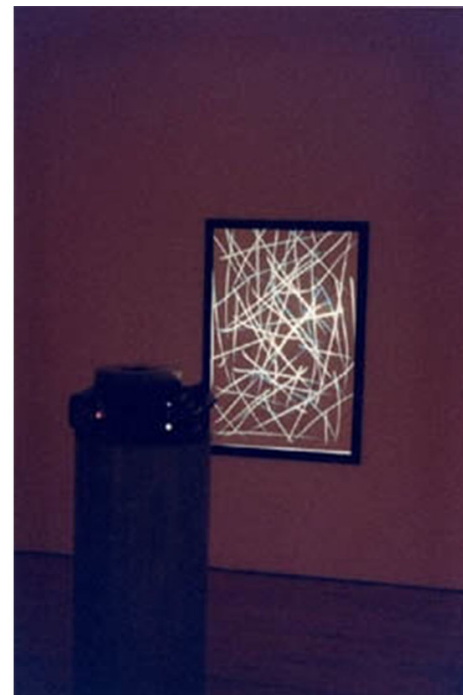
LEFT: Michael Snow, *Recombinant*, 1992, 80 35mm slides in a carousel projector on a painted cylindrical plinth and projected on a painted wood wall panel; plinth: 104 x 42 cm; panel: 74 x 108 x 3.5 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. RIGHT: Michael Snow, *Recombinant*, 1992, 80 35mm slides in a carousel projector on a painted cylindrical plinth and projected on a painted wood wall panel; plinth: 104 x 42 cm; panel: 74 x 108 x 3.5 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Snow's affection for certain forms and strategies is inexhaustible, but his reprises are neither sentimental nor purely retrospective—they are rigorous. Reuse of a theme or a motif transforms it both in its physical properties and in the mind of the spectator.

DIRECTING ATTENTION

The Walking Woman initially drew attention to itself but very quickly began to direct attention to its surroundings as an object famed for its production of art experience. Creating objects that functioned as directors of attention continued to preoccupy Snow, as he tested his ideas in different materials and media. Films that explore different camera movements, from the obsessive zoom of *Wavelength*, 1966-67, to the hyperactivated machine of *La Région Centrale*, 1971, heighten one's consciousness of human vision.

His sculptures are also noteworthy in this respect, many functioning as instruments, frames, windows, or apertures that open one world onto another and concentrate the power of sight. In the late 1960s Snow was working with aluminum, wood, and other sorts of industrial materials to create work at an arresting scale, but these objects were not intended for disinterested contemplation—they were made for active use. His *Scope*, 1967, made of stainless steel, is a giant recumbent periscope, designed for curious visitors to look through. By contrast, his hieratic *Seated Sculpture*, 1982, formed from the bending of three steel plates, creates a shadowy experience of tunnel vision for spectators who physically enter the work. *Blind*, 1968, and *De La*, 1972, are also directors of attention, though in different ways.

LEFT: Michael Snow, *De La*, 1972, aluminum and steel mechanical sculpture with surveillance camera, electronic controls, and 4 monitors; installation space: 3.5 x 7.5 x 12 m, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Michael Snow, *Scope*, 1967, stainless steel, mirrors, 5 elements; central unit: 175 x 396 x 91 cm; 2 base elements: 173 x 71 x 28 cm; wall panels: 122 x 69 x 15 cm; installation area: 500 x 840 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

In *Blind*, visitors walk the narrow corridors between the sculpture's mesh screens; their short walks bring out the characteristics of the piece, their bodies become part of the work for those looking on. In *De La*, spectators who approach the camera-activating machine are likely to be caught on video; here again their brief appearances become part of the work for themselves and others. Snow is not a social artist, but these works, and the many others that encourage cooperative exploration, direct his audience's attention to the visual habits and social performances of people who go to art galleries.

ANTICIPATING CHANCE

Chance factors into any creative process. Snow has sometimes courted its possibilities in his recording-media works: photographic, film, sound, and video production. This began with *Four to Five*, 1962, when he took his Walking Woman figure out of the studio to be photographed among pedestrians on the Toronto streets. A more carefully planned project than Snow's film *Wavelength* could scarcely be imagined, but the uncontrolled flow of city traffic outside his studio windows is not insignificant to the work. Nature performs itself

Michael Snow, *The Corner of Braque and Picasso Streets*, 2009, real-time video projection on white plinths, colour, silent, site specific, collection of the artist.

in his monumental landscape film *La Région Centrale*. Street life as it happens is the basis of his video installation *The Corner of Braque and Picasso Streets*, 2009, in which the real-time streaming of a surveillance camera turns Cubist when projected on an arrangement of plinths.

Chance also comes into play in ways that may not be recognized by the spectator. A photographic work, *8 x 10*, 1969, is composed of eighty photographs of one subject: a rectangle made of black tape laid down on a silvery-grey surface. The proportions of the taped rectangle match those of the photograph (the industrial standard 8 x 10 inches). The photographs are organized in a grid (of 8 x 10), thereby forming a network of formal relationships. The hidden surprise is that these relationships, however effective, are not fixed, as the photographs are supposed to be shuffled before each installation, whether by Snow or by technicians following his instructions. This deployment of chance in an otherwise rigorous system is *8 x 10*'s secret. Snow's oeuvre is sewn with little secrets.
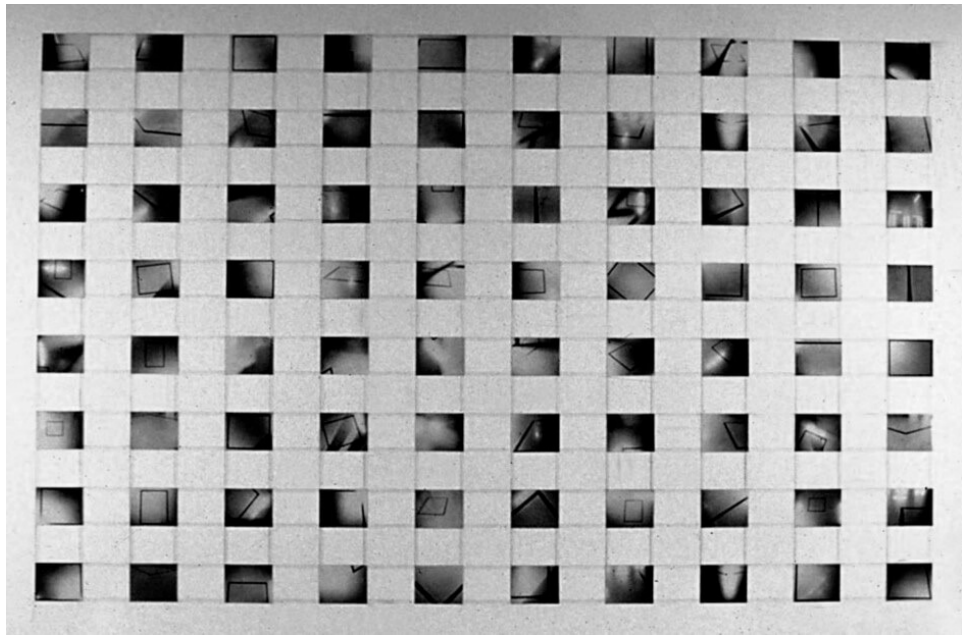
Michael Snow, *8 x 10*, 1969, 80 laminated photographs applied to wall in a taped grid, each 15 x 19 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, and Museum of Modern Art Ludwig Foundation, Vienna.

MATERIALITIES, THICK AND THIN

From his earliest activity as a painter, Snow was intrigued with the thinness of the medium, as a kind of skin on the canvas. How thin might a medium become? As a sculptor, photographer, and filmmaker, he found the answer in light, experimenting with coloured gels and transluscent plastics, which he used as windows (the viewer looking through) or filters (light passing through), both methods altering reality. Materials are interesting in their own right, but they are also deployed by artists and filmmakers to create illusions. Snow's work brings together the apparatuses of art and cinema: the relationship of the picture plane and the projected image to the wall; the slide or film projector and the paint spray can.

Michael Snow, *Two Sides to Every Story*, 1974, 16mm film loop, colour, sound, 11 min., two projectors, switching device, and aluminum screen; installation space approx. 3 x 6 x 12.5 m, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

These interests are met in *Two Sides to Every Story*, 1974, an installation consisting of two 16mm films projected simultaneously by two projectors on an aluminum screen. The film was shot by two cameras from opposite sides of a clear plastic sheet of the same dimensions as the projection screen. The figure of a woman moves back and forth along the axis formed by the two cameras, holding up sheets of coloured card, according to the instructions of the director who is seated within the frame. The figure eventually spray paints the clear plastic sheet, making it opaque, which changes the projection screen from a "window" to a "wall," before she slices it in half and passes through to the other side.

PUZZLES AND PLEASURES

Dualities are present throughout Snow's oeuvre: a painting is a free-standing presence; a sculpture is a window that the viewer looks through; a magisterial landscape view is unforgettable in part because it is shown to be constantly changing. Designed to interconnect, these systems can be difficult to pick apart and explain. Such complexities might be considered an "issue," and Snow's cinematic work is often quite challenging, but he has also translated his key themes—light, materiality, re-presentation, and so on—into DVD installations and public sculptures that appeal directly to the senses. Encounters with these works generate surprise, enjoyment, and enduring affection across the spectrum of audiences.

Consider *Two Sides to Every Story*, a work already mentioned for its dual nature as thick and thin. With projectors aimed at both sides of the hanging screen, viewers can often be found at the edges of the screen, trying to watch both sides at once. Snow's very amusing video installation *Serve, Deserve*, 2009, is, as he writes, "a temporal work made for an ambulatory audience … built on an exaggerated (!) imitation of the customary restaurant situation where one waits for the waiter to bring the order. But, in this case, the projection beam delivers the food to the representation of
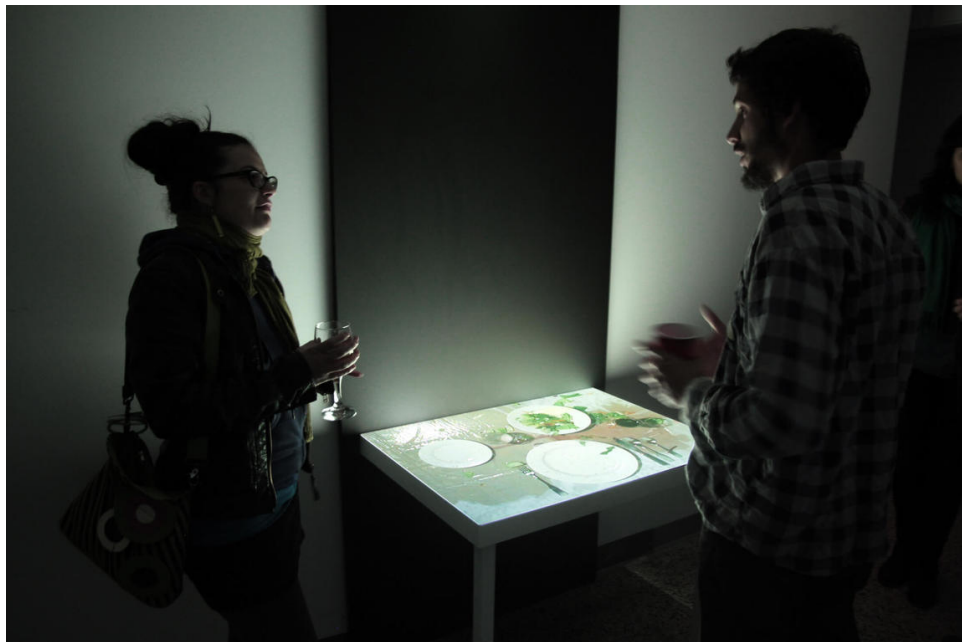
Michael Snow, Serve, Deserve, 2009, video installation, table projection, looped video, colour, silent, 13:30 min., collection of the artist.

'tabletop,' tablecloth surface, in the process making a canvas of it."[1] What really makes the canvas both abstract and expressive is the "action painting" of an invisible waiter who overfills the glasses and flings the food onto and over the edges of the plates. And further enlivening the experience is the disappearance of the food and drink as this inept service is replayed in reverse. Strangers meeting at the edge of the projection surface "table" encourage each other to "wait for it" as the water pools, the wine flows, the salad flutters, and the pasta splats. Relationships form.

STYLE & TECHNIQUE

Michael Snow is a polymath. His work is all about form, which he treats carefully in terms specific to the medium, whether material, spatial, or temporal. But if Snow strives in his work for optimal sensorial experience, he does so within systems of balance and contrasts that clarify impressions by sharpening distinctions. In this he has been influenced by philosophies of mind and language, phenomenology and environmentalism.

STYLE

As a visual artist, Snow belongs to a generation that was truly inspired by early twentieth-century European art—Piet Mondrian (1872–1944), Paul Klee (1879–1940), Henri Matisse (1869–1954), and Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) are key references—as well as the vitality of the New York School, principally Jackson Pollock (1912–1956) and Willem de Kooning (1904–1997). Snow has always respected the purity of their endeavours. Their way of thinking about art, more than its stylistic expression, has been carried forward in his work, somewhat complicated by the countervailing influences of Dada and Fluxus, especially the definition by Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968) of the art object as something authorized by an artist. These examples licensed Snow to experiment with technology, as well as with the humblest materials at hand, and sometimes to perform the role of the artist in his work.
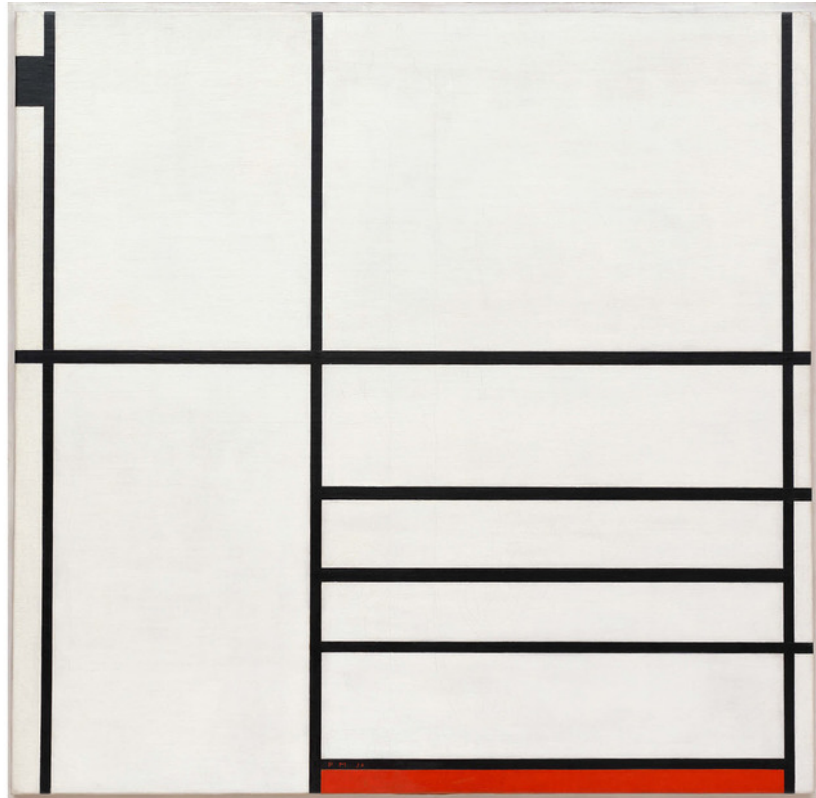
LEFT: Marcel Duchamp, *Bottlerack*, 1961 (replica of 1914 original), galvanized iron, 49.8 x 41 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art, © Estate of Marcel Duchamp / SODRAC (2013). RIGHT: Piet Mondrian, *Composition en blanc, noir et rouge*, 1936, oil on canvas, 102.2 x 104.1 cm, Museum of Modern Art, NY © 2013 Mondrian/Holtzman Trust c/o HCR International USA./figcaption>

Snow has ferociously resisted correlations with the dominant movements of his day, Pop and Minimalism, but also with Conceptual art, with which he is sometimes connected, for as he has repeatedly asserted, his work is about form. In 1969 the American film theorist P. Adams Sitney coined the term Structural film, citing *Wavelength*, 1966–67, as a key work, and this label on Snow's oeuvre has been the stickiest, as long as Structural film, which points to the essential aspects of the medium, is not confused with Structuralism, which essentializes or systematizes human experience. In refusing to be pigeonholed as a Minimalist, Snow himself has suggested that he might be considered a "maximalist." This term is not available, as it is associated with Russian revolutionary politics, but the reader will get the idea.

THEORY

Michael Snow's dialectical process has led his audiences through many of the problems and issues of modernism and postmodernism, in part by offering alternatives to strict orthodoxies. His modernism is performative; his postmodernism is paradoxically purist. In this he is well met by visual art theorists such as Hubert Damisch and Thierry de Duve in their phenomenological and semiological readings of visual art experience. Snow began reading philosophy as a teenager; his published conversations with Bruce Elder (b. 1947) are replete with references to the history of thought, from Plato to Wittgenstein.

In 1984 a special issue of the journal *diacritics* aligned Snow's work with the foundations of postmodernism—the ideas of Jean-François Lyotard—by commissioning it for the cover and inside pages. His work has been correlated with haptic theory by Martha Langford (2001)[1] and Jean Arnaud (2005)[2] as part of the reinvigoration of phenomenology through projective sense perception. As for methodology, as sociological and political theory has refined it over the past sixty

Michael Snow, *Venetian Blind*, 1970, 24 Ektacolour prints, painted wood frames, 127 x 238 cm,
Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa.

years, it is perhaps easiest to say what Snow is not. He is not a social artist, nor is his work political, except as it has stood for liberal values of freedom of expression, recognition of intellectual property and moral rights, public education, and the importance of state and private investment in the support of culture.

TECHNIQUE

Michael Snow has used almost every medium and technique encountered in a contemporary art museum or cinema. His work is generally divided into three categories: visual art, ranging from early works on paper to holography; film, video, and cinematic installations; and music/sound, which includes both live performances and gallery works in which sound is a key element. These divisions are reflected in three books, from a series of four, published to coincide with his 1994 retrospective at the Art Gallery of Ontario and The Power Plant in Toronto, *The Michael Snow Project*; the fourth book, a collection of Snow's writing, pulls his activities together by revealing the workings of his mind over many years. The Toronto retrospective, and by extension these publications, predates Snow's involvement with digital media—his creation of DVDs and video projections in galleries in the twenty-first century. Since 2000 he has also given many more improvisational concerts in relation to his exhibitions. Add to that the theoretical attention to the performative nature of his work. The three facets of Snow's creativity—visual art, cinema, and sound— are now widely understood as complementary.

Michael Snow poses with his work *Transformer*, 1982, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Careful orchestration has always been Snow's way of working. His projects match perception, memory, and imagination to medium and process. The human factor is, and has always been, explicit in the making of his work and its shaping of our understanding. In drawing, painting, carving, moulding, folding, panning, and performing to make visual art or music, what matters is the mark, the handprint, or the physical energy of the artist.
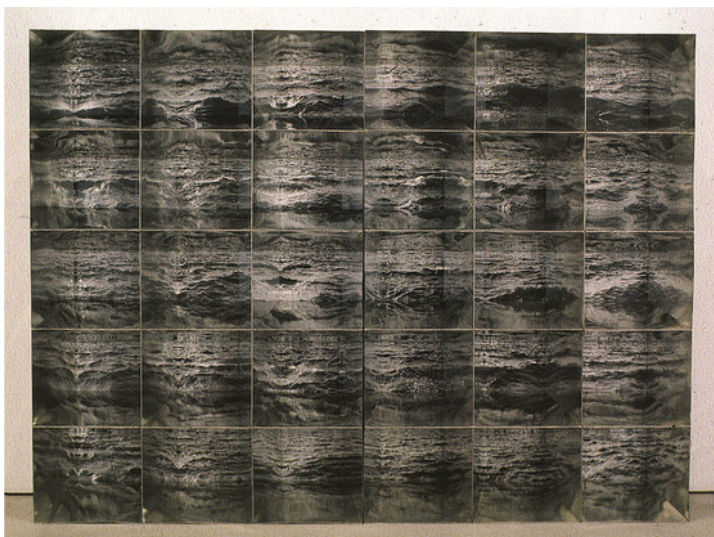
LEFT: Michael Snow, *Atlantic*, 1967, metal, wood, 30 black and white photographs, Arborite, 171 x 245 x 40 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. RIGHT: Michael Snow, *Snow Storm*, 1967, collage of photographs over enamel paint on Masonite, each 122.1 x 119.8 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Any work could be offered up as an example; some are particularly striking. In the early 1980s Snow was taking photographs that fulfilled his ideal of making "the entire photographic image." He was distinguishing his photographic work from modernism's art of observation, and especially the summary statement of the "decisive moment." Snow has used photography as a tool for protracted, meditative creation since the 1960s. His multiple image work *Snow Storm*, 1967—in which monochromatic images taken from his window are embedded in an enamelled Masonite field—is a study in greys. A related work, *Atlantic*, 1967, melds the photographic image with sculptural concerns. Snow's concept of the "made-to-be-photographed" image likewise intersects with still life and sculpture; sometimes he adds watercolour to the black and white prints, as in *Meeting of Measures*, 1983, risking the purity of the photograph to underline its genesis as a handmade object from an artist's studio. In these projects Snow also plays with materiality and scale to create visual juxtapositions—little handmade puzzles.

He also proposes correspondences, in the form of objects grouped together in front of the camera. An important work in this regard is *Digest*, 1970–98, whose stack of twenty-three colour images records the making of a three-dimensional subject, an aluminum container filled with plastic objects that have been immersed in plastic. Never a denizen of the darkroom, Snow has frequently used a Polaroid camera to produce an instant translation from split-second external reality to fixed image-object. His autobiographical suite *Still Living–9 x 4 Acts–Scene 1*, 1982, proposes coded correspondences that are further complicated in their arrangement as quartets of dye-transfer images on a sheet. Similarly, in more ambitious commissions, assemblages, or installations, the extended presence of the artist—the sense

Michael Snow, *Still Living-9 x 4 Acts–Scene 1*, 1982, edition of 10 portfolios each containing 9 pages with a total of 36 colour photos, 1 title page, 55.8 x 44.4 cm, various collections, and collection of the artist.

that we are sharing his creative space—is crucial to our appreciation of the work. Snow has also commissioned or collaborated with engineers, fabricators, photographers, and technicians to execute his ideas. In these cases, elements or entire art objects are authorized by the artist. His approach to these matters has developed on a case-by-case basis, sometimes driven by sheer practicality, but his work nevertheless can be taken as a guide to the changes in working methods that occurred during the rapid industrialization and technologization of art in the second half of the twentieth century.

WHERE TO SEE

The Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto and the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa are the principal institutional collectors of Michael Snow's work. The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts holds a smaller selection that offers a good range of works across media.

Anthology Film Archives in New York and the Cinémathèque québécoise in Montreal are repositories for Snow's cinematic work. The Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre in Toronto is the main Canadian distributor.

The Art Gallery of Ontario, E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives, is the repository for Michael Snow's papers: Michael Snow fonds CA OTAG SC052.

Although the works listed below are held by the following institutions, they may not always be on view.

ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO

317 Dundas Street West
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
1-877-225-4246 or 416-979-6648
ago.net

Michael Snow, *Quits*, 1960
Oil on wood, plywood
240 x 40 x 66 cm

Michael Snow, *Venus Simultaneous*, 1962
Oil on canvas and wood construction
200.6 x 299.7 x 15.2 cm

Michael Snow, *Carla Bley*, 1965
Offset lithograph, rubber stamp
66 x 51 cm
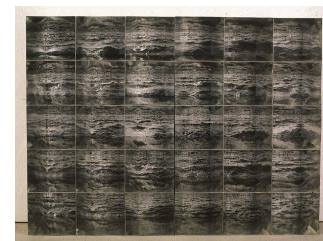
Michael Snow, *Atlantic*, 1967
Metal, wood, 30 black and white photographs, Arborite
171 x 245 x 40 cm
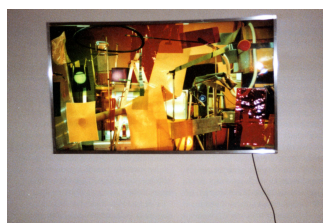
Michael Snow, *Immediate Delivery*, 1998
Back-lit transparency
116.1 x 191 x 16.8 cm

CANADA COUNCIL ART BANK

150 Elgin Street
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
1-800-263-5588
artbank.ca

Michael Snow, *Venetian Blind*, 1970
24 Ektacolour prints, painted wood frames
127 x 238 cm

MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

1380 Sherbrooke Street West
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
514-285-2000
mbam.qc.ca

Michael Snow, *Four Grey Panels and Four Figures*, 1963
Oil on canvas
Each panel
approx.152.5 x 51 cm

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 West 53rd Street
New York, New York, USA
212-708-9400
moma.org

Michael Snow, *Sink*, 1970
80 projected slides and one
mounted still photo
Each 63 x 63 cm

NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA

380 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
613-990-1985
gallery.ca

**Michael Snow, *Shunt*,
1959**
Wood with paint
274.3 x 335.3 cm

**Michael Snow, *Lac
Clair*, 1960**
Oil and paper adhesive
tape on canvas
178 x 178.3 x 3 cm

**Michael
Snow, *Wavelength*,
1966–67**
16mm film, colour,
sound, 45 min.
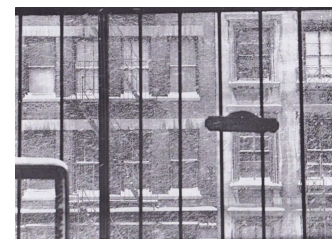
**Michael Snow, *Snow
Storm*, 1967**
Collage of photographs
over enamel paint on
Masonite
Each 122.1 x 119.8 cm
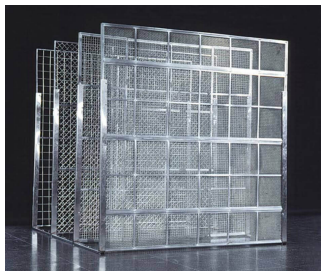
Michael Snow, *Blind*, 1968
Steel and aluminum
246.4 x 245.7 x 246.4 cm

Michael Snow, *Authorization*, 1969
Black and white
Polaroid photographs,
adhesive cloth tape,
metal frame, mirror
54.5 x 44.5 cm

Michael Snow, *La Région Centrale*, 1971
16mm film, colour,
sound, 180 min.

Michael Snow, *Plus Tard*, 1977
25 framed dye coupler
prints
Each 86.4 x 107.2 cm

Michael Snow, *Still Living–9 x 4 Acts–Scene 1*, 1982
edition of 10 portfolios
each containing
9 pages with a total of
36 colour photos, 1 title
page
55.8 x 44.4 cm

TORONTO EATON CENTRE

220 Yonge Street
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
416-598-8560
torontoeatoncentre.com

Michael Snow, *Flight Stop*, 1979
60 suspended fibreglass Canada
goose forms surfaced with tinted
black and white photographs
32 x 20 x 16 m

VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

750 Hornby Street
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
604-662-4700
vanartgallery.bc.ca

Michael Snow, *Sleeve*, 1965
Oil, canvas, wood
366 x 366 x 305 cm

NOTES

BIOGRAPHY
1. First published in 1967 in the exhibition catalogue *Statements / 18 Canadian Artists* (MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina), this excerpt from Snow's text has been cited many times. The full text is reprinted in his *Collected Writings of Michael Snow* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1994), 26–27.

KEY WORKS: VENUS SIMULTANEOUS
1. Arnold Rockman, "Michael Snow and His 'Walking Woman,'" *Canadian Art* 20, no. 6 (November/December 1963): 345–47.

KEY WORKS: SLEEVE
1. Michael Snow, "A Lot of Near Mrs.," written in 1962–63, published in his *Collected Writings of Michael Snow* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1994), 17–19. All citations in this passage are from this text.

KEY WORKS: WAVELENGTH
1. First published in 1967 in *Film Culture* 46 (Autumn 1967), Snow's "Statement on *Wavelength* for the Experimental Film Festival of Knokke-le-Zoute," is reprinted in his *Collected Writings of Michael Snow* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1994), 40.

2. Snow premiered this version in his solo exhibition *Michael Snow: Windows*, organized by Martha Langford for the Galerie de l'UQAM and Le Mois de la Photo à Montréal, 2005.

KEY WORKS: BLIND
1. Michael Snow, quoted by Kay Kritzwiser, "Snow's Walking Woman Walks Again," *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), April 9, 1966, 15.

KEY WORKS: STILL LIFE IN 8 CALLS
1. Rioux, Gilles. "Michael Snow: Holographe / Michael Snow: Holographer." *Vie des arts* 31, no. 123 (1986): 26–29.

KEY WORKS: IMMEDIATE DELIVERY
1. Michael Snow, "Notes on the Whys and Hows of My Photographic Works," in *Michael Snow: Panoramique; Oeuvres photographiques & films / Photographic Works & Films*;, 1962–1999 (Brussels: Societé des expositions du Palais des beaux-arts, 1999), 119.

KEY WORKS: SOLAR BREATH
1. Michael Snow, "Life and Art, About *Solar Breath (Northern Caryatids)*," in *Souffle Solaire*, ed. Louise Déry (Montreal: Galerie de l'UQAM, 2005), unpaginated.

KEY WORKS: THE VIEWING OF SIX NEW WORKS
1. Kazimir Malevich, *The Non-Objective World: The Manifesto of Suprematism* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2003), 67.

SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES

1. Michael Snow, statement in Louise Déry, Michael Snow, Erik Bullot, Jacinto Lageira, and Stéfani de Loppinot, *Solo Snow: Oeuvres de / Works of Michael Snow* (Montreal: Galerie de l'UQAM; Tourcoing, France: Le Fresnoy, Studio national des arts contemporains, 2011), 64.

STYLE & TECHNIQUE

1. See Martha Langford, "Repetition / La répétition: Michael Snow and the Act of Memory," in *Michael Snow: Almost Cover to Cover*, ed. Catsou Roberts and Lucy Steeds (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2001), 34–75.

2. See Jean Arnaud, "Touching to See," *October* 114 (Fall 2005): 5–16.

GLOSSARY

Anastasi, William (American, b. 1933)
A pioneering figure in American Conceptual and Minimal art, aligned with Carl Andre, John Cage, Eva Hesse, Robert Rauschenburg, and Richard Serra. Anastasi was one of the first modern artists to create site-specific works; *Six Sites*, 1966–67, led the way for later artists and curators interested in this form.

Anthology Film Archives
A New York City centre for film study, preservation, and exhibition, with emphasis on independent and experimental works, started in 1969 by five avant-garde filmmakers and writers on cinema: Stan Brakhage, Jerome Hill, Peter Kubelka, Jonas Mekas, and P. Adams Sitney.

bas-relief
A type of sculpture in which the decorative motif projects slightly from the background plane. Bas-reliefs are common to exterior architectural design around the world.

Bauhaus
Open from 1919 to 1933 in Germany, the Bauhaus revolutionized twentieth-century visual arts education by integrating the fine arts, crafts, industrial design, and architecture. Teachers included Josef Albers, Walter Gropius, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and László Moholy-Nagy.

Bley, Carla (American, b. 1936)
A pianist and composer who figured prominently in the free-jazz movement of the 1960s, which emphasized improvisation over fixed composition, and whose pieces have been performed by musicians including George Russell and Jimmy Giuffre. Bley helped found the influential Jazz Composers' Guild in New York in 1964.

Burton, Dennis (Canadian, 1933–2013)
A painter, illustrator, and teacher who rose to prominence with his overtly sexual, semi-abstract paintings of the 1960s. He was represented by the Isaacs Gallery in Toronto in the 1960s and 1970s and was a co-founder of the Artists' Jazz Band.

Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre
A non-commercial film distributor dedicated to experimental cinema, founded in 1967 in Toronto. The CFMDC's collection includes works in Super 8, 16mm, 35mm, and video and digital formats by those filmmakers considered most important to the development of avant-garde cinema in Canada. It is the largest distributor of its kind in the country.

Conceptual art
Traced to the work of Marcel Duchamp but not codified until the 1960s, Conceptual art is a general term for art that emphasizes ideas over form. The finished product may even be physically transient, as with land art or performance art.

Copyright Act of Canada

Federal statute protecting "every original literary, dramatic, musical, and artistic work" from unlawful reproduction. First passed in 1921, when it was modelled on the British Copyright Act of 1911, the Act has since been amended three times, with new technology among the chief reasons for reform.

Courbet, Gustave (French, 1819–1877)

A critical figure in nineteenth-century art, whose paintings—most famously *Burial at Ornans*, 1850, and *The Painter's Studio*, 1854–55—helped establish the Realist movement and paved the way for later artists, including the Impressionists, to abandon classical subjects for those they encountered in their daily lives.

Cubism

A radical style of painting developed by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in Paris between 1907 and 1914, defined by the representation of numerous perspectives at once. Cubism is considered crucial to the history of modern art for its enormous international impact; famous practitioners also include Juan Gris and Francis Picabia.

Dada

A multi-disciplinary movement that arose in Europe in response to the horrors of the First World War, whose adherents aimed to deconstruct and demolish traditional societal values and institutions. Artworks, often collages and readymades, typically scorned fine materials and craftsmanship. Chief Dadaists include Marcel Duchamp, Tristan Tzara, Kurt Schwitters, and Hans Arp.

de Kooning, Willem (Dutch/American, 1904–1997)

Although a prominent Abstract Expressionist, de Kooning was not concerned with strict abstraction—figures appear in the dense and riotous brushwork that characterizes much of his work. Among his most famous works are those of the Women series, first exhibited in 1953 to much critical scorn.

Duchamp, Marcel (French/American, 1887–1968)

One of the most significant artist-thinkers of the twentieth century, Duchamp influenced Conceptual, Pop, and Minimal art. Best known for the sensational painting *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*, 1912, he is also recognized for his ready-made sculptures, among them the urinal *Fountain*, 1917, and his "desecrated" *Mona Lisa* print, *L.H.O.O.Q.*, 1919.

Elder, Bruce (Canadian, b. 1947)

An experimental filmmaker, critic, philosopher, and teacher, Elder rose to prominence in the 1980s with his film cycle The Book of All the Dead (1975–94) among the most ambitious projects in the history of avant-garde cinema. His book *Image and Identity: Reflections on Canadian Film and Culture* (1989) is highly regarded and features in Canadian Studies programs.

Expo 67

The world's fair of 1967, held in Montreal, was a celebration of Canada's Centennial. With sixty-two participating nations and attendance of over 50 million people, Expo solidified Montreal's reputation as an international city and Canada's as a place for innovation.

Expo 86

Fifty-five countries participated in this world's fair, held in Vancouver in celebration of the city's centennial. Attended by over 22 million people, Expo 86 is now recognized as having been instrumental to the growth and development of Vancouver and to raising the city's status internationally.

figure-ground relationship

A compositional term referring to the perception of an object (the figure), as distinguished from its surround (the ground), especially in a context where this distinction is ambiguous. These two elements are interdependent—one defines the other. They can also be articulated as positive and negative shapes.

Fluxus

A movement started in Germany in 1962 defined by an attitude of rebellion against artistic conservatism and professionalism rather than a particular style. Street art and festivals figured prominently in Fluxus activities, which were eventually centred in New York City and lasted until the early 1970s. Major influences were the composer John Cage and the artist Marcel Duchamp.

Funnel Experimental Film Theatre

An experimental film collective and theatre located in Toronto from 1977 to 1989, dedicated to the production, distribution, and exhibition of 8mm, Super 8, and 16mm films. Many of its members were connected to the Ontario College of Art (now OCAD University), among them Funnel co-founder Ross McLaren.

Graphic Associates

Toronto animation studio, the first private company of its kind in Canada, founded in 1949 by National Film Board animators George Dunning and Jim MacKay. Michael Snow, Joyce Wieland, and Richard Williams all worked for Graphic Associates early in their careers.

Group of Seven

A progressive and nationalistic school of landscape painting in Canada, active between 1920 (the year of the group's first exhibition, at the Art Gallery of Toronto, now the Art Gallery of Ontario) and 1933. Founding members were the artists Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Frank Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald, and Frederick Varley.

haptic theory

The study of perception through the sense of touch. As adopted by contemporary art theory, haptics can be combined with vision as a means to imaginatively explore a work of art or a film, as theorized by Laura U. Marks.

Isaacs Gallery

A Toronto art gallery opened in 1955 by Avrom Isaacs. Originally called the Greenwich Gallery, it supported emerging Canadian artists—including Michael Snow, Graham Coughtry, Joyce Wieland, and Robert Markle—and hosted poetry readings, experimental music performances, and film screenings.

Klee, Paul (Swiss-German, 1879–1940)

Primarily known as a painter of prodigious energy and imagination—his output comprises an estimated nine thousand artworks—Klee was also a printmaker, art writer, and beloved teacher, first at the Bauhaus and later at the Düsseldorf Academy.

Malevich, Kazimir (Russian, 1878–1935)

An important figure in the development of geometric abstraction, whose religious and mystical proclivities deeply influenced his wish to abandon, as an artist, the representation of the visible world. His radically austere Suprematist works were first shown in Moscow in 1915. Malevich resumed figure painting in the late 1920s.

Martin, John (Canadian, 1904–1965)

A painter, watercolourist, printmaker, and illustrator and member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts and the Canadian Group of Painters, Martin taught design at the Ontario College of Art (now OCAD University) in Toronto. His work is held by the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Martin, Ron (Canadian, b. 1943)

An abstract painter, Martin is concerned with the process and performance of artmaking. Since 1965 his paintings have been shown globally in solo and group exhibitions, including at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, and the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Matisse, Henri (French, 1869–1954)

A painter, sculptor, printmaker, draftsman, and designer, aligned at different times with the Impressionists, Post-Impressionists, and Fauvists. By the 1920s he was, with Pablo Picasso, one of the most famous painters of his generation, known for his remarkable use of colour and line.

Minimalism

A branch of abstract art characterized by extreme restraint in form, most popular among American artists from the 1950s to 1970s. Although Minimalism can be expressed in any medium, it is most commonly associated with sculpture; principal Minimalists include Carl Andre, Donald Judd, and Tony Smith. Among the Minimalist painters were Agnes Martin, Barnett Newman, Kenneth Noland, and Frank Stella.

Modernism

A movement extending from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century in all the arts, modernism rejected academic traditions in favour of innovative styles developed in response to contemporary industrialized society. Beginning in painting with the Realist movement led by Gustave Courbet, it progressed through Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Fauvism, and Cubism and on to abstraction. By the 1960s, anti-authoritarian postmodernist styles such as Pop art, Conceptual art, and Neo-Expressionism blurred the distinction between high art and mass culture.

Mondrian, Piet (Dutch, 1872–1944)

A leading figure in abstract art, known for his geometric "grid" paintings of straight black lines and brightly coloured squares, whose influence on contemporary visual culture has been called the most far-reaching of any artist. Mondrian saw his highly restrictive and rigorous style, dubbed Neo-Plasticism, as expressive of universal truths.

Music Gallery

A Toronto institution dedicated to the development, production, and presentation of experimental music, founded in 1976 by Peter Anson and Al Mattes, original members of the nine-piece "free-music orchestra," the CCMC.

New York School

The group of avant-garde painters based in New York City in the 1940s and 1950s whose activities led that city to replace Paris as the capital of the modern art world. Chiefly Abstract Expressionists, the principal artists of the New York School include Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, and Mark Rothko.

Picasso, Pablo (Spanish, 1881–1973)

One of the most famous and influential artists of his time, Picasso was a prominent member of the Parisian avant-garde circle that included Henri Matisse and Georges Braque. His painting *Les demoiselles d'Avignon*, 1906–7, is considered by many to be the most important of the twentieth century.

Polaroid

An American company founded in 1937 by the chemist and inventor Edwin H. Land, most famous for its instant film cameras. Released onto the market in 1948 amid great excitement, Polaroid cameras were immensely popular with photographers, artists, and the general public until the rise of digital photography in the 1990s.

Pollock, Jackson (American, 1912–1956)

Leader of the Abstract Expressionist movement, best known for his drip paintings of the 1940s and 1950s. Pollock is also closely associated with action painting, in which the act of painting is gestural and the artist approaches the canvas with little notion of what he or she will create.

Pop art

A movement of the late 1950s to early 1970s in Britain and the United States, which adopted imagery from commercial design, television, and cinema. Pop art's most recognized proponents are Richard Hamilton, David Hockney, Andy Warhol, and Roy Lichtenstein.

postmodernism

A broad art historical category of contemporary art that uses both traditional and new media to deconstruct cultural history and deploys theory in its attack on modernist ideals. Canadian postmodern artists include Janice Gurney, Mark Lewis, Ken Lum, and Joanne Tod.

Rioux, Gilles (Canadian, 1942–1995)

An art history professor, writer, and avid collector of art and ephemera associated with the Surrealist movement. Rioux began collecting while studying in Paris in the 1960s and ultimately assembled the most important collection of Surrealist material in North America, which now resides at the Université de Montréal.

Structural film

A term coined by the American film historian P. Adams Sitney in the late 1960s to describe films that privilege form over narrative, with the audience asked to consider a work's construction rather than its plot—a new trend in avant-garde cinema at the time.

Structuralism

A school of thought that originated in Europe in the 1900s, which holds that all aspects of human experience and culture can be apprehended only through their interrelationships. Artworks therefore do not express essential truths but are rendered meaningful through the mental processes of their viewers.

Suprematism

A movement developed about 1915 by the Russian artist and writer Kazimir Malevich, who proclaimed it finished before 1920. Characterized by radical austerity of form and geometric abstraction, Suprematism had a powerful influence on European and American art and design of the twentieth century.

Thomson, Tom (Canadian, 1877–1917)

A seminal figure in the creation of a national school of painting, whose bold vision of Algonquin Park—aligned stylistically with Post-Impressionism and Art Nouveau—has come to symbolize both the Canadian landscape and Canadian landscape painting. Thomson and the members of what would in 1920 become the Group of Seven profoundly influenced one another's work. (See *Tom Thomson: Life & Work* by David P. Silcox.)

Universal Exhibition

A world's fair, generally held on a given theme, organized by a host country and sanctioned by the Bureau international des expositions. The tradition began in the nineteenth century, with the 1851 Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, in London, among the first and best known.

Venice Biennale

The cornerstone of this sprawling arts institution, which takes place in Venice every two years over six months, is the International Art Exhibition. The Art Exhibition was first held in 1895 and today regularly attracts more than 370,000 visitors. Canada has been participating since 1952.

Wieland, Joyce (Canadian, 1930–1998)

A central figure in contemporary Canadian art, Wieland engaged with painting, filmmaking, and cloth and plastic assemblage to explore with wit and passion ideas related to gender, national identity, and the natural world. In 1971 she became the first living Canadian woman artist to have a solo exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa. (See *Joyce Wieland: Life & Work* by Johanne Sloan.)

Zeidler, Eberhard (German/Canadian, b. 1926)

An architect, educated at the Bauhaus and the Technische Hochschule, University of Karlsruhe, Zeidler has lived in Canada since 1951. He has designed numerous public buildings in Canada, the United States, and Europe, including MediaPark in Cologne, Germany; Eaton Centre, Queen's Quay Terminal, and Ontario Place in Toronto; and Canada Place in Vancouver.

SOURCES & RESOURCES

Sustained international interest in Michael Snow's artistic practice has produced a long list of exhibitions and publications by many of the leading curators and writers in the field. The most authoritative voice is that of Snow himself: his close descriptions of his work, his published conversations with the critics and artists, and his essays on the nature of artmaking and the making of a life in the arts.

Installation view of Michael Snow's *Walking Woman Works* exhibition, 1984, London Regional Art Gallery (now Museum London).

EXHIBITIONS

Michael Snow's exhibition record includes major institutions in Canada, the United States, Europe, and Japan, as well as annual solo exhibitions at the Isaacs Gallery in Toronto.

1970	February 14–March 15, 1970, *Michael Snow / A Survey*, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Catalogue / artist's book. June–October 1970, 25th Venice Biennale. Catalogue.
1978–80	December 1978-April 1980, *Michael Snow Retrospective*, organized by National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Travelled to Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Kunstmuseum, Lucerne; Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Bonn; Montreal Museum of Fine Arts; Vancouver Art Gallery. Catalogue.
1983	February 22-March 20, 1983, *Michael Snow: Selected Photographic Works*, Frederick S. Wight Art Gallery, University of California, Los Angeles. Catalogue.

1983–85   November 1983–January 1985, *Walking Woman Works: Michael Snow, 1961–67*, organized by Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston. Travelled to Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY; Agnes Etherington Art Centre; Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax; London Regional Art Gallery; Art Gallery of Greater Victoria; Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Catalogue.

1986   May–October 1986, *The Spectral Image*, Expo 86, Vancouver.

1988   October 22–December 4, 1988, *Michael Snow*, Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo. Catalogue.

1994   March 11–June 5, 1994, *The Michael Snow Project*, four simultaneous exhibitions: *Exploring Plane and Contour, Around Wavelength*, and *Presence and Absence: The Films of Michael Snow*, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; *Embodied Vision*, The Power Plant, Toronto. Catalogue and three complementary publications.

1999–2000   July 1999–June 2000, *Panoramique: Oeuvres photographiques & films / Photographic Works & Films, 1962–1999*, Société des expositions du Palais des beaux-arts, Brussels. Travelled to Centre national de la photographie, Paris; Centre pour l'image contemporaine, Saint-Gervais, and Mamco, Geneva. Catalogue.

2001   September 22–November 18, 2001, *Michael Snow: Almost Cover to Cover*, Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol, U.K. Travelled to John Hansard Gallery, Southampton, U.K., April 23–June 8, 2002. Publication.
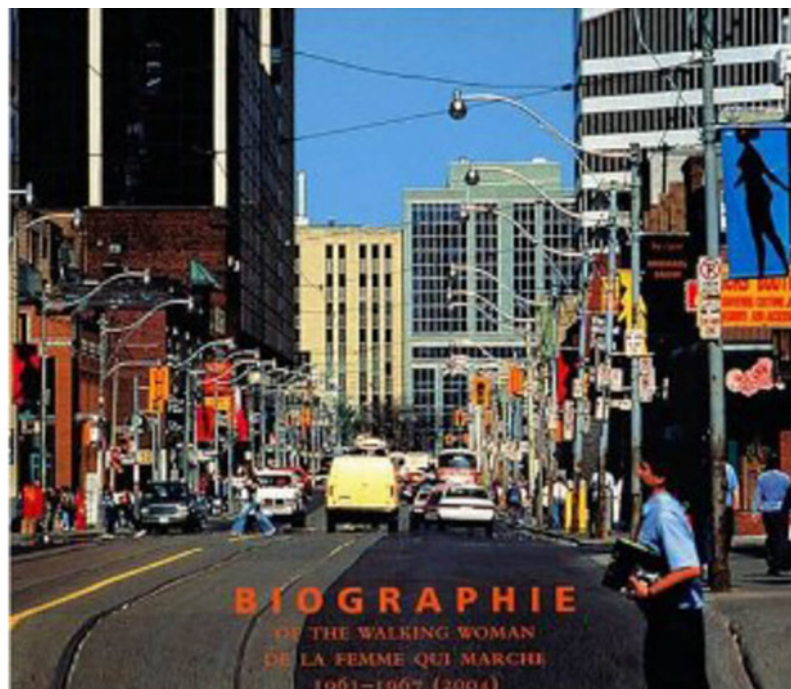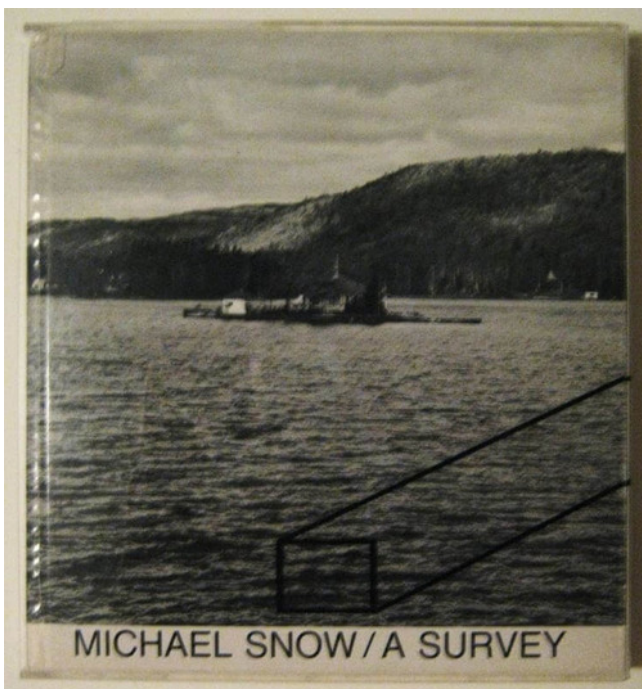
LEFT: *Michael Snow / A Survey* (1970). RIGHT: *Biographie of the Walking Woman / de la femme qui marche: 1961-1967* (2004).

WRITINGS BY SNOW

Snow's writings are pithy, poetic, provocative, and punishingly punnish. His exhibition catalogues generally include artist's statements, interviews, and/or essays about his practice. Snow has also created a number of artist's books and magazine spreads that are listed here.

Michael Snow / A Survey. Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario / Isaacs Gallery, 1970.

Michael Snow – Sequences – A History of His Art. With texts by Bruce Jenkins. Gloria Moure, ed. Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrava, 2015.

Cover to Cover. Nova Scotia Series. Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design; New York: New York University Press, 1975.

High School. Toronto: Impulse Editions / Isaacs Gallery, 1979.

"Repeat Offender." *Photo-Communiqué*, Fall 1986, 22–29.

"Passage in C." *C Magazine*, Fall 1993, 29–40.

The Michael Snow Project: The Collected Writings of Michael Snow. Foreword by Louise Dompierre. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1994.

56 Tree Poems. Ghent, Belgium: Imschoot, uitgevers, 1999.

"Notes sur le 'pourquoi' et le 'comment' de mes oeuvres photographiques / Notes on the Whys and Hows of My Photographic Works." In *Michael Snow: Panoramique; Oeuvres photographiques & films / Photographic Works and Films, 1962–1999*, 112–23. Brussels: Societé des expositions du Palais des beaux-arts, 1999.

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Biographie of the Walking Woman / de la femme qui marche, 1961–1967. Brussels: La lettre volée, 2004.

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FILM, DVD, VIDEO SOURCES

Michael Snow's influential work has been the subject of innovative films and recorded interviews. Snow has also participated in works by other artists, notably Hollis Frampton's performance *A Lecture*, 1968, for which Frampton prerecorded Snow reading the text.

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CRITICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Critical interpretations of Michael Snow's work have appeared in leading international magazines and journals of the visual arts, as well as in writings on critical theory, film studies, and cultural theory. Included in this literature are essays commissioned for exhibition catalogues. Of particular interest are three volumes (in addition to *The Collected Writings of Michael Snow*) that accompanied *The Michael Snow Project*–four comprehensive exhibitions in Toronto in 1994 co-produced by the Art Gallery of Ontario and The Power Plant–co-published by the two institutions and Knopf Canada: *Visual Art, 1951–1993*; *Presence and Absence: The Films of Michael Snow, 1956–1991*, edited by Jim Shedden; and *Music/Sound, 1948–1993*, edited by Michael Snow.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MARTHA LANGFORD

Martha Langford is the research chair and director of the Gail and Stephen A. Jarislowsky Institute for Studies in Canadian Art and a professor of art history at Concordia University in Montreal. The author of numerous articles on photography and contemporary art, Langford has published the following titles with McGill-Queen's University Press: *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums* (2001); *Scissors, Paper, Stone: Expressions of Memory in Contemporary Photographic Art* (2007); *A Cold War Tourist and His Camera*, co-written with John Langford (2011); and two edited collections, *Image & Imagination* (2005) and *Narratives Unfolding: National Art Histories in an Unfinished World* (2017). Langford has written the first comprehensive survey of modern Canadian photographic art, "A Short History of Photography, 1900–2000," in *The Visual Arts in Canada: The Twentieth Century*, edited by Anne Whitelaw, Brian Foss, and Sandra Paikowsky (Oxford University Press, 2010). She is editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Canadian Art History / Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien* and co-editor (with Sandra Paikowsky) of the McGill-Queen's / Beaverbrook Canadian Foundation series Studies in Art History.

Langford's research on Michael Snow has generated numerous conference papers, book chapters, and catalogue essays, including "Repetition / La Répétition: Michael Snow and the Act of Memory," in *Michael Snow: Almost Cover to Cover*, edited by Catsou Roberts and Lucy Steeds (Black Dog Publishing, 2001); "Michael Snow: Screen Writing," in *Switch* 3 (Spring 2010); and "Translation, Migration, Fascination: Motion Pictures by Michael Snow," in *Michael Snow: Recent Works* (Secession, 2012).

"The work of Michael Snow was an inspiration to me when I was an art student at NSCAD in the 1970s, and it has never ceased to amaze me. It's been a great privilege to work through its puzzles with the artist as my guide."

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Credit for Cover Image

Michael Snow, *Venus Simultaneous*, 1962. (See below for details.)

Credits for Banner Images

Biography: Michael Snow in New York in 1964, photographed by John Reeves. (See below for details.)

Key Works: Michael Snow, *Plus Tard #20*, 1977. (See below for details.)
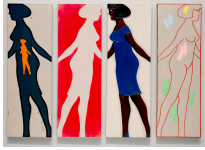
Significance & Critical Issues: Michael Snow, *Four Grey Panels and Four Figures*, 1963. (See below for details.)

Style & Technique: Michael Snow, *The Corner of Braque and Picasso Streets*, 2009. (See below for details.)

Sources & Resources: Michael Snow, *Venetian Blind*, 1970. (See below for details.)

Where to See: Michael Snow, *Flight Stop*, 1970, photographed by Owen Byrne. (See below for details.)

Credits for Works by Michael Snow
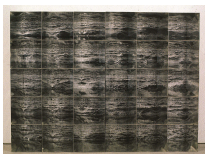
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The Corner of Braque and Picasso Streets, 2009. Collection of the artist.

**Corpus Callosum*, 2002. Collection of the artist.

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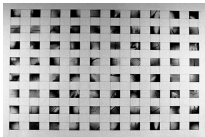
8 :x 10, 1969. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, and Museum of Modern Art Ludwig Foundation, Vienna.

Flight Stop, 1979. Toronto Eaton Centre. Collection of the artist.

Four Grey Panels and Four Figures, 1963. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, purchase, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts' Volunteer Association Fund and Horsley and Annie Townsend Bequest (2005.97.1-4). Photograph by Brian Merrett.

Four to Five, 1962. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.
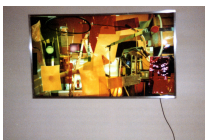
Immediate Delivery, 1998. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Jazz Band, 1947. Collection of the artist.

La Région Centrale, 1971. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1974 (30983).

Lac Clair, 1960. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1967 (15317).

Michael Snow: Cover to Cover, 1975. Published by the Press of Nova Scotia College of Art & Design, Halifax; and New York University Press, New York.

Plus Tard #15, 1977. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1977 (18842.1-25).
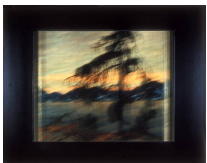
Plus Tard #20, 1977. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1977 (18842.1-25).

Quits, 1960. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Rameau's Nephew by Diderot (Thanx to Dennis Young) by Wilma Schoen, 1972-74. Collection of the artist.

Recombinant, 1992. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Scope, 1967. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1977 (18777.1-7).

Serve, Deserve, 2009. Collection of the artist.

Shunt, 1959. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1970 (15921).

Sink, 1970. Museum of Modern Art, New York. © Art Resource, NY.

Sleeve, 1965. Vancouver Art Gallery.

Snow Storm, 1967. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1968 (15456.1-4).

Solar Breath (Northern Caryatids), 2002. Courtesy of the artist.

Still Life in 8 Calls, 1985. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, gift of the family of Jean-Pierre and Johanne Pelletier (1996.26a-h).

Still Living–9 x 4 Acts-Scene 1, 1982. Collection of the artist.

Two Sides to Every Story, 1974. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1977 (18768).

Venetian Blind, 1970. Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa. Courtesy of the artist.

Venus Simultaneous, 1962. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

The Viewing of Six New Works, 2012. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Wavelength, 1966–67. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1970.

Credits for Photographs and Works by Other Artists

Altered front page of the *New York Post*, 1962, reproduced in Michael Snow, *Biographie of the Walking Woman / de la femme qui marche: 1961-1967* (Brussels: La lettre volée, 2004).

Antoinette Levesque and Gerald Bradley Snow, Michael Snow's mother and father, in the mid-1920s in Chicoutimi, Quebec. Published in Michael Snow, *Michael Snow / A Survey* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario / Isaacs Gallery, 1970).
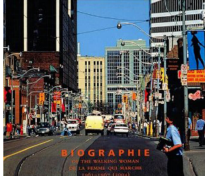
Biographie of the Walking Woman / de la femme qui marche: 1961–1967, by Michael Snow (Brussels: La lettre volée, 2004).

Bottlerack, 1961, by Marcel Duchamp. Philadelphia Museum of Art. © Estate of Marcel Duchamp / SODRAC (2013).

Composition en blanc, noir et rouge, 1936, by Piet Mondrian. Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of the Advisory Committee. © Mondrian/Holtzman Trust c/o HCR International USA. Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, NY.

Fire in the Evening, 1929, by Paul Klee. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital Image: © The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY. Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, NY.

Installation view of Michael Snow's *Walking Woman Works* exhibition, 1984, London Regional Art Gallery (now Museum London).

Ken Dean's jazz band Hot Seven, with Michael Snow on the piano, playing at a frat party at the University of Toronto in 1965. Courtesy of the artist.
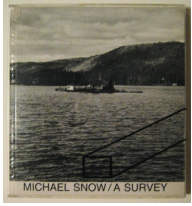
Michael Snow / A Survey, by Michael Snow (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario / Isaacs Gallery, 1970).

Michael Snow and Joyce Wieland in 1964, photographed by John Reeves. Courtesy of John Reeves.

Michael Snow chopping wood in Newfoundland in 1994, photographed by Peggy Gale. Courtesy of Peggy Gale and Michael Snow.

Michael Snow in New York in 1964, photographed by John Reeves. Courtesy of John Reeves.


Michael Snow poses with his work *Transformer*, 1982, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Michael Snow with the machine he and Pierre Abeloos designed to film *La Région Centrale*. Photograph by Joyce Wieland, October 1969. Courtesy of the artist.

Nine Polaroid Portraits of a Mirror, 1967, by William Anastasi. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, purchase, Barbara and Eugene Schwartz Gift and The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation Gift through Joyce and Robert Menschel, 1994 (1994.316.1-.9). Image copyright: © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY. Image Source: © Art Resource, NY.
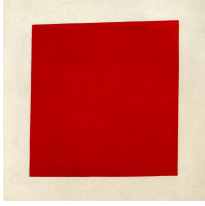
Red Square: Painterly Realism of a Peasant Woman in Two Dimensions, 1915, by Kazimir Malevich. State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.


Still from *Toronto Jazz*, 1964, directed by Don Owen. National Film Board of Canada, Toronto.

The 1976 album cover of Canadian Creative Music Collective's *Volume One*. Courtesy of the artist.
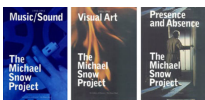
Three volumes published on the occasion of the *Michael Snow Project*, co-organized by the Art Gallery of Ontario and The Power Plant in Toronto. *Left to right: Music/Sound, 1948-1993*, edited by Michael Snow (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, The Power Plant, and Knopf Canada, 1994); *Visual Art, 1951-1993*, by Dennis Reid, Philip Monk, Louise Dompierre, Richard Rhodes, and Derrick de Kerckhove (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, The Power Plant, and Knopf Canada, 1994); and *Presence and Absence: The Films of Michael Snow, 1956-1991*, edited by Jim Shedden (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, The Power Plant, and Knopf Canada, 1995). A fourth volume was also published, *The Collected Writings of Michael Snow*, by Michael Snow, foreword by Louise Dompierre (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1994).
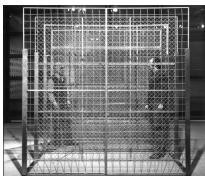
Viewers inside the sculpture *Blind*. Courtesy of the artist.

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