about the gallery

The School of Art Gallery is part of the School of Art, University of Manitoba. The University of Manitoba campuses are located on original lands of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis Nation.

The School of Art Gallery serves the School of Art, University of Manitoba, and broader communities by exhibiting and collecting contemporary and historical art addressing a range of practices and perspectives. Exhibitions and collections are complemented by engaging outreach programs and publications.

We strive to create a safe and welcoming atmosphere for all. If there is anything we can do to make your visit—onsite, offsite, or online—more accessible, please let us know.

All exhibitions and programs are free.

Blair Fornwald
Director/Curator

C.W. Brooks
Registrar/Preparator

Donna Jones
Administrative assistant

Jean Borbridge
Education coordinator
Surrealist Suggestions

Aliana Au
Kelly Clark
Kathleen Coburn-Donnelly
Marcel Dzama
Caroline Dukes
Ivan Eyre
Suzanne Gauthier
Richard Gross
Kristjanis Kaktins-Gorsline
Robert Nelson
Don Proch
Lee Saidman
Diana Thorneycroft
Esther Warkov

Curated by Lindsay Inglis
July 22 to September 24, 2021

{main gallery}
Beginning a Surrealist Legacy: Robert Nelson’s Influence at the School of Art

By Lindsay Inglis

In the early 1950s, a group of American artists came to Winnipeg to teach at the University of Manitoba’s School of Art and radically modernized the curriculum. Among them was Robert Nelson, a young artist who nurtured close friendships with his students and brought a unique perspective to his teachings. While he only taught in Winnipeg for three years, his impact continued long after his time at the School of Art. As the only surrealist among a cohort of abstractionists, Nelson introduced surrealism to Winnipeg and had a profound influence on his students.

Nelson was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1925. He spent his childhood drawing, often copying comic strips such as Prince Valiant. Nelson had a keen interest in art from a young age; he frequently visited art galleries in Milwaukee and borrowed art books from his teachers. Just after World War II, Nelson moved to Chicago to study at the School of the Art Institute. Along with printmaking and painting, Nelson also studied Art History at the School of the Art Institute, where he encountered surrealism for the first time. Many of his teachers, including Paul Wieghardt and Constantine Pougialis, frequently referenced surrealist theories in their teachings. Nelson developed close friendships with his professors, and strove to emulate their example when he became a professor himself. While Nelson never referenced surrealist theories in his own work, he was heavily inspired by Pablo Picasso. He was influenced by Picasso’s Rose Period and also began experimenting with cubism, as seen in his work, The Dancer. After his graduation, Nelson spent a year in Europe, then taught basic drawing for a year at the School of the Art Institute. Before coming to Winnipeg in 1953 to teach at the School of Art.

Nelson arrived in Winnipeg in his late twenties and was the youngest of the School of Art’s teaching staff. He described himself as “not exactly the professorial type that students were used to seeing in other classes.” Nelson’s students were only a couple of years younger than him, which eased the way to close friendships between them. He identified with his students. “They were all young and pink and smiling, with funny looking clothes on,” he noted, “and there I was, older, and pink and smiling with the same funny clothes.” His student, Barrie Nelson, mentioned that Nelson stood out among the other professors, and reminisced that Nelson would always wear black corduroy suits with colourful vests that his wife made him. Nelson described his students as responsible, mature, and honest people; he called them an alert group and noted that they were receptive to other people’s opinions on art. He would sometimes hire his students as babysitters when he went out of town, and on a few occasions he got calls asking him to bail one of them out of jail. When talking about his students and the choices they would sometimes make, he remarked, “they were in the business of living and I respected that.”

While School of Art students in the 1950s were living lives rich in experience, many did not have a lot of first-hand knowledge of contemporary art. Their only exposure to art came from popular culture such as comic books, magazine illustrations, and advertisements. The American teachers at the School of Art played a vital role in introducing their students to the work of contemporary artists and expanding their art historical knowledge. To assist with his teachings, Nelson established a weekly film night at the School of Art and often invited students to his apartment in the evenings, where they would discuss art, exhibitions, and art theory. He showed them his art books as well as his own art collection, which included Inuit sculpture and several pieces he picked up in Europe. As a young and optimistic professor, Nelson believed that people came to art school to learn from each other. While his students learned a lot from him, he acknowledges that he also learned a lot from them. Nelson even brought his students on a field trip to Chicago during his first year at the School of Art. This trip was the first time many students were able to see works by major artists in person. They visited as many galleries as they could, including the Art Institute and also visited a furniture factory run by Nelson’s friends from art school. Perhaps overestimating their good judgement, Nelson took his students to a party at that factory. The following day, several “disappeared” and Nelson had to run around the city finding them all. He never took another trip to Chicago with the School of Art, in part because he thought it was unfair to take students away from their studio time, and in part because he was terrified of losing them again.

Nelson resigned from the School of Art in the summer of 1956. He moved to Grand Forks and began teaching at the University of North Dakota. For Nelson, the hardest part of leaving Winnipeg was leaving the students he had befriended. When reflecting on his time with students in Winnipeg, Nelson professed: “I treasure their memories and the experiences I had with them.” They treasured him as well. Winston Leathers described Nelson, along with Richard Bowman, as being the most influential instructors during his time at the School of Art. Former students Barrie Nelson and
McLearly Drope went to visit Nelson in Grand Forks several times. In 1958, two years after Nelson’s departure, Ivan Eyre moved to Grand Forks to pursue a Master’s degree. He later explained that while the University did not have a strong Fine Arts program at the time, and he went because he wanted to be taught by Nelson. Nelson later stated: “I consider the classes that I had in Winnipeg to be some of the best drawing classes that I had my entire teaching career, and I’ve taught for nearly fifty years so that’s saying a lot.”

Though Nelson only taught at the School of Art for a short time, he made lasting impressions on his students. By introducing surrealism to the School of Art, Nelson left behind a legacy that continues to outlast his time in Winnipeg. He had a major influence on artists such as Ivan Eyre, who then went on to inspire another generation of surrealist artists at the School of Art.

---

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ted Howorth and Bill Pura, “Printmaking in the 1950’s [sic]: an Intimate View of Student Prints at the School of Art 1950-59.” Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, 2004, https://www.umanitoba.ca/schools/art/content/galleryoneoneone/print.html
15. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Albert Gilson, President’s Report (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1951).
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Dianne Scoles. “School Setting and Dedicated Staff Inspire 1950’s [sic] Student Printmakers,” Gallery One One One, School of Art, University of Manitoba, 2004, umanitoba.ca/schools/art/content/galleryoneoneone/scoles.html
26. Ibid.
27. Oliver Botar, “The Hidden Landscape of Winston Leathers and Wayne Foster,” Gallery One One One, School of Art, umanitoba.ca/schools/art/content/galleryoneoneone/wl05
28. Barry Nelson interview; Robert Nelson interview
The 1972 Munich Olympics had high hopes to convey to the world a new image of peace, coexistence, and friendship for Germany, after the Berlin Olympics of 1936 held during the Nazi regime. With a playful colour palette, minimal security, and a record number of athletes and sporting events, “The Happy Games” were set to be the biggest Olympics yet. This was due in large part to designer Otl Aicher, whose meticulous approach to changing Germany’s international image, curating a playful experience for visitors, and creating synthesis of sport and art, made the Munich Olympics a turning point that changed the aesthetics and the appeal of the Olympics. The Munich Olympics have since been critically acclaimed as one of the most well-designed and coherent Games ever to have been implemented. However, it was during this Olympics that there was a violent attack in the Olympic village—later named the Munich Massacre. This was an attack by the Palestinian militant group, Black September, that resulted in the death of eleven Israeli Olympians. Instead of the Munich Olympics being remembered as a visual redefinition of Germany’s international image, they are forever marked with the violent imagery of this attack.

Along with the Munich Olympic Committee, Aicher had dreams of creating a utopian environment, one that visually showed that Germany was a new country now, and implemented themes of peace and unity throughout. This
intentional and critical way of designing plays an important part in the Munich Olympics, which were themselves an important part of the massive task of reframing the country’s global identity. “However,” as Francine Zuckerman’s documentary, After Munich notes, “this was undermined in part by their history of reconciliation following the war, where Germany actively supported the creation of the Israeli state, thereby alienating them from most nations in the Arab League.” Germany’s oversimplification of this reconciliation led to an creation of the Israeli state, thereby alienating them from most nations in the of reconciliation following the war, where Germany actively supported the Arab League. Germany’s oversimplification of this reconciliation led to an creation of the Israeli state, thereby alienating them from most nations in the

Aicher was a graphic designer and typographer known for establishing the Ulm School of Design and for his work in corporate branding. Historically, he was very strongly opposed to the Nazi movement. He was arrested in 1937 for refusing to join the Hitler Youth and had to go into hiding in 1945 due to deserting the German Army during World War II. His longstanding opposition to Nazism made him an enthusiastic ideological fit as the lead designer for the Munich Games. The Olympic Games are created, and can be viewed through many different thematic lenses, one of which is international diplomacy. Aicher recognized the important diplomatic role that this particular Olympic Games were to play in history, saying, “trust cannot be gained through words, but instead only through visual proof and the winning of sympathy. It is not about explaining that this Germany is different, but about showing it.” Aicher was committed to using design as “both a negative foil and an inspiration for strategy and technique” in his quest to give Germany a new image in the eyes of the world.

While he wanted the design to feel playful, he took his task very seriously and produced a rigid and “unambiguous decision making hierarchy” so that he was able to “prevent a variable system losing its potency and ultimately disintegrating.” As Aicher put it, “The look of the Munich Olympics,” would have to “maintain the positive aspects of Berlin while at the same time eradicating its negative connotations.” He wrote:

There will be no demonstration of nationalism, and no enormity of scale. Sport will no longer be considered an adjunct of, or preparation for military discipline. Pathos will be avoided, as will ceremonial awe. Depth is not always expressed through earnestness. Lightheartedness and non-conformity stand just as much for serious subjectivity. The Munich Olympics should have an unforced character and be open, carefree, and relaxed. It is clear that this will give them an emphatically celebratory character. Celebratory not in the traditional institutional sense but in terms of play-ful improvisation.

Aicher meticulously crafted the environment throughout the Games by using three basic elements: scripts, signs, and colours. For scripts, every Olympic text, including signs, brochures, posters, etc. were to be printed in the Univers font. The text was laid out in long thin columns, to make blocks of information easier to read, and was all in lowercase, in homage to the Bauhaus style. Aicher wanted signage to help to guide human traffic in a natural way that allowed people to intuitively make choices, so he developed a series of easily understandable pictograms to be used on wayfinding signage. These pictograms were very precise, “positioned within an exact grid of orthographical and geometric coordinates. Rules and grids determined the proportions of heads, torsos, limbs, the representation of sports equipment, and the distinguishing features of male and female athletes.” Aicher is most well-known for these pictograms, the most iconic being his men’s and women’s restroom signs, which have been used almost ubiquitously in public restrooms since.

In terms of colour, Aicher wanted to diverge completely from the reds and yellows associated with the Nazi Party, so he chose the “core colours to be light blue and green, supported by silver and white, and supplemented by yellow, orange, dark green, blue, and occasionally even brown.” Because of this extensive colour palette, the rainbow came to be another symbol of the Munich Olympics. To Aicher, the rainbow “symbolized aesthetics in their ultimate form and appearance without losing a sense of the fleeting and playful” and offered visitors the chance to “experience humanity as a unified whole, as a model of society without violence or borders.”

As a part of Munich’s original bid for the games, the Committee promised a synthesis between art and sport. With this in mind, posters were high on their agenda. The Olympic posters were to be of “high artistic quality that had to be world famous” and “established and avant-garde trends in art ought to be represented.” Well-known international artists were “encouraged to incorporate a relationship with the Olympic idea, and the contemporary Olympic games in the present time.” Under this loose criteria, commissioned artists produced a wide array of images, some abstract like Eduardo Chillida’s graphic black and white design, some sports related, like Hockney’s depiction of a swimmer, and some humorous, like Tom Wesselmann’s illustration of a huge single foot. In these posters, this synthesis of art and sport portrayed quintessential Olympic themes such as unity, internationalism, and diversity. “Five series containing seven posters each were produced. Some versions of posters were produced on high quality paper—these were done by way of limited edition aiming at a collectors’ market.” They were to appeal to people with artistic interests, to be hung in places like universities, schools, museums, and galleries. Because they were produced in both wide and limited editions, they were able to be displayed everywhere, but also could also be collected and kept as pieces of artwork.

It was a week or so into the Olympic Games, early on the morning of September fifth, when “eight members of Black September snuck and then shot their way into the Israeli quarters at the Olympic Village. By 5:00 a.m. they had taken 11 Israelis hostage, killing one and wounding another.” The group demanded the release of 234 Palestinian prisoners held in Israel, and also requested an
airplane to fly them and the hostages to a safe location in the Middle East. The attack was highly televised, and by the end of the day, all of the hostages, one police officer, and five members of Black September were involved in an ambush, and then a shootout at the Munich Airport. They all died in the crossfire. Throughout the televising of the attack, the Games continued. After the announcement of the causalities, there was finally a 24-hour suspension on the Games, the first time this had ever happened. The organizers of the Games were devastated. Chancellor Willy Brandt remarked: “My disappointment at the time was intense because the Olympics on which we had expended so much loving care would not go down in history as a happy occasion.”

However, during the planning of the Games, it was known that there were rising tensions between Palestine and Israel, a fact never acknowledged within the event itself. There was not a lot of effort put forth to accommodate both nations equally: Israel was accommodated in many ways, but Palestine was not. Earlier in 1972, “Chancellor Willy Brandt made efforts to re-establish good relations with the Arab world, however the Olympic Committee torpedoed his attempts, and refused to acknowledge two requests by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to compete in the Olympic Games.” Good design cannot save us from crises we ignore.

Adjunct Programming

Playful Application Curatorial Tour and Design Relay Race

Wednesday, September 22, 7:00-8:30 CDT
On Zoom and livestreaming on the School of Art Gallery, University of Manitoba YouTube channel

Ready set go Helvetica! Join us for a design relay race by School of Art design alumni. Moderated by Playful Application curator Shaneela Boodoo, each designer will only have six minutes and twelve slides to present on their work before passing the baton to the next one.

Please visit umanitoba.ca/art/playful-application to register.
Marcel Dzama: A Game of Chess

Curated by Lindsay Inglis
July 22 to September 24, 2021

A Game of Chess is an homage to one of Marcel Dzama’s primary influences, Marcel Duchamp, an artist who nearly gave up art in favour of chess. In 1932, Duchamp wrote Opposition and Sister Squares, a book on chess that is equally considered an artist’s book. While it was originally commercially unsuccessful, Dzama was so fond of the book that he reprinted it in 2011, the same year he produced A Game of Chess.

In Dzama’s film, which owes much to Dada, Surrealism, and Bauhaus theatre, people are forced to become chess pieces and polka-dotted pawns. They dance across a giant chessboard, entertaining an uncanny audience of captivated yet inexpressive masked figures. Here, chess combines the elegance of ballet with the high stakes of a gladiator ring. Like gladiators, these individual’s fates are not their own; they are controlled by two men simply playing a game of chess. Only when these two worlds intertwine and the men playing chess are no longer safe in their own environment does a true winner emerge.

Marcel Dzama is a multidisciplinary artist born and raised in Winnipeg and currently based in New York City. He graduated from the School of Art in 1997 and was one of the founding members of The Royal Art Lodge, a drawing collective active from 1996-2008. He is represented by David Zwirner Gallery in New York City and Sies + Höke in Düsseldorf.
The School of Art Gallery at the University of Manitoba is launching its new Visiting Curator Program with internationally-recognized curator and art historian Grace Deveney as the inaugural visiting curator.

Over the next three years, the Visiting Curator Program will support curatorial research, exhibitions, events, and publications by Deveney as well as two emerging curators.

The Visiting Curator Program will serve as a catalyst for three international-calibre exhibitions and will play a vital role in defining contemporary art and its attendant discourses in the Prairies. It will also give students, faculty, and other community members meaningful opportunities to engage with curators charting new trajectories in the field. Through its mentorship component, it will foster strong new voices in this field.

This new program is generously supported by Dr. Michael F.B. Nesbitt, whose contributions to the arts and community-building are deeply felt throughout Winnipeg, and especially at the University of Manitoba.
Virtual Presentation with Grace Deveney

Thursday, July 8, 7:00-8:30 pm CDT
On Zoom and livestreaming on the School of Art Gallery, University of Manitoba YouTube channel

School of Art Gallery Visiting Curator Grace Deveney will give a presentation on her curatorial practice and writing, by presenting notes on the exhibitions that have influenced her work, shows she has curated at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and in other spaces as a guest curator. Deveney will discuss the overarching themes and interests that drive her research, which include media, language, landscape, and the ways artists use materials to create metaphors that speak to history and lived experience.

Deveney is Associate Curator of the fifth iteration of Prospect, a New Orleans-based triennial, titled *Prospect.5: Yesterday we said tomorrow* (2021). Previously, she was Assistant Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. Exhibitions at the MCA include *Christina Quarles* (2021), *Direct Message: Art, Language, and Power* (2019) and *Groundings* (2018; with Tara Aisha Willis), as well as presentations of the work of Paul Pfeiffer, Amanda Williams and Ania Jaworska.

She is a PhD candidate in Art History at Northwestern University, and her dissertation research looks at television and technology of the 1970s to 1990s and in the works of Howardena Pindell, Tony Cokes, and Stan Douglas, and the ways they created counternarratives to popular representations of Black political thought and action. Often exploring the relationship between landscape and language, Deveney’s research explores how representations of the places we live in, and the language that is used to define our experience is challenged or reconsidered by artists.

Please visit umanitoba.ca/art/visiting-curator-program to register.

This event will be ASL interpreted and recorded and uploaded to YouTube. Live captioning will be available.
Call for Emerging Curators

The School of Art Gallery at the University of Manitoba is seeking two emerging curators to participate in its inaugural Visiting Curator Program. The chosen applicants will receive mentorship and support from visiting curator Grace Deveney, as they propose, research, develop and present an ambitious exhibition, complemented by a lively and critically rigorous roster of adjunct programs and an engaging, substantive publication.

Between Fall 2021 and Winter 2023, the chosen candidates will participate in regular one-on-one and group mentorship sessions with Deveney as they develop their curatorial projects. They will receive additional support from faculty and staff at the School of Art and School of Art Gallery, and are encouraged to develop, foster, and harness opportunities provided by partnerships with other arts organizations.

In-person activities will take place as public health restrictions permit, and subject to travel restrictions, the program will offer opportunities to travel for research and presentation. Emerging curators may provide academic and public lectures, studio visits, and workshops at the School of Art, in Winnipeg, and elsewhere, either virtually, or in-person as permitted. Emerging curators who are not based in Winnipeg will be invited to spend at least six weeks onsite researching, developing, and presenting their programming.

We invite project proposals from curators who have recently graduated from an accredited master’s-level program and are within their first three years of professional curatorial practice. While this call is open to Canadian, American, and international curators, we especially welcome applications from BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) curators based in Winnipeg and the Prairies. Alignments with the research areas of the visiting curator are welcome, as well as disparate and complementary interests and engagements.

Project Timeline
- The deadline for submissions is July 23, 2021.
- Proposals will be reviewed by the School of Art Gallery Visiting Curator Committee. The chosen candidates will be notified the School of Art Gallery Visiting Curator Committee by August 6, 2021.
- The Program will begin between late August and early September 2021.
- The Program will culminate in Spring 2023 and Winter 2023-24 exhibitions curated by the chosen candidates.
- Comprehensive program schedules will be developed in collaboration between School of Art Gallery Director/Curator and the chosen candidates.

Financial Support
Each emerging curator will receive a curatorial fee of $20,000 CAD. The Visiting Curator Program will also cover the cost of related travel and accommodations. Project budgets will be developed by the School of Art Gallery Director/Curator in conversation with each emerging curator. All exhibition, publication, and outreach costs will be covered by the Program. Costs associated with the commission of new artworks may be covered on a case-by-case basis. The School of Art Gallery is committed to the fair remuneration of artists, writers, and other presenters and pays artist fees at or above rates outlined in the CARFAC Minimum Recommended Fee Schedule.

How to Apply
All proposals must be sent digitally with the email subject line Visiting Curator Program. In a single PDF, please include:
- An exhibition proposal (500 words maximum)
- A proposal for ancillary programming, which may include artist talks, workshops, performances, screenings, etc. (250 words maximum)
- A CV (3 pages maximum)
- 1-2 writing samples
- A list of support materials

You may include up to ten items of support material, including jpeg images, web links, and video files that demonstrate previous curatorial projects and/or artworks to be included in your proposed exhibition. Video support material must be no longer than 5 minutes in length (please include passwords and timecodes, if required, in the list of support materials). The application should be no more than 10 MB in size.

Please email your proposal to gallery@umanitoba.ca. You may also use Dropbox, WeTransfer or other file sharing service to submit your proposal.

We thank all applicants for their proposals, however, only those selected for an interview will be contacted.
Funding
The School of Art Gallery is generously supported by the University of Manitoba, the School of Art’s faculty and staff, national and provincial funding agencies, donors, and volunteers.

The School of Art Gallery Visiting Curator Program is generously supported by Dr. Michael F.B. Nesbitt.

Subscribe
Email gallery@umanitoba.ca to join the School of Art’s e-newsletter mailing list or to receive hard copies of the School of Art Gallery newsletter.

Hours
For up-to-date information about opening hours and how to access our programs, please visit: umanitoba.ca/art/gallery

Contact
256 ARTlab
School of Art Gallery
180 Dafoe Road,
University of Manitoba

T 204-474-9322
E gallery@umanitoba.ca

Follow
FB @uManitobaSchoolofArt
IN @SchoolOfArt_um
YT shorturl.at/fhyAG

Cover: Robert Nelson, The Dancer (detail), 1955, oil on octagonal canvas. Collection of the School of Art Gallery, Gift of Dr. Marion Lewis.