

Special Project: who claims
abstraction? Echoes from the
SFU Art Collection

Jack Bush | Francisco-Fernando Granados
| Corita Kent | Roy Kenzie Kiyooka | Gary
Lee-Nova | Rita Letendre | Attila Richard
Lukács | Michael Morris

JUN 8, 2023 - May 4, 2024
Belzberg Library

SFU G[^]ALLERIES_^

Exhibition Text

Francisco-Fernando Granados' research for the Teck Gallery 2023 installation, *who claims abstraction?* opens an inquiry into the legacies and implications of Modernist abstraction. This exhibition was presented first at SFU Gallery and features notable Modernist works in conversation with feminist and queer artists, including artists Jack Bush, Corita Kent, Roy Kenzie Kiyooka, Gary Lee-Nova, Rita Letendre, Attila Richard Lukács, and Michael Morris.

Granados' research into the SFU Art Collection in the early phases of the development of his large-scale, diptych mural, frequently referred to as *who claims abstraction?*, explores optical experimentation, architectural linework, gestural reverberations, and colour studies found in these works, primarily produced in the period of the early 1960s to late 1980s. Granados' findings, however, challenge Modernist claims of purity, autonomy, and absolutism, refuting the presumed limitations of the works.

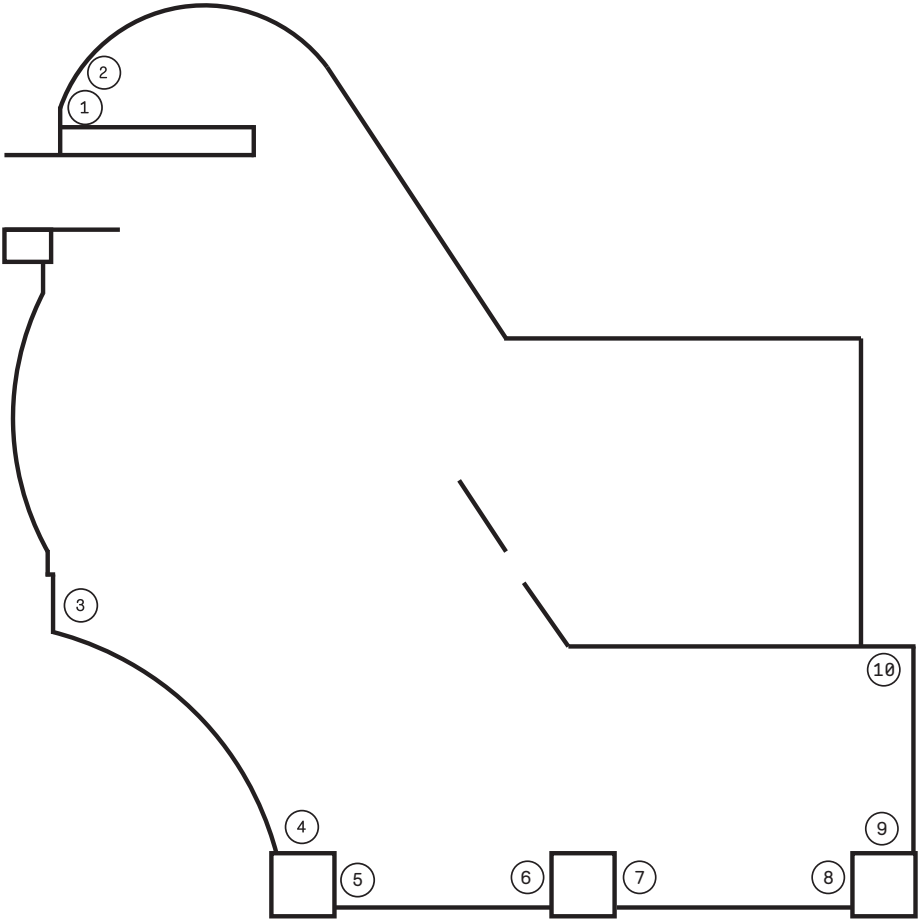
who claims abstraction? Echoes from the SFU Art Collection demonstrates that there are inclusive and ever-changing possibilities of encounter located within artworks, which still actively engage viewers in discourse while echoing with relevance towards contemporary practices of artists such as Granados.

Curated by Kristy Trinier with Francisco-Fernando Granados
Produced in Partnership with SFU Belzberg Library

List of Works

1. Jack Bush, *Untitled*, 1971, serigraph, ed. 29/100. SFU Art Collection. Purchase, 1975
2. Francisco-Fernando Granados, *apostrophe (portrait)*, 2012-2013, rectified readymade, correction fluid on postcard. Courtesy the artist
3. Rita Letendre, *Romir*, 1979, silkscreen, ed. 38/150. SFU Art Collection. Gift of Adrian Levitt, 1991
4. Roy Kenzie Kiyooka, *#2 Iberian*, 1971, screenprint, ed. 4/50. SFU Art Collection. Gift of Toronto Dominion Bank, 1998
5. Michael Morris, *Kinetic Technology*, 1973, lithograph. SFU Art Collection. Gift of Canada Council for the Arts, Art Bank, 2008
6. Rita Letendre, *Silver Space*, 1972, silkscreen, ed. 2/20. SFU Art Collection. Purchase, 2007
7. Gary Lee Nova, *Small Electrical Storm In Element County*, 1973, silkscreen. SFU Art Collection. Gift of Canada Council for the Arts, Art Bank, 2007
8. Michael Morris, *Palomar*, 1968, lithograph, ed. 10/75. SFU Art Collection. Gift of Canada Council for the Arts, Art Bank, 2008
9. Corita Kent, *parable of the artichoke*, 1964, serigraph, ed. of 100. SFU Art Collection. Purchase, 1970
10. Attila R. Lukács, *Meat: New York Steak*, 1986, lithograph, ed. 51/80. SFU Art Collection. Gift of Steve Bugera and family, 1995

Exhibition Map



Bibliography

Daina Augaitis, Kathleen Ritter eds., *Rebecca Belmore, Rising to the Occasion* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2008)

Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (New York: Verso Books, 2016)

Bruce Canyon ed., *Live at the End of the Century; Aspects of Performance Art in Vancouver* (Vancouver: Grunt Gallery, 2000)

Mrinalini Chakravorty, Surya Parekh, Joe Parker, and Herman Rapaport, eds., *Spivak Moving: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* (London: Seagull Books, 2022)

Christophe Cherix, Cornelia Butler, and David Platzker, eds., *Adrian Piper: A Synthesis of Intuitions, 1965–2016* (New York: MoMA, 2018)

Paul Couillard ed., *La Dragu: The Living Art of Margaret Dragu* (Toronto: FADO Performance Art Centre, 2002)

Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans., Rachel Bowlby (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000)

Cecilia Fajardo-Hill and Andrea Giunta, *Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960-1985* (Los Angeles: Hammer Museum, 2017)

Virginia Jaramillo, *Curvilinear* (New York: Hales Gallery, 2017)

John Paul Ricco, *The Decision Between Us: Art and Ethics in the Time of Scenes* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014)

Bridget Riley (Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 2019)

Sappho, *If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho*, Anne Carson trans. (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2002)

Book Launch: Hannah Godfrey: Critical Fictions

FRI, JUL 21 / 12 - 1PM

Teck Gallery

In her bold departure from conventional art criticism, Hannah Godfrey looks to the work of five contemporary queer visual artists, with attention to, and affection for, the wit, subversion, and many complexities of each of their practices. Shifting through written forms as experiential coves, *Critical Fictions* is a collection of inventive responses that are delicately linked, and devoted to their subjects.

Alongside the five artists — Derek Dunlop, Kristin Nelson, Hagere Selam shimby Zegeye-Gebrehiwot, Andrea Oliver Roberts, and Logan MacDonald — Godfrey shares a keen interest in intricacies of queer power, the body, and abstraction. Her varied approach to criticism embraces stories, poetry, essays, and other textual formations as means of wayfaring through the work of art. In these pages the reader will find not only celebrations of the depth, beauty, and acuity of the artworks discussed, but explorations of the imaginative thoroughfares they open up. This launch will include a reading by Godfrey.

Co-presented with Or Gallery and SFU Vancouver Campus

Book Launch: Francisco-Fernando Granados: who claims
abstraction (with a difference)?

THU, JUL 20 / 6 - 8PM

Teck Gallery

who claims abstraction (with a difference)? is a Publication Studio and SFU Galleries co-production with contributions by Christian Camacho-Light, Margaret Dragu, Francisco-Fernando Granados, Kimberly Phillips, Kristina Lee Podesva, Kristy Trinier, and Jonathan VanDyck. The book launch will include a reading by artist Francisco-Fernando Granados at the site of the Teck Gallery installation, *who claims abstraction?*

Jack Bush (1909–1977) was born in Toronto and resided there for most of his life. His artistic practice is felt strongly across Canada, as well as in London (UK), and especially New York. Included in Clement Greenberg's seminal Post Painterly Abstraction (1964) exhibition, as well as a solo exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1972), Bush remains a celebrated Colour Field artist. He began his practice with the Group of Seven: he worked as a commercial artist by day and painted landscapes in his off time. He was a member of the Canadian Group of Painters (CGP), Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (RCA), Ontario Society of Artists (OSA), and later Painters Eleven; from the 1960s on, he established a prolific painting and printmaking practice.

Francisco-Fernando Granados (he/him) was born in Guatemala and lives in Toronto, the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat Peoples. Since 2005, his practice has traced his movement from Convention Refugee to critical citizen, using abstraction performatively, site-specifically, and relationally, to create projects that challenge the stability of practices of recognition. His work has developed from the intersection of formal painterly training at Langara College, working in performance through artist-run spaces, studies in queer and feminist theory at Emily Carr University of Art + Design, and early activism as a peer support worker with immigrant and refugee communities in Vancouver, New Westminster, and Surrey on unceded Coast Salish territories. This layering of experiences has trained his intuitions to seek site-responsive approaches, alternative forms of distribution, and the weaving of lyrical and critical propositions. Recent projects include *foreward* (2021–2023), a solo exhibition consisting of site specific installations in dialogue with the permanent collection at The MacLaren Art Centre in Barrie; *refugee reconnaissance* (2021), a bilingual compilation of performance scores spanning 2005–2013 published by AXENÉO7; *duet* (2019–2020) a traveling

two-person exhibition alongside Canadian modernist painter Jack Bush in collaboration with the Art Gallery of Peterborough and The Robert McLaughlin Gallery; and co-respond-dance *Version II* (2020), an artist book published in collaboration with Centre des arts actuels Skol in Montreal. Other exhibition highlights include a performance installation in partnership with Third Space Gallery and the YMCA Newcomer Connections Centre in St. John New Brunswick, public art installations for Mercer Union and Nuit Blanche in Toronto, and participation in international group shows on contemporary queer aesthetics at the Hessel Museum and Ramapo College in the United States and Malmö Konstmuseum in Sweden. His writing has been published in books including *Other Places: Reflections on Media Arts in Canada*, as well as exhibition catalogues, magazines, and art journals like *Canadian Art*, *C Magazine*, *Canadian Theatre Review*, *FUSE*, and *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*. Awards and honours include grants from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Toronto and Ontario Arts Councils, and the Governor General's Silver Medal for academic achievement upon graduating from Emily Carr University in 2010. He completed a Masters of Visual Studies at the University of Toronto in 2012 and has taught art and theory in various capacities at OCAD University and University of Toronto Scarborough. In 2022, Granados began a PhD in Media & Design Innovation at Toronto Metropolitan University.

Corita Kent (1918–1986), born Frances Elizabeth Kent and also known as Sister Mary Corita Kent, was an American artist, designer, educator, former religious sister, and advocate for social justice. She taught at the Immaculate Heart College, and her artwork frequently referenced social justice issues. She became increasingly political throughout the 1960s, particularly concerning poverty and racism. Corita Kent produced a large body of graphically powerful serigraphs that often incorporated song lyrics, biblical verses, literature, advertising imagery, and slogans. After

Kent began printmaking in the early 1950s, her work was widely exhibited, at more than 230 exhibitions across the country by the late 1960s, and she completed commissions for the 1964 New York World's Fair, IBM, and Westinghouse. Her work was acquired by prestigious museums, such as the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and the Museum of Modern Art, New York; and the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles.

Roy Kenzie Kiyooka (1926–1994) was a painter, photographer, musician, and poet, whose legacy is still profoundly felt in artistic and literary circles of the Northwest Coast. He was a second generation Japanese Canadian, born in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan in 1926. Kiyooka studied at the Provincial Institute of Technology and Art (now named the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology and Art). A regular participant in the Emma Lake Artists' Workshops in the 1950s in Saskatchewan, Kiyooka moved to Vancouver in the 1960s and taught at the Vancouver School of Art (now Emily Carr University of Art + Design), where he explored various modes of abstraction. His visual artwork included paintings, sculpture, film, and photographs. During his career he taught at a number of universities including the University of British Columbia. Kiyooka was named an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1978.

Gary Lee-Nova (1943) was born in Toronto, and studied at the Vancouver School of Art and at Coventry College, England. An important figure in the West Coast scene of the 1960s and early 1970s, he was a co-founder of Image Bank (a collaborative project with Michael Morris and Vincent Trasov), and active in the Sound Gallery (circa 1965) and Intermedia (1967–1972). Lee-Nova continues to work as an artist, creating single projects that often take years to execute. In 2018 he was named Professor Emeritus at Emily Carr University of Art and + Design. He has exhibited

extensively throughout his career, including at the Vancouver Art Gallery, Bau-Xi Gallery (Toronto), University of Saskatchewan, Western Front, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, Burnaby Art Gallery, National Gallery of Canada, Demarco Gallery (Edinburgh) and the Paris Biennale. His work is included in collections at the National Gallery of Canada, Canada Council Art Bank, the Institute of Contemporary Art (London), and the Vancouver Art Gallery, among others.

Rita Letendre (1928–2021), born in Drummondville, Quebec, is of Abenaki descent. She studied at the École des Beaux-Arts in Montreal in 1948, where the rigid methodology and conservative environment was ill-suited to her creative exploration. She exhibited with the Automatists in Montreal from 1952 to 1955, and was included in the pivotal exhibition *La matière chante*, organized by artist Paul-Émile Borduas, and *Espace* at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. By the late 1950s, she had begun to exhibit in New York, at both Parma Gallery and Canada House, and her work was included in *The Third Biennial Exhibition of Canadian Art* at the National Gallery of Canada (NGC). In 1960, the NGC organized the exhibition *Non-Figurative Artists of Montreal*, which travelled to other venues in Canada and solidified Letendre's place in the forefront of Canadian non-figurative abstraction. Letendre won numerous important painting prizes in Montreal including the Young Painters Prize in 1959 and the Rodolphe de Repentigny Prize in 1960, as well as the Province of Quebec Award in 1962. Her work is recognized across Canada and internationally, including notably in Japan and France. She was an officer of the Order of Canada and was awarded the Governor General's Award for Visual Arts in 2010 and the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012.

Attila Richard Lukács (1962) was born in Alberta and graduated from the Emily Carr University of Art + Design in 1985. Lukács'

work was included in The Young Romantics exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery (1985), an influential exhibition curated by Scott Watson. After moving to Berlin in 1986, Lukács worked at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien Berlin and practiced in New York and Hawaii before returning to Vancouver. His range as an artist is evident in his abstract paintings and collages, as well as his large-scale figural paintings, collection of paintings of flowers and trees, and numerous etchings. Lukács has shown extensively internationally and has work in collections such as Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton; Vancouver Art Gallery; Rideau Hall, Ottawa; Nickle Arts Museum, Calgary; Edmonton Art Gallery; Art Gallery of Ontario; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa; Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Gent, Belgium; Musée d'Art Contemporain, Montreal; Froahlich Collection, Germany; Rudolf Zwirner, Cologne, Germany; Phyllis Kind, New York; John Stewart Collection, New York; Salah Bachir, Toronto; and Dietmar Werle, Cologne, Germany.

Michael Morris (1942–2022) was born in Saltdean, England, and emigrated to Victoria in 1946. In his roles as curator and, primarily, as an artist, Morris was a key figure in the West Coast art scene from the 1960s to the present. Morris studied at the University of Victoria and then at the Vancouver School of Art, followed by graduate studies at Slade School of Fine Art at the University College London, during the 1960s. There he became interested in the work of Fluxus and the European avant-garde, which had a profound influence on his work and on the Vancouver experimental art scene in general. In 1969 he founded Image Bank with Vincent Trasov and Gary Lee-Nova, a system of postal correspondence between participating artists for the exchange of information and ideas. Morris was acting curator of the Vancouver Art Gallery and organized art events and exhibitions at the Centre for Communications and the Arts at Simon Fraser University from 1967 to 1970, and held many guest curatorships at other institutions. In 1973, he

co-founded the Western Front — one of Canada’s first artist-run centres — and served as co-director for seven years. In 1990 he and Trasov founded the Morris/Trasov Archive, now housed at the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, to research contemporary art. Morris has participated in artist-in-residence programs both in Canada at the Banff Centre (1990) and at Open Studio (2003) and internationally at Berlin Künstlerprogramm (1981–1998). Morris has had solo and collaborative exhibitions nationally and internationally, and is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Audain Prize for Lifetime Achievement in Visual Arts (2015), the Governor General’s Award in Visual and Media Arts (2011) and an Honorary Doctorate from Emily Carr University of Art + Design.

Situated in Vancouver and Burnaby, SFU Galleries occupies the unceded territories of x̣ṃəθkẉəỵəm, Skwxwú7mesh, Səlilwətał, and ḳʷiḳʷəχ̣əm Nations. Acknowledging that the activities of SFU Galleries unfold on colonized Indigenous territories is both a recognition that settler colonialism is an ongoing structure and a commitment to support the capacity of art to unsettle these conditions.

SFU Galleries is generously supported by Simon Fraser University, the Canada Council for the Arts, and the British Columbia Arts Council, along with numerous foundations, community partners, donors, and volunteers. We are especially grateful for the visionary support of the Marianne and Edward Gibson Trust.



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