





# ROBERT YOUNG: TEN YEARS

February 10 to March 11, 1984

Cover:  
*The Princeleeps Badly*, 1982  
oil on linen, 152.4 x 111.8 cm

The Charles H. Scott Gallery  
Emily Carr College of Art and Design





*No Bath Mat*, 1973, watercolour, 72.7 x 70.5 cm





Robert Young, Pumps Performance, 1979

## ROBERT YOUNG: TEN YEARS

Robert Young's painting has significantly evolved in the ten years which have elapsed since his retrospective exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery. This is to be expected of any artist worthy of the name, under constant exhortation to cover new ground and take risks — though simultaneously undermined by post-modernist arguments that there *is* little new ground and that the risk-taking, to some, may seem meekly academic.

In essence, he has abandoned the appropriation of *particular* photo images which he rendered into shallow, non-illusory space, and turned a corner into what might be best described as a re-examination of analytical cubist abstraction, relinquishing the broader appeal of figurative art.

For those who continue to accept the convention of fastening fabric on rectangular wooden stretchers and applying pigment the "consistency of butter" over charcoal outlines, the conundrum of the appearance of a three-dimensional illusion painted on a two-dimensional surface is as compelling today as it was in the beginning of pictorial art.

The change which occurred in Young's work, as it unfolded, was as natural and logical as it could be, which is not to say that it was accomplished without difficulty or doubt on his part. Young's art is one of profound concentration and rumination. Although he has long since regarded it as his proper work, as distinguished from the concept of "job," he did not apprehend the craft of painting naturally or willingly and has only recently felt at all comfortable in this ostensibly antiquated medium.

Young's initial appreciation of art and artists came to him not as a practitioner, but as a student of art history at the University of British Columbia, (B.A. 1962, with Honours), under the influence of Ian McNairn and Bert Binning, one of the first art *provocateurs* in the Vancouver area. He learned his history well, working from secondary material, reproductions, and slides, but recalls being "suspicious" of abstract art, finding much of it to be "irrelevant." The talismanic quality of recognizable figures and objects on a ground, probably induced by his affection for pictures and the preponderance and veracity of objectivity in a majority of his art-historical models, more completely held his attention.

By the year of his graduation from university, he had also developed something of a romantic attitude about the artist's "glamorous" life and career through glimpses, locally, of figures such as Jack Shadbolt, Don Jarvis, Joe Plaskett, and Gordon Smith, and, nationally, of the achievement of Alex Colville the ranking Magic Realist and resolute conservative. Young opted to become an artist rather than an interpreter of artists, and went abroad to enroll in the City and Guilds of London School of Art. There, he decided the painting and drawing instruction was rather formless and



lacked direction, but responded to printmaking: etching, aquatint, and engraving, perhaps specifically because images could be achieved through a series of planned and discrete procedures which appealed to his sense of clarity and rectitude.

Young studied with Henry Wilkinson, the school's printmaker, who set him to tasks such as tracing the fifteenth-century engravings of Mantegna through impossibly fragile tissues, and then needling the lines onto plates — something he doggedly achieved where others failed. He eventually turned to his own stylized landscapes, inspired by Albrecht Dürer and Samuel Palmer and his recollection of storybook illustrations, producing scenes of pantheistic fecundity and "sublimated eroticism."

At least his prior education and common sense steered him away from "banal realism" as he began to formulate and incorporate ideas for bringing figurative content into his prints. From the increasingly discussed concept of the archetypal image, set forth by Carl Jung and others, Young began searching for appropriately strong devices to give substance to his work. Though he was neither interested in direct symbolism nor (what was to become) the Pop Art exploitation of 'camp' nostalgia and visual ironies, he independently tapped the same rich resource: photographs and photo reproductions, isolating and utilizing what to him were the most "resonant" images.

Returning to Vancouver in 1964, he sought further training in graphics at the School of Art on Dunsmuir Street, at a time when photo-generated imagery was in popular use, confirming his belief in this potential. It was only now that he became fully aware of other artists, such as Richard Hamilton and R.B. Kitaj, who were combining photo-based images in collaged formats on canvas. He had been introduced to "some painting" in oil and acrylic by 1966, when he graduated from the V.S.A., but was not inclined toward the painterly expression or post-painterly abstraction which had attracted several of the city's emerging artists.

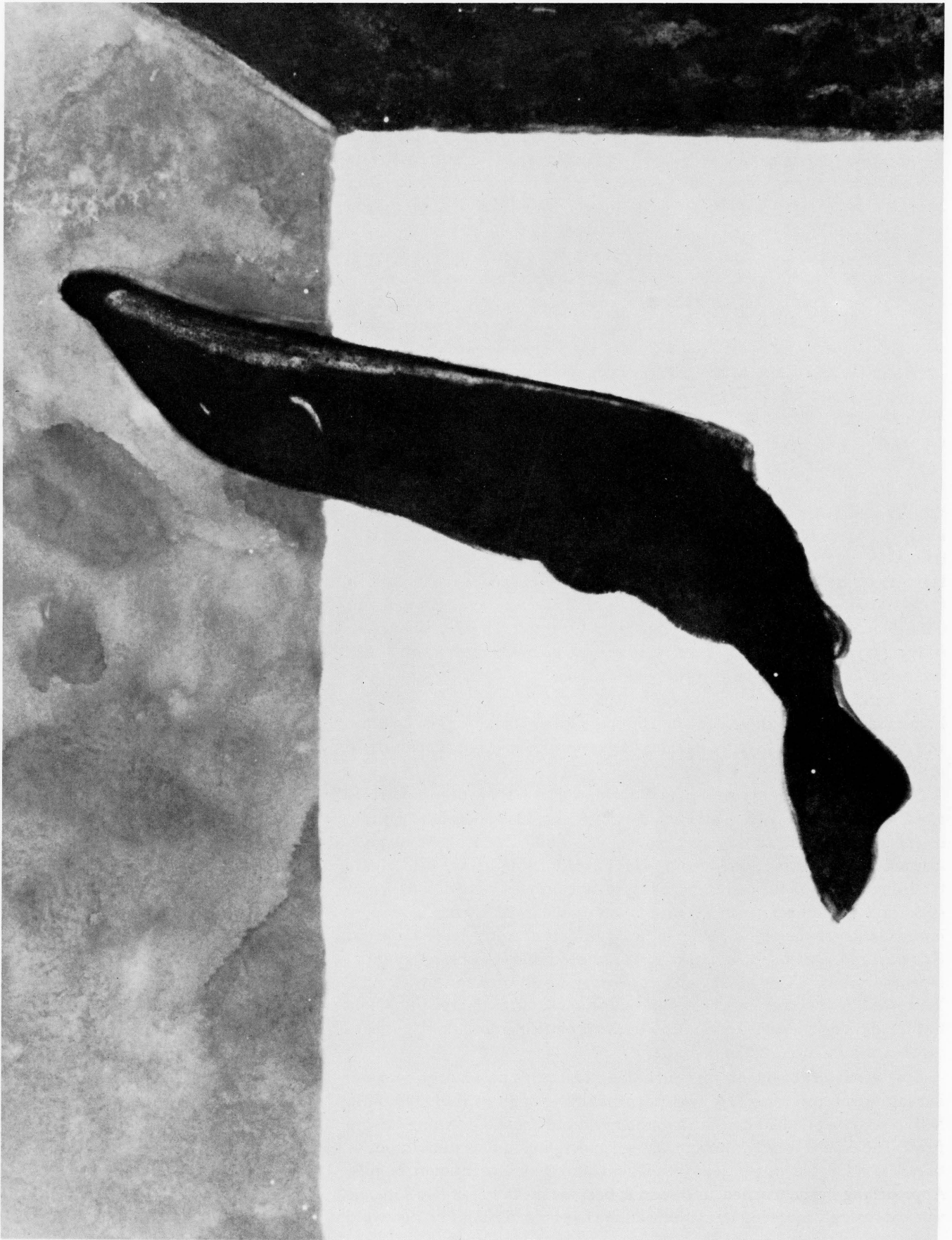
Back in London the same year (he was to stay there for the next ten), he began the shift from printmaking to painting. He says that, by 1968, painting was his primary mode, although he has continued to occasionally make prints.

He sees himself in this early period of painting as having been singularly restrictive in his approach. Never actually freeing up his application of paint, or mixing it on the canvas and moving it around, he temperamentally insisted on employing local colour and, in effect, sought parallels in late Gothic and early Renaissance painting — not only in colour, but also in space and the flattening out of forms. It was easy to see how much stronger images became when rendered graphically, an observation made earlier by Gauguin and Toulouse-Lautrec, who had learned this valuable lesson from Japanese prints. Using photo images already neatly ironed out for him, Young could experiment with a variety of linear, colour, and tonal situations. But the difficulty would remain: the choice of particular and potent images capable of fully carrying the painting.

The search for cogent imagery ran in the midst of his personal growth and increasing sophistication. He was now mature enough to ruefully admit, half in jest, that he had become a painter without actually learning how to paint. The Sixties were for Robert Young as revealing and as tumultuous as they were for the majority of intelligent and sensitive human beings. Approaching thirty, married, and soon to become the father of two sons, he was increasingly impelled to examine all the facets of his identity, his world

*Alien*, 1972  
watercolour, 44 x 34 cm









*Soft Little Jumper, 1977*  
oil on linen, 182.9 x 141 cm

view, his nationality, his relative position and attitude in the world of visual arts from the vantage point of London. The images that exemplified his own specifically male, Anglo-Canadian, westcoast, working class, protestant-work-ethic beginnings had to be sorted out and were frequently reflected in his paintings. The period softened rigid points of view for many, and Young was one of them. He began to introduce humour and archness into compositions where there had been only seriousness, uneasy ambiguity, and impeccable finish, as befitting the strong implication of historicism in his approach.

Young maintained his links with Canada throughout this decade abroad, finding devoted advocates in Tony Emery and Doris Shadbolt at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Between 1967 and 1971 he supported his family by teaching part-time at the William Penn School and the Dulwich Institute, and through slowly increasing sales and commissions; he returned to teach a session at the Banff School of Fine Arts in 1973. By 1974 there was a sufficient body of Young's prints and paintings to form a retrospective show at the Vancouver Art Gallery. He was thirty-six years old. Two years later, on the strength of bolstered support in Canada and because of dimming economic prospects in Britain, the Youngs returned to Vancouver.

It is the interim between then and now which provides our present exhibition of Young's paintings, revealing a substantially more advanced development of problems and solutions. If the Sixties was indeed the period of introspection, revision and relaxation from constriction, the intervening years, for him, have seen the actualization of newly-surfaced convictions.

Young is disarmingly frank about his inflexibility and slowness to internalize ideas and forms long since commonly (and, often, uncritically) accepted. His rational understanding of the Dionysian/Apollonian tug-of-war in his psyche did not particularly affect his scrupulous approach to painting, although his attention to other artforms has increased his respect for those working outside his area. He has been profoundly affected by the growth and development of his own children, recognizing in them the probable archetypal indicators and values he has sought and utilized by way of explaining the world. It is actually through his sons that he has forced himself to learn to *play*, after years of strict attention to work and survival. He took up skiing after having given it up for twenty years and has addressed himself to a determined, if amateur, proficiency in jazz saxophone by way of encouragement to his sons as they began music lessons.

Young shares with other realist painters the penchant for autobiography, and, as his career has advanced, the openness of abstract painters to discussing their cognitive and creative struggle on the canvas. Observed in chronological order, Young's work presents a clear case for itself, so let us begin at the beginning.

Of the more than thirty drawings and paintings brought together for this exhibition, Young's emblematic, leaping salmon in *Alien* (1972) is the earliest watercolour and typical of his tenacious grasp of talismanic images. Taken from a Vancouver *Sun* photo which he took to England and "carried around for years," the silhouette had become a metaphor for power which he has used on several occasions. He comments on the irony of his original notion that as an artist he could be in touch with and chronicle the seasons — a free spirit on the face of the earth — yet never did this. The salmon, a wild, superbly-evolved time-space-and-navigational machine, finds itself in his picture not in the alien environment of *air*, but in that of a formally-designed, painterly organization of orange-red and black: something in the way Young

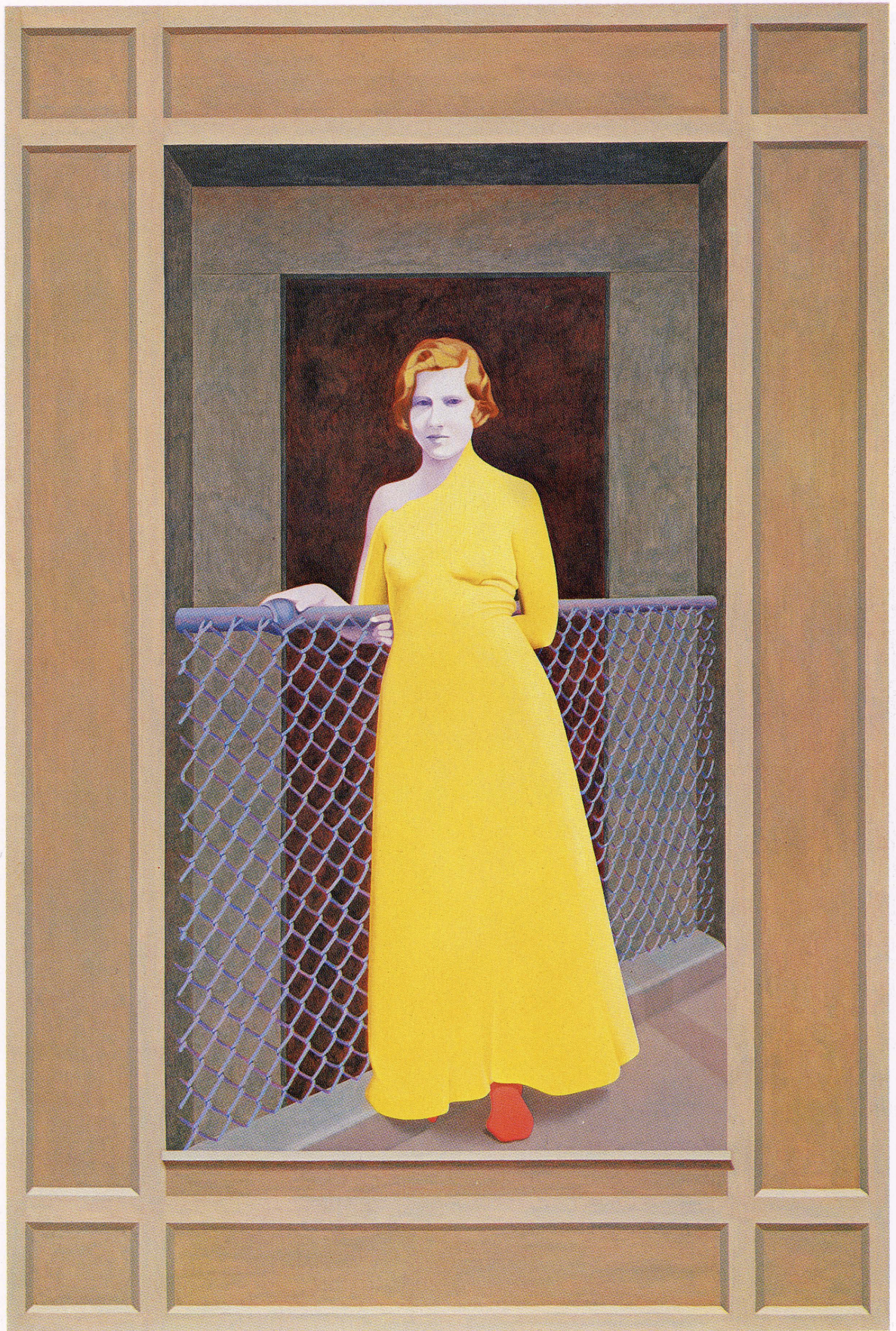




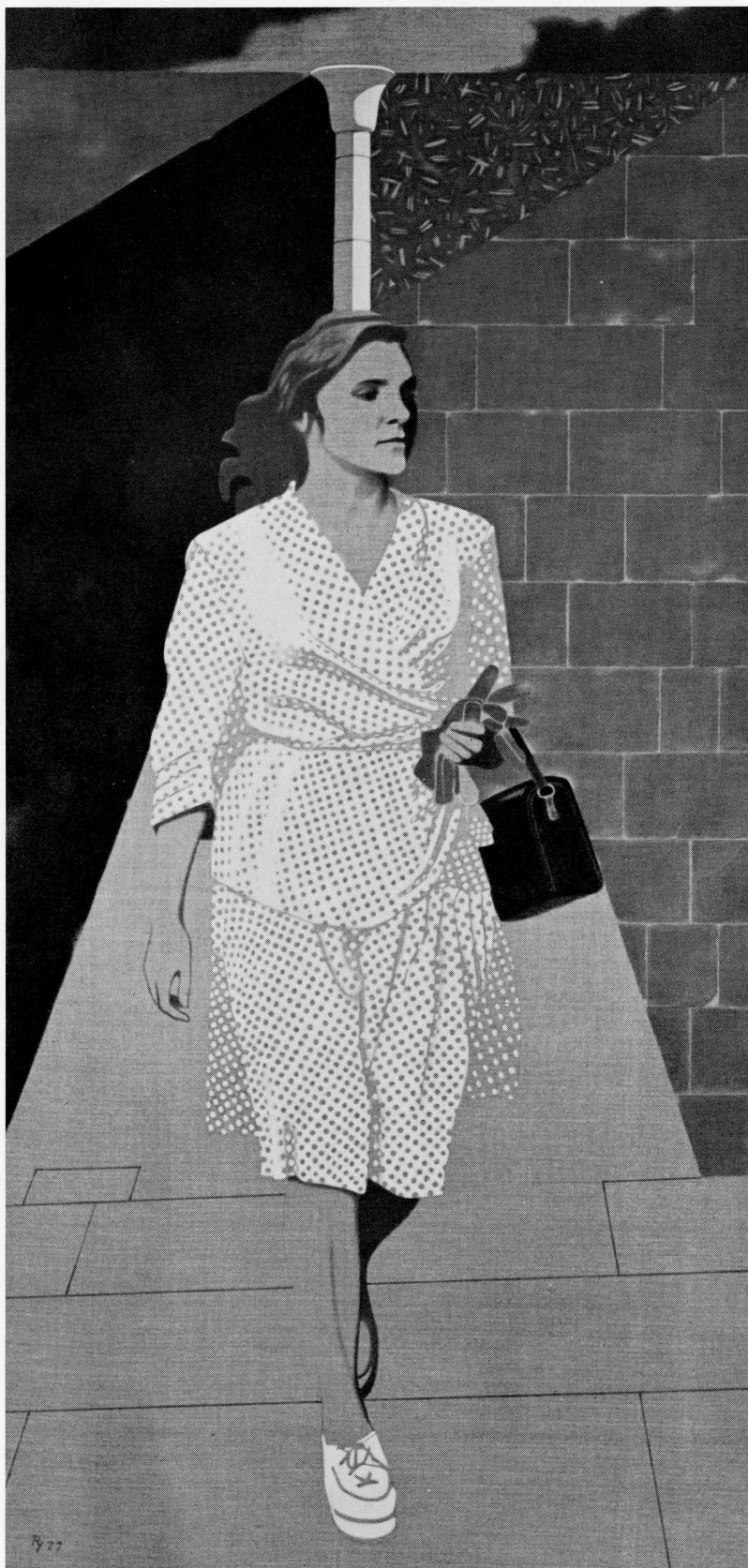
*From the Terrace*, 1974, acrylic on canvas, 152.4 x 152.4 cm

Opposite:  
*Allegorical Figure*, 1975  
oil and acrylic on  
canvas, 190.5 x 127 cm  
Collection: The Montreal  
Museum of Fine Arts purchase  
Horsley and Annie Townsend bequest









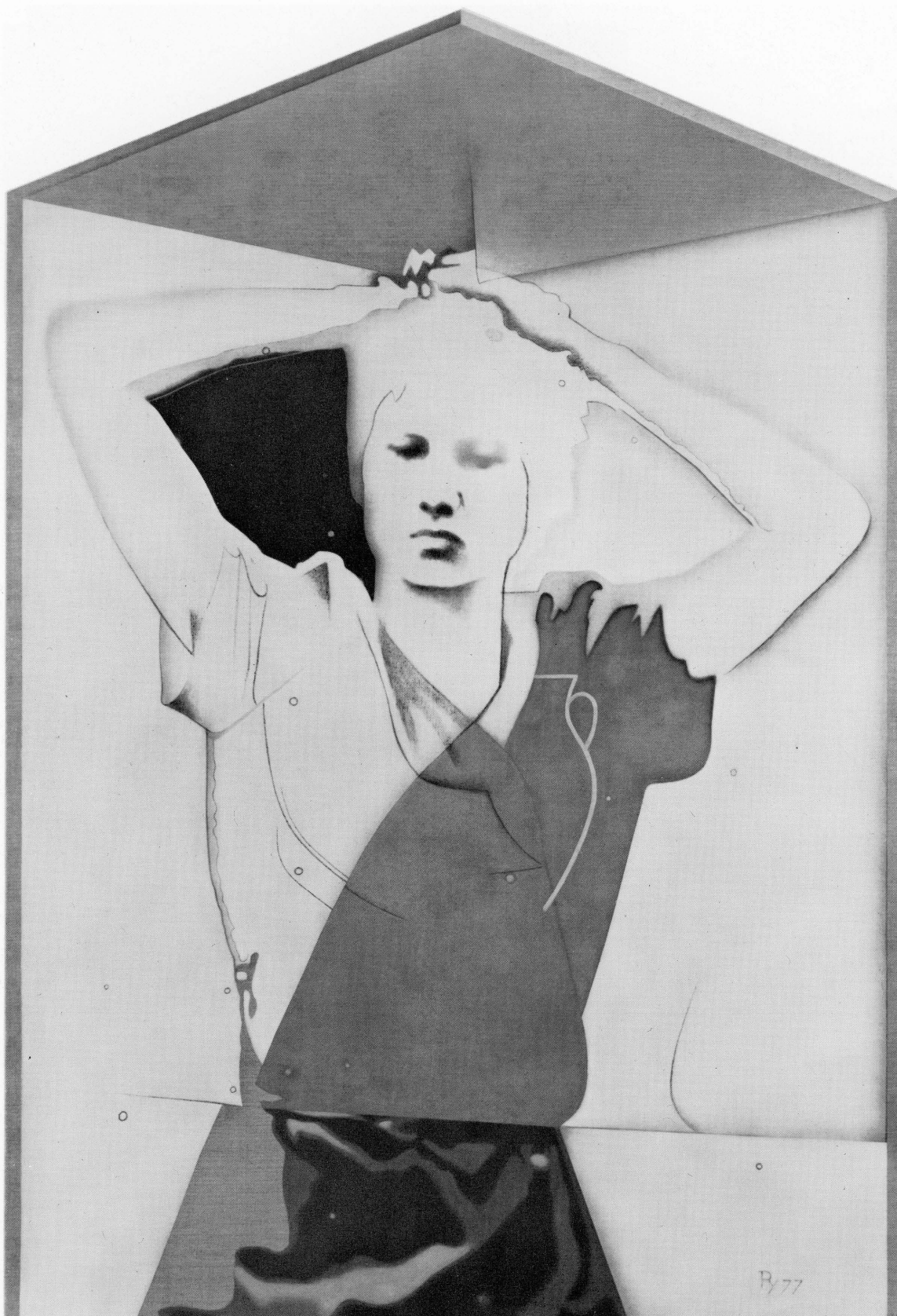
*An Odette*, 1977  
oil on linen, 182.9 x 88.3 cm



*Titled*, 1977  
oil on linen, 180.3 x 73.7 cm  
Collection: Canada Council Art Bank  
Photo: Y. Boulerice







*Amphora*, 1977, oil on linen, 182.9 x 124.5 cm





*The Explorer (Stylized)*, 1978, oil on linen, 152.4 x 114.3 cm



found himself in the confines of a studio, removed from the natural world and what seemed to be mainstream formalist sensibilities.

*No Bath Mat*, (1973) a watercolour, finds neither its source in photography nor its accoutrement in art-historical or stylistically-referential settings. It is a rendering of a directly-perceived puddle of water on a tiled bathroom floor, but it is also, incidentally, discovered in a flat plane, the water acting as a sort of emulsion, and demonstrates Young's persistence in *seeing flat*, rather than volumetric, conditions. Young may have thought this uncharacteristic painting a trifling exercise at the time, but it was a presage of other unlikely source material at his immediate disposal.

Another painting of the same year, *Diablero*, (the title is from Castaneda's Mexican-Indian word for *shaman*,) is based on a random snapshot of the father of an English friend in which Young has seen or assumed metaphysical properties. The subject, enveloped in the folds and drapery of a generously-cut suit, seems to be disappearing in the shadows and contrasts of the material, just as Castaneda's *Diablero* could transform himself at will. Magic and art both being about the relative appearance of things, Young melds the two notions.

In 1974, he painted a pair of dogs with a backdrop of sea, and titled the work *From the Terrace*. One of several paintings with this subject, its implications are other than purely scenic. His concern, again alluding to Castaneda and animal nature, is with the para-psychological aspects of dog-ness: their power, authority, and "attentiveness to business." Young admits to not even liking dogs very much, but at the same time he is impressed with their instinctive aggressiveness.

*Allegorical Figure* (1975), a large, ambitious acrylic-and-oil painting, returns to the subject of women. Quoted in an *artscanada* interview with Tony Emery, Young says:

(The painting) is based on a snapshot from my mother's album. I was moving from acrylic to oil at this time and was very interested in a traditional surface, in glazes and subtle, translucent effects of colour. The inspiration for the architectural niche as a setting for the woman was Giotto's representations of the Virtues and Vices in the Arena Chapel, Padua. As with many of Giotto's formal inventions, the concentration of attention on psychological tension is marvelous. The colour quality of *Allegorical Figure* reminds me of my experiences washing new cars in Vancouver in 1958. The woman is not easy in her situation because the wire fence is not in perspective with the alcove. . . the protective situation that she has found for herself is subtly trying to eject her; she no longer leans easily on the fence but grips it with determination. I suspect that the dress and the alcove both say something about the woman's femaleness; but I don't know what.<sup>1</sup>

Women in their classical and enshrined modes, in social and art history have fascinated Young. He has approached and dealt with the subject on a number of occasions. Unlike Colville, who seems to want to get down to woman's ultimate mammalian corporeality, or Michael Snow, who once saw the "Walking Woman" as a piece of instinctive male pattern recognition, Young's romantic residue pursues the more ineffable combination of spirituality and beauty, often screening an eroticism as implicit as experienced in the novels of Jane Austin.

*Korai II* (1976) again depicts Young's mother (left) and a companion, assuming the frontal pose of Archaic Greek *korai* (girls), even, it would seem, down to the characteristic, enigmatic "Archaic smile." Young has incised stylized folds in their skirts, and, in the manner of the pre-Classical sculpture of draped females, reveals nothing of their lower forms. The unflattering facial shadows borne out in the amateur photograph he has

*The Persistence of Style*, 1979  
oil on linen, 147 x 92.5 cm









*well made, badly made, not made by Young, Vancouver, 1978.*

*The Traveller Hasteth in the Evening*  
1978, oil on linen, 122 x 91 cm.

worked from are faithfully included, in sharp contrast to the idealization of the pose, the luminous skirts and the transformation of Canadian tree trunk into Hellenic column, suggesting the conflict between *realism* and *reality*.

The same year Young produced a strange drawing, *Untitled*, in graphite, of a walking nude female figure, reminiscent of the erotic fantasies of Paul Delvaux, the Belgian Surrealist. Young's indebtedness to other fantasists such as Chirico, Magritte and Ernst is readily acknowledged, but (returning to the Belgian painter, Delvaux,) it seems more than coincidental that Young in a subsequent 1977 work, *An Odette* utilizes the same pose and spatial format, working from a 1940's street-photographer's shot of his wife, Maxine Young's Belgian cousin. In the painting, Young has freely re-designed the space and has his appropriated, utterly self-assured and modern woman walking away from a pastiche of Kitajesque and ancient backdrops: an Egyptian column and a green, patterned wall out of Piero della Francesca.

Glenn Allison, UBC Fine Arts Gallery Director, has written that "*An Odette* is a lasting moment of sober vision. Young has used power of ideal time with power over the moment on which the creative act insists to weave a mythic substance."<sup>2</sup>

By contrast, *Amphora* (1977) again examines and comments on the humanity of another, unfree woman, as her image (at that moment) was being bandied by the international picture press. The woman was Ulrike Meinhof, co-founder of a German terrorist group, in confinement prior to her subsequent suicide. Young became absorbed by a *Sunday Times* colour photo which had been obviously and unfathomably altered for publication. Meinhof, seen taking exercise in handcuffs in a prison yard, had been crudely cut out of the original print and moved a few feet along in front of a wall, apparently to improve the composition. Young remembers being perturbed about this seeming violation of Meinhof as a human being, regardless of her crimes. As with Richard Hamilton's fascination with the morphogenesis of a media image (the Kent State murders), and out of increased deference to Kitaj's heightened politicization of painting, Young attempts to return to Meinhof a measure of her human dignity and female quality in this picture about a picture. Reference to Picasso's amphora-bearing women supplies the title to this work and Young has traced the classic form on her breast.

*Soft Little Jumper* (1977) is taken from an illustration in a book of knitting patterns and is Young's comment on another facet of behaviour known as "charm." Either because of the dated quality of the illustration or the current connotation of the word, the woman merely appears to be silly or insincere in a contemporary political context.

Young's ability to manipulate formal elements had so increased by the time he painted *Titled* (1977) that this work marks the last of the photographically-rendered images he was to use. One can hardly think of a photograph more iconic than one of the Queen Mother, but he psychologically defuses the image by relegating it to the distant reaches of the history of painting and relieving it of the illusion of living embodiment by casting the face and arms in the Byzantine-green values of Cimabue underpainting. The humour, greater in the title than in the image, becomes secondary to the realization that the over-all composition is carrying the recognizable component, and not the other way around.

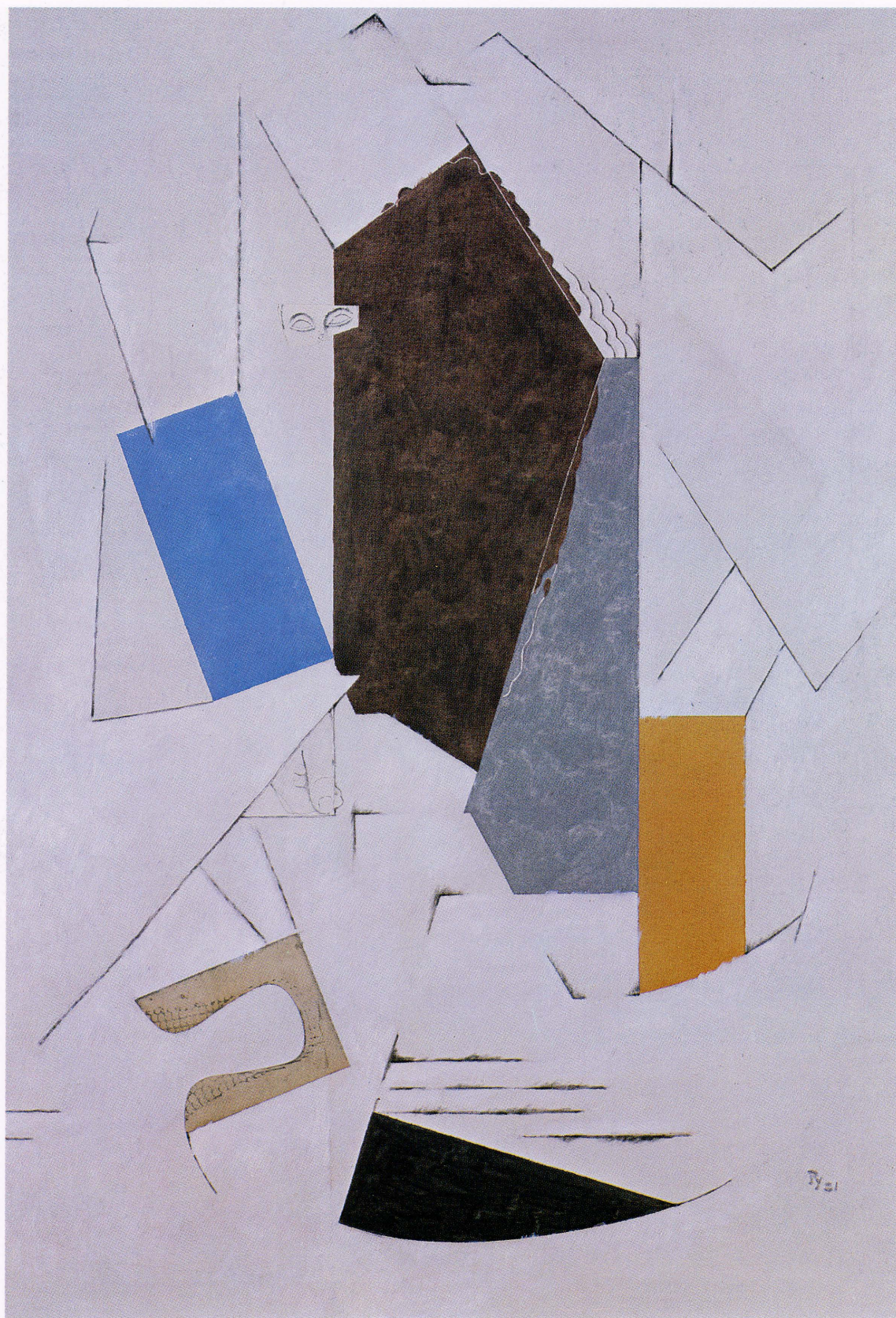
The subject of men and masculinity, and the mythos surrounding it, became for the next period of Young's career a general concern. Just as he had moved from random to specific metaphors for women, the same occurred with his own gender, ultimately becoming personally introspective.





*The Juggler*, 1980, oil on linen, 213.4 x 223.5 cm





*A Persona for the Prince*, 1981, oil, tempera, papiers collés on linen, 111.8 x 76.2 cm



*Study for the Explorer* (1978) and *The Explorer (Stylized)* (1978) launched Young into a complex and ambitious statement concerning "myth and style"<sup>3</sup> which attempted to incorporate his thoughts in a single, cohesive work. Operating in a proto-Cubist mode even to leaving bare or thinly indicating painted areas on the raw linen, Young chose for his Explorer the guise of Harlequin-Pierrot, classic symbols for man in commedia dell'arte and French pantomime — and already appropriated by Picasso for his *Three Musicians*. The central male character was fashioned around the delineation of a photograph of R.M. Patterson, author of *Dangerous River*, an account of Deadmen's (or Headless) Valley and the South Nahanni River in the Northwest Territories. Patterson, as Young remembered him from a teenage reading of his book, was not a pulp-novel *macho* wilderness-tamer, but a cultivated and sensitive English adventurer who carried his civilization around with him; a far more multi-dimensional man than the stereotype; the sort of man who could gut out and butcher an elk before breakfast, carry on his journal-documentation of North America's last frontier, and not bed down at night without having washed and put away the teacups: a combination of Lord Greystoke (Tarzan) and Lord Peter Whimsy.

As central figure, the Explorer is decked out not only as gun-toting Western Man (his elegant blue hand straight out of mediaeval book illustration), but is also man the buffoon, the fool, (the "walking shadow, a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage / And then is heard no more"<sup>4</sup>). He is supplanted by "Masolino's girls from *The Feast of Herod* in which the Baptist's severed head is visible, and the rather more tenuous link of R.M. Patterson. . . and the Pierre Berton legend of Headless Valley."<sup>5</sup> In this work, Young again indicates one of his favourite devices: the parallel horizontal dashes indicating a piece of sky out of the illustrations for Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*. Young dares to combine all these devices with an increased, but as yet, un-named Post-Modernist insouciance.

After this highly successful workout, Young moves on to two versions of *The Traveller Hasteth in the Evening* (1978), a mixed media drawing on canvas, and a painting based on a 6.3 x 9 cm engraving by William Blake. These works also invoke a childhood vision of the romantic figure as "walking traveller. . . the wind and the sun competing to see who could make him take his coat off."<sup>6</sup> Of the drawing (in this exhibition), Young states:

The second version, done with gouache, chalk, and a bit of oil, was very satisfying because I had long wanted to do a painting on canvas that was just line. The woodgrain and violin are necessary for the composition; the writing at the bottom refers to Blake's habit of inscribing his prints, and also to Robert Filliou's dictum: "Well made, badly made, not made."<sup>7</sup>

Young continues his preoccupation with men and myth in the 1979 oil painting, *The Persistence of Style*. He has offered the following comment on it:

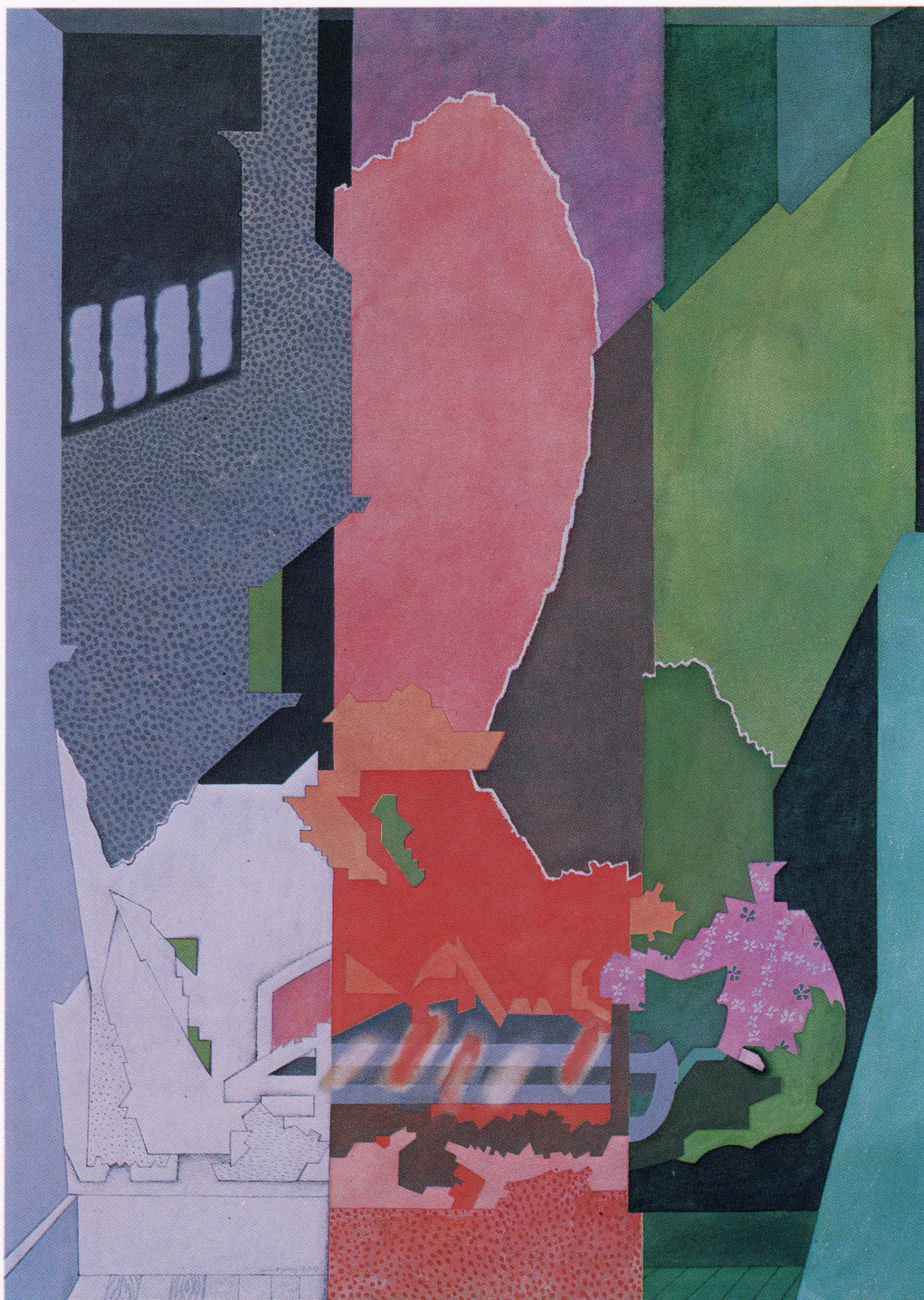
I'm not very interested in sport. What was interesting about the photo was, in a way, the image as object. He was depicted as a model for men, a twentieth-century "great hunter" or "mighty warrior." I dislike our current stereotypes, but in this postcard Carpentier transcended the whole thing somehow. His face seemed unbelievably fine, unmarked and sensitive for a boxer — even for an actor by today's standards. His clothes look homey and functional — they are not about big business. He looked altruistic. I liked his emblematic quality — quite talismanic already. I tilted him and put him on a slippery slope. (I cut the painting in half so I could take it on the 'plane.) He is doggedly facing complicated problems, his face shows perplexity, but also determination. The salmon is also a blind, inarticulate but determined prober in an uncomfortable environment. The Duchamp reference in the shadow, the dressmaker's

*A Taste for Theatrical Miming*, 1981  
oil on linen, 111.8 x 76.2 cm



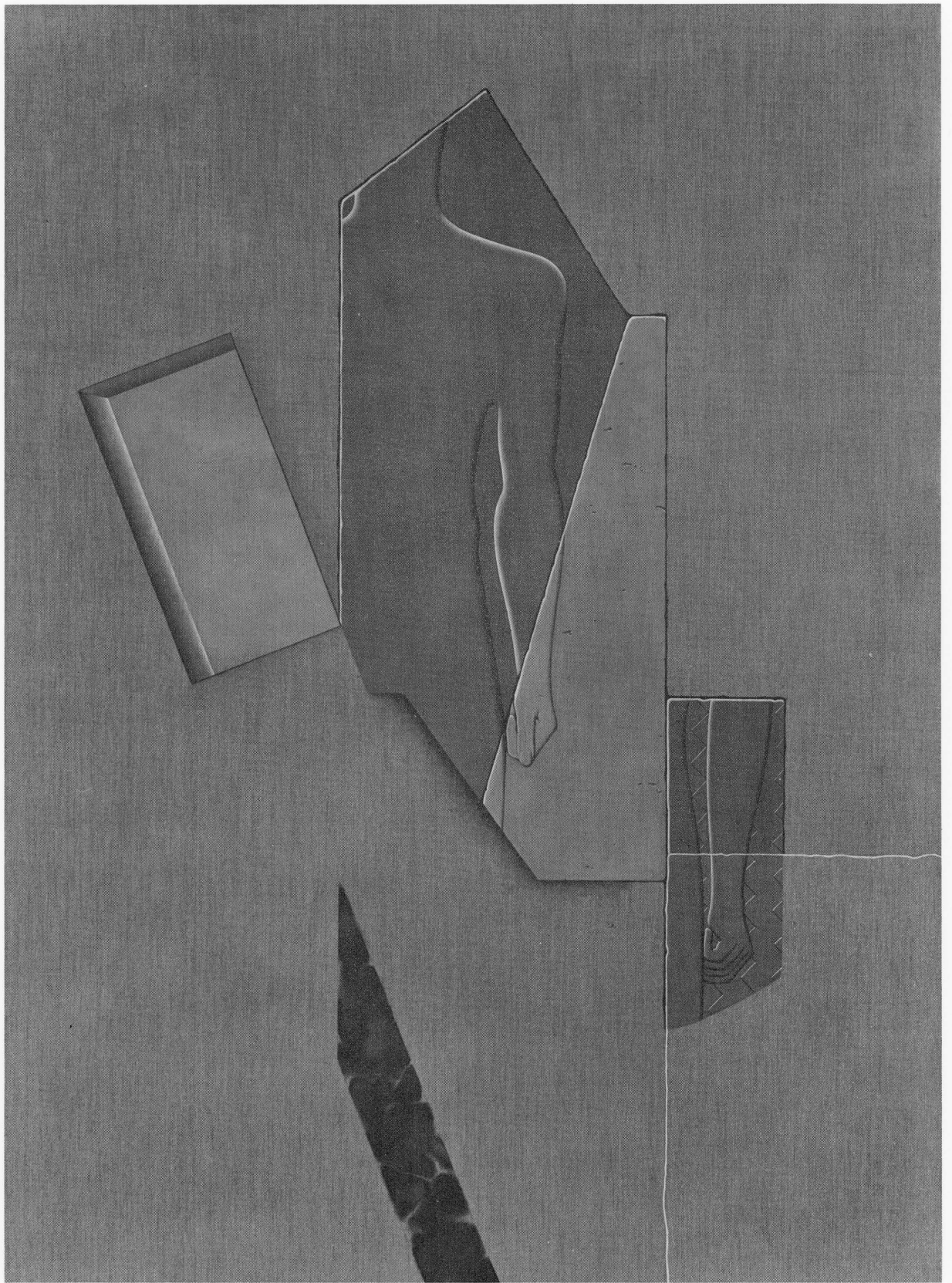






*Infrared Scan of the Prince's Chamber*, 1981, watercolour, 104.1 x 73.7 cm





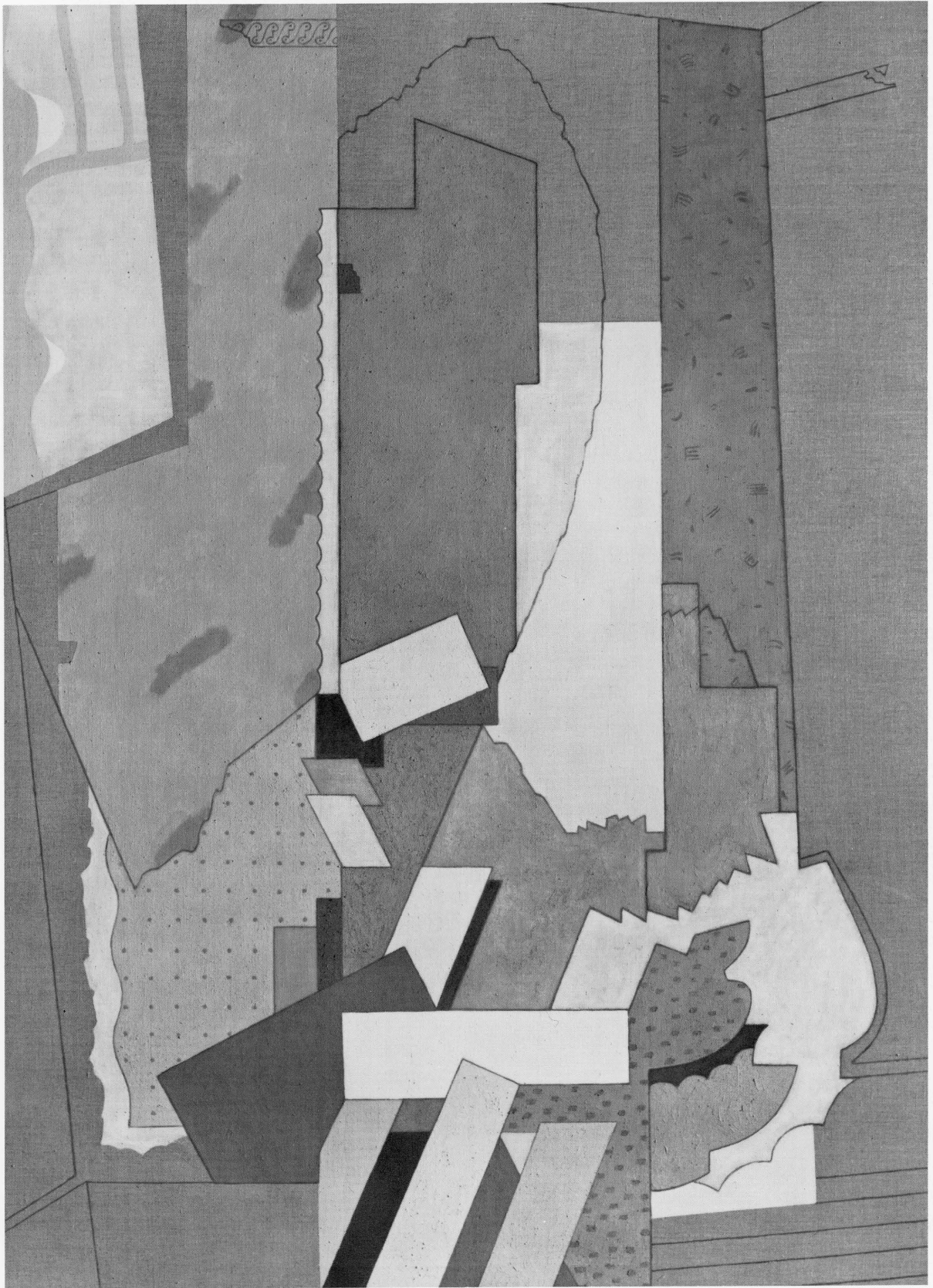
*A Certain Thickness Still Called For*, 1981, oil and conté on linen, 152.4 x 111.8 cm





*Study for The Princeleeps Badly*, 1981, oil on linen, 111.76 x 76.2 cm





*Study for The Princeleeps Badly*, 1982, oil on linen, 152.4 x 111.8 cm







*Untitled*, 1982  
oil on linen, 152.4 x 162.6 cm

pattern and the orange shape must all have something to do with the inappropriateness of his role, confusion, flux; there are references to female genitalia in the glove. I'm not interested in nostalgia in painting. I'm interested in what men and women look like, how they present themselves, what they demonstrate by their appearance, what they try to demonstrate, what they think they ought to demonstrate.<sup>8</sup>

*Untitled #3* (1979) returns to Young's leaping salmon motif, and the "blind, inarticulate. . . prober" Young cites above may be a metaphor for himself, in this case, groping in the uncomfortable environment of near-Minimalist understatement.

Two unrelated events in May 1979 helped to instigate and furnished elements for Young's next major work. In response to an exhibition of his work at the Redfern Gallery, London, earlier in the year, writer Fenella Crichton, in a cover story for *art and artists*, undertook the first penetrating criticism of his maturing work. Deciding from his array of styles, as well as his arcane and hermetic references, that Young had not, as yet, evolved a personal style, an "autograph manner" of representing his subject matter, as had "Colville, Katz and Pearlstein," she concluded:

Young's paintings are artificial constructions by intent. Each picture aspires towards an original aesthetic unity, but eclecticism is a slippery path to tread. Although he balances his elements with care, it is only rarely that he transcends the role of *juggler* [italics mine]. The function of his work seems to be at least partially talismanic, and ultimately their (*sic*) effectiveness in this respect must rest with the individual spectator. His classical aspirations are evidently backed by a calm intelligence and a sound sense of visual order, but at this stage of his career it remains to be seen whether or not his achievements will equal his ambition.<sup>9</sup>

Young could hardly deny that the Crichton article was important to his career and, particularly, his fortunes in Britain — much as he might disagree with her conclusions. The charge of eclecticism had been laid before, and, however negative that connotation, the thing that nettled Young most was the thought that maybe he *had* become a painter without having learned to paint — as had Colville, Katz, and Pearlstein. The title of the article, "A Juggler of Styles," haunted him.

On the heels of this mixed review, Young took part in a performance piece at Pumps, an alternative gallery in Vancouver's Gastown district. With Hank Bull (playing piano) and Eric Metcalf (playing vibraphone), he played saxophone in a parody of Picasso's *Three Musicians*. Young, costumed as Pierrot, attempted a sweet rendering of "Intermezzo," while Metcalf (as Harlequin) and Bull (as "a monk") jammed in with a frenetic Thelonius Monk tune. The symbolism, as far as Young is concerned, is not lost in its parallel to his Dionysian-Apollonian struggle. A few days later Young was in possession of a photo portrait of himself, unrecognizable behind sunglasses, as Pierrot-with-saxophone: the multi-dimensional post-modern man, the buffeted performer, the juggler of styles.

For the remainder of 1979 and well into 1980, Young completed a number of studies and began to incorporate them into what stands as a towering work in his career to date. Titled *The Juggler*, it was to be a holistic *tour de force*, underscoring his fourteen years as a painter. With characteristic (which is to say *intense*) concentration, Young began to weave the sum and substance of his being, the intricacies of his family ties, the staggering array of styles and historicism of his experience, a collage of his total *oeuvre* into a single, seven-foot-square oil painting. Worthy of a separate, exhaustive study, *The Juggler*, in which Young had "pulled out all the stops," was not so much a herculean response to the Crichton article as it was a rigorous self-examination. Obviously not willing to recant his position, he also realized that he *had*





*Untitled*, 1983, oil on linen, 111.8 x 76.2 cm





*Untitled*, 1983, oil on linen, 101.6 x 81.3 cm



found his style, and that style — eclectic or not — was the legitimate post-modernist position. Rather than deny his total experience, he luxuriated in it.

The technical undertaking of locking in so many disparate images in a single work is enormous, but, armed with the stylistic devices of half-a-dozen schools of painting, Young pulled it off. *The Juggler* is, after all, about the tenuous quality of appearances, and is heightened by forcing recognition that the whole illusion is "projected" on a transparent scrim, where "space" is alternately read as two- or three-dimensional. Young-the-juggler (from the Pumps' photo), the central figure in this autobiographical testament, is a Pied Piper, a conjurer, a trickster capable of summoning fairies and furies, Arcadian landscapes, the welter and variegation of art history — all without concern for flip accusations of "eclecticism." In any event, by 1980, the charge had become meaningless.

*The Juggler* drained and exhausted Young. When there was no immediate or considered critical response to the painting (although it was sold in short order), he turned his attention to other things and, for the first time in many years, abandoned regular work in the studio. If *Titled* was the end of photo-rendered work, *The Juggler* might be the end of photo-derived painting. Between the concerns of renovating an older house and starting to teach in the Fine Arts Department at the University of British Columbia, his energies were directed elsewhere.

Still immersed in house repairs the following year, Young's attention became fixed on an "accidental collage" which had developed on a bedroom wall as layers of old wallpaper, randomly stripped from the plaster, revealed a configuration which, to him, was fraught with possibilities.

There was something of the cubist phenomenon in this abrasion of coloured papers, torn edges, and grey plaster, which set his drawing and painting in motion once again. Though the paper and plaster configuration on his wall was, for all purposes, flat, in this case Young became intent on coaxing it into illusory space in a series of paintings — twenty of them — which fell under the general title *The Princeleaps Badly*. Historic cubism never aimed at complete abstraction but, rather, was intended as a new kind of realism. Young had found a means of effectively combining these two polarities, but from a reverse direction: the realistic depiction of an inherently abstract configuration.

As his fluency in the grammar and syntax of painting has become progressively more developed, the "tyranny of the object or image"<sup>10</sup> has relaxed its grip. Young took the "Princeleaps" motif through a series of exercises in colour, planar conjunction, spatial ambiguity, *trompe l'oeil* and stylistic repertory which would have been impossible while he was tied to the photographic image. Admittedly, recognizable images gave a certain accessibility which made amends for all the other privileged information in his earlier paintings, but now Young feels that a little more "dedicated attention is really necessary, if people can't get past the content."<sup>11</sup>

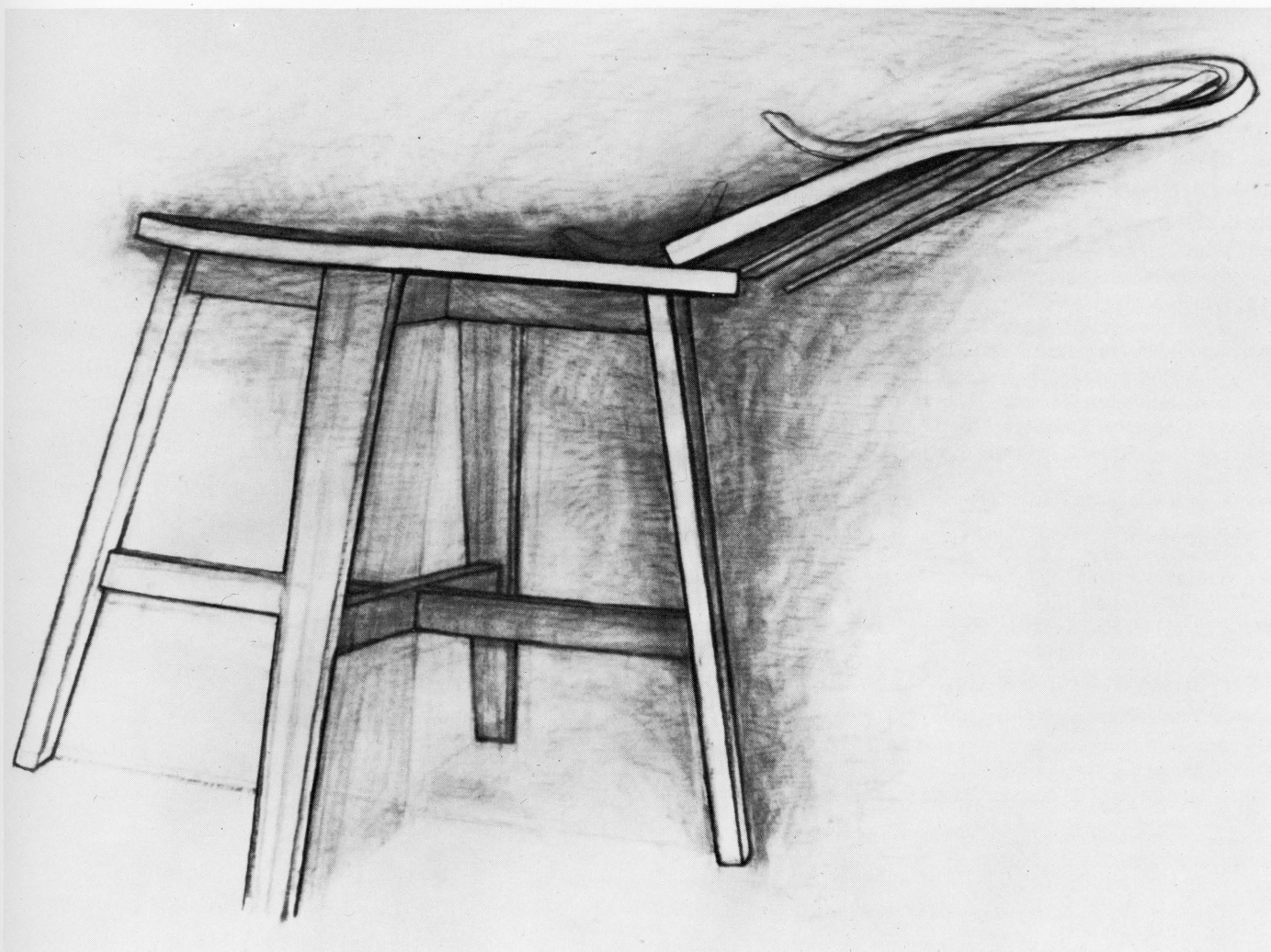
Young has recently begun another series derived from a broken kitchen chair, testing his acquired skills against a three-dimensional object occupying real space. Since he is now reasonably adept at "seeing" the 2-D/3-D illusion, flipping from literal to hypothetical views at will, the chair presents no more obstacles than the wall.

Robert Young's focus on new possibilities for painting is now, it seems, everywhere. Having forced himself through a prolonged rehearsal of the history of art and painting, he has emerged from mere facility to genuine

*Untitled*, 1984

charcoal on paper, 66 x 83.8 cm





authority. He has replaced wanting to make "paintings that look authentic" with authenticity itself. There may be easier ways to achieve the kind of education Young has afforded himself, but it is doubtful. Becoming an artist takes either no time (as with children) or a long time.

E. Theodore Lindberg  
Director

#### NOTES

1. Anthony Emery, "Myth and Style in the Work of Robert Young," *artscanada*, April/May 1980, pp. 29-32.
2. Glenn Allison, "Robert Young and The Sphinx," *Artswest*, November-December 1977, pp. 17-18.
3. Emery, pp. 29-32.
4. *MacBeth*, V.v.
5. Emery, pp. 29-32.
6. Personal interview with Robert Young, 15 November 1983.
7. Emery, pp. 29-32.
8. *ibid.*
9. Fenella Crichton, "A Juggler of Styles," *art and artists*, May 1979, pp. 4-10.
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11. Personal interview with Robert Young, 29 November 1983.



## BIOGRAPHY

Born, 8 August 1938, Vancouver, B.C.

### Education:

The Vancouver School of Art, 1966, Advanced Diploma in Graphics  
The City and Guilds of London School of Art, 1964, Certificate of Merit  
University of B.C., 1962, B.A. (Hons., Art History)

### Solo Exhibitions:

- 1982 Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto; Mira Godard Gallery, Calgary, Alberta; Redfern Gallery, London, England, (four-page catalogue)
- 1981 Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, (50-page illustrated catalogue); Confederation Art Centre, Charlottetown, (50-page illustrated catalogue)
- 1980 Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, (50-page illustrated catalogue)
- 1979 Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto; Redfern Gallery, London, England, (four-page catalogue & illustr.)
- 1978 Art Gallery of Southern Alberta, Lethbridge
- 1977 Glenbow Alberta Institute, Calgary; Equinox Gallery, Vancouver, (four-page catalogue & illustr.); Marlborough-Godard Gallery, Montreal
- 1976 Marlborough-Godard Gallery, Toronto; Centre Culturel Canadien, Paris, (7-page illustrated catalogue)
- 1975 Redfern Gallery, London, England, (four-page catalogue & illustr.)
- 1974 Vancouver Art Gallery, (illustrated, poster-format catalogue)
- 1973 Redfern Gallery, London, England, (four-page catalogue & illustr.)
- 1971 Canada House, London, England; Redfern Gallery, London, England, (four-page catalogue & illustr.)
- 1970 Jaffa Gallery, Doncaster, England

### Two- or Three-Person Exhibitions:

- 1979 Art Core, Vancouver, (four-page catalogue & illustr.); Pumps, Vancouver
- 1971 Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool, England
- 1970 Kingston Art Gallery, Kingston-Upon-Thames, England; Morley College Gallery, London, England

### Group Exhibitions:

- 1982 *Printmakers '82*, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, (catalogue, illustr. p. 11); *Canadian Art in Britain*, Canada House, London, Eng. (catalogue, illustr. p. 47)
- 1981 *Realism: Structure and Illusion*, Macdonald Stewart Art Centre, Guelph, (catalogue, p. 35); *B.C. Currents*, Sarnia, (catalogue, p. 19); *Graphex 8*, Art Gallery of Brant, Brantford, (catalogue, p. 55); Malaspina Printmakers Annual Members Show, Vancouver; *On Canvas*, Robson Square Media Centre, Vancouver
- 1980 Malaspina Printmakers Annual Members Show, Vancouver
- 1979 Malaspina Printmakers Annual Members Show, Vancouver
- 1978 Malaspina Printmakers Annual Members Show, Vancouver; *Canadian Video Open*, Calgary, Alberta (catalogue)
- 1977 Malaspina Printmakers Annual Members Show, Vancouver; Summer Exhibition, Redfern Gallery, London, England; *From This Point of View*, Vancouver Art Gallery, (catalogue, p. 41)
- 1976 Malaspina Printmakers Annual Members Show, Vancouver; *Current Pursuits*, Vancouver Art Gallery
- 1975 *Realismus und Realitat*, Darmstadt, Germany, (catalogue, illustr. p. 242); *Current Energies*, Saidye Bronfman Centre, Montreal, (catalogue)
- 1974 Summer Exhibition, Redfern Gallery, London, England; *Bradford Print Biennale*, Bradford, England, (catalogue)
- 1973 *The First British International Drawing Biennale*, Middlesborough, England, (catalogue and illustr., p. 32); Summer Exhibition, Redfern Gallery, London, England
- 1972 *Realism: Emulsion and Omission*, Queen's University, Kingston, (catalogue, and illustr., pp. 34-35); Summer Exhibition, Redfern Gallery, London, England; *Sculpture at Surrey University*, England
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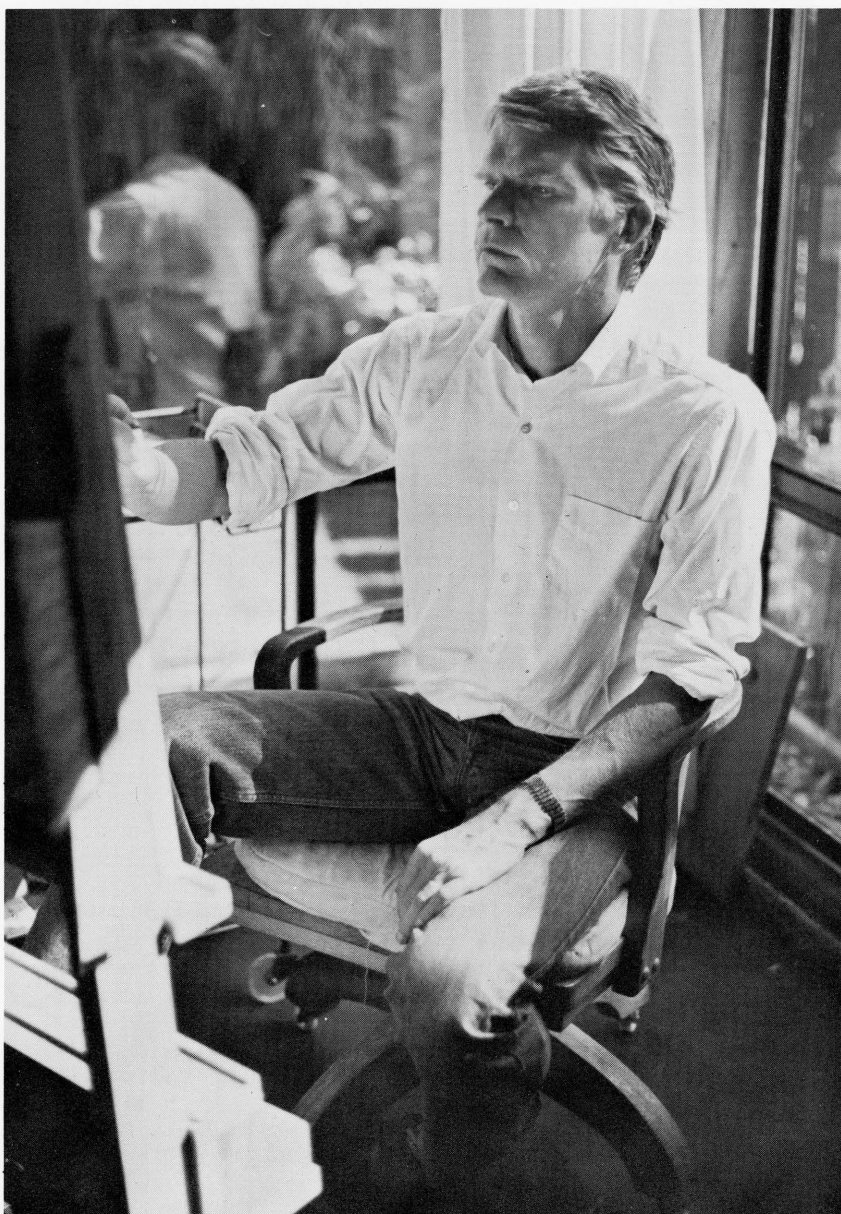
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Bank of Nova Scotia  
 Beaverbrook Art Gallery  
 Bell Canada  
 Burnaby Art Gallery



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Canadian Broadcasting Corporation  
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Confederation Art Centre  
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Elton John Collection  
Esso Resources  
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Glenbow Alberta Institute  
Imperial Oil  
London Borough of Camden  
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Montreal Museum of Fine Arts  
National Gallery of Canada  
Nickle Arts Museum  
Provincial Government of British  
Columbia  
Simon Fraser University  
Toronto-Dominion Bank  
University of Alberta  
University of British Columbia  
University of Calgary  
University of Guelph  
University of Victoria  
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and various private collections



Robert Young, 1983



## CATALOGUE

All dimensions are height x width.

*Alien*, 1972, watercolour, 44 x 34 cm  
Collection: British Columbia Art Collection

*Diablero*, 1973, oil and charcoal on canvas, 192.4 x 139.7 cm  
Purchased with matching funds from the Canada Council Art Bank Special Purchase Assistance Program and the Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton, N.B., Canada  
*No Bath Mat*, 1973, watercolour, 72.7 x 70.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist

*From the Terrace*, 1974, acrylic on canvas, 152.4 x 152.4 cm  
Collection: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Vancouver

*Allegorical Figure*, 1975, oil and acrylic on canvas, 190.5 x 127 cm  
Collection: The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, purchase Horsley and Annie Townsend bequest

*Korai II*, 1976, oil on canvas, 178 x 137.5 cm  
Collection: Canada Council Art Bank

*Untitled*, 1976, graphite on paper, 53.3 x 38.1 cm  
Private Collection

*An Odetta*, 1977, oil on linen, 182.9 x 88.3 cm

Collection: Mr. & Mrs. James Malkin  
*Amphora*, 1977, oil on linen, 182.9 x 124.5 cm

Collection: Canadian Commercial Bank, Edmonton

*Soft Little Jumper*, 1977, oil on linen, 182.9 x 141 cm

Collection: Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver

*Titled*, 1977, oil on linen, 180.3 x 73.7 cm

Collection: Canada Council Art Bank

*Study for The Explorer*, 1978, oil on linen, 45.7 x 45.7 cm

Private collection

*The Explorer (Stylized)*, 1978, oil on linen, 152.4 x 114.3 cm

Collection: Beth Purdie Noble

*The Traveller Hasteth in the Evening*, 1978, oil on linen, 122 x 91 cm

Private collection

*The Persistence of Style*, 1979, oil on linen, 147 x 92.5 cm

Collection: First City Financial Corporation Ltd., Vancouver

*Untitled #3*, 1979, acrylic on linen, 142.2 x 142.8 cm

Collection: University of Alberta Permanent Collection

*The Juggler*, 1980, oil on linen, 213.4 x 223.5 cm

Collection: Esso Resources Canada Limited, Calgary

*Infrared Scan of the Prince's Chamber*, 1981, watercolour, 104.1 x 73.7 cm  
Courtesy of the artist

*Study for The Princeleeps Badly*, 1981, oil on linen, 111.76 x 76.2 cm  
Collection: Art Gallery of Greater Victoria

*A Persona for the Prince*, 1981, oil, tempera, papiers collés on linen, 111.8 x 76.2 cm

Courtesy of the artist

*A Taste for Theatrical Miming*, 1981, oil on linen, 111.8 x 76.2 cm  
Courtesy of the artist

*A Certain Thickness Still Called For*, 1981, oil and conté on linen, 152.4 x 111.8 cm

Courtesy of the artist

*Study for The Princeleeps Badly*, 1982, oil on linen, 152.4 x 111.8 cm  
Courtesy of the artist

*Untitled*, 1982, oil on linen, 152.4 x 162.6 cm

Courtesy of the artist

*The Princeleeps Badly*, 1982, oil on linen, 152.4 x 111.8 cm

Courtesy of the artist

*Untitled*, 1983, oil on linen, 111.8 x 76.2 cm

Courtesy of the artist

*Untitled*, 1983, oil on linen, 101.6 x 81.3 cm

Courtesy of the artist

*Untitled*, 1983, crayon on paper, 83.8 x 66 cm

Courtesy of the artist

*Untitled*, 1983, gouache on paper, 76.2 x 58.4 cm

Courtesy of the artist

*Untitled*, 1983, crayon on paper, 30.5 x 22.9 cm

Courtesy of the artist

*Sheldrake's Chair*, 1984, oil on linen, 152.4 x 111.8 cm

Courtesy of the artist



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