

SUSAN SCOTT



Obsessive love knows no bounds.

SUSAN SCOTT

Works from 1974 to 1983

*An exhibition organized by the
Surrey Art Gallery.
Exhibition tour organized by the
Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.
Funded by the Canada Council,
with a grant from the Samuel and
Saidye Bronfman Family Foundation.*

SURREY ART GALLERY, Surrey, British Columbia
May 11–June 10, 1984

ART GALLERY OF GREATER VICTORIA, Victoria, British
Columbia
June 21–July 27, 1984

SAIDYE BRONFMAN CENTRE, Montreal, Quebec
August 14–September 16, 1984

THE JUSTINA M. BARNICKE GALLERY, University of Toronto,
Toronto, Ontario
October 11–November 8, 1984

AGNES ETHERINGTON ART CENTRE, Queen's University, Kingston,
Ontario
December 15, 1984–January 20, 1985

ISBN 0-920181-08-2

© 1984 Surrey Art Gallery

This exhibition is funded by the Cultural Services Division of the
Surrey Parks and Recreation Commission; the Government of British
Columbia through the B.C. Cultural Fund and the B.C. Lottery
Fund; the Canada Council; and the Samuel and Saidye Bronfman
Family Foundation.

Acknowledgements

This project began as one of those rather common situations in which two curators independently expressed interest in the work of the same artist at the same time. Instead of duplicating effort in organizing two separate shows, or having one curator pursue the entire project, Greg Bellerby, Chief Curator of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, and I decided to join forces to produce an exhibition which is more ambitious than either of us had originally planned. With the assistance of the Canada Council, we have been able to collect works from across this country, and from New York and California; to publish a catalogue; and to circulate the show to Montreal, Toronto and Kingston.

On behalf of our director, Rosa Ho, I thank the Director and staff of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria for their interest and cooperation throughout this project. Greg Bellerby, co-curator of this exhibition, is specially thanked for his contribution and for organizing the tour. We hope that the success of this joint venture will lead to further collaborations between our two galleries.

The organization of this exhibition required the efforts and cooperation of many people. The lenders to the exhibition have been most generous in agreeing to lend works for the extended period required for the tour. Special thanks to Kimberly Davis of the Bernard Jacobson Gallery in Los Angeles for her assistance in arranging loans. Susan Scott has been most helpful in tracing works, editing the catalogue essays, and animating the exhibition through public lectures. The energy and professionalism she displays as a painter and as an educator extends to all her endeavours. On behalf of the director, I thank the Canada Council and the Samuel and Saidye Bronfman Family Foundation for their financial support.

Finally I thank the staff of the Surrey Art Gallery who contributed to the exhibition: Rosa Ho, Director; Ingrid Kolt, Education and Events Co-ordinator; Gordon Rice, Assistant Curator; Allister Brown, Preparator; Helen Hunkin, Secretary; and Barbara Jones, Receptionist.

Jane Young
Curator, Surrey Art Gallery

Except for a brief interlude in 1981 when she painted abstract compositions loosely based on landscape motifs, Susan Scott has always been a figurative painter. This exhibition examines the eleven paintings of the *Description of a Struggle* series which she executed in 1983, nine of which are included here, with studies to represent the remaining two. When viewed in sequence, these works relate a story of passion, jealousy and unrequited love. Each painting presents a vignette or scene which compresses the thoughts, emotions and situation of a heroine/narrator into a compelling image. Because the theme of the story is somewhat personal and because the narrative is structured in a sequence of separate images, Scott has created a work which is unusual in the corpus of contemporary figurative painting. Instead of using subjects drawn from classical mythology as do many of the young artists now painting figurative imagery, she relates a story which is told in the first person and is clearly contemporary in setting. Instead of using the format of a series for works which progress in terms of purely formal issues, Scott uses it to create a narrative of chronologically ordered but discontinuous scenes with a beginning, middle and end. While modernist abstract painters have used the series as a method of working out stylistic or formal problems, Scott has revived it to create fiction.

The *Description of a Struggle* is more than a love story. Scott's is a new way of approaching one of the central problems of contemporary painting: how an artist can paint representationally and imbue the work with significant content without relying on references as encumbered as Greek myths or so personal as to be inaccessible.

The series did not arise spontaneously but is the culmination of years of research into different subjects and styles. Works from Scott's *oeuvre* from the mid seventies to 1980 are included in this exhibition to



Cat. 16

demonstrate the development of specific themes and working methods in her art relevant to the *Description* series. Scott subscribes to one of the tenets basic to Western art since the Renaissance: the belief that visual representations of the human form convey ideas in a cogent manner. In order to better learn this lesson, she followed the time-honoured pedagogical practice of copying the works of the masters, and executed graphite copies of major paintings by Giotto, Poussin and Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863). Scott paid particular attention to Giotto's (1266/7-1337) example of using a shallow picture space and few figures to focus attention on the drama of the scene. In her copy of his *Mocking of Christ* (cat. 16) of the Arena Chapel in Padua, Scott concentrated on the relationship between the figures. In the work of Nicolas Poussin (1593/4-1665), an artist who composed his paintings by rearranging tiny wax figures within a box-like stage from which he drew studies, Scott chose to examine the way in which architectural settings and gestures contribute to the viewer's reading of an incident or event depicted. When she

copied the Giotto panel and Poussin's *Eliezer and Rebecca* (cat. 17), Scott rendered the whole of each composition instead of significant details as is usual practice, in order to better grasp the structure of multiple figure compositions.

Stylistically, Scott's most important mentors are Picasso (1881-1973), Henri Matisse (1869-1954) and Ferdinand Léger (1881-1955). Taking the subject of the monumental female nude favoured by these artists, Scott paid homage to their formal innovations in *Four Sisters* (cat. 18) of 1975 by using large areas of unmodelled colour; grids which overlie these adjacent areas; hot, bright colours; and by emphasizing patterns and repeated motifs. Her painting is very broad in this

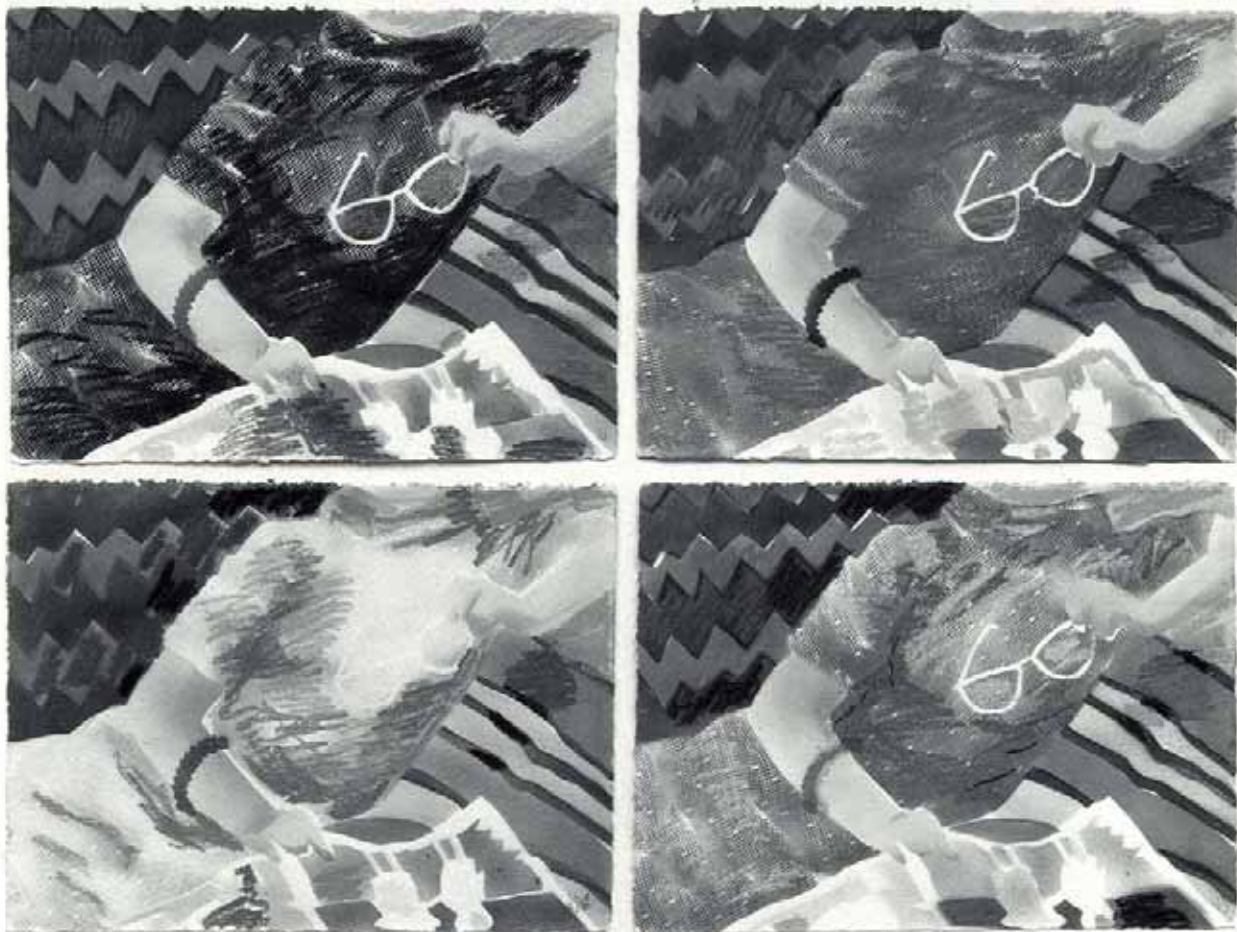
work with a brush stroke which is loose and gestural.

Later Scott began using a roller and stencil technique to counter her tendency to paint in an expressionistic, gestural style. She had experimented with this years before in *Would that he could tell her* (fig. 1) of 1968, and later in *The Hair Dryer* (cat. 22) and in *Reading the New York Times* (cat. 23) both of 1980. Scott found however in these latter two works that this technique used alone was too dry and flat unless enlivened with pastel overtop. While the brighter colours and relative absence of frenetic visual detail in these works is a departure from *Four Sisters*, it is their structure which is most significantly different. Each is composed of four panels which depict a single female figure. In *The Hair Dryer* the pose









Cat. 23

is the same in all but one panel. In *Reading the New York Times* it is the colour and pattern of the dress which change. Scott was working as a film editor at this time and the resemblance of these works to film stills is not coincidental. She was attempting in these paintings to create a sense of the passage of time, an exercise of importance to the development of the *Description* series.

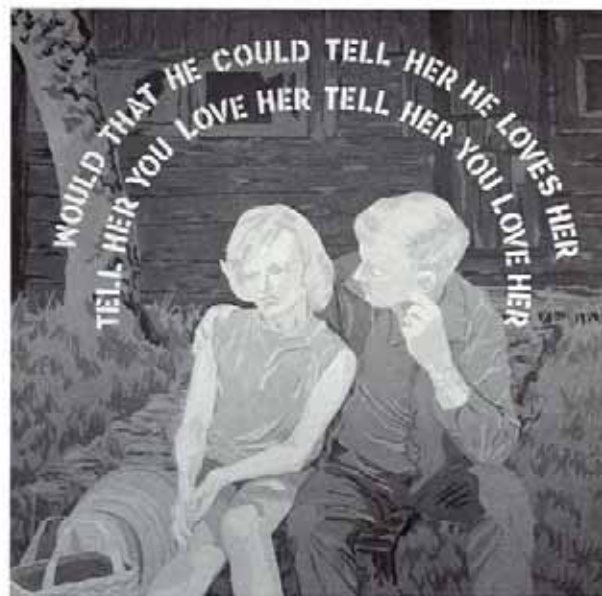
Certain themes have recurred in her *oeuvre* as well. *Narcissus and Echo* (cat. 19) of 1976 depicts a classical myth with characters in contemporary dress. Both characters found horrible fates because of love: Narcissus was doomed to fall in love with his reflection as punishment for his callous treatment of the maidens who loved him, and Echo was fated by Hera to repeat

only what others spoke because her vexacious loquacity had aided Zeus in deceiving Hera. In her version of the myth, one inspired by Caravaggio's (1573-1610) Scott focused on Narcissus's obsessive behaviour by placing him at the centre of the canvas and by using his reflection to complete the triangle formed by his pose to underline his self-absorption. Echo stands to the right, with a hand over her mouth, a gesture which identifies her speechless state.

Would that he could tell her (fig. 1) is another tale of unrequited love. Scott parodies the seriousness of the heroine's situation by using a figure style straight out of *True Romance* comic books. The idea of using words within a painting was common among Pop artists such as Larry Rivers (b. 1923) who were dominating the New York scene while Scott was studying at the Pratt Institute in the late sixties. While Rivers used words to identify objects within a painting, Scott, as in the *Description* series, used them to complement and contradict the emotions conveyed by the expressions and poses of the figures.

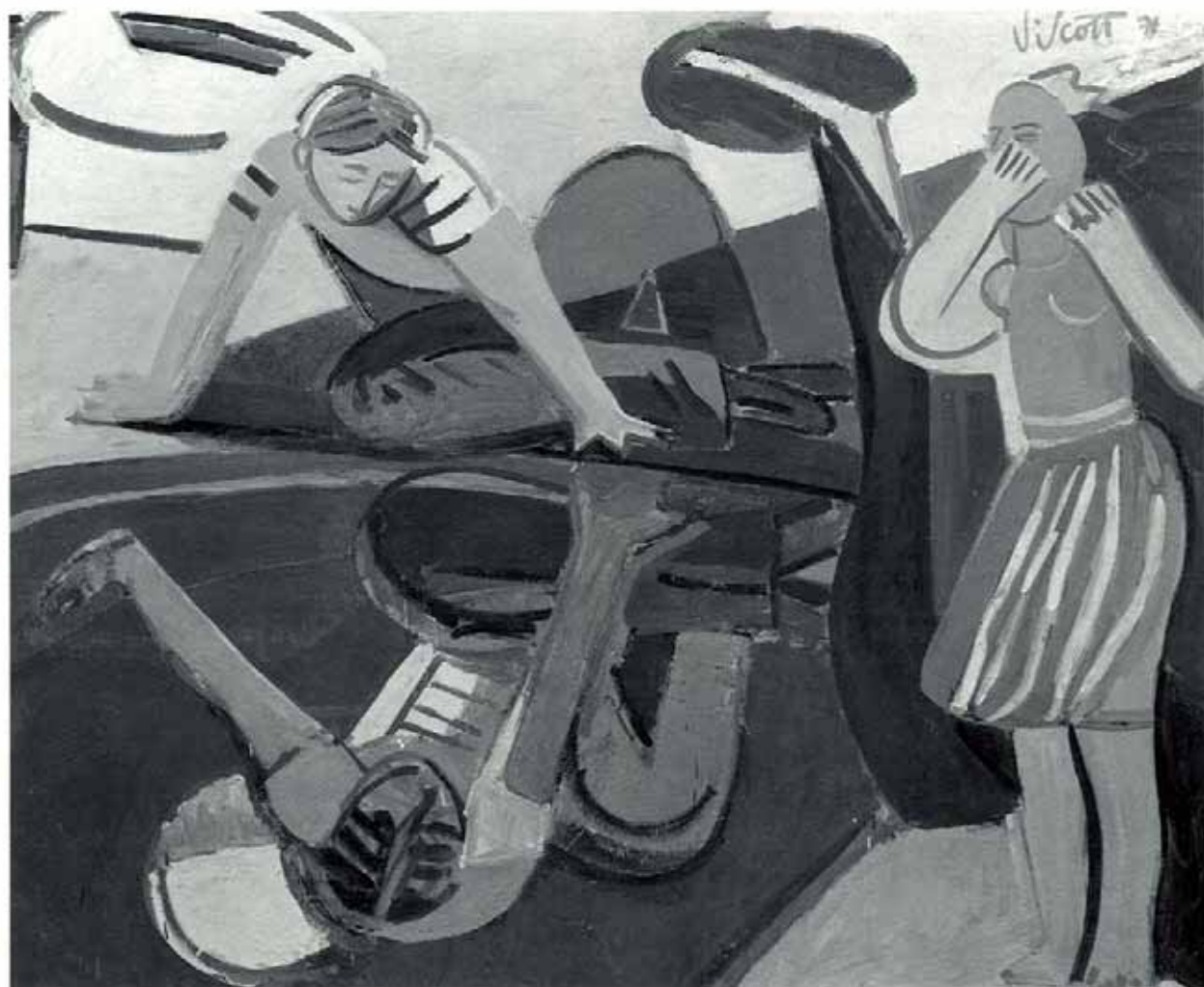
The format of the paintings of the *Description* series is one which also incorporates words within the painting. Here, however, they are the voice of the blonde-haired heroine and are painted in a white border which surrounds the image. The scenes within these borders are like the frozen moments captured by an amateur photographer: somewhat posed but still slightly awkward.

The effect of these paintings is one of overblown emotionalism. Like a soap opera, it is a story of passion, but unlike afternoon T.V. it is not graphic or explicit in its treatment of sex and violence. Despite her discretion, one wonders at Scott's decision to explore in such a large and public format a story so common, yet so intimate. It is however precisely the sense of embarrassment one feels when confronting the heroine's frank revelations which motivated the artist's choice of subject.



Would that he could tell her 1968, acrylic on canvas, 152.4 x 111.7 cm.

The underlying theme of the *Description* series is the *frisson* created by the incongruity of private emotion expressed through public behaviour. Scott chose the title of the series from a short story by Franz Kafka of the same title, in which the young male narrator relates his encounters with two characters, one of whom fears the intrusion of passion into the routine of his urbane social life, and another who prays daily in the cathedral in a loud and mournful manner purely for the pleasure of watching the reactions of others to his untoward behaviour. The first character is deeply in love with a faultless young woman but shuns his passion because its manifestations are never private or easily concealed. The other revels in his exhibitionism. Like Kafka, Scott experiments with public statements about personal emotions, exposing and exploiting the incongruity of socially-prescribed behaviour which excludes the expression of our most deeply felt emotions. She accom-



plishes this by exaggerating the emotional content of the paintings by using specific colours and compositional motifs.

In *They would not let go of each other, somehow I was in the middle* (cat. 1), Scott uses harsh acidic colours to underline the claustrophobic box of a room which contains the rival and her lover. Even the steeply tilted floor contributes to this sense of a physical space and a situation which presses in on the two figures. The image on the screen on the T.V. in the corner which Scott remembered from a Godard film echoes the heroine's view that the love is as much a burden as a blessing: it is difficult to discern whether the male figure on the left of the screen is about to embrace or strangle the female.

My first mistake: I would get to know my rival (cat. 2) creates an atmosphere of threat and passion with large areas of black and hot, garish pink. The heroine, indicated only by her hand which clutches a wine glass to the left of the canvas, converses with her rival in an elegant café. Among outward signs of civilized life — the rival in an evening dress, a colonnaded portico visible across the street, and conventionally polite conversation over cocktails — the emotional reality of the scene is depicted: they really want to kill each other. The hapless rival is literally pinned into the scene; all the diagonal lines formed by the table and parapet meet at her abdomen.

The lighter colours of blue, ochre and white in *I dreamt she would watch us sleeping . . .* (cat. 3) allude to a happier state for the lover and heroine. Their enjoyment of their love is tinged by the heroine's foresight of future problems represented by the rival's vulgar red fingernails. In *The kingpin holds firm* (cat. 4) the heroine still loves him but is beginning to resent her dependence on the lover. Scott uses a composition found in many versions of Madonna and Child altarpieces of the Italian Renaissance to ironic effect. Contrasting nurturing maternal love with the self-destructive dependency

of her romantic involvement, she depicts the heroine clinging like a child to the lover who looks away toward the open door.

In *Obsessive love knows no bounds* (cat. 5) Scott shows her heroine still in the grip of her passion but starting to realize that she can decide her own fate: she must decide if she will continue the affair. Her growing power is signalled by her size relative to the canvas: in *The kingpin . . .* she is tiny; here she dominates the composition, filling it from top to bottom. The gorgeous colours used for this painting also serve this reading: they are not the harsh, grating hues of the first painting of the series and are richer and more vibrant than those used for the heroine and her lover in *I dreamt . . .*

Part II of the series begins on a hopeful note: the heroine has a new interest, a new lover, in *Five years later, while in a foreign city, I took a lover who spoke another language* (cat. 6). Yet he is not quite enough; he is indicated only by an outline and the two sit slightly apart. Here for the first time in the series, the architecture forms a protective curve over the figures and they gaze out into an open landscape in the distance. In *I returned to the Capital, nothing had changed* (cat. 7) Scott again uses a traditional motif turned on its head. The lover and rival are depicted walking a dog, which was used as a symbol of domestic fidelity in 16th and 17th century painting. The symbol of the dog in this context is Scott's ironic comment on the character of the lover who could never decide between the two women. The return to the tumultuous passion of the first painting of the series is signalled by the fiery red which appears in both works.

The symbolism of *A salmon arrives by mail* (cat. 8) is deliberately obscure. The fish could mean a new lover or simply new beginnings. The gift is a Pandora's box, an offering which could bode ill or well and the heroine is depicted small as if overwhelmed by this new

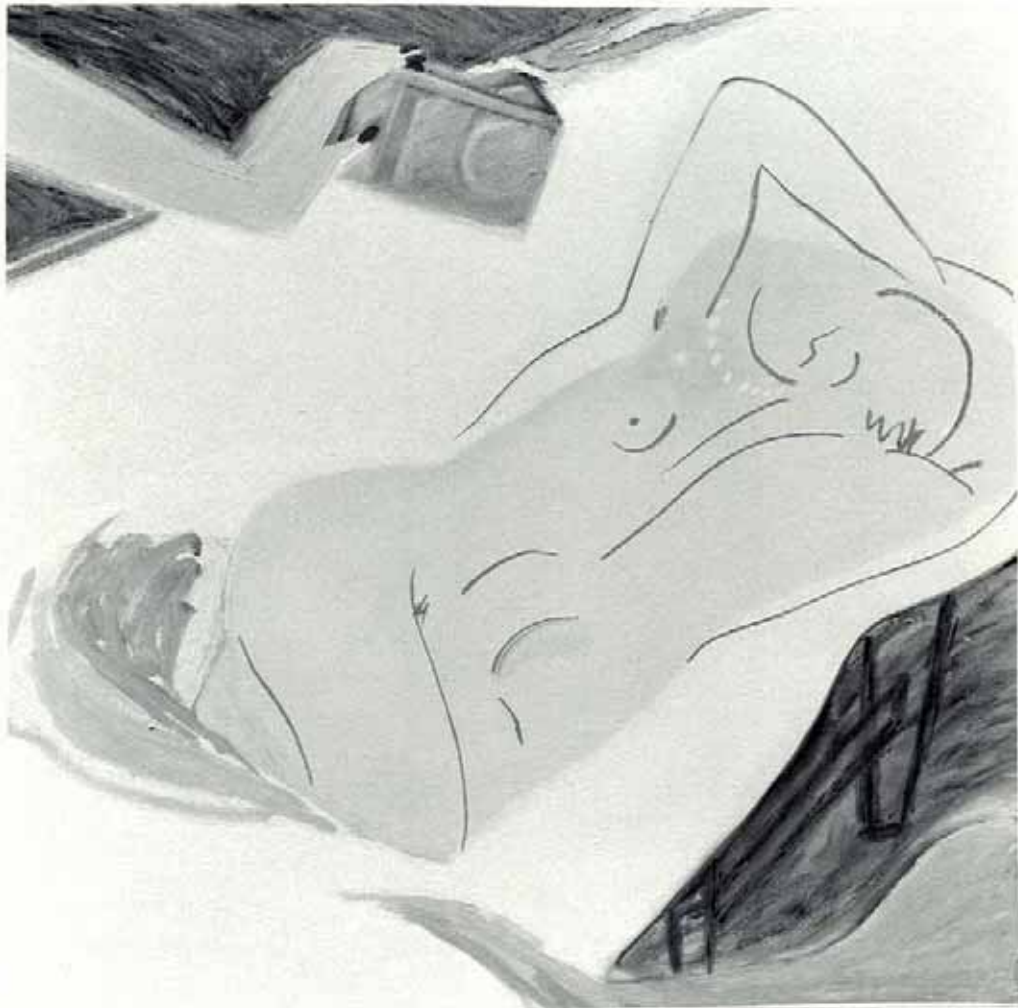


Obsessive Love Knows no bounds

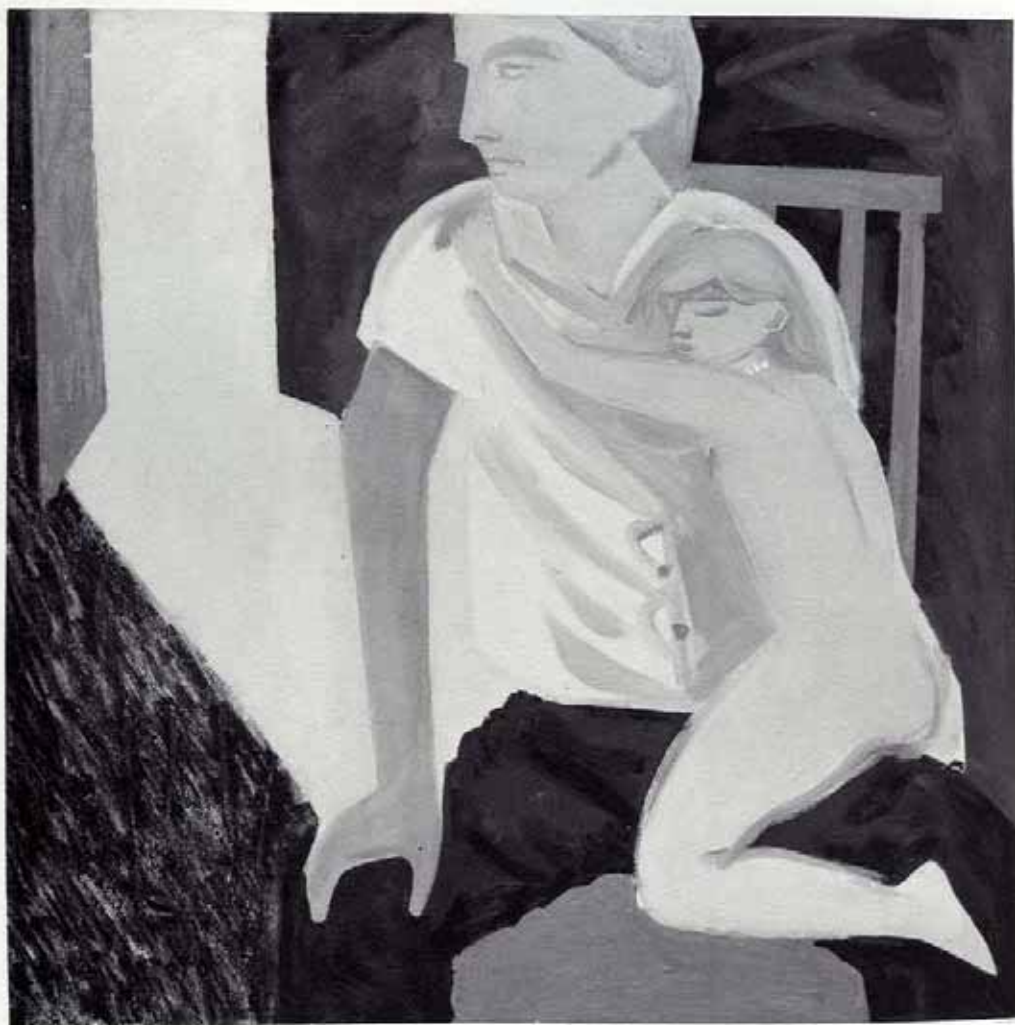
V. Jett '63



They could not let go of each other, somehow I was in the middle.



I dreamt she would watch us sleeping ...



The kingpin holds form.



My first mistake: I would get to know my rival.



Five years later, while in a foreign city, I took a lover who spoke another language.

situation. Within the structure of the series, this painting acts as a pause, a breathing space where both the heroine and the viewer may contemplate what has gone before in light of this new element. The passion returns in *A recurring image: I often thought of killing him* (cat. 9) and with it the dark colours and gloomy urban setting of the earlier paintings. The hate is real enough, given the situation described in *I returned . . .*; but Scott lampoons its intensity by depicting her heroine clad in a white dress and pearls, both traditional symbols of purity, while she stabs the fickle lover.

Relief comes when she leaves the capital, New York, at night in *Escape over water* (cat. 10). It is the beginning of her rehabilitation of an untenable situation. As in *Five years later . . .* the landscape or in this case, the open space above the city, represents a release from turmoil. In *I arrive in a village and am surprised to discover there are people there who know me* (cat. 11) the heroine is free and in the open air. Both the second part of the title and her size relative to the canvas indicate that she realizes that her tale is not unique and she begins to look out into the world.

In the *Description* series Scott undermines our expectations of a love story with parody, overstatement and an unconventional use of traditional symbols. The humorous approach works well with the comic book style of flat, bright colours; clearly defined edges to forms; figures depicted with little modelling; and the simple declarative statements which form the titles.

The tale at first appears straightforward, but because some of the scenes are purely imaginary within the context of the story, and because so much information is omitted, the series is enigmatic. *They could not let go . . .* and *A recurring image . . .* and to a lesser extent *A salmon . . .* are fictions of the heroine's thoughts on the

triangle yet are offered with the same unequivocal captions and with the same direct visual presentation as the rest of the paintings in the series. We never know the lover's good qualities or what attracted the heroine to him in the first place. The longer we look the more the characters become caricatures. Except for her penchant for pearls and violent fantasies, we know very little about the heroine. The paintings are like icons: representations of characters who remain remote and unindividualized while expressing emotions we have all shared.

As the author, Scott has subtracted many particulars of a story which could, like all fiction, be somewhat autobiographical. She presents a few facts but conveys much emotional information through the colours, compositions and titles used. She employs strategies common to much recent figurative painting: a style influenced by forms of popular culture (comic books), references to the art of the past in the use of motifs and symbols from authoritative sources, and images which are fraught with violence and raw emotion. While most painters choose more esoteric classical and cultural myths for their subjects, Scott uses a version of one of the most elemental of all stories, the love triangle. The universally recognizable situations depicted with simple motifs in sparse settings allow each of us to interpret and make sense of the story for ourselves, to ponder the chasm which separates what we know about romance and its attendant emotions, from how these feelings are expressed.

Jane Young
Curator
Surrey Art Gallery

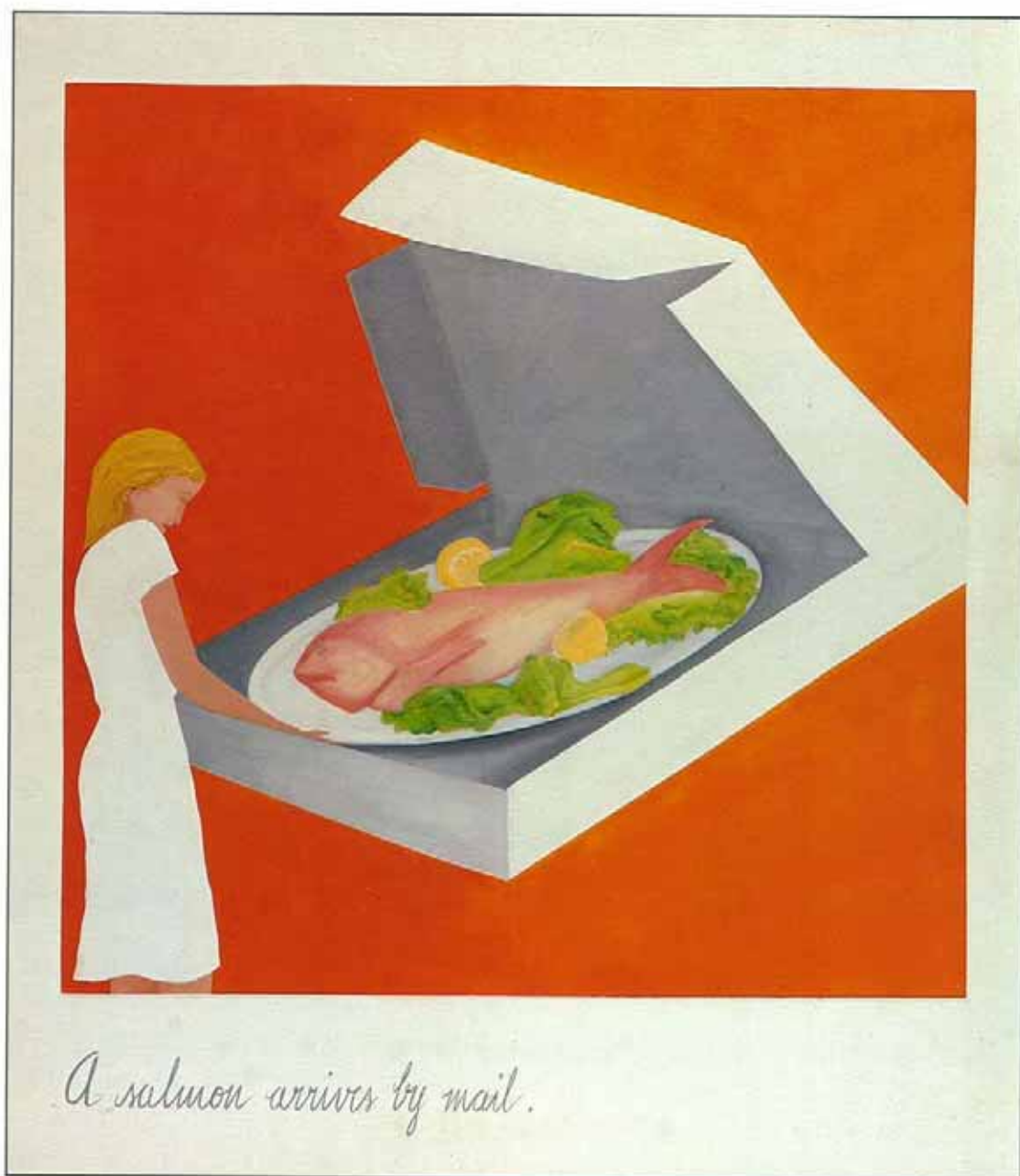


*I returned to the Capital
Nothing had changed.*

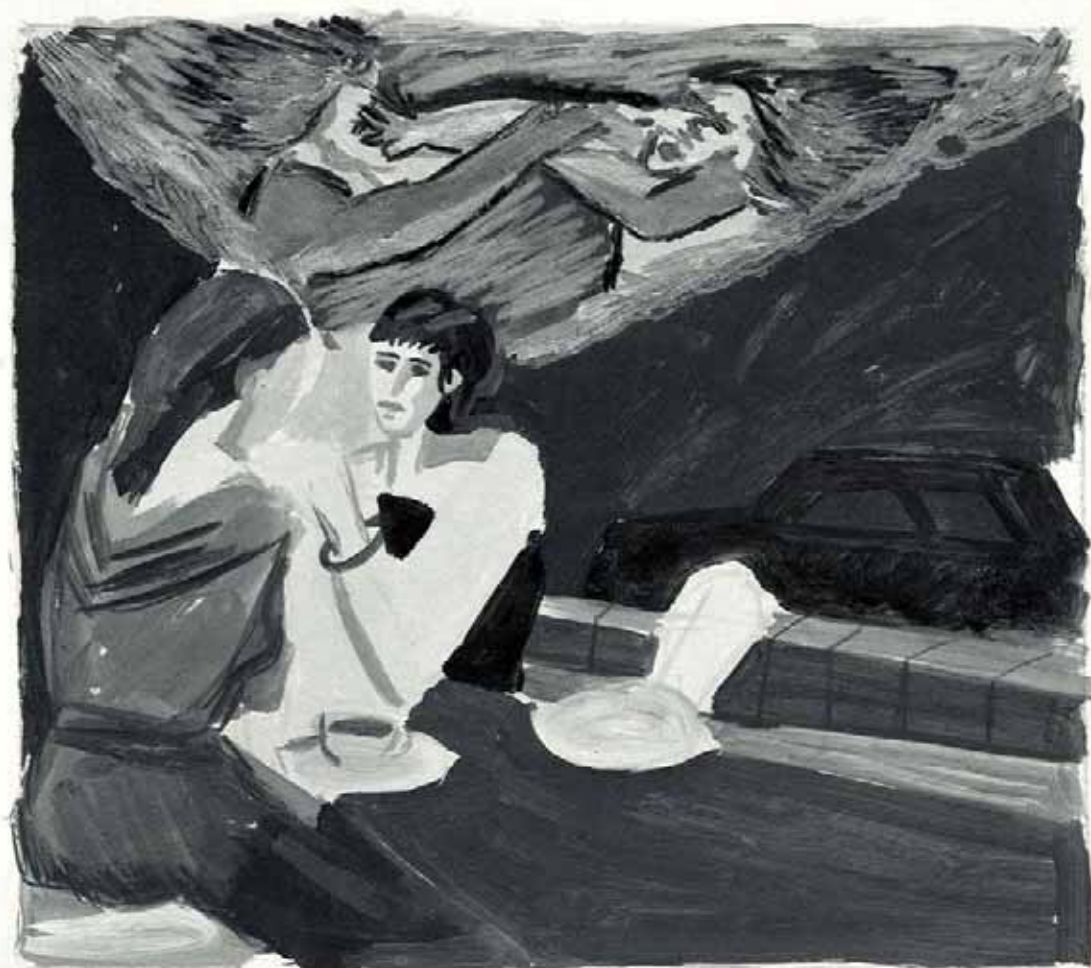
W. H. 1915



I returned to the Capital, nothing had changed.



A salmon arrives by mail.



*My first mistake
I should get to know my seat.*

The revitalization of painting in the 1980's has been due to a great extent to the resurgence of figurative painting. One of the major contributions of the new figurative painting has been the reintroduction of content which goes beyond the formalist concerns of painting. Since 1978 Susan Scott has steadily moved towards personal content in her work.

This essay will examine how Scott's involvement with *Box Assemblages* from 1978 to 1980, enabled her to approach more personal subject matter. In addition to the boxes, her interest in drawing, and making studies for paintings also played a role in allowing her to address the themes of love, sexuality and relationships in her work. This exploration culminated in her *Description of a Struggle* series of 1983, which displays a full range of emotional and psychological content.

Susan Scott made her first *Box Assemblage* in 1978, shortly after moving back to New York from New Jersey. Her intention at the time was to continue producing large scale figurative paintings. But instead, she reacted to the environment of Manhattan and specifically the garment district around 19th Street, with its old iron front buildings.

She was also looking for a way to come to terms with certain influences in her work; "I felt I had not dealt with the influences in my painting of Léger, Matisse and Picasso. I thought if I stopped painting for a while I might rid myself of those influences".¹ Scott's painting previous to 1978 had borrowed heavily from Léger in her use of colour and abstracted forms. The subject in these works, street scenes and women putting out laundry, played a minor role to that of the stylizations.

The *Box Assemblages* became a convenient format for Scott to break with the influences in her painting. As well, they were ideal for the interpretation of the Manhattan architecture. The boxes provided an opportunity to take an entirely new approach. Scott returned to a simple honest representation of the life she observed

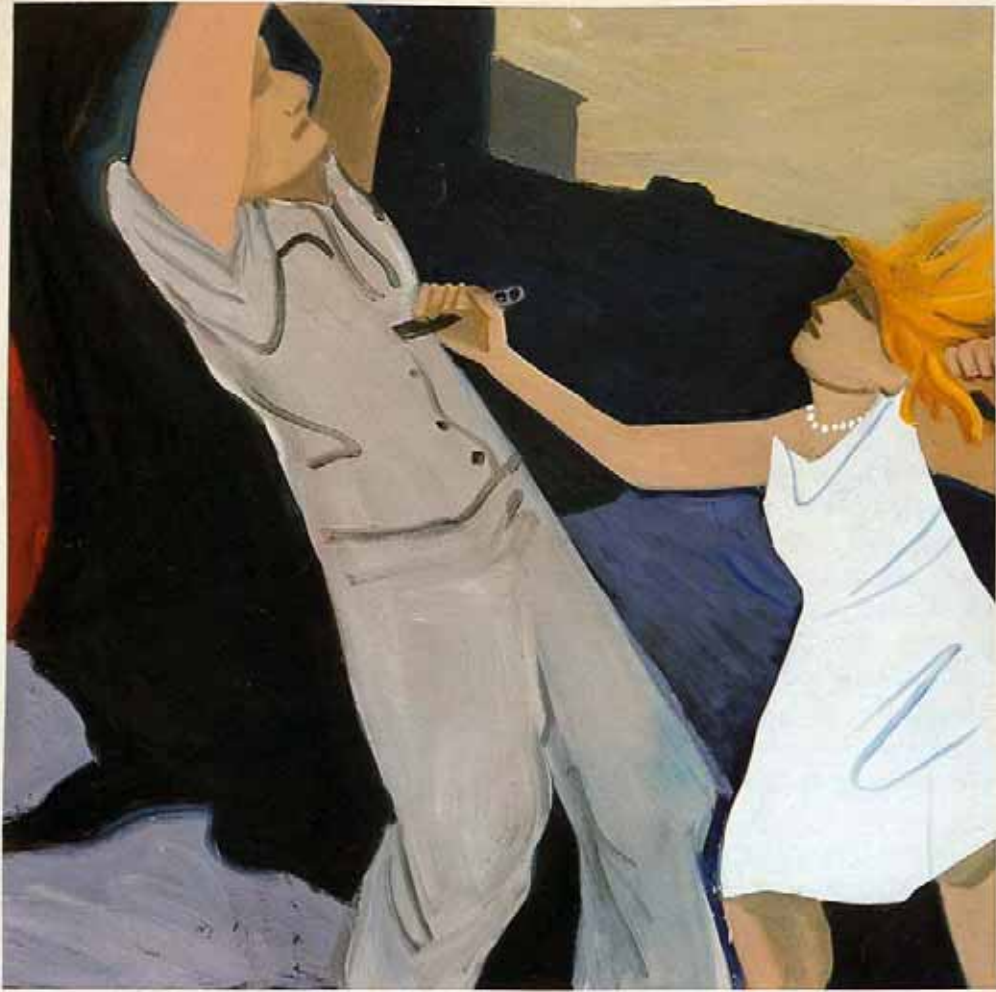
around her. They are an attempt to tell a story without obscuring it with stylistic over-playing. In part, her ability to do this was that the boxes were fun to do, they allowed her to play. The boxes did not carry the same weight of seriousness that her paintings did.

Scott completed three different series of boxes between 1978 and 1980. Each series is different in its construction, use of materials and approach to subject matter. From the first series, the *Artist's Loft* is typical of Scott's intention in the boxes. The work is a view looking across at a building typical of New York architecture. The facade of the building with a large arched window at the top is rendered in a straight-forward manner, giving a sense of detail without being obsessive. The top floor is occupied by an artist's studio, complete with paintings in progress and the paraphernalia common to the artist's studio. The floor below is occupied by a garment manufacturer with workers busy producing their goods.

There may be some parallels between the garment factory and the artist's studio. Neither is given priority, but is simply seen as a place of work. The depiction of the artist's studio has often been romanticised as some sort of mysterious environment where creative acts take place. It is depicted here as a place of work and manufacture.

In this work the distance of the view disallows any personal contact with the subject. Scott appears to be taking the position of a detached observer. The same distant viewpoint is used in other boxes from 1978, which depict the backs of apartment buildings. There are views into kitchens, hallways and the occasional bedroom, but these interior spaces are always partially obscured by drapes or fire escapes. The works seem to have a sense of alienation often associated with the urban environment.

The boxes of 1978 were constructed within a narrow frame about four and a half inches deep of finished



A recurring image: I often thought of killing him .



wood. They were complicated constructions which sometimes included their own light source. Scott became a little disenchanted with this first series and remarked that they were, "too much like doll houses".² In order to overcome the problem of the works appearing fussy, she began her second series by utilizing old window frames and constructed a box around them. She also began to incorporate materials such as fabric and wood, as well as paper and paint. But the most dramatic changes in the boxes done in 1979 is the point of view, and Scott's use of cubist techniques of manipulating planes and space.

Lovers #1 (cat. 20) depicts a close view into the bedroom of a couple making love. On a dresser is an open diary with the words, "At first she did not recognize him as he had just shaved off his beard". The use of the written statement anticipates Scott's use of this device in later works. The viewpoint in this work is as intimate as the scene being portrayed. No longer is the viewer distanced from the subject, but is brought uncomfortably close. The work does have a voyeuristic quality in that the window frame acts as a barrier, separating the viewer from the scene being acted out.

Scott used cubist methods of flattening out certain planes, while creating illusionistic space in others in this work. This is accomplished with great success by the collaging of paper and fabric. The material is painted, bent, cut, and folded into the desired shapes. The work has a resemblance to the Japanese erotic art of the *Shunga* print in its emphasis on patterned fabric and layering of forms. The figurative element is well integrated into the compositional construction of the work and shares equal importance with all the other components.

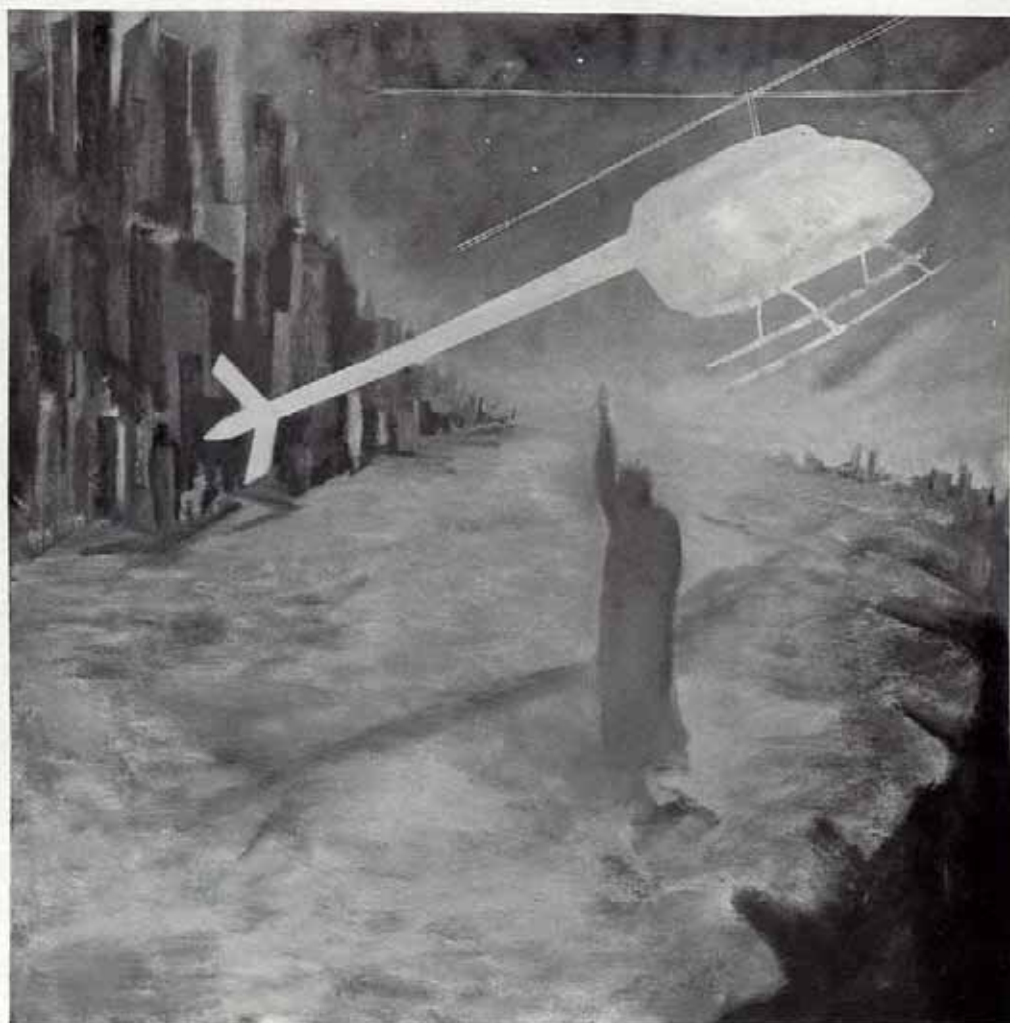
In *The Lovers #2*, a similar scene is depicted, but the composition is less complicated and there is a greater emphasis on the figures. The work is again a collage of cutout paper and fabric. But rather than fracturing the

space as in the previous cubist oriented work, Scott simply layered the images within the shallow space of the box.

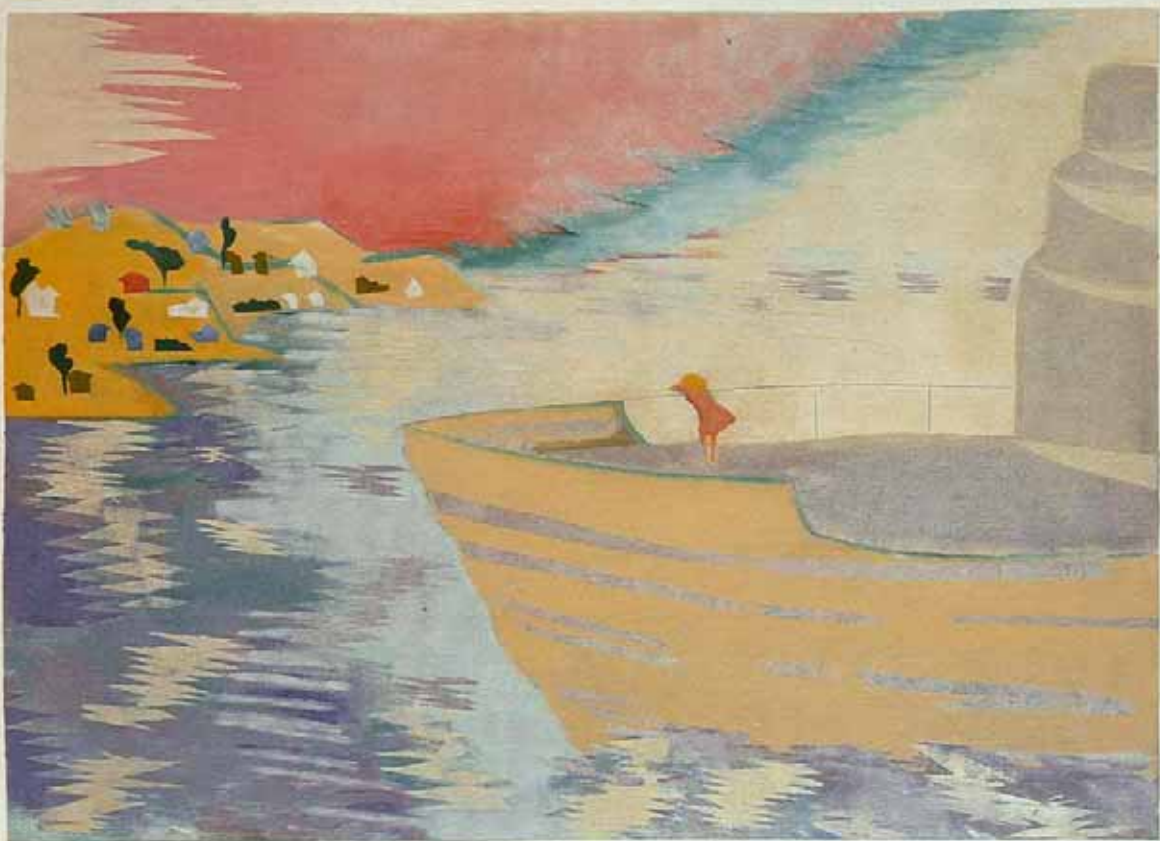
The Fortune Teller, also from 1979, is probably the most carefully detailed box Scott produced. Depicted in this box is a fortune teller reading the cards of a young woman. Scott has taken great care with the details of the scene. The drapes, a tablecloth with stars painted on it, the rendering of the figures and the attention to small aspects of the room, all combine to make the scene complete and believable. The work is very different from *The Lovers* series with their reference to cubism. What this shows is Scott's interest in both abstract strategies and that of representation for the purpose of telling a story. Throughout her career she has swung back and forth between these two interests.

In her third series of boxes done in 1980, Scott again varies the point of view and construction methods. *Goodnight* depicts a close-up of a pair of hands turning down bed sheets. Behind the bed is a window with venetian blinds and to one side in the foreground are frilly curtains. The forms are all simple, painted cutouts arranged in a straight-forward manner. Through the three series of boxes we have seen how the viewpoint has shifted from a distant view in the first series, to that of one room in the second, to a fragment of a room in this last series. This changing viewpoint has meant a change in attitude to the subject from a detached observer, to voyeur and finally to one that is personal and self-referential.

On the Phone (cat. 21), also from this last series depicts a woman sitting up in bed reading the paper and talking on the telephone. Scott constructed the figure and the bed out of wood. The pattern of the material has been achieved by using a stencil, giving the image a flat appearance. She has incorporated a real phone cord to emphasize the flatness of the painted surfaces. As in *Goodnight* the images are stylized and the composition



Escape over water.



I arrive in a village and am surprised to discover there are people there who know me.

has been refined to bare essentials. In these works the stylization operates in conjunction with the image content. It does not override the image as it did in her earlier paintings.

One of the most important aspects to come out of the *Box Assemblages* was Scott's treatment of subject matter. The boxes provided her with an avenue to explore intimate or personal content, something she had not dealt with in her paintings. This willingness to explore personal content may have come about from an attitude that the boxes were not as serious an activity as painting, that the scale and materials somehow diffused the controversial nature of the subject. Regardless, they did succeed in opening her up and her subsequent paintings are filled with personal content.

In 1983 Scott began working on a series of paintings which tell a story of unrequited love. She titled the series *Description of a Struggle* after a short story by Franz Kafka. For this series of works she produced both drawings and acrylic on paper studies. The production of drawings and studies has been an important process for Scott. Like the *Box Assemblages*, they have allowed her to explore avenues that she might not have done if she had worked solely on the full scale canvases. "It is important for me to work on paper concurrent to painting. Drawing from a painting in progress is a way of objectifying and distancing myself from the painting. It gives me alternatives to solving problematic areas in the painting."³ Viewing the studies alongside the finished version of the painting, gives an opportunity to observe how Scott's thought process has affected the final outcome of the *Description of a Struggle* series.

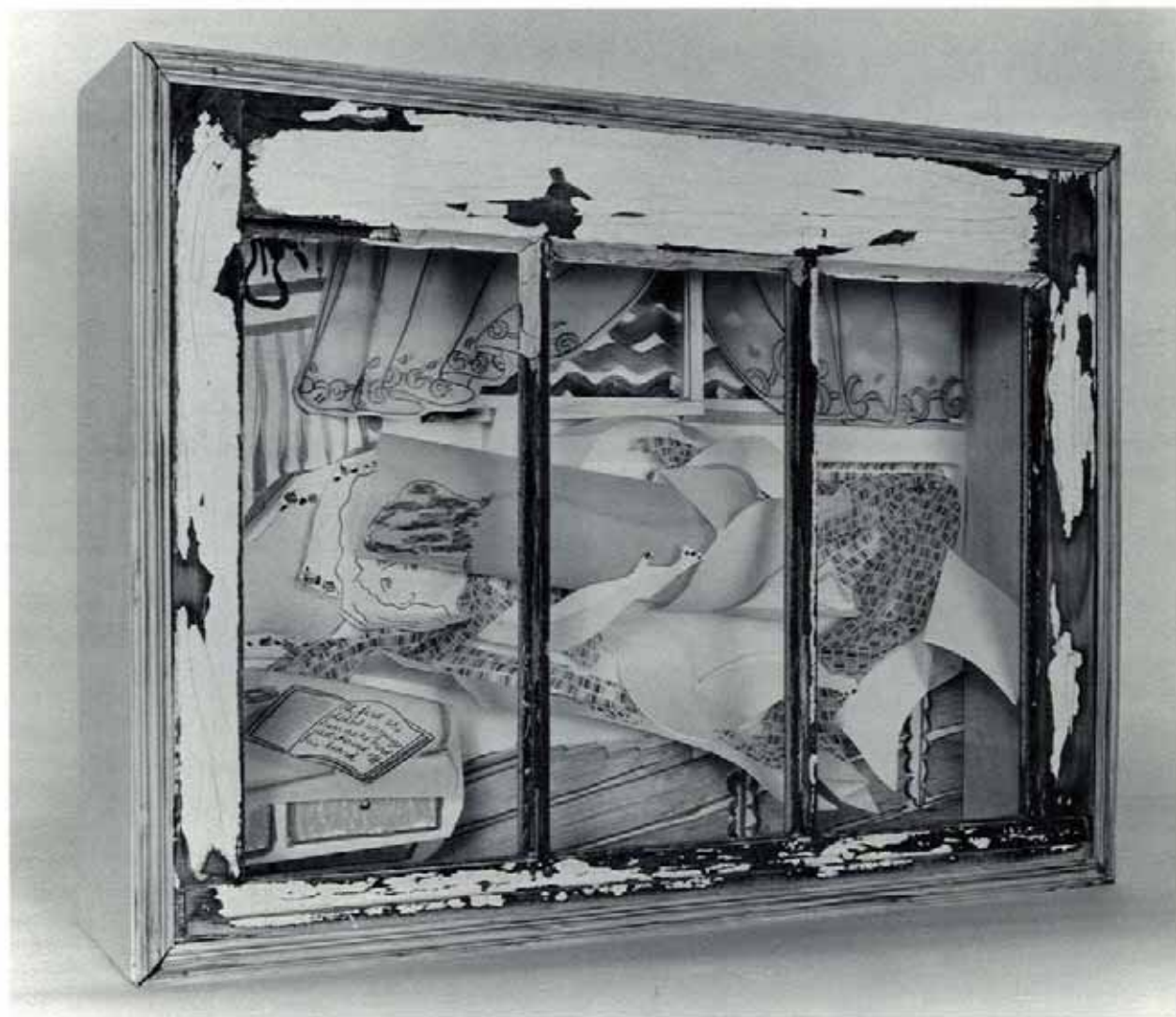
Not only does Scott produce studies in preparation for paintings, but often makes studies of paintings in progress. This process means that the studies and paintings do not necessarily follow a linear time sequence, but develop concurrent to one another. This makes the

body of work, both paintings and studies, an accurate document of Scott's exploration of her subject. As well, the comparison of the studies to the paintings provides a demonstration of how different formats and scale, influence the way the same subject is viewed.

In the *Description of a Struggle* series Scott utilized a 22" x 30" format for the acrylic on paper studies, while the paintings are approximately 4' x 5' or larger. The small size of the studies makes them seem more intimate and invites close viewing. They are personal in that they communicate one to one, whereas the paintings seem more public. They exist much more in the same space as the viewer. The images are more imposing when portrayed at close to life size.

The studies have a readily discernable quality of immediacy, brought about by the gestural application of paint. They do not appear to be laboured or fussy in any way. Detail takes secondary importance to the blocking in of the compositional elements, colour, and the establishment of figurative relationships. In general, the paintings have a more finished appearance; the gestural aspects are present, but have been tightened up. Details have been brought out giving the images an added strength and believability. Colour combinations have also been resolved to emphasize the visual impact of the painting.

Aside from their formal differences, Scott seems to have dealt with the subject matter in different ways in the studies and the paintings. The studies have more physical and emotional qualities associated with the depiction of the subject. One of the most obvious examples of this is *A recurring image: I often thought of killing him*, (cat. 13). In the study for this work, Scott has not held back in depicting the killing with full emotional strength. The work shows a woman in a green dress, stabbing her lover with a knife. The lover is seen reeling back in pain with blood pouring from his chest. The work is all emotion, and the physical force that emo-



Cat. 20



tion is able to unleash. The gestural application of paint, the strong compositional placement of the figures and the use of moody colours like red, black and brown, all add to the highly charged quality of the work.

In comparison, the painting (cat. 9) has undergone changes which seem to divest the subject of its emotional energy. This is not to say that it has been removed, but transformed into more symbolic terms. In the painting the woman appears wearing a white dress instead of green. Her outstretched arm still holds the knife at the chest of her lover, but there is no force behind the action. The placement of her body implies movement away from her lover. He still reels backwards, but no blood appears from the wound. Colour has also been toned down to cool greys and dark blue.

The image is still one of great power, but the emotional energy which gave power to the study has been internalized in the painting and resides in the realm of thought not action. Scott has said that she wants the paintings to stand as "Archetypes".⁴ It seems reasonable that they undergo this conceptual simplification to have them function in this manner.

In the study for *My first mistake: I would get to know my rival*, (cat. 14), Scott composed an image of two women sitting in a restaurant. Above them is a thought cloud showing two figures tearing at each other's faces. The figures in the cloud are rendered in a highly expressionistic manner, which emphasizes the tense physical and emotional state of the scene. In contrast, the other elements in the study are presented in a simple representational style.

In the final version of the painting (cat. 2), Scott reworked the composition, shifting the emphasis of the work. One of the major changes is the elimination of one of the women, turning the painting into a portrait

of the rival. The thought cloud with the fighting figures emanates from the smoke of the rival's cigarette, instead of being a shared thought as in the study. Scott has clearly changed the focus to emphasize the negative characteristics of the rival. She also used a stencil in her depiction of the fighting figures, which tend to stylize the image, defusing its expressionist power.

All of the gestural aspects of the study have been tightened up in the painting. The whole feeling in the work is one of control. The controlled treatment of the forms and surface emphasizes the portrayal of the rival as a strong, controlled personality.

The studies have allowed Scott to explore her themes for their emotional and psychological potential. They gave her the opportunity to freely express herself without holding back. They function as personal statements and communicate on a more intimate level. Her treatment of the paintings on the other hand, was to make public statements. She refined the images to increase their value as archetypes. The studies and paintings that make up the *Description of a Struggle* series effectively portray Scott's use of the narrative form. Her use of text and images within the same work contributes to their emotive power. Through this series Susan Scott comments on the complexities of relationships with humour and thoughtfulness.

Greg Bellerby
Chief Curator
Art Gallery of Greater Victoria

¹Interview with the artist August 1983.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

Susan Scott

1949, Montreal

I. EDUCATION

1966-67	Pratt Institute, New York
1967-68	Saidye Bronfman Cultural Centre, Montreal
1968-69	Ecole des Beaux-arts, Montreal
1969-71	Boston Museum School of Fine Arts, Boston
1971 (summer)	Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, Maine (Scholarship award)
1971-72	New York Studio School of Painting and Sculpture, New York

II. EXHIBITIONS

	<i>One Person Exhibitions</i>
1976	Deitcher O'Reilly Gallery, New York
1978	Galerie Libre, Montreal
1979	Galerie Libre
1980	Galerie Libre
	Nancy Poole's Studio, Toronto
1981	Byck Gallery, Louisville, Kentucky
	<i>Susan Scott: Vancouver Series</i> , Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton
1983	Bernard Jacobson Gallery, Los Angeles
	<i>Group Exhibitions</i>
1968	Canadian Guild of Painters, Etchers and Engravers (juried travelling exhibition)
1969	Canadian Guild of Painters, Etchers and Engravers Gallery Moos, Toronto
1970	Gallery Moos
	Ward Nasse Gallery, New York and Boston
1971	Ward Nasse Gallery, New York and Boston

1974	Summit Art Center, Summit, New Jersey (juried exhibition)
1975	Summit Art Center Deitcher O'Reilly Gallery, New York
1976	Deitcher O'Reilly Gallery Summit Art Center
1977	Deitcher O'Reilly Gallery Union City, New Jersey (juried exhibition at the YMHA)
1978	Union City Salander O'Reilly Gallery, New York
1979	Union City <i>Vivre en Ville</i> , Expo, Montreal (juried travelling exhibition) Pauline McGibbon Cultural Centre, Toronto (juried exhibition) Salander O'Reilly, New York <i>Windows and Doorways</i> , Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, Ontario (catalogue)
1982	<i>Summertime</i> , Vanderwoude Tananbaum Gallery, New York
1983	<i>E(X)changes</i> , Grunwald Gallery, Toronto <i>Coups d'Eclat</i> , Galerie Michel Tetreault, Montreal Open Space Gallery, Victoria, B.C.

III. REVIEWS AND CATALOGUES

Daigneault, Gilles, *Le Devoir*, 3 septembre 1983.

Gordon, E.J. *Montreal Gazette*, June 19, 1978.

Meilleur, Martine. "Coups d'Eclats", *Parachute* 33 (Dec. 1983/Jan./Feb. 1984): 41-42.

Murray, Joan. *Windows and Doorways* (Oshawa, Ont.: Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 1979).

Nixon, Virginia. *Montreal Gazette*, May 19, 1979.

Oshawa Times, July 25, 1979.

Pincus, Robert L. *Los Angeles Times*, June 17, 1983.

- Raynor, Vivien. *New York Times*, July 16, 1982.
Robert McLaughlin Gallery Bulletin, Feb. 1980.
 Tannenbaum, Judith. *Arts Magazine* V. 51 #1 (Sept. 1976): 13.
This Weekend (Oshawa), July 30, 1979.
 Varley, Christopher. "Susan Scott: Vancouver Series", *Update* (Bulletin of the Edmonton Art Gallery) V. 3 #2 (Mar./Apr. 1980): 6-7.

IV. TEACHING APPOINTMENTS

1972	St. Anne's Episcopal School, Brooklyn, New York
1974-76	Summit Art Center, Summit, New Jersey
1980-81	Emily Carr College of Art and Design, Vancouver, B.C. (Artist in Residence)
1982 (summer)	Banff School of Fine Art, Banff, Alberta
1982-83	University of Victoria, Victoria, B.C.
1983-84	Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario
1984 (summer)	Mount Allison University, Sackville, New Brunswick

V. PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Art Gallery of Greater Victoria
 Canada Council Art Bank
 Exxon Canada Corporation
 Montreal Museum of Fine Arts
 Robert McLaughlin Gallery

List of Works

All works are oil on canvas unless otherwise indicated. Dimensions are in centimetres; height precedes width and depth.

A. DESCRIPTION OF A STRUGGLE 1983

Part I.

1. *They would not let go of each other, somehow I was in the middle.*

158 x 137.5

Collection of the artist

2. *My first mistake: I would get to know my rival.*

(not in exhibition)

149 x 173

Paula Weinstein and Mark Rosenberg, Los Angeles

3. *I dreamt she would watch us sleeping . . .*

158 x 137.5

Collection of the artist

4. *The kingpin holds firm.*

158 x 137.5

Collection of the artist

5. *Obsessive love knows no bounds.*

158 x 137.5

Mark and Margaret Park, Los Angeles

PART II.

6. *Five years later, while in a foreign city, I took a lover who spoke another language.*

149 x 173

Collection of Barry Krost, Los Angeles

7. *I returned to the Capital, nothing had changed.*

(not in exhibition)

158 x 137.5

Private collection, Montreal

8. *A salmon arrives by mail.*

158 x 137.5

Collection of the artist

9. *A recurring image: I often thought of killing him.*

158 x 137.5

Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, purchased from Canada Council funds and Women's Committee purchase funds

10. *Escape over water.*

158 x 137.5

Collection of Jonathon C. Caliri, Los Angeles

11. *I arrive in a village and am surprised to discover there are people there who know me.*

149 x 173

Collection of Ron Petrus, Los Angeles

B.

12. *Study for "Obsessive love knows no bounds."* 1983

charcoal on paper

56.5 x 76.3

Collection of Jonathon C. Caliri, Los Angeles

13. *Study for "A recurring image: I often thought of killing him."* 1983

acrylic on paper

56.5 x 76.3

Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, purchased from Canada Council funds and Women's Committee purchase funds

14. *Study for "My first mistake: I would get to know my rival."* 1983

acrylic on paper

56.5 x 76.3

Collection of the artist

15. *Study for "I returned to the Capital, nothing had changed."* 1983

acrylic on paper

56.5 x 76.3

Collection of the artist

C.

16. *Study from Giotto: The Mocking of Christ* 1974

compressed charcoal on paper

45.7 x 60.5

Collection of the artist

17. *Study from Poussin: Eliezer and Rebecca* 1974

graphite on paper

30.4 x 35.5

Collection of the artist

18. *Four Sisters* 1975

194.5 x 247

Barbara and Lawrence Salander, New York

19. *Narcissus and Echo* 1976

183 x 244

Collection of the artist

20. *The Lovers #1* 1978

wood, fabric, paper, acrylic

56.5 x 73.6 x 17.7

Collection of the artist

21. *On the phone* 1980

wood, paper, wire, plastic

40.6 x 40.6 x 7.6

Collection of the artist

22. *The Hair Dryer* 1980

airbrush pastel on paper

60.5 x 71.2

Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Nathan Scott, Montreal

23. *Reading the New York Times* 1980

airbrush pastel on paper

60.5 x 71.2

Collection of the artist

Photo Credits:

Cat. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23 Trevor Mills, Victoria

Cat. 2, 21, fig. 1, courtesy of Susan Scott

Cat. 7 Pierre Denault, Montreal

Design: Ted Staunton

Printing: Hemlock Printers Ltd.

Surrey Art Gallery
13750 - 88th Avenue
Surrey, B.C. V3W 3L1
(604) 596-7461