

THE TENTH DALHOUSIE DRAWING EXHIBITION

Paul Edouard Bourque

Cliff Eyland

Glen MacKinnon

Mary Pratt

Nigel Roe

George Steeves

Susan Wood

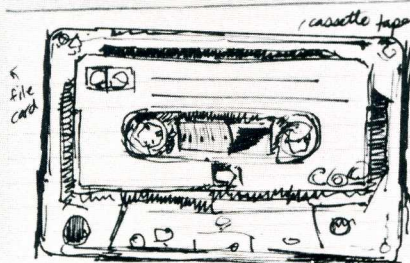
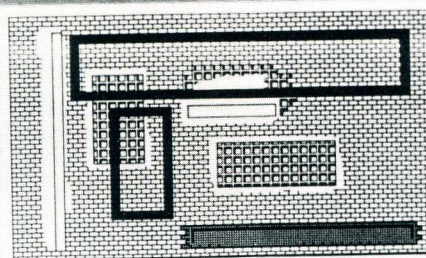
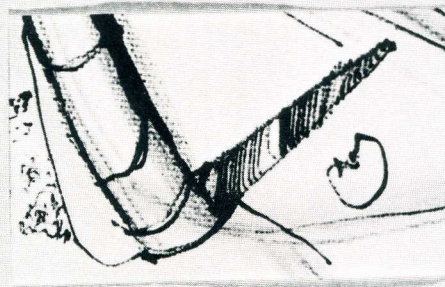
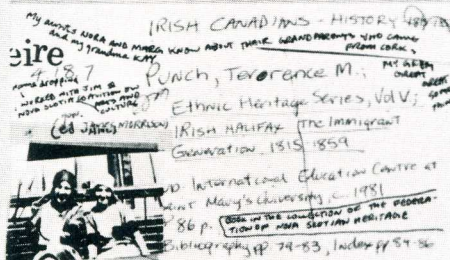
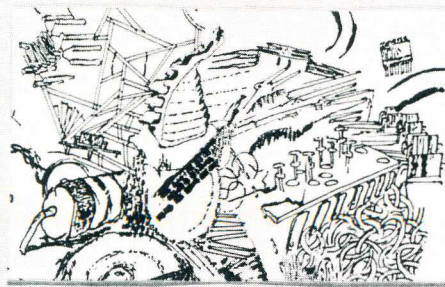
Chris Woods

Don Wright

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Dalhousie Art Gallery
Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia

7 April - 13 May 1990

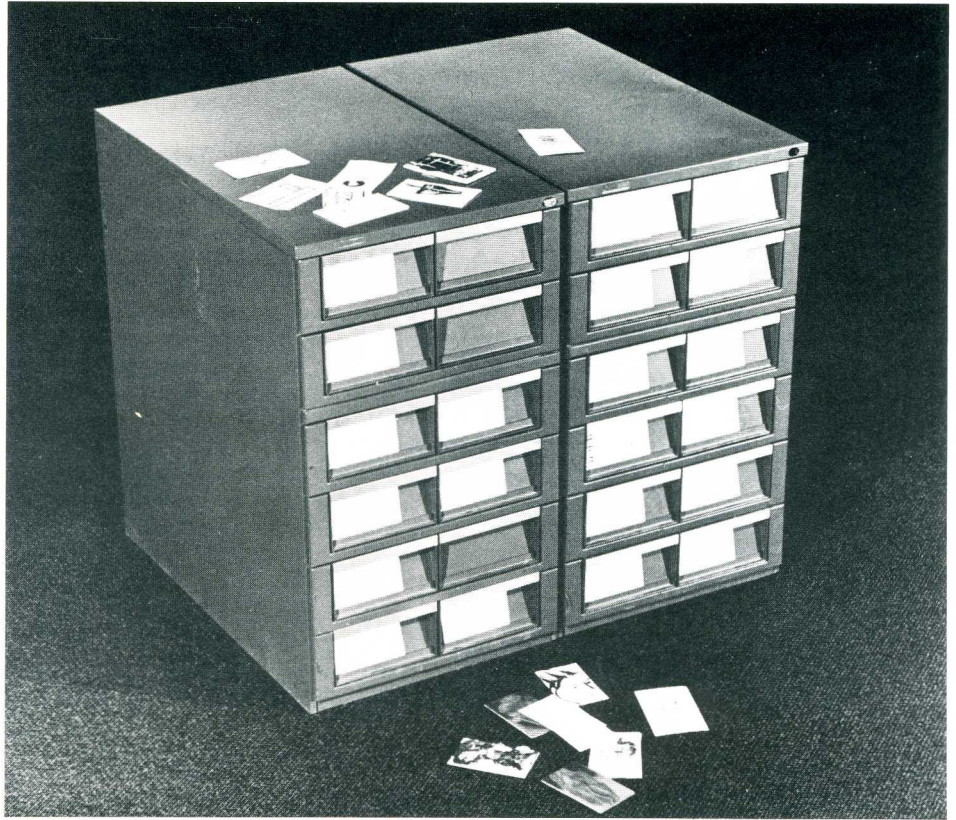


Cliff Eyland

For this exhibition, I specifically excluded drawings that were not in themselves completed works, largely because "artists' sketchbooks" or some equivalent of these are so ubiquitous and purposeful that they merit separate attention. Nevertheless, I include Cliff Eyland's *Filing Cabinet*, not merely as a summative example of "sketchbook" (for he is concerned that the work goes beyond a solipsistic concern with recording one's own ideas and experiences), but as a "complete" work which, in its organic potential for increase or loss (not only of information, but of how systematically the information is arranged and retrieved), provides a rich analogy for thinking.

To be sure, the assortment of visual renderings, plans, notes and quotes that accumulate in many artists' sketchbooks also comprise a form of thinking; but Eyland's preoccupation is with how knowledge itself gets (dis-)organised. Presently Curator for an Architectural Resource Centre and Gallery, and with a long-term interest in Libraries, Eyland began using 3" x 5" file-cards as art in 1981, partly in response to problems of storage, waste and cost of artistic materials. He rapidly grasped their potential as a subversive device: inserting cut-up 3" x 5" reproductions of the illustrations to Arneson's History of Art, for example, into the appropriate section of a library's card index system, or providing topical commentary and eccentric ornament to cards copied from the Federation of N.S. Heritage Library. Eyland's deconstructive forays into the stacks, drawers and cabinets of hallowed archives (and onto the walls of galleries) display considerable wit, but the endearing naughtiness with which he carries out his project often masks the seriousness of his intent.

It is suitable, then, that this sober metal monolith, *Filing Cabinet*, collects virtually all of Eyland's artistic production to date. The richly allusive contents are encyclopaedic in scope: Lilliputian versions of modernist paintings jostle pithy aphorisms; miniature portraits hide like gems among all kinds of marginalia; images filched and trimmed from a variety of sources rub shoulders with, yes, recognisable drawings. People interested in puzzles will seek an organising principle, suspecting more secret order than apparently pertains, since, evidently, systems and subsystems of more or less coherence abound in the cabinet. Yet the stubbornly material presence of the object and its parts — the persistence of hand-drawn marks, scribbles and layered paint — returns us to the immediacy of concrete experience and confounds the abstract systems with which we attempt to catalogue and interpret it.



untitled (filing cabinets)

Cliff Eyland was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1954, and studied Philosophy and Art History at Mount Allison University. He obtained a Diploma in Graphic Design from Holland College, P.E.I. (1978), and a BFA from NSCAD (1982). He lives in Halifax.