

PUBLIC ART



WINNIPEG
ARCHITECTURE
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Cover: *Justice*, Gordon Reeve, 1985. Photo: Jeffrey Thorsteinson, 2013. This page left: *DIY Field*, Germaine Koh, 2012. Right: *From Here Until Now*, spmb_projects, 2012. Photos: Winnipeg Arts Council.

In recent years Winnipeg has played host to a resurgence in the quantity and visibility of public art. This fact has largely been the result of the Winnipeg Arts Council's Public Art Program, a measure which passed with unanimous City Council support vote in 2004. Examples which are the result of this contemporary program include spmb_projects's *Table of Contents* (Vimy Ridge Memorial Park, 2006) and the *From Here Until Now* installation on the Osborne Bridge (2012); *land/mark* by Jacqueline Metz and Nancy Chew (2009, Bishop Grandin Boulevard); *Agassiz Ice* by Gordon Reeve (2008, Assiniboine Park); *DIY Field* by Germaine Koh (2012, Central Park); and four pieces located within or adjacent to the Millennium Library: *Untitled* by Cliff Eyland (2005), Nicholas Wade's *The Illumination* (also 2005), *emptyful* by Bill Pechet (2012) and *Sentinel of Truth* by Darren Stebeleski (2012). Other examples of public art from the recent past in the city include works by Joel Breman, Warren Carther, Jacqueline Metz, Nancy Chew and Ione Thorkelsson at the 2012 Winnipeg James Armstrong Richardson International Airport and Catherine Widgery's *River Arch* (Norwood Bridge, 1999).



Left: *Eternal Youth*, Georges Gardet, 1918. Centre: *Queen Victoria*, George Frampton, 1904. Right: *Taras Shevchenko*, Leo Mol, 1961. Photos: Jeffrey Thorsteinson, 2013.

Yet this proliferation of public art is not unprecedented and, in fact, represents a continuation of Winnipeg's long history of art set in communal gathering places. This practice includes the extensive presence of sculptural decoration on turn-of-the-century and early twentieth century architecture, including on the office buildings, banks and government facilities of Winnipeg's downtown core. In this respect, a significant example is the Manitoba Legislative building, which also contains such notable public art works as the famous *Golden Boy* (also known as *Eternal Youth*; Georges Gardet, 1918); two large bronze bison (also by Gardet); and, in the rotunda, a mural depicting the First World War by Belgian-Welsh artist Sir Frank Bragwyn. In addition, in front of the building stands George Frampton's 1904 commemorative bronze sculpture of Queen Victoria, a work which over the years has been joined by numerous other memorial pieces such as the 1961 sculpture of Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko, the 1990 Holocaust Monument, Memorial Parks' Airman Training monument and the Women Veterans of the Two World Wars memorial (1976).



Boy With The Boot, 1898. Photo: Manitoba Historical Society.

Further commemorative works can be found on the grounds of the Winnipeg Centennial and Civic Centres. These include the 1886 Volunteer Monument by Samuel Hooper, originally a tribute to the men of the 90th Winnipeg Battalion killed in the 1885 North West Rebellion. In 1963 the work was re-dedicated to those who served with the Royal Winnipeg Rifles. Adjacent to this is the Nicholas Copernicus monument, dedicated in 1973 in honour of the 500th anniversary of the scientist's birth. City Hall was also home, temporarily, to another sculpture which (along with the Golden Boy) is one of the most beloved public art works in Winnipeg: *Boy With The Boot*. First installed in front of city hall in 1898, the sculpture was moved to its present location in Assiniboine Park in 1913. The work – which likely came from the J. L. Mott Iron Works in New York City – was paid for with money raised by local churches and children. The English Garden, to which the *Boy* serves as an entrance marker, also contains the Queen Victoria Diamond Jubilee Memorial, an 1897 work which likewise was previously located at city hall, until its move in 1967. These two pieces once, together, originally formed a single composition.

Just beyond the Legislative grounds, along Memorial Boulevard, stands another significant local artwork of remembrance: the Winnipeg Cenotaph. Designed by architect Gilbert Parfitt in a streamlined variety of Classical design, this stone pillar was unveiled 7 November 1928. The work paid tribute to those killed during the First World War and was later rededicated to acknowledge, as well, the sacrifices of the Second World War and the Korean War. The plans for this monument were the result of a lengthy and interesting process involving two public competitions. The first of these was won by Ontario sculptor Emmanuel Hahn; this plan was ultimately rejected due to Hahn's German heritage. During the second



Winnipeg Cenotaph, Gilbert Parfitt, 1928.
Photo: Jeffrey Thorsteinson, 2013.

competition the victorious design came from Elizabeth Wood, who happened to be Hahn's wife. This plan, too, was likewise abandoned – likely due to the relationship between Hahn and Wood – and, instead, the final selection was of Parfitt's proposal, which had come second during this round. Other city cenotaphs grace St. James' Bruce Park (original dated 1936) and Coronation Park, in the Norwood neighbourhood. Perhaps one of the most conspicuous war memorials in Winnipeg is found at Portage and Main: the Bank of Montreal War Monument. Unveiled 5 December 1923, this work commemorates the 231 Bank of Montreal employees from across Canada who died during WWI. Sculpted by James Earle Farmer, the statue was modelled after Captain Wynn Bagnall, a member of the bank's Winnipeg staff. The Belgian Veterans Association Historical War Memorial (Hubert A. Garnier, 407 Provencher Boulevard, 1938) is another prominent monument of this variety, with a portrayal of one soldier standing over a fallen comrade. A list of such memorial art works in the city is lengthy and also includes Augustine United Churches Gothic revival Tyndall stone memorial (by Arthur A. Stoughton, first dean of the University of Manitoba Faculty of Architecture), the Winged Victory Monument (Coeur de Lion McCarthy, 2109 Portage Avenue, 1922; commemorating soldiers employed by the Canadian Pacific Railway) and the Ukrainian Second World War Veterans Cairn (Euclid Avenue at Hallet Street, 1942).



Winnipeg Builder's Exchange mosaic, Takao Tanabe, 1956. Photo: Jeffrey Thorsteinson, 2005.

Winnipeg's public art scene reached new heights during the 1950s and 60s. Much of this art took the form of art in architecture. An example of this sort from 1956 is prominent Canadian artist Takao Tanabe's mosaic in the courtyard of the modernist Winnipeg Builder's Exchange building (290 Burnell Street; Waisman Ross). Since enclosed, the piece – which depicts the history of construction – was unveiled 7 December by Builder's Exchange J.J. Bernard and director of the Winnipeg Art Gallery Dr. Ferdinand Eckhart.



Astra Building mosaic, Robert Bruce, 1957.

Photo: Jeffrey Thorsteinson, 2013.

This was far from the only public mosaic work to be erected during this era. A further example – in another Waisman Ross designed structure – is Robert Bruce's 1957 piece set in the entry colonnade of the Astra Building (208 Edmonton Street). This colourful array of tiles is one of the first examples of an abstract public art work in the city. Bruce, then a professor at the Winnipeg School of Art stated that he desired for his design to be sufficiently engaging and vivid to hold its own against the nearby shop windows filled with commercial merchandize. Like Tanabe's piece, this mosaic also provides a sense of colour and complexity which nicely balances the otherwise muted and clean-lined modernism of the building as a whole. In an episode which demonstrates the vulnerable character of much public art in the city, in 1983 this work was nearly demolished when an interior designer deemed that the piece not the fit the decor of the restaurant which then filled the adjacent rental space and was only saved due the efforts of Bruce's widow Melba Cumberland. Another Bruce mosaic from the following year graces Marymound's Leacock house and depicts the Virgin Mary and Child in a similar colour range to the Astra building work.



Smith House mosaic, Robert Bruce, 1959. Photo: Jeffrey Thorsteinson, 2013.

Bruce was a very prolific figure in the public art scene of this era and was responsible, as well, for a street-facing abstract mosaic at the modernist home of Ernest Smith (909 Kildonan Drive, 1959). Smith was a founding member of the prominent local architecture firm Smith Carter and designed this building himself. In addition, in 1963 Bruce won a competition to execute a very large mosaic at the Manitoba Institute of Technology (now Red River College, 2055 Notre Dame Avenue), which portrays many of the technologies taught at the school. Other public works by the artist included the 1961 mural *Life in Winnipeg in 1873*, at the former Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce offices, and *Eternal Conflict*, a mural at the Grace hospital from the 1970s. Both of these works are now gone – the first by fire and the second demolished – again underscoring the vulnerable character of such pieces.



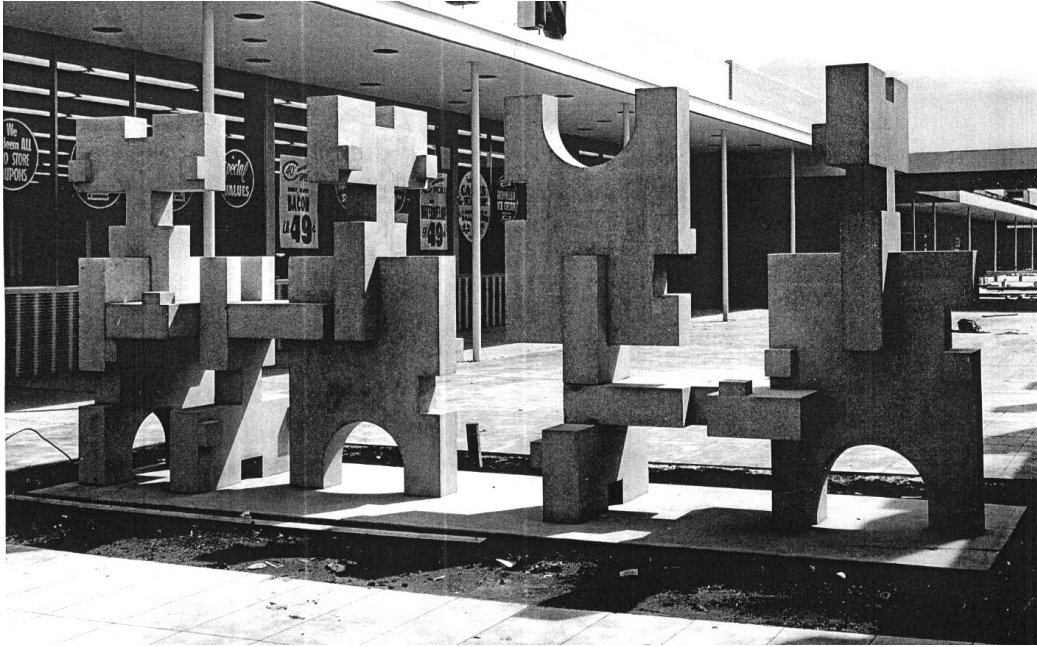
Left: St. Paul's College exterior chapel mosaic, Lionel Thomas, 1958. Right: St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church mosaic, Emil Telizyn, 1988. Photos: Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.

The apex of mosaic in this era, is undoubtedly St. Paul's College chapel at the University of Manitoba. Here the entire structure is wrapped in colourful tile – primarily in bright teal – with an enormous, stylized image of Christ gracing the West façade. The work is by Vancouver artist Lionel Thomas, who also completed a bronze work which graces the 1955 Great West Life building (60 Osborne Street North). Further examples of religious public art in the city include the large mosaic of Christ fronting St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church, by Toronto artist Emil Telizyn.



Acrobats, George Swinton, 1959. Photo: Jeffrey Thorsteinson, 2013.

One of the more surprising elements of this mid-century flourishing of public art in Winnipeg was the copious introduction of art into the initial design of the city's largest major suburban shopping centre: Polo Park. Following research conducted at other such developments across North America, here architects Green, Blankstein, Russell & Associates were inspired to use four Winnipeg artists to fill the new building sculpture and other art pieces. These included *Acrobats*, a playful concrete sculpture by Viennese-born Winnipeg School of Art professor George Swinton which first stood in the centre of the mall's main pool. The work is now installed at a nearly hidden location at Kennedy Street at Webb Place. Swinton also executed an intricate abstract mosaic which spanned 45 metres across the south façade of the mall's Simpson-Sears outlet. This composition of various blue tones enlivened the the monochromatic colour scheme of the building as a whole. The mosaic was demolished in a 2003 renovation.



Richard Williams, Mock Wall, 1959.

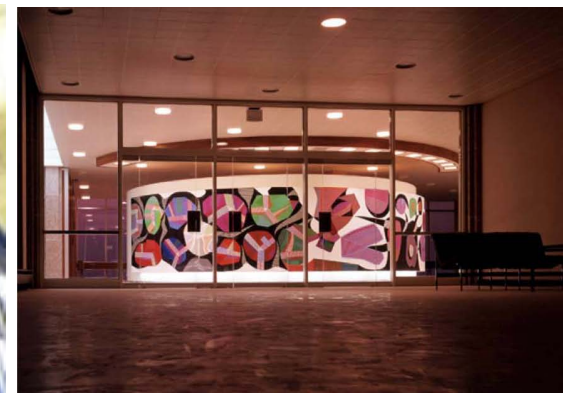
Photo: Richard Williams Fonds, University of Manitoba Archives.

Polo Park's original slate of public art included, as well, a bronze reclining figure, *Bronze Lady*, by Duane Eicholz, also of the Winnipeg School of Art. Eicholz, in partnership with local artist Jim Willer, contributed a large-scale sculptural sundial which graced the mall's Portage Avenue entrance plaza, to the east of Swinton's Simpson-Sears mosaic. Willer also created two intricate relief sculptures for the mall. Made of cement segments held aloft by metal wire, one work was located on the mall's east side and depicted two roosters crowing at the rising sun; on the west side of the complex an owl paid heed to the prairie sunset. The year before, Willer had also completed a linear pre-cast concrete wall relief for the Charleswood Motor Hotel, which was destroyed in 2008. At Polo Park, Richard Williams, director of the School of Art, furthermore designed two additional abstract works: *Birds in a Bluff*, of wood and metal, and the concrete composition *Mock Wall*. These works were removed and demolished over the course of the mall's history. Williams also completed a geometric stainless steel wall relief at the Investors' Syndicate Building (1959, 280 Broadway) which has since been demolished.



*The Four Seasons, Bruce Head, 1959.
Photo: Canadian Mennonite University.*

A vivacious strain of abstraction can be found in another example of public art from this era located at the Canadian Mennonite University (500 Shaftesbury Boulevard). Here, in 1959, in what was then the dining room of the Manitoba Teacher's College, Winnipeg School of Art graduate Bruce Head was commissioned to create a mural to fill a large expanse of plaster wall within the college's main, 1922 collegiate Gothic building (by architect John Atchison). Unveiled in 1960 the completed piece, *The Four Seasons*, is a dramatic and kinetic composition which bears some echoes of the colours and forms of nature and the Manitoba landscape.



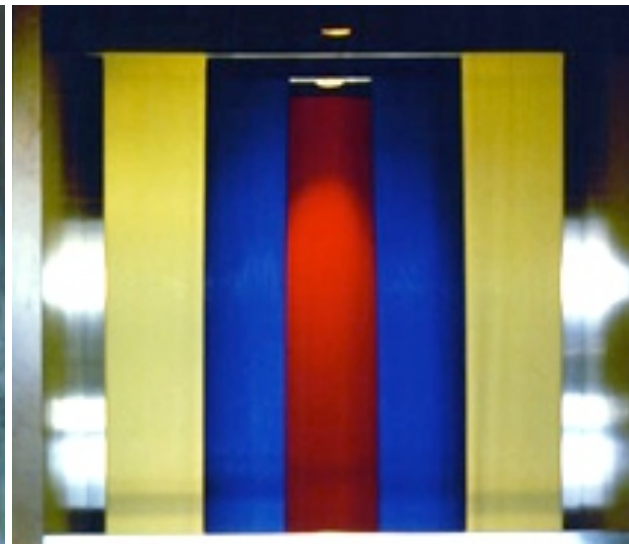
Left: Winnipeg Airport relief mural, John Graham, 1964. Photo: Winnipeg Architecture Foundation. Above: The Prairie, Alfred Pellán, 1964. Photo: Winnipeg Building Index.

Another preponderance of public art during this period came with the construction of the 1964 Winnipeg International Airport. Here the strong art presence was, in part, inspired by the Federal government's establishment of a per cent art program in which one half of one per cent of construction costs were devoted to art. Amongst the pieces which were found here were American-Canadian artist Eli Bornstein's abstract *Structuralist Relief in Fifteen Parts*. This work was removed from the now demolished airport for future installation at the University of Manitoba. At the opposite end of the airport's grand terminal hall from Bornstein's work also stood John Graham's modernist relief mural. Made of metal, mosaic tile and coloured plexiglass, this piece has found a home in Ottawa's Canada Aviation and Space Museum. As with aforementioned public art works of this era, the composition brought a dose of complexity and visual excitement to the elegant simplicity of the modernist terminal. Other works originally found at the airport were prominent Quebec artist Alfred Pellán's ten metre mural *The Prairie*, since moved to Montréal's Mirabel Airport, and Gerald Gladstone's assemblage *Solar Cone*. The airport further held Totem, a 9 metre vertical work by Toronto's Walter Yarwood and Anne Kahane's abstract wood memorial to decorated Canadian First World War pilot Captain Frederick Stevenson, a work which is now located at the Western Canadian Aviation Museum.



*Centennial Concert Hall wallhanging, Kenneth Lochhead, 1967.
Photo: Centre for Contemporary Canadian Art.*

The airport was far from the only large public building from this era to sport such adornments. Beyond the memorial works found in its exterior plaza, the interior of the Manitoba Centennial Centre was bedecked with a number of bold examples of public art. The largest of these stands in the impressive main atrium of the Centennial Concert Hall (1967, 555 Main Street, Associated Architects for the Manitoba Centennial Centre: Green, Blankstein, Russell Associates; Moody, Moore & Partners; Smith, Carter, Searle Associates): a rugged yet intricate ceramic mural by artist Greta Dale which depicts the arts of dance, music and drama. Two murals by artist Tony Tascona are also found on the west end of the Concert Hall's orchestra level corridors. These works – mostly abstract with some elements recalling the Prairie geography – were selected by means of a national competition. A notable detail is the works' medium: painted aluminium; Tascona learned to employ this method by means of his work as an aerospace electroplating technician. In addition, at either end of the main atrium the building also contains enormous abstract wall hangings by noted Canadian artists Takao Tanabe and Kenneth Lochhead.



Left: Pan Am Pool wallhangings, Kenneth Lochhead, 1967. Above: School of Architecture wallhanging, Kenneth Lochhead, 1969. Photos: Centre for Contemporary Canadian Art.

A member of the prominent Canadian group of painters the “Regina Five,” Lochhead executed a number of public art works in Winnipeg during 1960s and 70s. Beyond the Concert Hall, these include two colourful banners at Pan Am Pool (1967), which pleasantly contrasted with the unpainted exposed concrete of the building. Lochhead also produced a striped textile installation at the University of Manitoba School of Architecture (1969, since removed) and works at the Bank of Montreal branches on Mountain Avenue (at McGregor Street) and Portage Avenue (at Hargrave Street) – both since removed.



Southwood Village Sculptures, Joe Fafard, 1967. Photos: Winnipeg Building Index.

The 1960s found public art appearing not only at government, institutional and academic settings, but also within commercially constructed architecture. One of the more interesting examples of this in Winnipeg can be found at the Southwood Village development of 1967. This project, by architects Libling Michener, won a Massey Medal for Architecture and a Canadian Housing Design Council Awards. It features an extensive interior courtyard space, designed by University of Manitoba professor Dennis Wilkinson. Within Wilkinson's plan are set multiple sculptural works, including an intricate modernist fountain by Wilkinson himself and works by School of Art professor J. Daniel and noted Canadian artist – and then University of Manitoba student – Joe Fafard. The examples by Fafard are noteworthy for their abstraction – diverging from the artist's later famous representative style – while still bearing his characteristic sense of joy. Further, more contemporary, Fafard works are on public display at the Manitoba Hydro Building's exterior plazas and lobby, where works by local artists Bruce Head and Steve Gouthro are also exhibited.



Left: Portage and Main concourse, Bruce Head, 1978. Photo: Jeffrey Thorsteinson, 2013.

Above: Rising Form, Tony Tascona, 1977. Photo: Winnipeg Building Index.

Other major public building projects from this era also included a significant art programme. At the Winnipeg Centennial Library (251 Donald Street, McDonald Cockburn McLeod McFeetors, 1977), amongst a large area of exterior pools and fountains, stood a distinctive, angled and brightly coloured sculpture by Tony Tascona, *Rising Form*. Repositioned due to recent renovations, the work still adds a shot of energy to its public plaza setting. In addition, with the controversial 1978 closing of the corner of Portage Avenue and Main Street – and the creation at that point of an underground concourse – the city acquired what it quite likely its largest public art piece, Bruce Head's immense, circular, bare concrete relief. The work features abstract and patterned designs with echoes of geographic and animal imagery.



Above: *Sculpture*, George Norris, 1972. Right: *Drops of Water*, Tony Tascona, 1972. Photos: Winnipeg Building Index.

Another set of 1970s works are located the Freshwater Institute (501 University Crescent, Green Blankstein Russell, 1972). Here, funded by the federal government's one per cent art program, appeared another Tony Tascona work: *Drops of Water*. This group of four "stabiles" hang suspended from lobby ceiling, each carrying four large discs whose design recalls petri dishes filled with microscopic organisms – such as those used at the Institute. A similar reference to building's scientific procedures is found in a piece by Vancouver artist George Norris' angular all-weather sculpture which features multiple globes filled with colourful, bubbling viscous glycol. This work has since been moved from its original exterior location (where it functioned as an all-season fountain) to the building's interior.





Sunbeams (Marching Over The Hill), Ron Gabe, 1966. Photo: Winnipeg Building Index.

Adjacent to the Freshwater Institute, the University of Manitoba campus features an extensive public art program. Beyond the works already discussed this collection includes such pieces as: *Sunbeams (Marching Over The Hill)*, 1966, by Ron Gabe of art collective General Idea; *Night and Day*, 1962, by Cecil Richards; S. G. Esley and Leo Mol's 1958 *Sun and Wheat* and *John the Apostle At The Foot Of The Cross*; and Eli Bornstein's 2008 *Tripart Heaplane Construction No. 2*.



Crossroads Manitoba, Susan Hare, 1975. Photo: Winnipeg Building Index.

Another 1970s city “mega-project” which brought with it a number of examples of public art is the Winnipeg Convention Centre (LM Architectural Group and Number Ten Architectural Group, 1974). Here, on the third floor hang two abstract aluminum and brass works – one each in the west and east side atria, suspended about the staircases. The pieces, entitled *Crossroads Manitoba* were created by artist Susan Hare in 1975. In addition, the Convention Centre holds a number of sculptures by Cecil C. Richards in its central second floor corridor, amongst them the bronze *Parting of the Waters* (1974). Richards’ other public works in the city include the carved wood doors of St. George’s Anglican Church (168 Wilton Street, 1959) and those of the Winnipeg General Hospital chapel.



Untitled ("Artwall"), Winston Leathers, 1972. Photo: Winnipeg Architecture Foundation.

One of the largest public art works in the city is Winston Leathers' untitled 1972 mural on the south wall of the Walker Theatre (now known as the Burton Cummings Theatre, 364 Smith Street). The piece was the result of a national "artwalls" program backed by cigarette manufacturer Benson & Hedges. Three local artists – Bill Lobchuk, Bruce Head and Winston Leathers – were selected by the Winnipeg Art Gallery to complete works in Winnipeg. Leathers, a graduate of the University of Manitoba School of Art who taught at the university's Faculty of Architecture from 1969 to 1993, is known for his innovative and often experimental abstract art. Here the work pulses with an energy recalling cinema, theatrical marquees and science, the latter of which was a preoccupation of the artist.



Top: Gladstone School mosaic, William Enns, 1962. Photo: Winnipeg Architecture Foundation. Bottom: Lord Roberts School relief sculpture, William Enns, 1970. Photo: Jeffrey Thorsteinson, 2013.

During the post-war period, schools too found themselves embellished with examples of public art. In Winnipeg, examples include the geometric mosaic panels decorating Gladstone School (1962, 500 Gertrude Avenue) and the brilliant red relief panels which grace the south entry to Lord Roberts' School (1970, 665 Beresford Avenue).



No. 1 Northern, John Nugent, 1976.
Photo: Winnipeg Architecture Foundation .

While many examples are beloved, public art has often been greeted, as well, with contention. Winnipeg in particular has been the setting for some notable battles in this regard. One of the more famous instances is the tale of John Nugent's No. 1 Northern – originally, and now once again, found located – in front of the Canadian Grain Commission building (303 Main Street). Unveiled 1 June 1976, the large (13 by 7 metre), bright yellow abstract sculpture was another result of the federal one per cent art program. The work's forms echo the rolling golden fields of the prairies as well as the shapes and materiality of farming machinery. Fairly soon after its completion, controversy began when the work was deemed a waste of taxpayers money by Public Works Minister Charles Drury and Agriculture Minister Eugene Whelan, a claim which gained national attention. By 1978 No. 1 Northern was scheduled to be removed; at this point Nugent travelled to Winnipeg to lobby in favour of his piece, considering a court injunction. Nevertheless, in August of that year the sculpture was cut into three pieces and moved to a storage yard in Lockport. Two years later the piece, however, was re-assembled and set outside of the Winnipeg Taxation Centre (66 Stapon Road). Again, though, the work was removed and placed in storage, until, in 1997 it found itself re-installed in its initial location.



Louis Riel, Marcien Lemay and Étienne Gaboury, 1971. Photo: Province of Manitoba. Louis Riel, Miguel Joyal, 1996. Photo: Manitoba Historical Society.

Controversy also characterized the reception of another prominent work of Winnipeg public art. In 1971 a work commemorating Métis leader Louis Riel, founder of the province of Manitoba, was unveiled on the Assiniboine River frontage of the Legislative grounds. The monument, by Franco-Manitoban artist Marcien Lemay and architect Étienne Gaboury (a distant relative of Riel) featured two semi-circular bare concrete walls with incised lines and bearing Riel's name, ensconcing within a bronze sculpture of Riel. The sculpture depicted, in expressionist fashion, Riel as nude and misshapen. While some were content with the work and the acknowledgement of Riel, others argued that this artistic representation was an inappropriate manner in which to commemorate such an important leader. Métis leader Yvon Dumont, for instance, called the original work "shameful," while demanding a more statesmanlike portrayal. In 1995, due to such pressure from within the Métis community and elsewhere, the original memorial was moved to grounds of Université de Saint-Boniface, where it stands today. The following year a new bronze statue of Riel by artist Miguel Joyal was unveiled on the Legislative grounds. This piece – in a more traditional style and taller than even the Golden Boy – depicts Riel in suit and tie.



Justice, Gordon Reeve, 1985. Photo: Jeffrey Thorsteinson, 2013.

While the zenith of public art in Winnipeg came with the decades proceeding the Second World War, the 1980s did see the installation of a number of prominent works in the city. One of the largest and most notable of these is University of Manitoba Fine Arts professor Gordon Reeve's prodigious, 13-metre tall, 1985 stainless steel sculpture *Justice*, set outside the Manitoba Law Courts building from the same year. Constructed in Sweden, the sinuous, curvaceous composition nicely juxtaposes with the angular architectural forms around it. The kinetic work – distinguished by its uncommon ability to move – was one of four commissioned for the new building.



Surprise, Leo Mol, 1976. Photo: Jeffrey Thorsteinson, 2012.

Another significant installation of set of public art works in Winnipeg came with creation of the Leo Mol Sculpture Garden in 1992. Born in Ukraine, prior to his arrival in Manitoba, Mol was trained in sculpture at the Leningrad Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg, Russia. The garden and its art gallery contain hundreds of pieces, with over 200 having been donated by the artist himself. Further Leo Mol works are on public display at the Richardson Building plaza (1 Lombard Place) alongside Ivan Eyre's large bronze work *North Watch* (2010).



Left: *Prairie Boy's Dream*, Warren Carther, 1994. Photo: Warren Carther Glass Studio. Above: *The 'Pioneer' at Fort Garry in 1861*, Adam Sheriff Scott and E. Tappan Adney, 1926. Photo: Jeffrey Thorsteinson, 2013.

The 1990s brought another, very large, public art work to the city – *Prairie Boy's Dream*, by glass artist Warren Carther. This ten metre tall piece consists of two curved glass segments with abstracted geographical imagery. The work is located across the street from the Portage Avenue Hudson's Bay Company store, which contains Adam Sheriff Scott and E. Tappan Adney's 1926 mural *The 'Pioneer' at Fort Garry in 1861*.

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