Jim Adams

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Curators' Introduction

When discussing some of his influences beyond the visual arts, Jim Adams refers to numerous sources ranging from the poetry of LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) to the science fiction writing of Samuel Delaney and William Gibson. Adams also remarks on a few films that have left an indelible impression, one being The *Horse's Mouth* from 1958, which depicts an artist named Gulley Jimson, played by Alec Guinness, who will do almost anything in order to paint. Adams describes his original experience of watching this technicolour feature as both "incredibly aggravating," perhaps on account of the general wickedness of the lead character's personality and the obstacles he faces as an artist, but also fundamentally inspirational. Adams wished later in life that he had "that kind of dedication and single mindedness" of the film's protagonist. It seems clear he has had both. Having created a vast corpus of painted images and assemblage objects spanning five decades, Jim Adams has demonstrated both a tireless commitment and persistent resolve towards his craft without the tempestuous and irascibility of Jimson.

In the four decades since Adams moved from the United States to the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, his contributions to the art community have extended well beyond his creative production. Adams has also made a mark as an educator, an advocate for the arts, and a leader in the cultural community of South Surrey. Yet, it will certainly be his expansive array of artworks that will have the most lasting impact, capturing both the specificity of his surroundings and aspects of the human condition. *Jim Adams: The Irretrievable Moment* is a two-part retrospective that brings together many of his most accomplished works and presents them over the course of five months in two venues: Surrey Art Gallery and The Reach Gallery Museum Abbotsford.

For the first time in over thirty-five years, the exhibition presents selections from Adams early artist books and prints. His earliest book works combine poetry with punchy visual imagery. There is a raw simplicity and minimal economy to the warm linocut tones in *Argument on the Sun* (1965) that sets it apart from the pop conceptual appropriations of corporate logos in *Thought* (1966) and the brightly hued lithographs based on found photographs in *Arab Israeli Conflict* (1966).

The raven imagery of *Night Raven Portfolio* (1968) and *Love Song for Libby* (1971) are harbingers to the artist's

later use of birds (particularly hawks and owls) in his paintings of the 1990s and 2000s. At the same time, Adams' early prints (such as *Roger as Falconer*, 1969) exhibit the qualities of what would later become an approach to portraiture that merged specificity of individuals with universal personae.

Among the bodies of work assembled for the exhibition, Adams many images of flight culture most clearly engage with the legacies of modern art. The artist's vivid renderings of non-commercial aircraft capture the spirit of liberation embodied in these gliding and soaring forms that first inspired him as a child growing up in within the tenement building canyons of inner city Philadelphia beneath a highly trafficked flight path. In Adams paintings of the 1980s, the airplane is both an extension of the artist himself, as in *Centurion Self Portrait* (1984), and a vehicle for creativity and expression.

The images of taxiing and parked planes preening upon the tarmac for adoring audiences (*The Poleskie Panels*, 1985), and of individuals dressed-up and promenading between hulking steel forms (*Airshow Annie*, 1982) before the very same audiences, suggest parallel rituals and habits of the airshow and museum. These aerial projectiles become mechanisms for the artist to examine colour, line, and form while engaging with modern art history. With its dizzying weightlessness

and indeterminate horizon, the fuselage and wing patterns in *Polish Camel* (*PLZ Dromeder*, 1981) read like a found geometric abstract or op art painting. Yet these are simultaneously representational images that defy genres of landscape, portraiture, still life. Altitude becomes form.

Toward the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, the airplane receded into the background in Adams work as the landscape and human figure entered the outer limits of the frame. Yet it would be incorrect to see this reduction in scale of the aircraft figure as a diminishment in meaning. The distant plane, as in *08:15:40 08/06/45 (The Bride)* (1987) is deceptively central to the picture—dropping the first atomic bomb that forever changed history. As with so many of Adams landscape and suburbanscape paintings from the 1990s, *Final Approach* (1996) is dominated by the changing colours and atmospherics of the sky. As the artist put it, "In a seeming contradiction to its advertised image, White Rock is a city of skies, not beaches. Its location and architecture provide an ideal setting for the constantly changing aerial theatrics and fireworks which, in turn, serve an unending challenge to the artist."[1] A number of these landscapes collapse an ancient civilization, Cydonia—that some have speculated may have existed on the planet Mars—with landscapes based on the artist's immediate surroundings in the South of Fraser Region of Metro
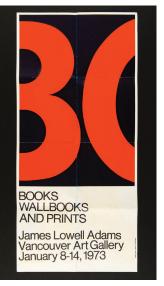

Roger as Falconer | 1969
61 x 51 cm
Transfer print

Vancouver. *Peaceable Kingdom (Homage to John Martin and C.D. Friedrich)* (1996) was the first painting with figures situated in an expansive landscape. Many of the pictures from this period present scenes of individuals or couples in private residences, as if glimpsed through a window in ways that evoke Edward Hopper's early to mid-century masterworks on modern isolation and loneliness. Yet they depart from Hopper in their depiction of vast, dramatic skies with the frequent addition of barely visible scenes of criminality and arrest of individuals by the authorities, that indicate, as the artist once wrote, "the social fabric of the community is undergoing profound—and often distressing—change."2

Another pattern that can be detected when looking across the decades of Adams practice is his return to the global armed conflicts of his day. The various African civil wars of the late 20th century, the Gulf War (1990–1991), and the Syrian War (2011–present) inspire a number of images that comment on the senselessness and inhumanity of war. *Suburban Pyramid (Arab Spring)* (2012) conflates the suburban bungalows of his home environment with the bombed out homes of various cities in the Middle East following the Arab Spring uprising that began in 2010. Other pictures depict instances of significant social upheaval, such as the turmoil and unrest predicted by the Y2K bug millennium scare of 2000

(*Millennial Disturbance*, 1997) and the momentous environmental catastrophe in 2010 of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico seen in *Payback (Posiedon's Pickle)* (2011).

Surrey Art Gallery's presentation also brings together key selections from the artist's diverse and wide-ranging mid-career engagement with forms of portraiture. In addition to his rendering of key historical personalities of African-American history in the 1990s, Adams regularly painted people within his Lower Mainland community. In a more recent case, *Scribe of Bastet (Crazy Cat Lady #1, Portrait of Dee Walmsley)* (2016) renders Adams friend as both ancient Egyptian writer and goddess of domesticity, fertility, and cats. Members of his own family, especially his wife and two children, have appeared in numerous paintings. Often these family members or friends appear in hybrid form, such as the domestic worker pictured in *Endurance* (1994), that is, in part, a portrait of his mother. *In Gulf Stream (A Portrait of the Artist's Father (And a Nod to Winslow Homer)* (1999), the figure is simultaneously representative of a train porter, a profession many African-American men occupied in the late nineteenth to mid-20th century due to restrictions on other professions, and the artist's father who worked in this capacity for a time.

Though Jim Adams has not explicitly dedicated

Poster advertising early exhibition of Jim Adams' print work at the Vancouver Art Gallery | 1973

himself to unpacking the colonial elements of the African diaspora, the works presented at The Reach trace two important threads in the artist's career that provide oblique, but nevertheless connected, perspectives on the politics of racial representation in Canada today.

Primarily from the last three decades of the artist's career, a significant selection of works highlight the artist's lifelong interest in cultural meta-narratives, especially those drawn from Egyptian and Classical mythologies. Over time, the processes of colonization and cultural imperialism have erased the ethnic origins of many of these narratives. Tracing the trajectory of mythological themes and the depiction of deities from ancient Egypt to Greece and beyond, artists have predominantly portrayed these figures as racially white. Adams concerns himself with restoring African heritage to the art historical record both in terms of the origin of these enduring stories, and in the racial identity of the figures who populate them.

Joining legions of artists before him, Adams is captivated by the universality of myths and, like his forebears, contextualizes and contemporizes these sweeping tales according to his own experience. In re-envisioning these universalizing stories, Adams tackles contemporary social conditions like militarization, urban industrialism, environmental destruction, and poverty while returning black figures to the equation. Though Adams is not overt or dogmatic about his politics, the depiction of race in his mythological imagery is both notable and poignant.

Selections from *Mythological Sketches* and the *Mythic Portraits* that followed are included at both The Reach and Surrey Art Gallery. These paintings introduce Adams' contemporary and remarkably motley pantheon of Greek gods and goddesses. Sporting tank tops, tattoos, bustiers, and aviator sunglasses, this indecorous cast of characters has more in common with the banal, idiosyncratic qualities of present-day popular culture than with the hallowed realm of togas and pyramids. A significant and recurring quality in Adams *Sketches* is the significant foreshortening of spatial depth within which the artist has framed his subjects. The effect is similar to the point of view seen frequently in social media selfies—the "sketches" of the digital age.

Adams use of iconography acknowledges the long history of artistic representation associated with his mythic subjects, but goes to great lengths to bring them up to date. For example, in *Lil' Zoose* (2008), Zeus is portrayed in baggy jeans and a skull cap with

a gold medallion around his neck. The Greek-god-cum-hip-hop artist sits atop a throne of speakers in an ominous urban landscape, the archetype of black masculinity. Adams version of the goddess of justice and battle, Athena, is a muscular, attractive, and ruggedly wary woman of colour dressed in camouflage (*Athena/Monrovia*, 2003). In this instance, the goddess is doubly personified as both the Greek goddess and as Monrovia, a city in Western Liberia ravaged by civil war in the 1990s. Meanwhile, *Persephone* (2009), an attractive young woman in a skin-tight purple mini-dress, waits on an urban sidewalk for the streetcar that will transport her back to the underworld, just as the snow begins to fall. Apotheosis for Adams is not always grand; it is often attained by those whose greatest accomplishments are to endure the conditions of modern life.

Also on view at The Reach are selected sculptural assemblages from the artist's *Deities Revisted* series. Adams pays homage to the bounty of mythological traditions found in Africa, in this case reinventing the likenesses of Yoruban deities using found objects and toy parts. These boldly decorated divinities are armed with action hero defenses, prepared to play out their mythic roles in the twenty-first century. Adams hybridization of gods and goddesses with mass-produced children's toys is consistent with the adaptation of Yoruba itself, as its spiritual and

cultural practices have been transmitted across the world through various diasporic periods.

A selection of Adams shaped paintings on plates, and larger shaped canvases from the *Minor Sun* series (2002) point to another persistent source of artistic subject matter in his career: flight, space, and intergalactic possibilities. Adams painted plates, mostly created in the 1990s, use the unique ready-made concave surface of dining plates to extend the illusion of distant landscapes seen from great heights, while additional surfaces are suspended across the edges of the plate provide an immediate foreground – often a pilot in a cockpit. These precise and playful works unite Adams love of flight and his recurring interest in extending the painting beyond the limits of the picture plane. Adams experimentation with the shaped canvas continues in his *Minor Suns* series and in a series of small planet paintings from the early 2000s that echo the circular format of the plates. In these works, Adams moves us outside the familiar realms of our own solar system and creates his own stellar and planetary possibilities, what he describes as "landscapes that we have yet to travel to, except in our imagination." [3]

Adams works connect tangentially to broader themes of Afrofuturism; however, he is ambivalent about Mark Dery's consequential suggestion that black thinkers,

artists, and writers have been underrepresented in the science fiction genre.[4] Adams cites far-reaching examples from the west-African Dogon people (whose remarkable celestial knowledge is credited to their extraterrestrial origin stories) to contemporary graphic novels (like Disney's *Red Pyramid* published in 2012) as evidence of a consistent and abiding connection to the genre. Though matters of race are clearly presented throughout the artist's career, he takes a broad view of its role in his practice, stating "creative people reflect the world they exist in and in my work; people and environments of all stripes and persuasions are interchangeable."[5] Overarching mythic and intergalactic themes in Adams work prompt us to mine the primordial and binding depths of human experience and push us to expand the boundaries of what we imagine our possible futures to be, collapsing the outermost borders of time as we know it.

1 Jim Adams, Changes: *Recent Work of Jim Adams*. White Rock: Community Arts Council Gallery White Rock, 1994, p.1.

2 *Ibid*, p.1.

3 Jim Adams, "Stellar Journeys" in *Journey*. Surrey: Surrey Art Gallery, 2002, p.49.

4 As posited by Mark Dery, in "Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delaney, Greg Tate and Tricia Rose," *Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture.* Mark Dery, ed. Duke University Press, 1994.

5 Personal correspondence with Laura Schneider, October 12, 2016.

The title of the exhibition refers to a central theme that runs through Adams work. The irretrievable moment is that moment where, according to Adams, "you have committed to the action but the action hasn't actually happened yet." Or, it is that moment when nothing has happened, but a critical transformation is about to take place. We are hopeful that a big transformation is imminent for the way we think about our country and its history. To acknowledge Canada's 150th year of Confederation, The Reach Gallery Museum Abbotsford and Surrey Art Gallery have separately committed to exhibitions and programs that explore and critique the colonial history of our country and emphasize artistic gestures of decolonization. We are pleased to collaboratively present the work of Jim Adams at this important moment not only in our country's history, but also in the far longer history of this land and community of peoples that call this land home. The work of Jim Adams, with its interrogation of identity that spans vast geographies and epochs, has much to say about the limits of the nation and easy categories of identity. We thank him for sharing his thought provoking and visually engaging art with our viewers and we know that Adams work will continue to stimulate thought and strong emotions for many decades to come.

Laura Schneider
Executive Director & Curator
The Reach Gallery Museum Abbotsford

Jordan Strom
Curator of Exhibitions and Collections
Surrey Art Gallery

Jim Adams' Transformative Places

Jim Adams' Transformative Places

Sylvia Grace Borda

The universal challenge facing any painter is: how does one depict a vision of place with imagination and originality? Surrey-based artist Jim Adams has been responding to this challenge throughout his career by renewing viewers' perceptions about the local landscape. His paintings are uniformly compelling as he 'positions' his subjects across a number of literal and metaphorical points of reference. His canvases are infused with colour, contrast, and references to art history, creating a blend of localized environments with emotive compositions and enigmatic titles.

In this way, Jim Adams' distinctive approach deserves revisiting again and again. There is no one definitive way to summarize his opus of artwork over the decades. Adams has invented a unique visual language of his own; one that is wide open by intent, creating a renewed sense of place that co-exists with layers of meaning. He cleverly blends present-day reality that resides within a historical landscape to shape a modern portrait of time and place.

Adams' lengthy career as a painter reveals the kind of artistic confidence that comes from a depth of art historical knowledge, and applied to a body of work that demonstrates a breadth of personal interests.

For example, a series of airplane paintings by Adams during the 1980s illustrates the artist's lifelong interest in flight (so intense is this interest that Adams got his pilot's license in 1976). His stylistic references to Pop Art from this period deserves some mention; in particular, his overtures to two pop icons, James Rosenquist (b.1933) and Roy Lichtenstein (1923-1997).

Rosenquist is known for a style appropriated from commercial painting and applied to large-scale works that fragment consumer imagery using a palette of bright Day-Glo colours. Rosenquist tackled the theme of aviation in the context of the Vietnam War and consumerism in his *F-111 (1964-1965)*, a large-scale depiction of a military plane flying through disjointed images of consumer products. Adams' works *Triple Juliet* (1983), *Grand Commander* (1976/77), and *Airshow Annie* (1982), recall Rosenquist's approach to colour in their rich ambers, oranges and reds, offset with deep blue skies. These images reflect Adams' ability to extend the compositional and colouristic qualities from American Pop Art to the Northwest Coast's unique suburban landscape.

Cornered at Six (Onley Evades Pop and Conceptual Attacks) | 1984
61 x 91.5 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Adams' airplanes are usually represented as partial or complete entities, with figures situated either around the aircraft or reflected in the glass of the cockpit or the sheen of the fuselage. This choice may be informed by the work of another Pop artist, Roy Lichtenstein. Lichtenstein is known for his adoption of the comic-strip inspired Ben-Day dot imagery in his artworks, such as the 1967 work *Explosion* (from *Portfolio 9*, 1967) and iconic comic-book panel *Whaam!* (1963), which depicts two fighter planes in combat. Lichtenstein himself often re-imagined art historical compositions (for example, reworking Claude Monet's in *Rouen Cathedral* in 1968-69), and integrated narrative and compositional elements of past painters into his own works. For example, in

Stepping Out (1978), Lichtenstein depicts a man and woman, standing side by side, both quite dapperly dressed. The male is based on a figure in French cubist Fernand Léger's painting *Three Musicians* (1944), while the female figure resembles the Surrealistic women depicted by Pablo Picasso during the 1930s. Lichtenstein's resulting composition in *Stepping Out* is an elaborate hybrid of references, a strategy adopted by Adams throughout his career.

In title and substance, *Cornered at Six: Onley evades Conceptual and Pop Art* (1984), blends references to well-known Canadian painter, friend and fellow pilot, Tony Onley (1928-2004) with stylistic elements from Pop Art. Born on the Isle of Man but established

as an artist in Canada and closely identified with West Coast landscapes, Onley's abstract coastal landscapes of muted greys, aquamarines, and earth tones were a stark contrast to the languages of Pop and Conceptualism that were highly influential on Canadian artists in the last few decades of the 20th century. In Adams' painting, Onley is portrayed in profile sitting in a plane awash in palette of bold yellows, oranges and reds, reminiscent of Rosenquist. The plane is depicted as if taking off; it occupies three-quarters of the foreground and is seen evading Lichtenstein-inspired painted explosions around it. There is an added poignancy to the portrait in light of Onley's tragic death in his amphibious plane when it crashed into the Fraser River in 2004. Adams offers a complex vision, not least of which is modern art's tendency to borrow from and alter iconic artworks of the past. Adams takes cues from Pop Art, but takes this painting a step further by converting the work into something that extends beyond the style's references to mass culture. Adams personalizes the superficiality of Pop Art, making it reflective of local sensibilities, personalities, and his own aesthetics.

Adams is an artist curiously in step and out of time, selecting from a range of styles and subjects in a way that make his works uniquely his own. For example, Adams is sometimes a painter of everyday life, depicting subjects that may be considered as unworthy or outside the conventions of tradition. Other areas of his work are unmistakably influenced by 19th and early 20th century painters like Vincent Van Gogh and René Magritte. Adams' paintings also use

tropes from other artistic genres including film noir. Cinematic devices like stark light and dark contrasts, wide-angle or skewed views, and the use of reflective surfaces to layer compositional imagery are deployed in Adams paintings, as in film, to disorientate our sense of reality.

Many of Adams' paintings modernize the urban and suburban landscape illustrating both its grit and grace. *Magritte's Ghost* (1994) portrays a large white owl swooping across a sky at sunset as an ode to the surrealist painter, and possibly eliciting a tribute to Magritte's own painting, *The Night Owl* (1928). *Nighthawks: Homage to Hopper* (1995) is a complicated composition of vertical planes. An updated version of Hopper's café, Adams situates his version firmly in the familiarity of a Starbucks, replacing the Americana of Hopper's time with the anonymity of the suburban corporate coffeeshop. Patrons in Adams' café include the artist himself. Adams makes many cameos in his own paintings, perhaps paying homage to artists like Velazquez' who cleverly, and famously, inserted himself into *Las Meninas*, around 1656. As in Hopper's painting, the figures go about their evening routines, whilst the sense of drama in the work comes largely from the contrast between the everydayness of what is happening indoors and the intensity of the electrical posts and trees silhouetted against the setting sun in the dusk sky outside the café.

The paintings *Peaceable Kingdom: Homage to John Martin and C.D. Friedrich* (1996) and *Cydonian Sea (with thanks to Arnold Böcklin)* (1999) use art

historical references and a montage of techniques, leaving clues for the savvy viewer to decode. The 19th century German artist, Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840), painted the landscape scene *Man and Woman Contemplating the Moon* (1824), in which two enigmatic figures are caught gazing at the moon and bathed in a purple nightscape—nearly swallowed by the richness of colour on the canvas. Likewise, Adams uses his colour palettes to elicit emotion—orange, red, and purple hues dominate, reflecting on his trees and adorning his skies—close in spirit to Friedrich. Quiet neighbourhoods are pictured against dramatic skyscapes at dusk, dawn and night, adding to the intimations, mood, and layers of interpretation possible in Adams' work. This depiction of in-between places could belong to any suburb in Canada or in the United States. What defines Adams' paintings are the haunting skyscapes domineering the pictorial horizons, a quality also found in the works of iconic Romantic landscape painter, Joseph Turner (1775-1851). Like Freidrich and Turner, the vast and vivid skyscapes in many of Adams' suburban pictures from the 1990s, including *In Living Colour* (1991), frame the human figures within complex emotional and social settings.

Later works in the artist's oeuvre are equally connected to the history of modern art. Adams' modern day trompe l'oeil *UFO Fragments* serve as both a play on the illusion of pictorial space and a Dadaist montage of real and seemingly unrelated objects. In this series, Adams cleverly uses perceived dimensional and tonal details to create volumetric spaces, with the addition

of real objects—such as a fragment of celluloid film, 33 millimeter slides, a baseball card, or newspaper clippings—caught between the picture plane and the frame. Works like *UFO Fragments* ask us to suspend any disbelief and to enter the artist's spatial and narrative world.

UFO Fragment #7 (Trading Card) | 1998
20 x 20 cm
Acrylic on canvas

A significant portion of artworks completed in the 1980s and 1990s could characterize Adams as the preeminent South Surrey-White Rock basin Painter of that time. Adams holds a place among his contemporaries, and artists from a younger generation, whose paintings are deeply indebted to the Surrey basin region—artists such as Vojislav Morosan (b.1941), Chris McLure (b. 1943), Elizabeth Hollick (b. 1944) and Don Li-Leger (b. 1948) yet he is unique in the ways in which his works explore

local landscape. Adams' work in White Rock started with totemic scenes illustrating a rapidly changing urban environment, defining and documenting this changeable landscape. Paintings such as *Dead End* (1992), *Full Moon* (1993) and *July Storms* (1996) portray a geometric organization of houses, a mosaic of horizontal and vertical constructions, and unreal figures defined as silhouettes caught in staccato motion. The portrayals seem to occur equally under the weight of remembered experience and the freedom of imagined narrative. The places, people, and context of Adams' images hold a mystery that is skillfully played out in both the artist's depictions and the titling of the work. Adams' description of the local is achieved with the richness of pre-Raphaelite tableau and the allegorical qualities of Victorian landscape. Darkness and light, fiction and representation, order and chaos, are negotiated across the artist's canvases, tracing the evolution the landscape of Surrey-White Rock.

The psycho-geography of Adams' local neighbourhood seems to exert an almost obsessive hold on his imagination. That something, that "hold"—a memory, a recalled experience or encounter from walking around a familiar neighbourhood—is hinted at, but never delineated. It lurks in all of Adams' suburban paintings. It is there, not just in the seemingly mundane subject matter, but in his commitment to realism in painting. Details in Adams' works are important as evidenced in the specificity and prevalence of personal and art historical iconography. Given this, and his recurring references late-modernist painting,
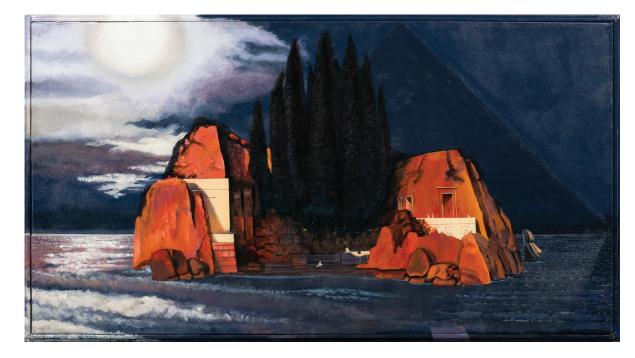

it is unsurprising that the artist chooses to work in acrylic paint a medium favoured by 20th century artists for both its flexibility and immediacy.

So why does Adams keep going back to his neighbourhood, literally and metaphorically?

An underlying social commentary also comes through in Adams works. Neighbourhoods are not static— they are as vibrant and diverse and personalized as those who live and dream in them. Alienation and belonging, the moment of now and obsolescence, absurdity and truth, these are the benchmarks of Adams' contribution to the contemporary oeuvre of West Coast painting.

In Living Colour (8p.m. chan. 13) | 1991
112 x 213 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Adams is guiding us on a journey through the interpretation of art history through the lens of the regional landscape. In this exchange, he artfully uses geography to prompt the viewer to further consider their own social role in wider histories: those histories that have passed, and those that we are in the process of creating. This ongoing consideration of time, and our place in it, is the strength of Adams' opus which is also distinguished by scale, ambition, story and intrigue.

All of us belong, fleetingly, to a vanishing world. What Adams does eloquently through paint is to give us a window of opportunity to see ourselves as part of the mundane, grounded in the urban everyday, while simultaneously creating a renewed landscape of the imagination for us. His pictures are unsettling as they suggest real or familiar locations, while also alluding to something extraordinary, often through striking cloudscapes, or subtle artistic gestures that hint at events or actions just about to occur that will shatter the illusion of normalcy.

The exhibition *Jim Adams: The Irretrievable Moment* allows us to explore these many layers and to deepen our understanding of an artist who provides us with an unrivalled opportunity to shape our own perceptions of the local and its transformative potential. Ultimately, Adams' paintings ask each of us: can we find beauty, history, or strength within ourselves to respond with imagination to our own backyard?

Cydonian Sea (with thanks to Arnold Böcklin) | 1999
75.5 x 139 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Interview with Jim Adams

Interview with Jim Adams

Yaniya Lee

I reached Jim Adams over Skype at his home in White Rock. Both times I spoke to him, he had just finished a full day of painting. He jokes about art making as a kind of bug or disease: "I've got it, I can't get rid of it. I have to scratch that itch every day or else I get grumpy." Decades ago, Jim drove to British Colombia from the east coast of the United States and never looked back. He lives a peaceful life in Surrey, inspired by the never ending beauty of the coast.

Jim's work departs dramatically from the painting traditions that have been central to narratives of BC art history. Neither does it fit squarely into the styles of black Canadian artists. Emerging from a firmly American tradition with both European and regional influences, Jim has developed a unique and recognizable style throughout the different stages of his work.

His deep love of painting reaches way beyond the bounds of visual arts into mythology, science fiction, history and world events. Jim's not a talker, he's a doer. "I just paint!" He tells me, "Either it works or it doesn't." Knowing this, I approach our conversation hoping to learn a bit more about his practice, and the artists that inspire him. Languid from having been focused in the studio all day, he answers my questions full of patience and good humour.

How did you become a painter? Did you have specific influences?

I was about eight or nine when I started painting and drawing things. The first painting that really made me want to become a painter was a painting of the interior of the St. Lawrence Church in Amsterdam. (This was in at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, my father had taken me there.) The artist is unknown. It's a small painting of a white interior with beautiful light. I stood in front of that painting for a good half hour. I'm almost positive that was the day I said: *This is what I want to do!*

Obviously my father was a great influence for me. Other than being a musician, he was also a painter. He didn't have a chance really to do much because working and playing music took up most of his time, but I guess I got my bug from him. If he hadn't hauled me off to the art gallery, God know what would have happened.

What kind of paintings did you end up making?

My earliest serious work was flight related. I spent a good twenty years painting airplanes and things that flew. Eventually it started to transform itself from,

say, a close up of an airplane, to an airplane in the sky, to an airplane in the sky that was part of a landscape. All of the sudden the airplane was smaller and the sky was larger and I realized that I was interested in not only the object in the sky but the sky itself.

I think that really began to hit home when we moved to White Rock, which is right over the edge of the country. We live right on the ocean. When you look out what you see is not necessarily the ocean—that only takes up a quarter of the image—it's really all the sky. I became fascinated with the sky and the landscapes just started to happen.

Has the geography of White Rock become a part of your practice?

It has. It's a remarkable landscape. Up until a few years ago it was a retirement community. It's surrounded by the municipality of Surrey, which is a much larger area. White Rock, for the most part, sits on a hillside, and you can see the ocean from just about any street corner.

I've always had a window on the world in my studio here. I can look out and see what's going on. The town is not frenetic. It's not busy like downtown Vancouver or downtown Toronto. It's very quiet, and that has an effect on me. I guess it's quieted me down, I can paint

the world from a very calm place and think about my work at a more leisurely pace.

What techniques and methods did you learn early on?

I actually thought I'd never be able to paint because when I was in undergraduate school oil paints were the only thing you could paint with. I was far too impatient for oil paints. Everything ended up being brown! It wasn't till I discovered acrylics—they came out around that time—that I realized I actually could paint, because I had found a medium that agreed with me. With acrylics things could be done a lot faster than you could with oil.

I was a printmaking major in undergraduate school. The strong, black and white bold, hard edges were something that attracted me and really influenced my painting. At the beginning I didn't have a lot of detail. As I went on the detail became greater and greater. I realized that I liked symbols, and you need to have more detail to get the symbol into the painting.

You've spoken of your admiration for Charles Sheeler. Sheeler trained in industrial drawing and, for part of his career, focused on urban architecture. Is there anything you see your work responding to in his distinct style?

The massive forms and shapes. He was very much involved with the whole industrial thing, Precisionism. I like that. Being born in 1943, I guess I've got art deco in my blood. That streamline elegance of the industrial form is something that I've always admired. It shows up in my work in one way or another, in shape or form or the scale of the forms. Its interesting combining something like that, Sheeler's work, with what Hopper did. It makes for some interesting images.

Edward Hopper was an early and mid-20th century American painter, as was Grant Wood. Would you say you picked up on some of their approaches to picture making?

More so from Edward Hopper than Grant Wood. Wood I liked simply because of his skills and his sense of clarity. With Hopper it's the light and isolation that have always attracted me. I find in his work a sense of quietness, of contemplation…of peacefulness really. Although a lot of his work does have a great deal of subtle angst and drama in it.

It seems like those are sensibilities that are present in your own practice: the solitude, the peacefulness, and also the conflict laced beneath the surface.

It does have an effect on my work. There's a large Edward Hopper poster that sits on the floor in my office that I look at a great deal. It's called *Chop Suey*. It's the interior of a Chinese restaurant in the twenties. There's just something in it that I always strive for. There's light coming in that intensifies the isolation. Even though there's only two people in the room, they seem to be very separate. You can focus on

either of the persons and really begin to understand what it is that they're about. And I try to put that in my work, probably not as successfully as Hopper, but I really try get that sense of the person in the work.

What about the painter Jacob Lawrence? You made a portrait of him in the past. What draws you to him?

He's a fascinating man. There's something about the drama of his work that makes me sit up and take notice. He was the first black artist that I ever came across when I was very young (other than my father). He's got a really strong sense of color, which I admire, and of observation. What intrigued me most was his feeling for shapes: he simplifies forms a great deal. He's talking about some very very complex issues, yet he's able to distill those things that he sees into forms which are clear and easily recognizable by the viewer. That really impressed me. The fact that he could see that clearly and really discern what going on in a particular instance.

What are some of the situations or sentiments you've tried to capture in your own work?

The irretrievable moment is something that is really fascinating to me. It's that frozen moment in between when you've started something and before it happens. You've initiated an action and you can't take it back, but it hasn't happened yet.

Could you describe one of these paintings?

The one that's most poignant is of a young Japanese woman in a white kimono. It's an image of a Japanese bride and she's walking under a beautiful sunlit sky to her wedding. It's called *08:15:40 08/06/45 (The Bride)*. It's the time just after the atomic bomb has been released from the airplane over Hiroshima. If you look into the sky she's walking this way and there's a small contour of an airplane going the other way. So she's about to be blown to eternity, but it hasn't happened yet.

In a way, capturing that moment allowed you to speak about much larger events and issues.

Exactly, which is why I also like myths, because they deal with human foibles, things that are the same today as they were three hundred years ago, or one thousand years ago. Human nature doesn't change. People get angry, people get frustrated, people will do things on an emotional level that they would not do otherwise. We're very consistent. We still have anger and prejudice.

08:15:40 08/06/45 (The Bride) | 1987
61 x 122 cm
Acrylic on canvas

For the last 5 years, I've been working with the classic myth and trying to break it into the 21st century. Zeus and Hera, for example. Or Odan from the Nigerian Yoruba. All myths sort of came out of East Africa, along with the people, as they spread throughout the world. Of course, over time they were modified and changed, but essentially they're the same myth. Joseph Campbell would call them creation myths. Those are the myths I work with. It's not a new idea, if you ever look at any of the paintings in art history, by Rembrandt or Caravaggio, you will see that they painted myths and put them into contemporary situations.

Your paintings frequently make reference to geopolitical conflict—such as various late 20th century African conflicts, the Gulf War, or recently the Syrian War. What compels you about these subjects, and how do you go about painting them?

I think that's why I started on the myth series. When I do paintings that have geopolitical references, it's because we're still dealing with the same things today that we were dealing with a thousand years ago. The same need to dominate, and the same need to overcome someone else's way of thinking. It hasn't changed. I guess because human nature hasn't changed. And I try to point that out.

If it's your understanding of human nature that nothing changes, why make the viewer stop and consider a single moment?

Because I'm an eternal optimist! I keep thinking: *Well, maybe this will make people stop and change.* It doesn't, but I keep trying. That's my lot in life: to try and make people see things in a way that may make them change their thinking.

You see far too many bloody bodies on the street or things that are blown up. If you can look at something which is perfectly fine and perfectly formed and know that there is nothing you can do to stop it from being destroyed, maybe it'll make you stop and think: *Hey, maybe we shouldn't pull the trigger on that, maybe we should look at things in a different way.*

That's what I keep hoping will happen.

Mythic Sketches

Mythic Sketches

Jim Adams

Myth *myth*\ *legendary narrative that presents part of the beliefs of a people or explains a practice or natural phenomenon.*

Sketch \ *skech*\ *a rough drawing or outline*

The need for an artist to sketch is ever-present, even in the 21st century when advances in technology increase an artist's ability to create and understand their imagery. And with these advances, it is still essential that the artist be able to sketch or "note-take" effectively by hand—in either two or three dimensions—so that the creative effort is not solely dependent on a convenient technology. Sketches, especially those bearing on the idea rather than detail, are the very core of works of art.

For centuries, artists have used myths—both classic and obscure—to depict issues and conflicts that are as significant today as they were in earlier times. Jealousy, ambition, hubris, greed and the glorification of warfare are essentially the same as they were in the age of the classic Greeks or the Kingdom of Great Zimbabwe. The only things that have changed are the clothes and the technology we use. Marie Phillips, in her novel *Gods Behaving Badly* (Back Bay Books 2007), transforms such gods as Apollo into a TV psychic and Aphrodite into a telephone sex worker, bringing their "skills" into a more contemporary setting. My Mythic Sketches series is a collection of preliminary works that make reference to various myths shown in contemporary settings.

Sketches are the base upon which an artist builds his or her work. They are invaluable in that they allow artists to see their ideas in a concrete form and provide them with a guide as they develop their work.
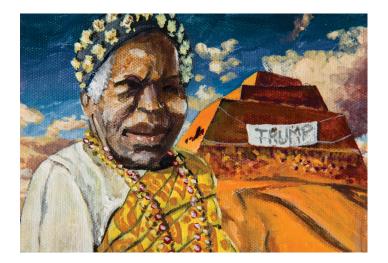
Sketches come in many forms and on many levels: they may be a thumbnail sketch, a brief, concise drawing of a few lines that is quickly done when the idea is fresh on the artist's mind; they might be a croquis (crow-key), which is the French word for a quick sketch, but one that is in greater detail than a thumbnail sketch; or a sketch might be a study, a more complete drawing or painting which gives a more complete idea of what the finished work will look like, or a detailed examination of a particular part of the final work. Works of all three types can be seen in this exhibition.

In some cases, a single canvas or panel may contain more than one study of various parts of a projected painting that, while not necessarily belonging together, are grouped for convenience of reference. With the exception of a detailed study of a particular fragment, sketches are meant for their "note-taking" rather than the formal accuracy that will come in the final work.

Within the different types of sketches there are different levels of finish; this applies with greater emphasis to studies. There are quick studies which provide an overall impression of what a finished work will look like. There are more detailed studies, where details are more closely explored. In whatever form they take, sketches are that essential and invaluable tool that artists rely upon.

As is the tradition when working with myths, the reference points (clothing, setting) are often contemporary, as is the case with the works you see here. Another point you will note is the use of black figures in many of the pieces. This is in reference to the theory of Afrocentric Art History, which states that it is "A general theory of the origins of humans on the African Continent ... *Winckelmann's History of Ancient Art* (1764) is generally recognized as founding the discipline of art history. It emphasizes that the 'imperfection' of ancient Egyptian art was inevitable due to that culture's 'lack of beautiful models,[1] a situation contrary to that in which Greek art developed. However, recent evidence that Egyptian deities and, ultimately, Greek Philosophy

Nubian Express | 2013
13 x 18 cm
Acrylic on canvas

were partially derived from sub-Saharan cultures will further affect our understanding about the origins of Western art." I also use them to make reference to the complexity and commonality of myths worldwide. 2

Ozymandias | 2013
13 x 18 cm
Acrylic on canvas

The development of an idea can be seen in the progression of the sketches of *Suburban Pyramids*. Starting with the black-and-white thumbnail, moving through the small croquis in colour, and on to the larger quick studies. Working in this way helps the artist settle on a direction to start the final work. Quite often the artist will be dissatisfied and the idea will end with the sketches or be set aside for reconsideration at a later date.

Throughout all of the works here you can see the combination of the concept of the classic myth with current imagery. In *Ozymandias*, there is reference to the fallen monuments of past empires with the trappings of a current one. The various *Nubian Express* sketches are variations on the idea of the caravan which would be a part of a larger work.

Artists find that, while working on one work, other ideas will be sparked and sketches come into their own as notes for future reference. The artist develops a "shorthand" that, in some cases, is indecipherable in form or meaning to anyone but the artist. It's only after a careful study of a large body of an artist's work that some sense of the artist's thinking process may be gleaned. The sketches in this exhibition have fairly straightforward imagery, but the concepts and interpretations they are tied to give them an entirely different life, and in doing so provoke both thought and challenge in the viewer. Even in sketches, the core of the concept is on display, translating these brief works into more meaningful statements.

1 See *Bulfinch Dictionary of Art terms*, Little Brown, 1992

2 See Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, with Bill Moyers, Anchor Books 1991.

Reprinted from the exhibition catalogue for *Mythic Sketches*, Newton Cultural Centre, 2014.

Cydonian Pyramid | 1999
12 x 17.5 cm
Acrylic on panel

Birth of Mount Olympus | 2013
12.5 x 17.5 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Selected Images

Triple Juliet #2 | 1983
46 x 122 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Airshow Annie | 1982
91.5 x 122 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Left

***Centurion
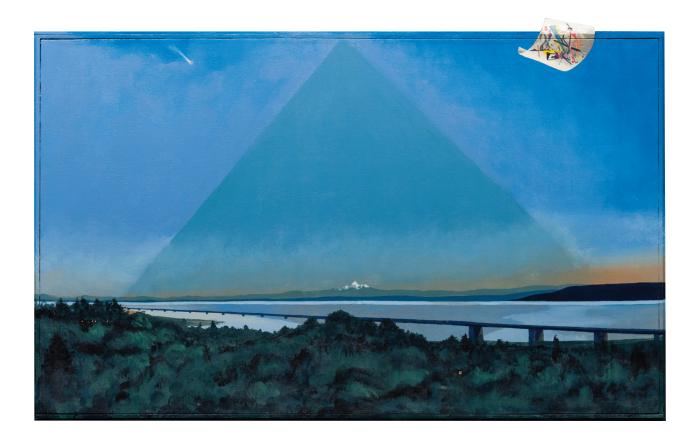Self Portrait*** | 1984
188.5 x 127 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Beuys' Stuka | 1984
91.5 x 122 cm
Acrylic on canvas

In Living Colour | 1991
112 x 213 cm
Acrylic on canvas
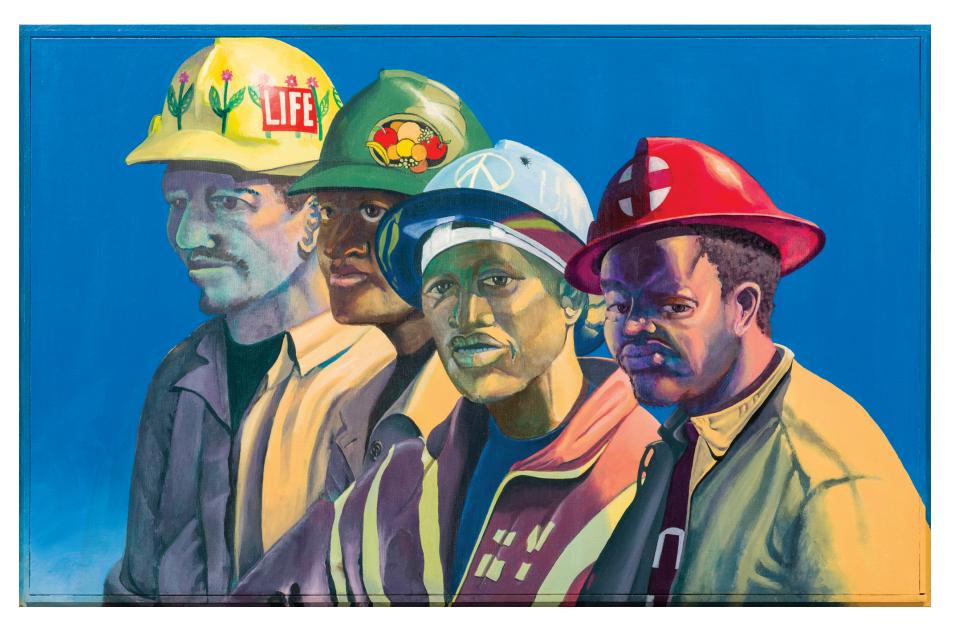
July Storms | 1996
72 x 125 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Last Evening (With a nod to Kandinsky) | 1997
63.5 x 104 cm
Acrylic on canvas

UFO Fragment #7 (Trading Card) | 1998
20 x 25 cm
Acrylic on canvas

UFO Fragment #8 | 1998
20 x 25 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Endurance | 1994
156 x 81 cm
Acrylic on canvas

The Other Horsemen | 1996
79 x 100 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Millennial Disturbance | 1997
53.5 x 94 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Gulf Stream (A Portrait of the Artist's Father)

(... And a Nod to Winslow Homer) | 1999

74 x 104 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Last Exit | 1991
61 x 91.5 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Reluctant Warrior
(Atlas) | 1993
104 x 74 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Oshun | 1993
74 (height) x 35.5 (diameter) cm
Acrylic & latex on plastic

Yemoja | 1993
48 (height) x 40.5 (diameter) cm
Acrylic & latex on plastic

Nubian Express (Full Moon) | 1999
20 x 25 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Nubian Express #3 | 2000
20 x 25 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Opposite page
Echoes of Empire | 2004
120 x 183 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Saturday Night | 2001
74 x 125 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Insight (Icarus flies too close to the truth) | 2010
75 x 95 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Lost Trophy (Apollo) | 2012
73 x 93 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Birth of Mount Olympus | 2013
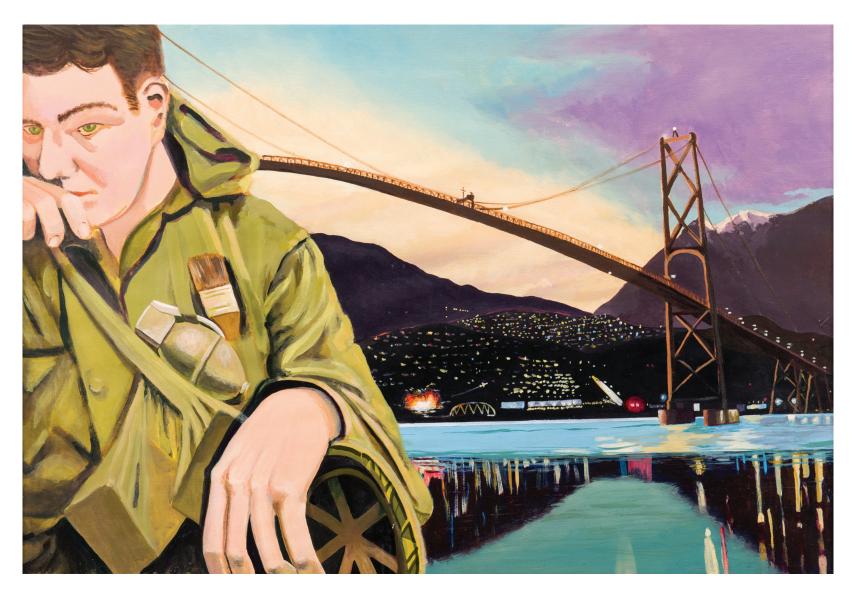12.5 x 17.5 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Hotrod (Study for Phaethon) | 2013
20 x 25 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Age of Invisibility | 1997
122 x 64 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Domination | 1997
124.5 x 71 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Homefront I | 1974
65 x 96.5 cm
Acrylic on paper

***Portrait Plate #3 (The artist's daydream
gets out of hand)*** | 1995

30.5 cm diameter
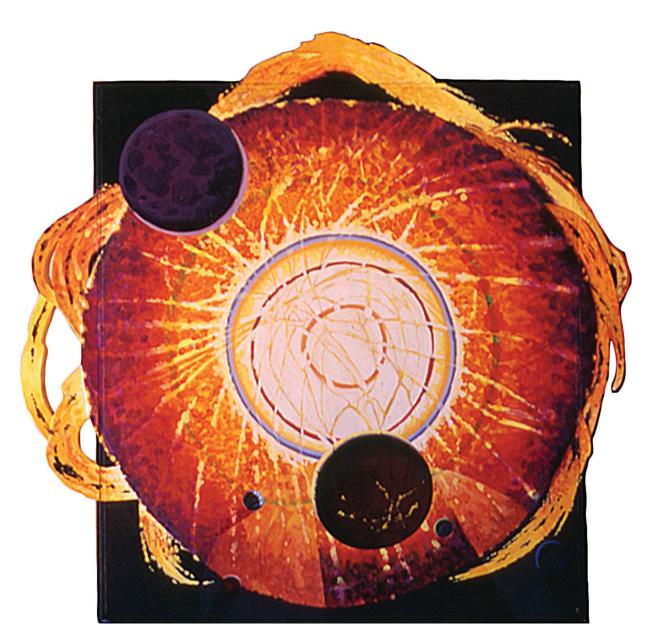Acrylic on ragboard and high temperature plastic

***Artist's Portrait Plate #6 (the artist plays the ultimate
videogame on an IBMANA5Q133)*** | 1987

33 cm diameter
Acrylic on ragboard and high temperature plastic

Torpedo Run Plate (The artist attacks Kits Beach) | 1990
30.5 cm diameter
Acrylic on ragboard and high temperature plastic

Portrait Plate #6 (The artist calmly ignores warnings from ATC) | 1987
33 cm diameter
Acrylic on ragboard and high temperature plastic
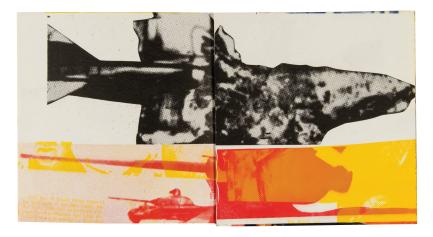
Minor Sun | 2001
114 x 118 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Minor Sun No. 3 Lucifer | 2001
137 x 105 cm
Acrylic on canvas

Argument on the Sun | 1965
21 x 22.5 cm
Bookwork

Arab Israeli Conflict | 1966
22 x 21.5 cm
Bookwork

And I dreamed of another garden.

A few rectangular flower beds surrounded
by a wooden fence. Under the brown
layer of topsoil, the seeds germinate, as yet
invisible. But in between, there grows a shaded
wilderness of brushwood, the merry
residence of many birds.

Love Song for Libby | 1971
19 x 19 cm
Bookwork

Artist's Biography

Artist's Biography

James Lowell Adams was born in 1943 in Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. His father, James Adams Sr., was a talented musician and artist, who toured across America and Spain with several jazz big bands, including one which he led himself. James senior managed the local musician's union, and in his free time, penned his own comic strip and produced paintings. In addition to the presence of his father's work, Jim and his brother Forrest were exposed to art at a young age during trips to the Philadelphia Museum of Art.
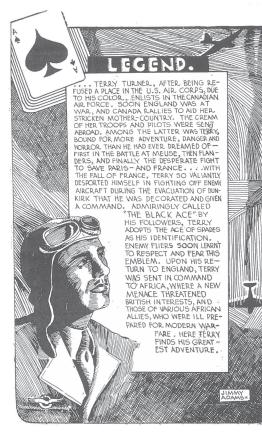
Adams grew up around the tenement buildings and concrete streetscapes of Philadelphia, among predominantly Irish and African-American communities. His childhood home lay underneath a flightpath, which connected to a nearby local airport. For Jim, flight was an early symbol of escape, and freedom from the confinement of local poverty. He earned a pilot license in 1976, and images of flight have appeared in his work throughout his entire career.

Jim graduated from South Philadelphia High School in 1961 with an athletic scholarship to Temple University. He was not the only artist-athlete on the basketball team; the star starting centre was Russell Gordon (1936-2013), who eventually became a faculty member at Concordia University in Montreal. Jim's basketball took him through Temple, whereupon he gained a graduate fellowship to the University of Pennsylvania,

receiving his Master's in Fine Arts in 1968.

Being exempted from military service due to height, Jim's first jobs included an instructor position at the Philadelphia Art Museum Print Club, and department head in printmaking at Fleischer Art Memorial. From there, Jim moved to California, where he instructed at Laguna Beach College of Art and Design for one year.

It was during this period that Jim developed his early series of art books. From 1965 to 1973, he studied book design with Eugene Feldman, head of printmaking at University of Pennsylvania. He went on to design two books with the poet and linguist Ernie Robson, one of which was designated one of the Fifty Best Books of the Year by the American Institute of Graphic Arts.

In 1970, Jim moved to Canada, staying in Vancouver first before settling in White Rock, where he has remained ever since. He quickly gained an

instructor position at Douglas College (now known as Kwantlen Polytechnic University), and would go on to become the Chair of the Department of Fine Arts. He worked at Douglas for 30 years, retiring in 2000.

Jim's involvement in the Surrey arts community was marked from early on. Shortly after the opening of the Surrey Art Gallery in 1975, Jim approached then curator Lorna Farrell-Ward about the possibility of developing a flight-oriented art exhibition. This would ultimately manifest in *Creative Flight* in 1979, which included works by several dozen renowned artists. Public programming for the exhibition, which was jointly hosted by the Langley Centennial National Exhibition Centre and the Surrey Art Gallery, featured helicopter flights between the two institutions, and a hot-air balloon visit from local MLA Bill Vanderzalm. Jim's efforts contributed significantly towards the development of the Surrey Art Gallery's own mandate to connect different communities together through the power of art. He has since shown at the Gallery on numerous occasions, and he has exhibited his art at a variety of other venues, including the Amelia Douglas Gallery, Presentation House Gallery, and the Vancouver Art Gallery. His works may be found in private collections across the world, and in public collections at the International Women's Air and Space Museum in Cleveland, the Kozlekdesi Museum in Budapest, and the United States Air Force art museum in New York, among others.

As a historian and advocate for art, Jim has worked in multiple roles. In the 1980s, he hosted and produced two television shows: *SAGA*, for Western Cablevision, and *On View*, for Shaw Cable. These programs featured previews of local art exhibitions, and interviews with artists. Elsewhere, Jim has been a Canada Council Lecturer at the University of Waterloo, a Judge of the Junior Black Achievement Awards in Visual Arts, and a facilitator of the pivotal Canadian Black Artists in Action Skills Development workshops and Creative Arts Exchange programs.

In recent years, Jim's advocacy has extended into the public art sphere. He has been a consistent presence in the City of Surrey's public art program for two decades, having served as Chair of the Public Art Policy Development Committee from 1995 to 2004, and then again from 2007 to 2012; and as Chair of the Public Art Advisory Committee, from 1998 to 2004, and then from 2007 to the present. He has also served on the Surrey UrbanScreen's advisory committee, and contributed to the development of the City of Surrey's Cultural Strategic Plan. For his contributions to Surrey's culture, he received the Surrey Civic Treasure Award in 2008.

Jim is married to his wife Mary, who produces decorative boxes, mirrors, and screens under the name *"Reflection by Petronella."* They have two children: Jake, an editor for *The Province* currently living in Vancouver, and Anya, who works as a Director on the television series *Blackish* in Los Angeles.

Stills from S.A.G.A. (Surrey Art Gallery Association), circulated on Western Ten Community Television from 1984 to 1986. Above: Jim teaches viewers how to mix oil paint. Aired December 1984. Below: Jim teaches viewers about different kinds of camera. Aired August 1984

List of Works

Exhibited at the Surrey Art Gallery

Argument on the Sun, 1965, bookwork, 21 x 22.5 cm

Thought, 1966, bookwork, 28 x 22 cm

Arab Israeli Conflict, 1966, bookwork, 22 x 21.5 cm

Sky One, 1967, transfer print, 62 x 47.5 cm

Pictures for Bruegel, 1967-1968, bookwork, 25.5 x 20 cm

Night Raven Portfolio, 1968, bookwork, 25.5 x 22 cm

Carolyn Standing Calm, 1969, transfer print, 61 x 51 cm

Roger as Falconer, 1969*,* transfer print*,* 61 x 51 cm

Love Song for Libby, 1971, bookwork, 19 x 19 cm

Homefront I, 1974, acrylic on paper, 65 x 96.5 cm

Grand Commander, 1976/77, acrylic on canvas, 79 x 152.5 cm

Polish Camel (PLZ Dromeder), 1981, acrylic on canvas, 91 x 182 cm

Airshow Annie, 1982, acrylic on canvas, 91.5 x 122 cm

Triple Juliet #2, 1983, acrylic on canvas, 46 x 122 cm

IJU, Mud Bay, 1983, acrylic on canvas, 61 x 183 cm

Centurion Self Portrait, 1984, acrylic on canvas, 188.5 x 127 cm

Beuys' Stuka, 1984, acrylic on canvas, 91.5 x 122 cm

Cornered at Six (Onley Evades Pop and Conceptual Attacks), 1984, acrylic on canvas, 61 x 91.5 cm

The Poleskie Panels, 1985, acrylic on canvas, 91 ½ x 122 cm each

5-J Plate, 1986, acrylic on china, 20 cm diameter

Bonanza, 1986, acrylic on china, 20 cm diameter

08:15:40 08/06/45 (The Bride), 1987, acrylic on canvas, 61 x 122 cm

Ange's Plate #1 (Capt. Joe Cool launches a secret weapon at his sister), 1987, acrylic on ragboard and high temperature plastic, 33 cm diameter

Portrait Plate #3 (the artist's daydream gets out of hand), 1987, acrylic on ragboard and high temperature plastic, 30.5 cm diameter

Mac Attack Plate #1 (The artist suffers a 'Big-Mac' attack), 1987, acrylic on ragboard and high temperature plastic, 30.5 cm diameter

Torpedo Run Plate (The artist attacks Kits Beach), 1990, acrylic on ragboard and high temperature plastic, 30.5 cm diameter

Last Exit, 1991, acrylic on canvas, 61 x 91.5 cm

Late Shift, 1991, acrylic on canvas, 54 x 80 cm

In Living Colour (8 p.m. chan. 13), acrylic on canvas, 112 x 213 cm

Hunter/Killer, 1991-1992, acrylic on canvas, 76 x 91.5 cm

Dead End, 1992, acrylic on canvas, 91.5 x 122 cm

Eshu-Elegba, 1993, acrylic/latex on plastic, rag paper, foamcore, 114 (height) x 35.5 (length) x 56 (width) cm

Magritte's Ghost, 1994, acrylic on canvas, 76 x 103 cm

Endurance, 1994, acrylic on canvas, 156 x 81 cm

Nighthawks (Homage to Hopper), 1995, acrylic on canvas, 120 x 85 cm

Racial Memory, 1995, acrylic on canvas, 119 x 72 cm

Final Approach, 1996, acrylic on canvas, 117 x 95 cm

July Storms, 1996, acrylic on canvas,
72 x 125 cm

The Other Horsemen,
1996, acrylic on canvas,
79 x 100 cm

*Peaceable Kingdom
(Homage to John Martin
and C.D.* Freidrich), 1996,
acrylic on canvas,
85 x 125 cm

Faith, 1996,
acrylic on canvas,
130.5 x 85 cm

Domination, 1997,
acrylic on canvas,
124.5 x 71 cm

Age of Invisibility, 1997,
acrylic on canvas,
122 x 64 cm

Millennial Disturbance,
1997, acrylic on canvas,
53.5 x 94 cm

*UFO Fragment #2
(pencil)*, 1997,
acrylic on canvas,
20 x 25 cm

*UFO Fragment #7
(trading card)*, 1998,
acrylic on canvas,
20 x 25 cm

UFO Fragment #8, 1998,
acrylic on canvas,
20 x 25 cm

*UFO Fragment #9
(paper airplane)*, 1998,
acrylic on canvas,
20 x 25 cm

*Nubian Express (full
moon)*, 1999,
acrylic on panel,
20 x 25 cm

*Thumbnail: Suburban
Pyramid,* 1999,
acrylic on rag panel,
10 x 15 cm

*Suburban Pyramid
Thumbnail*, 1999,
photoprint of a pencil
drawing,
5 x 7.5 cm

*Thumbnail Sketch:
Cydonian Pyramid*, 1999,
acrylic on panel,
12 x 17.5 cm

*Cydonian Sea (with
thanks to Arnold
Böcklin)*, 1999,
acrylic on canvas,
75.5 x 139 cm

*Last Evening (with a nod
to Kandinsky)*, 1999,
acrylic on canvas,
63.5 x 104 cm

Objects of Desire, 1999,
acrylic on canvas,
71 x 142 cm

*Gulf Stream (A Portrait
of the Artist's Father) (…
And a Nod to Winslow
Homer)*, 1999,
acrylic on canvas,
74 x 104 cm

Look upon the Rainbow,
2000, acrylic on canvas,
85 x 125 cm

Nubian Drifter (study #1),
2000, acrylic on canvas,
20 x 25 cm

Nubian Express #3, 2000,
acrylic on canvas,
20 x 25 cm

Nubian Express #4, 2000,
acrylic on canvas,
20 x 25 cm

Cydonia Sea (Study #3),
2000, acrylic on canvas,
20 x 25 cm

Cydonia Plain (Study #5),
2000, acrylic on canvas,
20 x 25 cm

Saturday Night, 2001,
acrylic on canvas,
74 x 125 cm

A Desert Called Peace #2,
2003, acrylic on canvas,
64 x 125 cm

*Payback (Poseidon's
Pickle)*, 2011,
acrylic on canvas,
78 x 124.5 cm

*Thumbnail: Suburban
Pyramid (Arab Spring)*,
2012, acrylic on rag panel,
10 x 15 cm

Lost Trophy (Apollo),
2012, acrylic on canvas,
73 x 93 cm

Birth of Mt. Olympus,
2013, acrylic on canvas,
12.5 cm x 17.5 cm

Wiki Fire, 2013,
acrylic on canvas,
20 x 25 cm

*Hungarian Plains with a
rainbow*, ca. 2013,
acrylic on canvas,
13 x 18 cm

*Thumbnail Nubian
Express*, ca. 2013,
acrylic on canvas,
13 x 18 cm

*Thumbnail Cydonian
Pyramid*, ca. 2013,
acrylic on canvas,
13 x 18 cm

Ozymandias, 2013,
acrylic on canvas,
13 x 18 cm

*Autumn Ritual
(Elizabeth's Raven)*, 2013,
acrylic on canvas,
20 x 25 cm

*Transformation (Daphne
Dissolves)*, 2015,
acrylic on canvas,
94 x 75 cm

*Palmyra Station (Road
from Damascus)*, 2016,
acrylic on canvas,
71 x 92 cm

Scribe of Bastet (Crazy Cat Lady #1, Portrait of Dee Walmsley), 2016, acrylic on canvas, 73.5 x 93 cm

Girl Friday (Freya, Portrait of Jeannine Hendrigan), 2016, 93 x 73.5 cm

Athena at Home (Portrait of the Artist's Wife Mary), 2017, acrylic on canvas, 73.5 x 99 cm

Exhibited at the Reach

Jake's Plate #2 (Capt. Joe Cool patrols the Inner Harbor), 1987, acrylic on ragboard and high temperature plastic, 33 cm diameter

Portrait Plate #6 (The artist calmly ignores warnings from ATC), 1987, acrylic on ragboard and high temperature plastic, 33 cm diameter

Artist's Portrait Plate #6 (The artist plays the ultimate videogame on an IBMAN/A5Q133), ca. 1987, acrylic on ragboard and high temperature plastic, 33 cm diameter

Mac Attack Plate #1 (The artist suffers a 'Big-Mac' attack), 1987, acrylic on ragboard and high temperature plastic, 30 cm diameter

Yemoja, 1993, acrylic & latex on plastic, 48 (height) x 40.5 (diameter) cm

Oshun, 1993, acrylic & latex on plastic, 74 (height) x 35.5 (diameter) cm

Shangok, ca. 1993, acrylic & latex on plastic, approx. 76 (height) x 48 (diameter) cm

Osanyin Falling, 1994, acrylic & latex on mixed surface, 43 (height) x 30.5 (length) x 20 (width) cm

Minor Sun, 2001, acrylic on canvas, 114 x 118 cm

Minor Sun #2, 2001, acrylic on canvas, 109 x 122 cm

Minor Sun #3 (Lucifer), 2001, acrylic on canvas, 137 x 105 cm

Red Planet #1, 2002, acrylic on canvas, 50 cm diameter

Red Planet #2, 2002, acrylic on canvas, 50 cm diameter

Small Red Planet, 2002, acrylic on canvas, 30 cm diameter

Ghost, 2002, acrylic on canvas, 50 cm diameter

Blue Planet, 2002, acrylic on canvas, 30 cm diameter

Green Giant, 2002, acrylic on canvas, 30 cm diameter

Orange Planet, 2002, acrylic on canvas, 30 cm diameter

Blue Moon, 2002, acrylic on canvas, 128 x 126 cm

Waterworld, 2003, acrylic on canvas, 30 cm diameter

Athena/Monrovia, 2003, acrylic on canvas, 65 x 94 cm

Echoes of Empire, 2004, acrylic on canvas, 120 x 183 cm

Spheres of Influence, 2006, acrylic on canvas, 94 x 125 cm

Reluctant Warrior (Atlas), 2007, acrylic on canvas, 104 x 74 cm

Lil' Zoose, 2008, acrylic on canvas, 124 x 94 cm

The Road to Rome (Ares/Mars), 2009, acrylic on canvas, 94 x 124 cm

Curse of the Gadfly, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 78 x 124 cm

Round Midnight, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 155 x 94 cm

Snowbird (Persephone), 2009, acrylic on canvas, 124.5 x 94 cm

Intercept (Hermes/Mercury), 2010, acrylic on canvas, 79 x 125 cm

Insight (Icarus flies to close to the truth), 2010, acrylic on canvas, 75 x 95 cm

Lil' Sheba (study for Princess' Playground), 2012, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 25 cm

Hera (preliminary study), 2012, acrylic on canvas, 8 x 15 cm

Hades sketch, ca. 2013, acrylic on canvas, 18 x 13 cm

Hades Rising, 2013, acrylic on canvas, 18 x 13 cm

Neith, Goddess of Battle, 2013, acrylic on canvas, 13 x 18 cm

Earthlight (Chronus and Rhea), 2013, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 25 cm

Helios (as Maverick), 2013, acrylic on canvas, 15 x 10 cm

Snowbird's Return (Persephone Sketch #2), 2013, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 25 cm

Ozymandias, 2013, acrylic on canvas, 13 x 18 cm

Athena's Workout, 2013, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 25 cm

Hangover (Bacchus finds the hair of the dog), 2013, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 25 cm

Hot Rod (Study for Phaethon), 2013, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 25 cm

Hephaestus/Vulcan (Fire on the Horizon), 2013, acrylic on canvas, 10 x 15 cm

Anubis/Hermes, 2013, acrylic on canvas, 10 x 15 cm

Transit of Venus, 2014, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 25 cm

J's Journey (Sea), 2015, acrylic on canvas, 13 x 18 cm

Dark Matter (Young Diogenes starts his search for the truth), 2016, acrylic on canvas, 76 x 102 cm

Author Biographies

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Jordan Strom

Since 2009, Jordan Strom has worked as Curator of Exhibitions and Collections at the Surrey Art Gallery. Recent exhibitions include *Mimetic Workshop: Kelly Lycan and Fiona Ackerman* (2016) and *Nep Sidhu: Shadows in the Major Seventh* (2016), and the sound art group exhibitions *Sonorous Kingdom* (2014) and *Sound/Tract* (2013). From 2004 to 2008, Jordan was co-editor of Fillip magazine. He holds an M.A. in Critical and Curatorial Studies from the University of British Columbia's Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory.

Laura Schneider

Laura Schneider is a curator and arts administrator with a track record of energetic leadership and insightful curatorial programming. A believer in the ability of the arts to shape individuals and communities, Laura has demonstrated her commitment to integrating arts appreciation and visual literacy more fully into the lives of those around her. With a keen understanding of public galleries as dynamic and dialogic spaces, she envisions these places as thriving nerve-centres of cultural and community life. She has been the Executive Director & Curator of The Reach Gallery Museum Abbotsford since 2015. Previously she held the role of Director/Curator of the Cape Breton University Art Gallery (Sydney, NS), and was co-founder, chairperson and artistic director of the Lumière Arts Festival. She holds two degrees in Art History from Queen's University (Kingston) and Carleton University (Ottawa), and has additional academic qualifications in Education and Collections Management.

Sylvia Grace Borda

Sylvia Grace Borda is an artist, researcher, designer, and educator. Her practice blends historical and cultural symbolism, new media technologies, geospatial and information-based systems. Borda's artwork has been exhibited in galleries and public art programmes, such as Northern Ireland's satellite event for the Venice Architectural Biennale (2014), Lighthouse, Scotland (2015), and Mantta Art Exhibition (2016) Finland. Her writing and art have featured in various publications, including *Blueprint, Canadian Architecture, C Magazine,* and *Photomonitor*, to name a few. She has held lecturing appointments at the University of Salford, Queen's University Belfast, the University of British Columbia, and Emily Carr University of Art and Design. Borda is also the recipient of multiple grants and awards, most recently the 2016 Lumen Prize for achievement in digital art in which she was profiled for her artwork produced for the Surrey Art Gallery exhibition of *Farm Tableaux.*

Yaniya Lee

Yaniya Lee is a Toronto based writer and researcher. Her writing has appeared in *C Magazine, Magenta, Adult, Fader* and *Motherboard*. In 2016 she collaborated with members of the 4:3 Collective to organize the *MICE Symposium on Transformative Justice in the Arts*. From 2012-2014 she hosted the *Art Talks MTL* podcast, a series of long-form interviews with art workers in Montreal. She is an Editorial Advisory member of *C Magazine* and a founding collective member of *MICE Magazine*. Lee is currently an MA candidate at Queen's University where her research draws on the work of Black Studies scholars to reconsider black art histories in Canada.

Acknowledgements

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