
This rich and fascinating work documents one of the most exciting periods in the history of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design at a time when the College marks 125 years since its founding. The author and Canadian conceptual artist, Garry Neill Kennedy, served as President of the College during the formative years covered by this volume. Kennedy oversaw the expansion of programs and spearheaded the shift from a traditional provincial art college to a breeding ground for advanced thinking in contemporary art and an international center for artistic activity. The reputation of the College soared as visiting artists and faculty members at NSCAD included some of today’s most well-known contemporary artists.

The volume is comprised of documents arranged according to a chronology that provide a visual and written record of the College’s key events and “supercharged activity of NSCAD in the late 1960s and 1970s.” These range from gallery openings to dance performances, lectures, exhibitions, and classroom projects. Juxtaposed with photographs, reproductions, and programs are reviews, reminiscences, transcripts of interviews, reprinted essays, and notes on some of the College’s more notable controversies. The Last Art College brings the attempt to “create a college that would be on the cutting edge of contemporary art” to life in a way that previous histories of NSCAD have not. Contributions from former faculty and staff, artists, and students are included which provide first-hand accounts of the interesting encounters between students and avant-garde artists of the time. Also described are the innovative new programs introduced at the College during Kennedy’s tenure. The Projects Class, initiated by David Askevold, was designed to engage students with problems and questions and invited artists such as Dan Graham and Lawrence Weiner to write and submit proposals for projects to be completed by students. The Lithography Workshop, a contemporary printmaking venture, invited established artists including John Baldessari, Vito Acconci, Joyce Wieland, and Sol LeWitt to work in collaboration with the master printer to make limited editions of signed prints. Midway through this time period saw the move to establish the NSCAD Press to publish books by and about leading contemporary artists. The Press produced works by such luminaries as Claes Oldenburg, Gerhard Richter, and Michael Snow.

Included at the end of the volume are notes, a chronology of faculty and administration, and a comprehensive index. Entertaining and richly illustrated, this oversized volume will be of interest to students, art historians, artists, and general readers. Highly recommended for library collections supporting undergraduate and graduate programs in contemporary art.

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