

**REICHERT /
ARCHAMBEAU**

AT GALLERY 1.1.1.

Archambeau and Reichert

Recent Works

February 28th — March 17th, 1983

**Gallery 1.1.1.
School of Art
The University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba**

Robert Archambeau



Bowl, Ash and Salt Glazed, 11 cm x 16 cm



Akio's Bowl, Ash and Salt Glazed, 11.5 cm x 15.5 cm



Bowl, Ash and Salt Glazed, 11 cm x 15 cm



Bowl, Iron Ash Glaze, Salt Glazed, 10 cm x 15.5 cm.



Salt Glazed Vase, 15 cm x 34 cm

Photo credit D. Teichman



Photo credit D. Teichman

Covered Jar, salt Fired with Bronze Lid, 20 cm x 21 cm



Photo credit D. Teichman

Covered Jar with Bronze Lid, 19 cm x 22 cm



Photo credit D. Teichman

Vase with Shino Glaze, 16 cm x 31 cm



Photo credit D. Teichman

Wood Fired Teapot with Bronze Lid, 15 cm x 18 cm



Photo credit D. Teichman

Small Bowl with Porcelain in-lays, wood Fired, 8 cm x 14.5 cm

Don Reichert and Robert Archambeau: Recent Works

Don Reichert and Robert Archambeau have exhibited together at least twice before, at the Thomas Gallery in 1976 and most recently at the Brian Melnychenko Gallery in 1979. On the surface this pairing would seem to be a determination of friendship and common vocation (both have taught for a number of years in the School of Art at the University of Manitoba.) But there are other affinities which go beyond the circumstances of shared work and play, ones which have to do with the fundamental and related questions of aesthetics and sensibility.

You can see it operating in their art. Reichert and Archambeau both make the viewer's eyes into fingers. The act of looking at their surfaces — whether on a painting or a pot — is to be involved in a tactile delight. It is also a provocation for visual loitering around and within the art; it's a seduction into ocular vagrancy.

Look at one of Archambeau's pots. (I am impressed by the casual solidity of the word. Pot. Not something to trifle with, a word from a time when language could have simple, uncluttered dignity.) Look at a small, white, porous drinking cup, with delicate chips of feldspar scattered about like bone fragments on the surface of the moon. Or at another bowl with pale orange stripes clawing up its black surface. The piece is perceptibly feline.

Walk up to Reichert's 25-5-80, with its trinity of deep red ovoids set against a more diffuse, four-sided shape. It begins to look like a figure in landscape; a torso outlined in black and the suggestions of a cobalt blue head. Gradually you realize it's the accents Reichert uses — raw sienna smudges, a black squiggly line on a chromium oxide green, a touch of yellow — which make the piece work, as if they were visual stepping-stones to get your eye moving throughout the space.

Both artists share this sensitivity to detail, not just in the making of art, but in its apprehension as well. Archambeau doesn't only pay scrupulous attention to the patinas on the bronze lids of his pots, but he will include a split bud handle on a columnar four-chambered vessel because it "feels right". These additions are never merely embellishment; "I'm not decorating a cup", he says, "The cup is the space I choose to work on". Archambeau is after an integral relationship between the plastic and the surface elements of his work. On a classically thrown vase he adds slip with a moosehair brush and it has the effect of wrapping the form in cloth with gold flecks. It's easy to forget that what he has really done is simply to drag semi-fluid clay around a piece of stoneware.

In a lithograph like *Dry April*, Reichert conducts a ferocious wind which blows brittle, dusty browns across the paper surface; in *Echoes* a suspended meadow of green attracts the attention of a pair of gestural scythes in the early stages of breaking apart. These prints have the paradoxical quality of static action, as if nature had been caught in a moment of dissolution.

There is in the work of both artists a tendency to sabotage their pieces, or at the very least, to do them a little damage. In *Breaking/Becoming*, Reichert underlines the necessity of giving one thing up to gain another: the print was done at a period of personal difficulty and looks for all the world like an exploding cradle. As Reichert himself puts it, the piece posits "safety against risk". Archambeau raises the same tension in aesthetic rather than psychological terms. He has an abiding fear of getting too sophisticated and of looking too slick; as he says, in a phrase that would bring tears of fraternal sympathy to the iron eyes of David Smith: "I started making these lovely pieces and they got piss elegant". The making of art, then, is a constant testing of the limits of aesthetic tolerance. An ability to make beautiful things in their respective media is a kind of curse, a variation on the wicked tale of rich King Midas and his productive touch.

If it's not too obvious a showing of the regimented colours, I see Reichert and Archambeau as romantics in the sense that their art embodies an intelligent and constant search for freedom within an intuitively recognized set of restraints. Archambeau runs his finger-nail up the surface of a pot and registers a sensational violation. The pot becomes a thing betrayed, like a beautiful woman with a scar. And then, imperceptibly, you realize the beauty is in the scar as much as in the perfect form you imagine without it. Reichert's *Hotspur* describes a delicate clatter of shapes across the surface, with an aura of ink splashed at the top like a webbed crown. With its aggressive configurations, the image embodies a fierce regality.

Poet and novelist Michael Ondaatje, has a rich and ambiguous phrase for activity of this nature. In one of his poems he describes the act of writing as "pouring nets of chaos onto the page". If you make a simple transposition to throwing nets of chaos on the wheel, or splashing webs of pigment onto the canvas, then both artists in this exhibition join the poetic confraternity. The net constrains the chaos; the pour slips through the net. I sense that the making of art for Reichert and Archambeau involves a recognition of this paradox. They have found an identical pattern in nature. Both men have studios at Bissett, Manitoba, where the elements provide examples of awe-inspiring occurrences: Reichert has been overwhelmed by the impossible beauty of the Northern Lights. At the same time, he finds additions to his palette in the close-value colours of rocks and lichens in the area. Reichert paints outdoors and the wind is less his enemy than an unpredictable co-creator. Similarly, over the last five years, Archambeau has performed a private ritual of welcome to spring by using leaves as a resist in his pieces. The leaves are suspended within the transparency of the glaze and the effect is mesmerizing, like seeing veins shine through when a flashlight is placed behind your hand. In some inexplicable way, the plates are lit with mortality, with the poignant beauty of the beginning of decay.

So now the touch is death, not gold. Inescapably, their art draws you to this paradox. And paradox is simply an intellectual description of our confusion at the bewildering condition of being alive. I am heartened when we produce art out of — and because of — this confusion. Robert Archambeau's cryptic rationale for art-making is a subtle comment on both of these impulses: "I'm making these things so you can look at them for years". I can see Don Reichert now, nodding his head in agreement as his hand moves towards a canvas, as his brush marks the clarity of a cut of paper.

Robert Enright,
February, 1983.

Don Reichert



29-5-80 Acrylic on Paper, 64 cm x 102 cm



26-6-80 Acrylic on Paper, 64 cm x 102 cm



30-6-81 Acrylic on Paper, 64 cm x 102 cm



8-8-81 Acrylic on Paper, 80 cm x 120 cm



Detail, Lithographic Working Proof, 1982.



Breaking/Becoming — Lithograph — 72 cm x 77 cm
Moosehead Press, 1982 — David Umholtz, Master Printer



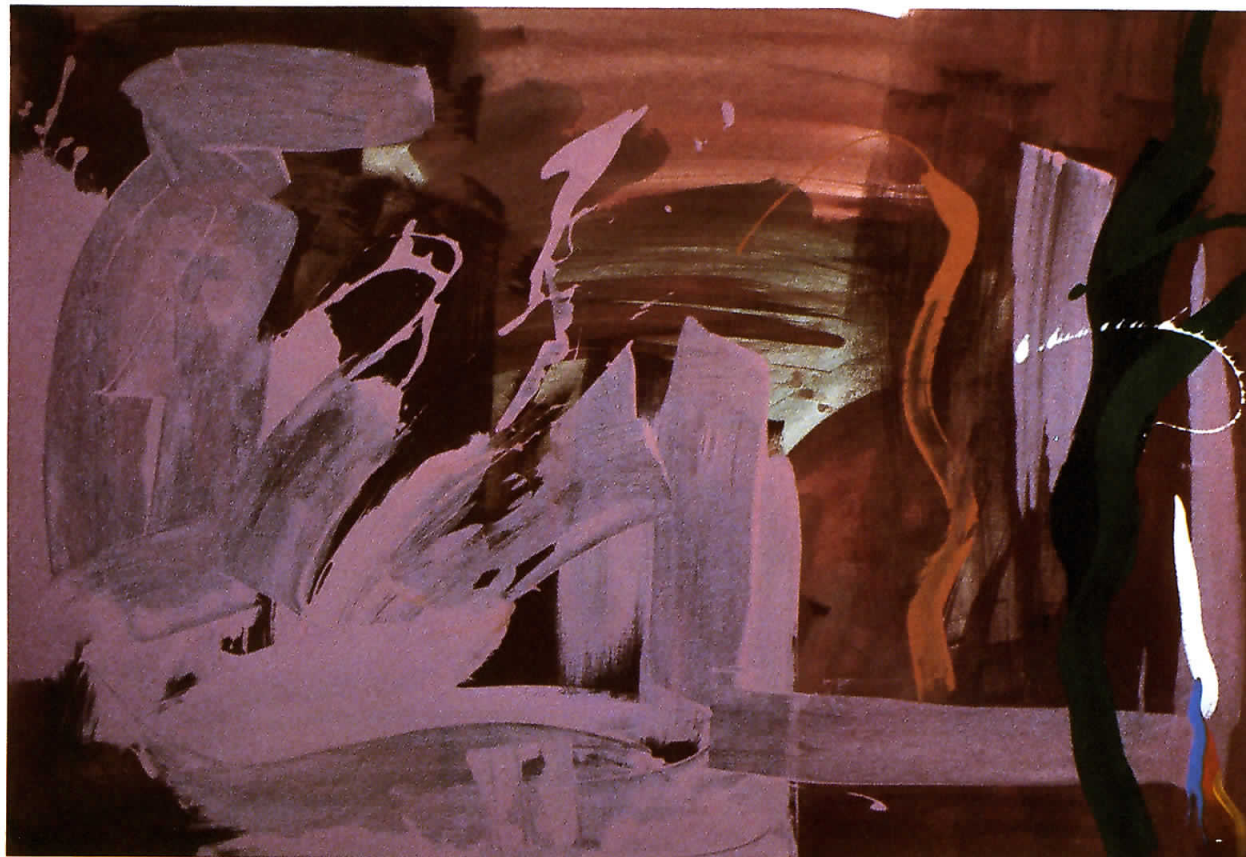
5-8-81 Acrylic on Paper, 76.5 cm x 111.3 cm



9-8-81 Acrylic on Paper, 80 cm x 120 cm



11-8-81 Acrylic on Paper, 80 cm x 120 cm



2-2-82 Acrylic on paper, 76.5 cm x 111.3 cm



Don Reichert

Robert Archambeau

Ernie Reichert

Biographies

Robert Archambeau was born in Toledo, Ohio in 1933. He attended the University of Toledo and Alfred University in New York where he received his M.F.A. He taught at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, Rhode Island from 1964-68 and since 1968 has taught at the University of Manitoba.

Mr. Archambeau has exhibited widely. His works are in many major public and private collections, including the Toledo Museum of Art, the Albright Knox Museum in Buffalo, New York, the Winnipeg Art Gallery, the Canada Council Art Bank, the Glenbow, Alberta Institute and the Archie Bray Foundation.

In 1978 he travelled widely in China, Korea and Japan and in 1981-82 worked for an extended period of time near Seto in Aichi Prefecture, Japan.

Don Reichert was born in Libau, Manitoba in 1932. He attended the University of Manitoba School of Art, where he graduated with a B.F.A. in 1956. He did post-graduate work at the Instituto Allende, in Mexico, and had his first one-man show at the Winnipeg Art Gallery in 1960. He was Artist-in-Residence at the University of New Brunswick in 1961-62. The following year he painted in St. Ives, Cornwall, with assistance from the Canada Council.

Mr. Reichert has taught at the University of Manitoba since 1964. He has exhibited in a number of major exhibitions, and his work is included in many collections, including the Canada Council Art Bank, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the National Gallery of Canada, and the Winnipeg Art Gallery.

Much of his recent work has consisted of large paintings done in the landscape, and a series of aerial photographs of local land patterns taken from his own airplane.

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Dale Amundson, Director
Gallery 1.1.1.

