



In Still Water: The Grateful Dead and the Avant-Garde in Vancouver, 1960s-1970s

By Brenda Peterson

Our city has a rich cultural history and this month the Vancouver Historical Society is excited to have Gregory Betts give a talk based on his meticulous research for his award-winning book *Finding Nothing: The VanGardes, 1959-1975*.

The talk will consider some of the connections and associations between the city's literary avant-garde and the musical counterculture of the time. In particular, there was a series of concerts performed by the Grateful Dead, starting in 1966 with the Vancouver Trips Festival at the PNE Garden, before their first album was released, and culminating in 1973 and '74 performances at the PNE Coliseum, by which time "hippie culture" had faded and David Bowie's was ascendant.

The Trips Festival made connections with the San Francisco-Haight Ashbury psychedelic community, inviting people to "wear your best fluorescent clothes and makeup" and share in the optimism for a renewed, remade culture.



This month's speaker:
Dr. Gregory Betts

A dynamic, engaging storyteller, Gregory is the professor of Canadian and Avant-Garde Literature at Brock University and experimental poet with collections published in Canada, the United States, and Ireland. He has performed his works hundreds of times, in many countries, including at the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games as part of the "Cultural Olympiad."

Finding Nothing: The Vangardes, 1959-1975, published by the University of Toronto Press in 2021, received the Basil Stuart-Stubbs Prize for Outstanding Scholarly Book on British Columbia and the Gabrielle Roy Prize, which honours the best work of scholarship on literature produced in Canada.

I asked Gregory a few questions about his research topic and an overview of the time period in Vancouver.

What makes the literature, art and music of that time in Vancouver worth studying today?

Vancouver's 1960s were truly a remarkable moment of transformation and cultural change. Experimental and modernist writers worked in relative isolation until the sudden explosion of public literary cultures that emerged during the period. The city went from a small handful of magazines and places to publish new work to dozens and then hundreds. Furthermore, it became remarkably easy and almost common for writers to collaborate with artists from other disciplines. These



A partial cast of characters, clockwise from top left: Gerry Gilbert, George Bowering and Allen Ginsberg; Bowering later in life; Al Neil; Gladys Maria Hindmarch. **PHOTOS COURTESY OF GREGORY BETTS**

collaborations created a collective space of intermedial culture, where specialization and the silos of professionalism disappeared for a brief, delirious moment. The hippies in Vancouver worked from and with that spirit of radical openness, pushing the literary community even further into their experiments. New kinds of writing and new kinds of publishing emerged in the city during this time.

Who were the main players here?

In the late fifties and early sixties, you have celebrated and exceptional writers in Vancouver, like Phyllis Webb and Earle Birney and Dorothy Livesay, who

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President's Note

About 50 people attended my talk in September, with another 37 watching it live on YouTube. It was gratifying to have that number sitting so comfortably in the big and familiar Joyce Walley Room at the MoV, and enjoyable for me to have a live and very lively audience to kibbitz with before and after the talk. And so we will continue our path back to normal, with three excellent talks lined up for this month, November and January. We hope to see you there!

Michael Kluckner, presidentvhs@gmail.com

What's in a Name?

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one that assumed a common Aboriginal culture across a vast region...

Unfortunately for Lytton ... there were also disquieting signs of an attack building over wider issues than the mere name of the new colony ... Yet pressure of time alone meant that Lytton could accept little more than cosmetic changes to his bill. One obvious change was the abandonment of the name New Caledonia, which would help rid the measure of its aura of amateurishness, thereby removing a possible focus for criticism.

Unfortunately, a change of name would require not only the consent of the Queen, but also her tacit acceptance that she had made a bad choice in the first place. In broaching this delicate subject, Lytton laid much stress on reported objections from the French government (not otherwise mentioned at this time), passing over the unwittingly disloyal sentiments of MPs. The Queen was asked if she would graciously select a less confusing name – “such as ‘New Cornwall’ which was the old geographical Designation – or whatever other name might suggest itself to your Majesty.” Accordingly, the Queen suggested “British Columbia”, thereby tactfully rescuing the government from artificial novelties. Lytton gratefully seized upon the royal brainwave, revealingly suggesting that “great additional popularity would be given to the Colony itself” as a result of its new designation.

...The naming of British Columbia hardly throws much light on the political role of the monarchy in nineteenth-century British politics, but it does illustrate the careless and hasty manner in which the new Pacific colony was created. The Queen was given less than a week to select New Caledonia, and three days to think of a substitute when it proved unpopular. New Westminster, chosen from an indifferent short-list, flouted the general distaste for combinations of “New”. For many, the royal associations of Westminster were probably counter-balanced by those of parliament ... Nonetheless, the names of the new colony and its short-lived capital, however casually chosen, remain as the legacy of a Queen and her minister.

[<https://www.gedmartin.net/martinalia-mainmenu-3/354-naming-british-columbia>]

Upcoming Events

Our lectures take place at the Museum of Vancouver. For those not wishing to attend in person, the lectures will be broadcast live on the Vancouver Historical Society's YouTube channel, subject to technical difficulties.

November 24, 2022, 7pm

History, Heritage Buildings and Murder

Best-selling author **Eve Lazarus** will tell stories from her books *Vancouver Exposed* and *Cold Case BC*, including an update on the infamous Babes in the Woods case.

January 26, 2023, 7 pm

Lisa Anne Smith

Hastings Mill:

The Historic Times of a Vancouver Community

VHS member Lisa Anne Smith has added to her series of books on Vancouver history with this newly published volume on the Burrard Inlet waterfront and its first factory.

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Welcome New Members

Burt Montgomery
Derek Ponsford
Robert Sparks
William Stott
Greg Strong & Katherine Mitsui

Vancouver Historical Society Executive Board: 2022 - 2023

(ELECTED MAY 24, 2022)

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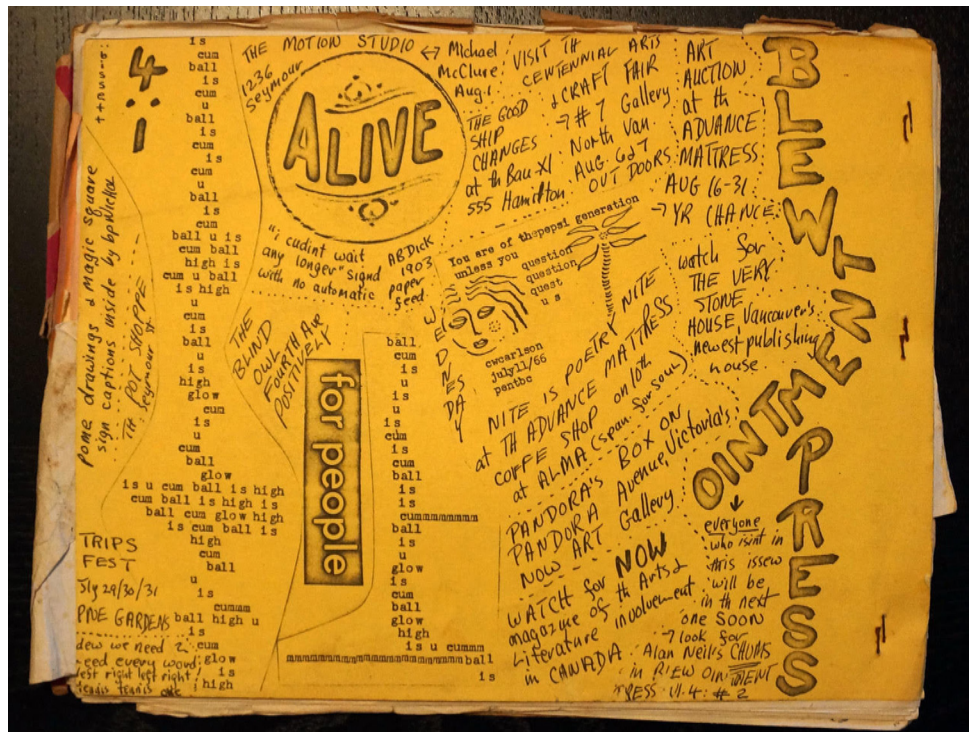
The Avant-Garde in Vancouver, 1960s-1970s

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experimented with modernist styles from a variety of sources. The Black Mountain scene at UBC happened in the early years of the 60s, displaced by the intermedia culture that emerged from about 1963. In literature, you have figures like bill bissett (who prefers lower case for his name), Roy Kiyooka, and Judith Copithorne emerge alongside the New American school of writers like Robin Blaser, Stan Persky, and George Bowering. Artists from other media spilled into literature, too, such as Al Neil and Gregg Simpson's collaborations with Kenneth Patchen, or Roy Kiyooka the painter and poet who married Daphne Marlatt, and Helen Goodwin, the dancer, who was formative in the Intermedia Society. There are so many more to mention! Gerry Gilbert, Gladys Maria Hindmarch, Ed Varney, Sam Perry, Takao Tanabe, Iain Baxter&, and so many more.

What was the scene like: communal houses, coffee houses, jazz places, etc.?

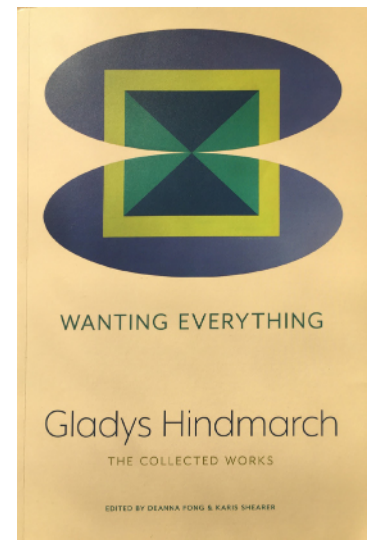
The thing that draws me to the era is the collective invitation to join in and create something new. Every time someone participates, the scene alters. That spirit of openness extends from the communal living situations in the city to the haphazard living conditions on the Mudflats to the collective events like the Human Be-ins in Stanley Park right into the art galleries and publishing houses. People were starting things, trying things, and facilitating others to do so as well. We are much more professional now, which is not necessarily a compliment. What we lose by living and working in our atomistic silos is precisely the risk of discovering something completely new, completely fun, completely unmarketable. I don't want to be too utopian about it all, there were some consequences and casualties of all the openness, as well as unacknowledged closures borne by women, people of colour, and the Indigenous community especially, that took decades to be recognized.



Blewintment Press Issue 5.1 COLLECTION OF GREGORY BETTS

A book of original works from Vancouver's avant-garde era is Gladys Hindmarch's *Wanting Everything*, published in 2020 by Talonbooks. Gladys Hindmarch was a central figure in the Vancouver literary scene of the time. The book republishes some of her early works along with prose, correspondence, criticism and oral history interviews about the places and characters of the day.

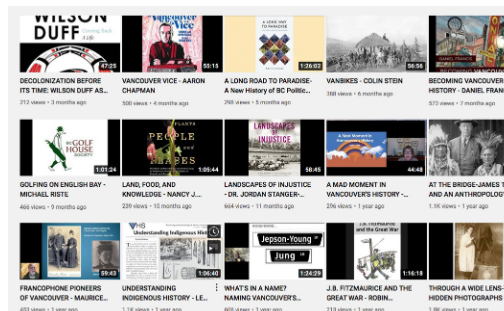
"As a central figure in Vancouver's poetry and art scenes of the 1960s and 1970s, [Hindmarch] gives us both oral and written glimpses of that period's vitality." -DAPHNE MARLATT



Don't miss a lecture!

Visit our archive online: search "Vancouver Historical Society on YouTube" to find our lectures going back to 2016

Elwin Xie, videographer



Fabulous: The Life and Work of Designer Lore Maria Wiener

The BC Society for the Museum of Original Costume (SMOC) was founded in 1992 to preserve the Society's collection of historic fashion and to interpret the collection's significance for the scholars, collectors, costumiers, local fashion designers and the community. We explore how people have adorned themselves for centuries and believe that a garment is an art form worthy of admiration.

SMOC will present the lecture and display "Fabulous: the Life and Work of Designer Lore Maria Wiener" on Sunday, 16 October at 2:00 pm in the Grand Ballroom of Hycroft, 1489 McRae Avenue, Vancouver.

Dr. Claudia Cornwall, who teaches non-fiction writing at Simon Fraser's Writer's Studio, has prepared an illustrated lecture on her mother's life. Following this talk, SMOC's curator, Ivan Sayers, will discuss SMOC's collection of Wiener fashion, some of which will be on display.

SMOC PRESENTS

fabulous

The Life and Work of Designer Lore Maria Wiener

Claudia Cornwall presents the work of her mother, Vancouver designer Lore Maria Wiener. Featuring a display of the designer's pieces from the SMOC collection.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2022
HYCROFT
1489 MCRAE AVENUE
VANCOUVER, BC
DOORS OPEN AT 1 PM

MEMBERS \$25
NON-MEMBERS \$35
STUDENTS \$15
TICKETS ONLINE SMOC.CA
SHOW 2:00 - 4:00 PM

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PHOTO COURTESY OF GORDON CORNWALL,
AND THE MODEL IS CONNIE BARNES

Lore Maria Wiener was one of the major contributors to establishing Vancouver's reputation for excellence in dress design. She dominated local fashion during the mid-century twentieth century with elegant and wearable creations. As a tribute to Wiener's importance, the Vancouver Art Gallery chose one of her dresses for the cover of their 2020 exhibit catalogue, "Modern in the Making."

This lecture also celebrates the successful digitization of Rainforest Chic: Designer Lore Maria Wiener Archive. SMOC thanks the Irving K Barber Learning Centre at UBC for matching funding to digitize the collection.

Since 2017, the British Columbia Electronic Library Network and the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre have been partnering to allow successful grant recipients the option of hosting their digitized collections on ARCA, BC's collaborative digital repository.

How Queen Victoria named British Columbia (and Queensland) ...

By Ged Martin

[This is an excerpt from an article appearing on Ged Martin's website, www.gedmartin.net. In its entirety it makes for very amusing reading]

Although apparently a trivial issue, the selection of a name for the gold-rush colony of British Columbia embarrassed Lord Derby's minority Conservative government and threatened to become the focus for a groundswell of opposition to the constitution and even the very establishment of a new colony. The Colonial Secretary in Lord Derby's minority Conservative ministry of 1858-9 was Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton. New to office – his party was short of talent as well as numbers – in poor health and embarrassed by a disastrous marriage, Lytton did not project the image of a confident cabinet minister. He was better known as a novelist, remembered

today, if with some derision, for coining the clichéd story-opening phrase, "it was a dark and stormy night". Perhaps it was an innate streak of romantic creativity that led him to ask Queen Victoria to select the name for the new colony. Since legislation was to be introduced within a week, his loyal gesture caused problems.

...In asking his sovereign to select that name, Lytton informed her that explorers had used the name "New Caledonia", but he did point out that the name had been used for "the chief island of the New Hebrides Group in the South Seas where the French have lately signified their intention to form an establishment". He added that the names New Cornwall and New Hanover had also been applied to parts of the coast by some mapmakers. The monarchy retained a significant role in mid-nineteenth century government, but it was hardly equipped to act as a cartographical research institute for the

Colonial Office. Nonetheless, the Queen – probably in consultation with her husband, Prince Albert – responded promptly, on 27 June informing her minister that she had settled on New Caledonia as the most generally accepted name.

...The parliamentary criticism of the choice of New Caledonia was not an isolated phenomenon. It was a common joke that the British public was ignorant of the world in general, and of colonial geography in particular, and much of the blame was put on confusing and imitative names...

When the committee stage of the bill began on 12 July, there were suggestions of "Pacifica" (by analogy with Australia) and of reviving Sir Francis Drake's "New Albion", while Roebuck "recommended that the Indian name should be sought out and adopted in a translated shape" – an enlightened sentiment, but

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