



LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES EXHIBITION NO. 27



GARRY NEILL KENNEDY

SUPERSTAR SHADOW 1984-2005

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Cover: Preparatory drawing for Failure of Intelligence (detail), 2005, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario

This exhibition and brochure accompany the book *Garry Neill Kennedy: Superstar Shadow, 1984-2005*, produced in 2006 by Museum London in partnership with the National Gallery of Canada, the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, and the Owens Art Gallery. The publication surveys fifteen floor-to-ceiling wall paintings using the typeface Superstar Shadow. Each work includes colour photographs documenting the installation, original-size reproductions of printed matter from the exhibition, preparatory drawings, a commentary by a curator or critic, and notes by the artist reviewing his intentions, along with acknowledgements and contextual details.

In the year 2000, during Kennedy's retrospective* at the National Gallery of Canada, the Gallery commissioned him to produce a work for a challenging space consisting of twelve large areas. The artist recalled reading a book review that summarily identified only twelve main problems in the world. A committed conceptualist, Kennedy is interested in painting as a method of questioning the meaning of art and its relevance to society. Conflating the two ideas, he produced *Twelve (12) Big Problems* [6], an installation of twelve floor-to-ceiling panels, each 4.5 by 5.5 metres, representing the numbers one through twelve in the typeface Superstar Shadow and painted in mis-tints (another problem solved!). The rejected cans of paint – the result of wrong choices or technical errors – were purchased from stores in the Ottawa area. Each stated problem, which begins with the definite article *the* in boldface, was reproduced in a brochure that accompanied the installation of painted numbers. Together, the huge numbers and the brochure make an ironic comment, pointing to the folly of presenting simplistic solutions to complex problems.

Peter Trepanier
Head, Reader Services

*Garry Neill Kennedy: *Work of Four Decades*. Halifax: Art Gallery of Nova Scotia; Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2000.



49th Parallel Gallery

1 Figure Paintings, 49th Parallel Gallery, New York, 1984

I mixed naval ship colours of both Canada (Fig. 1) and Mexico (Fig. 3) with the U.S. fleet colour (Fig. 2) in quantities proportional to the size of their navies. As the U.S./Canadian ratio is 40 to 1 (Fig. 4) and the U.S./Mexican ratio is 25 to 1 (Fig. 5), there is no perceptible change in colour between Figs. 2, 4, and 5. This was the first time I used the typeface Superstar Shadow. The idea came from having noticed the numbers painted on the prows of the NATO ships that visited Halifax harbour – clearly visible to me from my NSCAD office window.



Don Corman

2 Garry Neill Kennedy: Superstar Shadow, Stride Gallery, Calgary, 1986

In this work I painted my name from floor to ceiling, spacing the letters so as to cover all the walls of the gallery. The work is painted in a variation of Superstar Shadow – altered so that its shadow was not cast below but directly sideways (to the right). My name therefore is seen neither from above nor from below but head-on, at eye level, so to speak. A year later when I made the same work at Cold City Gallery, Toronto, I used Pittsburgh Paints' "Empire Yellow." This was the first of many works in which the names given to paint directed or influenced the content of my work.



GNK

3 Conrad Black and Bob White, Cold City Gallery, Toronto, 1988

I painted the names "Conrad Black" and "Bob White" on the gallery walls from floor to ceiling. The painting began at the entrance (left) with the C in Conrad, then travelled throughout the reception area and office and continued across the washroom doors and windows until it completed its journey with an E, at the exit. Both names were painted with semi-gloss on flat-white walls, with the show's announcement folder placed on the wall in between the k in Black and the B in Bob. The folder, an integral part of the work, contained the *Canadian Encyclopedia* bios of Black, White, and me.



GNK

4 UH-HUH, S.L. Simpson Gallery, Toronto, 1992

I painted the words "UH-HUH" from floor to ceiling on the walls and windows of the lobby of the gallery. The words were selected from the Pepsi television advertisement, "That's the way I like it, Uh-Huh, Uh-Huh," sung by Ray Charles. They were painted in the Pepsi colours red and blue with the shadows of the letters painted in blue and the hyphen, a red square, painted in the corner.

5 Nothing Personal, Khyber Centre for the Arts, Halifax, 2000

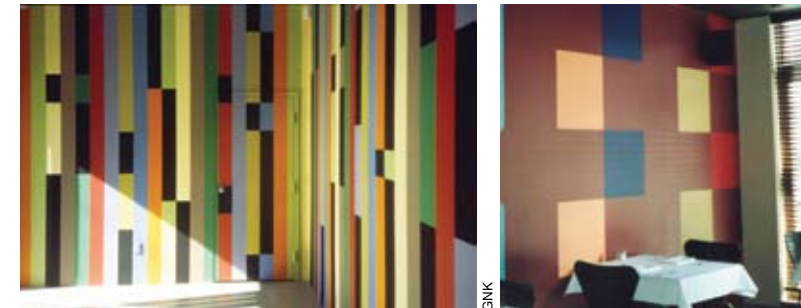
From floor to ceiling across two walls I painted the words "Nothing Pers" in gloss white, and after turning the corner on the third wall I continued with "onal" in a bright green. The white-on-white treatment on the first two walls presented an empty-looking surface upon which Lucy Chan, a NSCAD student, placed her large cutout figures. The third wall's green shadows were painted on the highly decorative, neo-classical Corinthian columns.



Clive Coney

6 Twelve (12) Big Problems, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 2000/2001

The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia and the National Gallery of Canada organized my retrospective, *Work of Four Decades*. The exhibition travelled to the Nickle Museum of Art at the University of Calgary and the Beaverbrook Art Gallery in Fredericton as well as to the two sponsoring institutions. I was commissioned to do a new, site-specific work, *Twelve (12) Big Problems*, while the exhibition was at the National Gallery. Peter Trepanier comments on this work above.



GNK

7 Fast, Free & Easy, Goodwater Gallery, Toronto, 2003, and Schnell, Frei & Leicht, Goodwater Gallery, Art Forum, Berlin, 2003

I thought the words "Fast, Free, and Easy," which had recently popped up in my reading, would fit neatly (Es and Fs – always excellent letters for Superstar Shadow) into the small Goodwater storefront gallery on Dundas Street. The three-word text followed a computer-based configuration that was conceived by Roger Bywater, and the work's nine colours were lifted from an IKEA decorative carpet. I was particularly attracted to the word "free." I had used it years before as an artist's book [8]. The German version of the text was later installed in Berlin by the Goodwater gallerists John Goodwin and Roger Bywater.

8 FREE, Black Cat Café, Ottawa, 2003

I painted the word "FREE" along one wall of the Murray Street restaurant. *FREE* picks up on the ideas associated with the common and not-so-common use of this word that I have worked with previously. One such use was contained in an artist's book in which I listed all the items that one could have free in a fast-food outlet, for example, salt, pepper, mustard, ketchup, relish, vinegar, and so on. I submitted this as a proposal for the text on banners that would be displayed around the perimeter of the Dome stadium in Toronto. My intention was to have it look like a giant hamburger. The proposal was not accepted.



Owens Art Gallery

9 RIEN DE PERSONNEL, Centre d'art contemporain Faux Mouvement, Metz, France, 2003

I re-made an earlier idea, *Nothing Personal* [5], this time in French – *Rien de Personnel*. The IKEA carpets I chose were round, about 1.5 metres in diameter, and decorated with the continents and countries of the world arranged randomly in four colours on a mid-blue background. I applied these colours (adding white for punch) to form the shadows of the text on a 38-metre wall that zigzagged from the entrance to well within the gallery. Most of the carpets hugged the wall, but some were scattered into the space occupied by the work of other artists in this group exhibition.

10 TIT FOR TAT on the Tantramar Marsh, Owens Art Gallery, Mount Allison University, Sackville, New Brunswick, 2004

I painted the words "TIT FOR TAT" around the walls of the large gallery of the Owens. My choice of colours had names that included the word Marsh. There were six colours in all: Marsh Marigold, Marsh Thistle, (another) Marsh Marigold, Marsh Fern, Marsh Creek, and Marsh Rose, which I used as the background colour. *TIT FOR TAT* was the first of three works of an open series that I called *Ethics 101*. Two others in this series have followed [11, 13]. The phrase "tit for tat" has recently been associated with the evolution of cooperative behaviour among people. This work suggests that the environment may also have a hand in it.



John Armstrong

11 You Scratch My Back and I'll Scratch Yours in the Colonial Room, Article, Montreal, 2004

This is another text piece from my recently developed *Ethics 101* series. I was fortunate to have handy a string of words, "You Scratch My Back and I'll Scratch Yours," long enough to fit the multi-room spaces of Article and in an appropriate setting for Colonial Colours. Thirty years ago the word colonial popped-up in advertising much more often than it does now. Its use has diminished (but not yet replaced with post-colonial) to the point where it's hard to buy a good colonial colour any more. In a way this work signifies the decline of colonialism. Although, old-fashioned as it may seem, does one really believe that the United States will ever vacate Iraq?

12 OTTO GOLD, Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto, 2004

This work grew out of my project in 2003 for Kunsthalle, Erfurt, Germany, titled *Telephone Book (In Colours): Erfurt and Shawnee*. In that work I made a new telephone book for Erfurt and for Shawnee, Kansas – Erfurt's sister city and a wonderful coincidence I couldn't resist using. The book was similar to most telephone books, except that it listed only persons with colour names. One of the names in the new Erfurt phone directory was Otto Gold. I selected him, as his name, OTTO, when configured in Superstar Shadow and painted in gold, fit beautifully, one letter per wall, in the tower-like entrance to the gallery.



Museum Toronto

13 AN EYE FOR AN EYE, Museum London, London, Ontario, 2004

The museum's centre gallery of three large exhibiting walls was the site for this Superstar Shadow installation. I painted the words "AN EYE" on each of the sidewalls and the word "FOR" on the much larger centre wall. Throughout the open floor space I scattered sixty round IKEA Ringum carpets in red, blue, yellow, pink, grey, and off-white. The wall text was painted in these same colours. I signed and numbered the carpets as an edition. They were later available for sale in the gallery's gift shop.



Isaac Applebaum

14 FAILURE OF INTELLIGENCE, McMaster Museum of Art, Hamilton, Ontario, 2005

I painted the text "failure of intelligence" in Superstar Shadow from floor to ceiling. The work occupied two rooms – ten walls in total. The base colours, one for each wall, had names that included the word "Persian" or "Arabian" and were applied so that the following wall's colour formed the preceding wall's shadow. In the centre of the small gallery I placed a pile of approximately twenty Oriental carpets that were assembled in response to a university community-wide request. The work is concerned with the war in Iraq and also attempts to reference the particular, that is, the place where it is exhibited and the people who work and live there.



Steve Farmer

15 Number Painting, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, ARTport, Halifax, 2005

Number Painting is a variation on *Figure Paintings* [1], a work I first presented at the 49th Parallel Gallery, New York, in 1985. In that work I attempted to comment on the military might of the United States in relation to its northern and southern neighbours – Canada and Mexico. *Number Painting* continues the theme of the dominant military power, but since the French fleet would be anchored in Halifax harbour during the course of the exhibition, I thought it would be more relevant to paint a comparison of Canada and France with the size and strength of the United States. I also exchanged the heading "Fig." with "No.": hence the title *Number Painting*.