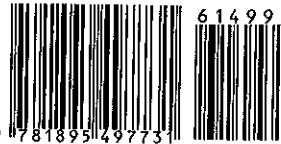


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Kamloops Art Gallery

Isao Sanami/Morrill
Real Life and Landscapes

A catalogue of the exhibition
Isao Sanami/Morrill: Real Life and Landscapes
held at Kamloops Art Gallery
19 October 2008 to 4 January 2009.
Curated by Jen Budney.

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Foreword

Beverley Clayton

Acting Director

Isao Sanami/Morrill paints landscapes of the Thompson-Nicola and Okanagan regions with refreshing candour, illustrating the unique geography along with aspects of our modern culture, such as power lines, housing developments, highway ramps, and household objects of convenience. Consisting of artworks produced between 2000 and 2006, *Real Life and Landscapes* showcases Sanami/Morrill's unique approach to painting and pastel. The influence of both Japanese and Western art techniques can be seen in her subtle application of pigment, manner of composition, and colour sensibility. Sanami/Morrill recently moved to Nova Scotia after spending most of the last twenty years in the Southern Interior of British Columbia. This exhibition represents her gift to this region.

The Kamloops Art Gallery is pleased to present this solo exhibition of works by Isao Sanami/Morrill along with this beautiful publication, which includes insightful essays by Jen Budney, former Kamloops Art Gallery curator and now Associate Curator at the Mendel Art Gallery in Saskatoon, and Ross Nelson, Academic Director for the Faculty of Arts and Professor in the Department of Geography at Thompson Rivers University.

On behalf of the Kamloops Art Gallery, I thank all those who made this exhibition and publication possible, including Isao Sanami/Morrill, Jen Budney, Ross Nelson, photographer Victor Hamm, and publication designer Richard Winchell, along with KAG staff and board. The Gallery is grateful to the Province of British Columbia through BC150 Years, a Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts initiative, and to media sponsor B-100 for supporting this exhibition. The Gallery is also grateful to the City of Kamloops, British Columbia Arts Council, and Canada Council for the Arts for providing operational funding.

Landscapes of the Post-Cowboy West

Ross Nelson

On March 29, 2008, the darkened skylines of cities in earlier time zones dominated Kamloops' evening news. The unusual scenes were the result of a global campaign by the World Wide Fund for Nature that asked households, corporations, and governments to reduce electricity consumption together for a period of one hour. Intrigued by the images on my television screen, I donned a coat and set out on foot to gauge local participation. My expectations were modest. Civic leaders had endorsed the campaign. However, in the small cities and rural periphery beyond the Vancouver-Victoria-Nanaimo conurbation of southwest British Columbia, particularly in regions like ours, with long histories of resource extraction, and where the collective percentage of commuters by foot, cycle, or public transportation can be tallied on the digits of one hand, environmental attitudes tend to be utilitarian. Along my route, I passed a number of darkened homes, some with flickering candles on sills or dining room tables, cheerful signs of participation. Yet, from the prospect afforded by a hillside in one of the city's newest neighbourhoods, the pockets of dark were no competition for the sea of light. In the distance, as bright as ever, the city sparkled with the arterial orange and the backlit red, white, and blues of our modern service economy. At hand, the diffuse glow of drop lens, cobra head street lamps—standard issue for over 40 years but now the bane of dark-sky advocates—illuminated icons of our energy-intensive age: a curvilinear network of snout houses, freshly rolled turf, thirsty cedar hedges, and fire-truck-wide thoroughfares.

Despite the brevity of the event and the enormity of the problem, Earth Hour was a success. The 60-minute campaign drew media-wide attention to the threat of global warming and to the ameliorative roles individuals and organizations can play. Polls indicated that almost one-half of Canadians participated in some way and that 84 per cent felt our governments should do more to combat global climate change. Organizers were understandably pleased, as no doubt were environmental groups and others who champion related causes. And the same, I suspect, was probably true for the artist Isao Sanami/Morrill. Her landscapes are not the Super Natural lens through which we normally see and sell the province of British Columbia.¹ Instead, her work documents the everyday, built environment—bumps and warts included—of the dry south-central interior of B.C. Her subjects are housing tracts, power lines and light poles, fences and NO TRESPASSING signs, scarred hillsides, and urban intrusions in our rural and mountainous environs. Like Earth Hour, Sanami/Morrill's focus invites us to reconsider the state of our lived environment in a time of escalating demands and concern. The goal of my brief essay is to describe some of the key forces currently shaping our regional landscape, and thereby underscore the artist's message.

Economic Shifts

The rhythm and character of urban settlement in southern British Columbia has been the product of irregular pulses of economic stimuli and accompanying waves of immigration. The nineteenth century brought successive waves of fur traders and forts, gold prospectors

and instant towns of hotels, beer halls, and laundries, and near century's end, hard rock miners, railroaders, dry-land farmers, and land speculators. The gridiron cadastral patterns and oversized streets of our urban cores are artefacts of this optimistic phase. In the twentieth century, three long decades of strong commodity prices, corporate mega-projects, and massive public investments in highways and hydroelectric power fuelled a so-called golden age of post-war economic expansion that extended and reworked the province's urban fabric. It was an age of sprawl, of bypass strips and cinder block architecture, shopping malls, arterial strips, and cul-de-sacs of uniformly unadorned and highly affordable accommodation. It was also a time of amalgamation and organization. Many places created their first official community plans while preconceived instant towns sprung to life in the resource rich wilderness. In other cases, as on Kamloops' north shore or the string of satellite suburbs that stretch the city's eastern boundary, growth outran the ability of public officials to plan. The resultant urban scenes were more haphazard, less polished, and typically more expensive to service. *KamPlan 1974* was the city's first overarching attempt to deal with these challenges.

Post-war expansion came to a rapid close in the early 1980s as soaring oil prices, sky-high interest rates, and cratering resource and housing markets took their toll. A second expansionary phase, more cautious and geographically uneven than its predecessor, arose shortly thereafter. Larger centres and communities favoured by the retired have benefited most. The population of Kelowna and Vernon jumped 76 per cent and 79 per

¹ "Super Natural" is a long-standing advertising theme used by the provincial government. It sells the province as a pristine wilderness and recreational paradise of snow-clad mountain crags, breaching killer whales,

misty rain forests, and soaked whitewater rafters.

Dr. Ross Nelson is a geography professor, currently the Academic Director, Faculty of Arts, Thompson Rivers University.

cent between 1986 and 2006, with Peachland (67 per cent), Osoyoos (63 per cent), Salmon Arm (45 per cent), Penticton (38 per cent), and Kamloops (32 per cent) following in order.² In contrast, many smaller communities, especially those dependent on resource industries, have stagnated or shrunk, such as Midway (-1 per cent), Princeton (-6 per cent), Ashcroft (-11 per cent), Greenwood (-17 per cent), and Clinton (-22 per cent)—or, like Logan Lake, struggled to recoup populations lost when the post-war expansion went bust.

The duality of this experience is symptomatic of a broad shift in the region's economy. Jobs in the agriculture, forestry, mining, and fishing industries accounted for four per cent of the labour force in 2006, down from 14 per cent in 1951. The current share is slightly higher in the Thompson-Okanagan region (six per cent) but the trend is the same. A recent study of the character of regional economies estimated that only five per cent of the income generated in Kelowna and Penticton is now tied to forestry compared to 18 per cent and 28 per cent in Ashcroft and Princeton. In the region's largest cities, business and professional services, education, health care, and tourism have joined traditional retail and governmental operations to become the new backbone of the local economy.³

Amenity Migrants

The shift from resource extraction economies to service economies is reflected in migration patterns. In the past, people settled in Interior B.C. in tandem with fluctuations in commodity prices and the fortunes of resource communities. In-migration peaked at the top of the economic cycle, and ebbed when jobs

and the prices upon which they depend turned south. Statistical analyses indicate that this connection has weakened in recent decades and that new relationships are emerging between the province's urban core and its less settled hinterlands. Current migration patterns in the south-central interior and on the outskirts of Vancouver are a residential rather than employment phenomenon.

Thomas Power and Richard Barrett, economists who have examined similar transitions in the USA, argue that states along the spine of the Rocky Mountains have entered a "post-cowboy" phase in which place-based "amenities" in the form of unspoiled scenery, recreational opportunities, local culture, and a sense of community and safety are critical regional assets.⁴ Collectively known as the mountainous west, this region has consistently eclipsed national growth averages over the last 40 years despite the decline of its once dominant resource industries and wage rates below national norms. Power and Barrett contend that many migrants consciously trade these weaker economic prospects for more attractive natural and cultural features: "Clearly, people care about where they live, and they act economically in the pursuit of their preferences," including making "major sacrifices in pursuit of higher-quality living environments." If this analysis is correct, the mountainous west and presumably the Interior of British Columbia are places where the financially mobile are choosing to live in order to recreate.

Major urban centres are the largest source of in-migrants to British Columbia's south-central interior, and presumably the majority are amenity-oriented newcomers. Vancouver

and Victoria together supply half of the intra-provincial migrants entering the Thompson-Okanagan, with Vancouver accounting for the bulk of the numbers. Despite, or perhaps because of, its status as an economic powerhouse and magnet for immigrants around the Pacific Rim, Greater Vancouver has annually exported since 1987, without exception, more people to than it has received from the rest of the province. The exodus peaked in the early 1990s when upwards of 17,500 (net) annually escaped the rain, congestion, and overheated property values of the Lower Mainland. The numbers have fluctuated since this time, but still average a net outward flow of 5,500 per year. The balance would favour Interior destinations even more if migrants beyond the Rockies or those who maintain second homes and commute on a seasonal basis were included. Amenity migrants tend to relocate to smaller communities; that is, they travel down rather than across or up the urban hierarchy.

Beautiful Hyper-Suburban British Columbia

If the character of urban settlement is intimately connected to the driving economic forces of an age, what, one may ask, does the built environment of amenity migration look like? One might suspect that amenity migrants, given their big city origins, would carry in their cultural baggage a taste for high density, mixed use, and, above all, vibrant urban landscapes; or that economic development agencies, in the competition to win them, would encourage the same. The regional scientist Richard Florida argues that dynamic urban scenes are essential for attracting the creative class, the vanguard of the new economy. Amenity migrants are also thought to be "greener" folk.

American surveys indicate that they place a high value on the natural environment and are willing to pay dearly to non-consumptively use it. Their influx has consequently changed the dynamics of public opinion and led to heated arguments about the relative merits of the old versus new economies and legal struggles over back-country access and the proper management of rural lands.

British Columbia has witnessed its own vitriolic battles and, occasionally, physical confrontations over land-use plans. However, for the most part, amenity migrants have not preoccupied municipal agendas. There are, of course, exceptions. Kelowna renovated its waterfront and concocted a cultural district to support its aspiration claim to become Canada's Silicon Vineyard, while Kamloops' Sun Rivers neighbourhood is one of the country's largest geothermal neighbourhoods. However, on balance, amenity migrants seem to be lured by natural rather than urban amenities. The design elements advocated by the New Urbanism and Smart Growth⁵—dedicated bicycle lanes, integrated live-work complexes, traffic calming roundabouts, low energy and carbon neutral structures, and tightly knit communities of smaller homes and front porches—have consequently found little purchase in the silt clays of the Thompson-Okanagan region.

The built environments of amenity migration are hyper-suburbs. Hyper-suburbs are automobile-dependent, residential landscapes that take sprawl and exclusivity to new extremes. They occur in a variety of forms. Common examples are the gated communities for the "over-55" crowd and the verdant neighbourhoods of trophy homes that hug the

2 Statistics cited in this paper are drawn from Statistics Canada or BC Stats

3 Garry Horne, *British Columbia's Heartland at the Dawn of the 21st Century: 2001 Economic Dependencies and Impact Ratios for 63 Local Areas* (BC Ministry of Management Services, 2004).

4 Thomas Power and Richard Barrett, *Post-Cowboy Economics: Pay and Prosperity in the New American West*, (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2001).

5 The New Urbanism refers to an urban planning movement that started in the 1980s. It seeks to create more community-oriented and sustainable urban places by encouraging higher density, mixed land use, better design

and architecture, and pedestrian-friendly street networks and landscaping. Smart Growth broadly refers to non-governmental organizations across North America that advocate similar socially and environmentally responsible planning policies.

edges of modern golf courses. Dedicated space for golf cart storage, home theatres, fitness rooms, show case kitchens, and grand halls in some enclaves have inflated the average space we consume. The average Canadian house contained 800 square feet in 1945; today it is 2,000 square feet, and 2500 square feet in B.C., the highest in the nation. The significance of this increase is further magnified by a decline in the average household size. In 1951 the average Canadian household contained 3.9 persons; in 2006, but 2.5.

Further out are exurbs, resort communities, and the gentrified range.⁶ Exurbs are large-lot, low density, fully serviced, single use developments. They are typically found beyond municipal borders in rural or undeveloped areas, but also appear on the edges of smaller towns that lie within the commuter sheds of regional centres. Long stretches of the Okanagan corridor fit this description, as do the upscale real estate ventures materializing on the shores of Nicola Lake. Resort communities are hyper-suburbs clustered around ski hills, beaches, national parks, or cultural attractions. Some have morphed from seasonal tourist destinations into year-round towns. Others are purpose built, catering to full-time residents from the start. Whistler, Banff, and Canmore are prime Canadian examples, while Sun Peaks, Silver Star, and Big White ski resorts, and the newly minted Tobiano golf community outside Kamloops, and soon perhaps Merritt's Active Mountain complex are regional illustrations. The gentrified ranges, so-named by the geographer William Travis, are working farms that have been carved into ranchettes (purely residential) or converted into hobby ranches.

Both are typically occupied by affluent urbanites who continue to work elsewhere. The gentrified range is less common in south-central British Columbia, as narrow valleys and the Agricultural Land Reserve limit possibilities. The situation in the United States is a different story. Studies there suggest that around one-half of western farms now fit this category.

Hyper-suburbanization has exploded the boundaries of our functional urban areas, creating immense urban bubbles around the traditional cores of our cities. According to Census Canada, which uses population density and commuting patterns to define the area that functions as an urban place, the Kamloops census agglomeration stretches from Sun Peaks to Logan Lake, and from the outlet of the Little Shuswap lake to the outlet of Kamloops Lake. In total the region encloses some 5,686 square kilometres. By this measure, Kamloops is the sixth largest city in Canada and almost twice the size of metropolitan Vancouver. Kelowna also makes the top-twenty list at just under 3,000 square kilometres. However, Kelowna's urban boundaries abut those of Vernon and Penticton. Together, the three urban entities consume over 6,000 square kilometres. In the not too distant future, one will probably be able to refer to the Okanagan conurbation, a continuously settled landscape of urban cores, suburban fringes and hyper-suburban flows reaching northward from the American border to Salmon Arm and the shores of Shuswap Lake—or, given the disappearance of a few rural buffers, and in the spirit of megalopolis acronyms, we may refer to the supra-urban region of Kamlowyoos.

The Necessity of Post-Cowboy Art

In 2006, 87 per cent of British Columbians lived in one of the province's 26 largest urban centres. In the Thompson and Okanagan valleys, the five largest communities—Kelowna, Kamloops, Vernon, Penticton, and Salmon Arm—accounted for 84 per cent of the region's population. We are definitely an urban society. We are not, however, a highly urban culture. Our economy has swung from extractive resource activities to urban-oriented and supposedly clean information services. But here, in the south-central interior of British Columbia, we still seem to be trying to escape or deny our urban possibilities. We live in a country where land and gasoline are relatively inexpensive,⁷ and the dream of the single family home with a view of a sweeping fairway (or quiet waterfront or sun dappled ridge) remains strong. As hyper-suburban amenity seekers and amenity ranchers, we willingly trade urban congestion for the new suburbia and believe we can pocket the difference. We locate universities—the engine of the new economy—on the outskirts of our cities. We reject water meters in our driest cities. We consume twice the energy, water, and space that Europeans do, yet marvel at the beauty and efficiency of their cities.

We cannot expect Sanami/Morrill's work to single-handedly rein in the hyper-suburbs and undermine the consumer ethic that drives them. But it is a start. Like the Earth Hour campaign, her landscapes challenge us to recognize the imprint of our residential choices and, in turn, to question the values upon which they are based.

⁶ For a longer description, see William Travis' *New Geographies of the American West: Land Use and the Changing Patterns of Place* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2007).

⁷ While prices have jumped dramatically over the past 12 months, gasoline is still inexpensive in North America compared to other developed parts of the world. It will be interesting to see if the increased cost will affect

our commuting patterns and ultimately the ways we plan and develop our cities.