

SEPTEMBER 1989

FREE

# FRONT



Nancy Shaw

Feature: Mary Kelly, *Between Signifiers*  
Patrick Ready: *Rain and Art*

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# FRONT



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Nancy Shaw  
 photo:  
 Chick Rice

FRONT

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FRONT is published nine times a year by the Western Front Society, Vancouver. Designed by Charles Cousins; cover photographs by Chick Rice; edited and produced by Henry O. Bull, Jane Ellison, Elspeth Sage and Ron Twanow. Submissions and correspondence are encouraged. Advertising rates available on request. Second Class Mail permit #8229

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NANCY SHAW

VIDEO ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

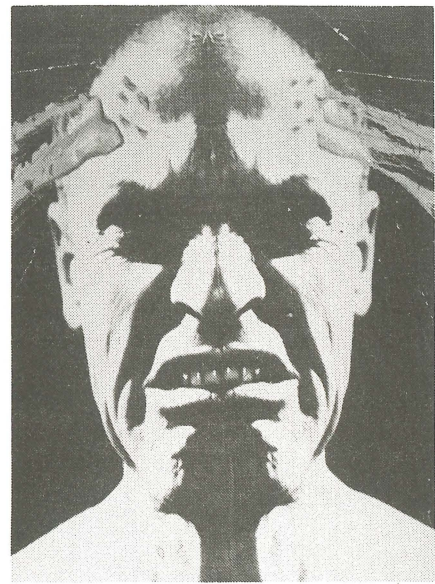
September

Nancy Shaw is a Vancouver artist and writer. She is also director of the OR Gallery and on the board of Writing Magazine. This is her first video production.

Scoptocratic  
(One of several scenarios)

Under one roof you can observe a lot when given to an old time hero. I meant nothing by this remark but was surprised when the witness kept quiet. In doubt a rose is a grotesque thing. Scars, scissors and lips; tar paper, and paper, wooden windows. It is simply names that work today and this has nothing to do with windows. The home owner and his helper. I watched from a room I knew too well with a partial view of the neighbour's lawn on a slender, riotous island.

—Nancy Shaw



GORDON PAYNE

EXHIBITION: UNDER SATURN

September 12–October 7

Opening: Tuesday, September 12, 8 p.m.

Artist's Talk: Gordon Payne will discuss this work on Thursday, September 14 at 8 p.m. FREE

Gordon Payne is a resident of Vancouver. Over the past few years he has received acclaim for his painting. His large scale abstract canvasses were exhibited in 1986 in a solo exhibition at the Charles H. Scott Gallery. UNDER SATURN is a departure from his usual practice. This installation entails a number of "mirror" portraits produced during the past several years. These self-portraits present only the head and neck with the face consistently contorted. The motif reappears in various two dimensional genres and media (photo images, drawings, egg tempera paintings) as well as in three-dimensional forms such as cast lead. Without corpus or context, the cause of the grimace is unclear but the unrelenting repetition actualizes the nature of obsession. Component titles extend meaning and direct the viewer by alluding to psychological states and ontological issues. The installation also constitutes an investigation into the relationship between work and text. Some elements of this project have been previously presented in the *Capilano Review*. Each element has an adjunct "story" which Payne will present and discuss at his Artist's Talk.



YAT-AH: CHILCOTIN SKY

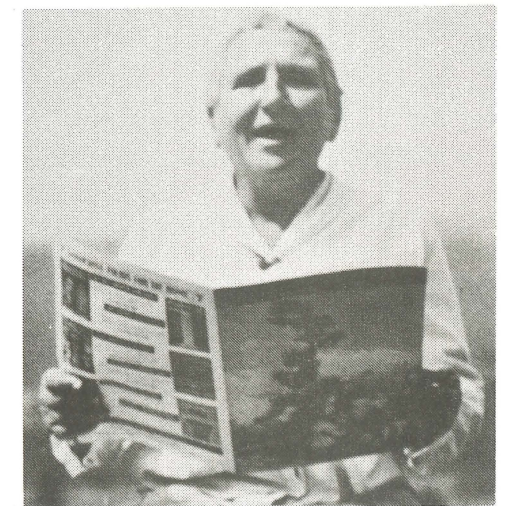
THEATRE

September 12–16, 8:30 p.m. \$5.

In YAT-AH: CHILCOTIN SKY, an ensemble of Indigenous and European Clowns, an old storytelling couple, and several musicians take a journey through Canada's past and turn Cultus History upside-down. In a series of fourteen scenes, YAT-AH recreates the arrival of the European and his legacy: the fur-trade, the coming of disease, the Missionaries, the industry of lumber, the Hollywood of Cowboys and Indians, the judicial scales of History, and the isolation and imaginings of the North and its storytelling traditions. With an intercultural ensemble of Clowns and Storytellers, with a vocal percussive score, with the use of Indigenous languages—Cree, Salish, Kayuga—YAT-AH expresses images and rhythms of Canadian history.

Written and directed by Alison McAlpine, with Sam Bob, Oona McOuat, Kelly Moyah, Debbie Danbrook, Vern Clair, Troy Awassis, Jimmy Sidlar, Ronnie Sauve, Tina Louise Bomberry, Ahmed Hassan, Sam Miller, Tina Farmilo.

Special thanks to THE UNITED NATIVE NATIONS, Jani Lauzon, Ronnie Sauve and THE INSTITUTIONAL THEATRE PRODUCTIONS SOCIETY. Sponsored by Canada Manpower, Leon & Thea Koerner Foundation, Laidlaw Foundation, The National Film Board of Canada, Simon Fraser Institute for the Humanities, Eastside Educational Enrichment Society.



NANCY COLE  
ROBERT DUNCAN  
GEORGE OPPEN  
MARY OPPEN

POETS ON VIDEO

Thursday, September 21, 9 p.m. \$2.

The first in a monthly series drawing on the formidable video collections of the American Poetry Archive and the Western Front. Curated by Charles Watts, these screenings take place in an informal context, with refreshments, and book table courtesy of Proprioception Books.

Charles Oppen reads *Seascape: Needles Eye* and Robert Duncan reads from *Dante Etudes* and other poems. 42 min. Feb. 23, 1973. American Poetry Archive.

Mary Oppen reads a selection of prose works including *Meaning A Life*, her autobiography. 45 min. Nov. 29, 1978. American Poetry Archive.

Nancy Cole performs *The World is Round* by Gertrude Stein. This solo performance is a collection of works for children. There is considerable audience participation, with the children singing and playing word games inspired by Stein's "lessons". Excerpts. Nov. 16, 1975. Western Front Archives.

# C.A.G.

## ■ NANCY SPERO

September 13 – October 7

## ■ ROBERT KEZIERE

October 13 – November 11

## ■ SPRING HURLBUT

November 17 – December 16

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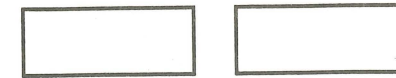
PAINTINGS

Curated by Sima Elizabeth Shefrin

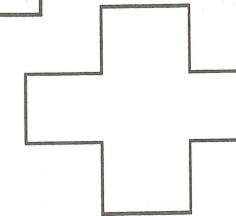
September 28 - October 22, 1989  
VANCOUVER WOMEN IN FOCUS GALLERY  
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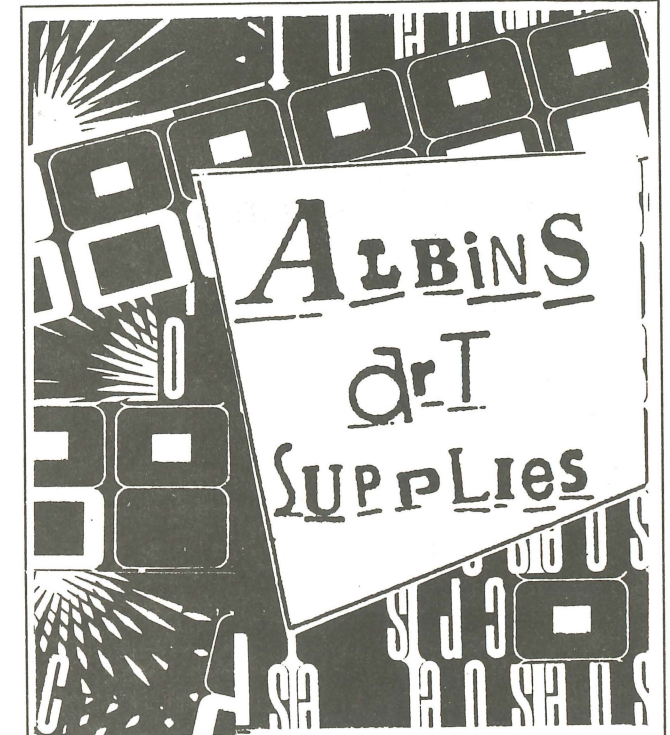
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\* For The Democratization of the Arts \*  
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SEPTEMBER 27-OCTOBER 7  
OPENING TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

WENDY DAVIS: MEANS OF NAVIGATION  
OCTOBER 11-21  
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KEITH HIGGINS: A FICTIONALIZED ACCOUNT  
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# B E T W E E N S I G N I F I E R S

Mary Kelly conducted "The Critical Practice of Art," in June 1989, a Summer Intensive organized by Anne Ramsden (AR) of the Centre For the Arts, Simon Fraser University. Guest lecturers were Joanne Isaak and Victor Burgin. The Summer Intensive was designed for artists, writers, critics and curators in the visual arts community. It comprised a series of lectures on psychoanalysis, seminar sessions and critical engagements with the work of participating artists. Further, the first week of the Intensive coincided with a course by art historian Griselda Pollock, organized by Judith Mastai at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

The participants in the Intensive were: Renee Baert (RB), Marion Penner-Bancroft (MPB), Claudia Beck (CB), Jessica Bradley (JB), Lorna Brown (LB), Margot Butler (MB), Kati Campbell (KC), Anne-Marie Cosgrove (AC), Sara Diamond (SDi), Stan Douglas (SDo), Nancy Frohlick (NF), Don Gill (DG), Annette Hurtig (AH), Judi Lederman (JL), Phillip McCrum (PM), Joanne Ross (JR), Nancy Shaw (NS), Kathleen Slade (KS), Jin-me Yoon (JY). Donna Clark (DC) was Intensive Assistant.

Kati Campbell and Donna Clark invited participants (though not all were able to respond) to write a brief 100 to 150 words:

**DG:** Coming to terms with my reactions to the intensive is difficult. Its value is undeniable, the information dealt with is timely and important, the input of the participants stimulating, and Mary Kelly's pedagogical delivery impressive. However, the primary value of the institute for me comes with the process of determining my own position as a male artist in relation to the historical conjuncture of psychoanalytic theory, feminism, and women's practice of art. A conscious effort to become familiar with the material in a more comprehensive manner is now a requisite project.

**JY:** I wanted to be like Mary Kelly. The way she crosses her legs, for example, angled 20 degrees from her poised body, the shins perfectly parallel to each other. I could never remember to do it exactly right. I would inevitably start to slouch, and the top crossed leg would stick out awkwardly, accentuating the fattest part of my calf. Perhaps if I looked in the mirror long enough... Mirror. Long(ing). (Never) enough. No, it wasn't just how she looked. It was her mind that I wanted. Subtle and sophisticated, generous but tough-thoroughly articulate—no flabbiness there. It's that gracious composure... She is lovely in all ways. Her apparent "seamlessness" unnerved me at first but gradually, her totality delighted me. She was complete. And on the night before the last day of the seminar I dreamt: "Was your mother a man?"

**JL:** A lot of smart, enthusiastic kids we were. Bounding up that narrow staircase through the peculiar stale smell to perch expectantly on the edge of chairs, pens alert and curious. Oh, a little chitchatting, an occasional latecomer, but mainly intent, intense. Not wanting to miss a word. (Maybe even longing for a tape recorder.) And then, Mary. That quietly eloquent, small abundant voice. Precise. Clearing her throat. The surprise laugh, bemused at the next idea. Riches. Very serious and joyous. Freud and Lacan. It was going to make sense.

**JR:** It was definitely a Vancouver affair for someone (of the six) from out of province, the vitality of the artistic and theoretical community was exhilarating. A month later, my mind is still electrified and assaulted by the intensity of Mary's presentation and of our participation. Mary's evident pleasure



in the elegant working through of theory prevailed to focus group discussion more on theoretical intricacies and less on current or historical issues surrounding the intersection of feminism and psychoanalysis. The moments — in discussions following lectures, in critiques, in Mary's public lecture at the VAG — when theory and practice coalesced, were tantalizing highlights. After the fact, I wish there had been more.

**AC:** I'm drawn to writing to you about my current news! Since I've been back I've done a lot of dishes and changed a lot of diapers, made some dinners, and generally been quite busy. Immediately, I missed being there, having the opportunity to speak and have others listen and to listen to others. The level of intensity that I enjoyed in that group is uncommon and seemed to be fuelled by the variety of interests that were represented by the participants and the speakers. I am very enthused by the range of feminist activity that presents itself in Vancouver. As you may know, there is no single feminist art gallery in Toronto. Today I'm off to look at possible sites to continue my art practice away from my home

which has become, happily, a source of constant distractions.

**RB:** I was able to attend only two weeks of the three-week intensive. Mary Kelly was concerned: "You'll miss the castration complex!" The castration complex was the subject of Kelly's third lecture, the topic toward which her other tutorials led. My understanding of the castration complex — and the pleasure of the workshop was its amplification, development, reworking of my understanding — is that it is precisely the turn that inaugurates desire and object relations. For men, the recognition of inadequacy: for women, the not-having, missing. But I missed the castration complex. What is

missing, irretrievably not-there, and what persists as object of desire and fantasy of plenitude, is that forever foregone lecture.

**CB:** Dear Gang: I'm at art camp at the Banff Centre. I'm writing. Critical fictions is my critical practice. I'm writing about America, the Americans, and Robert Frank, sort of. You wanted me to write about Mary Kelly and my fabulous three weeks, night and day with all of you and Griselda, Victor, Joanna, Freud, Lacan, etc. Mostly I remember you, I hear your words and laughter, emphatic and questioning. Mostly I remember you and your pictures, while we talked. Mostly I remember you, while we ate and drank and joked. I dream about our words and pictures while I sweat it out with something else on the computer. Being here is different. They say I'm elusive. I can hardly wait to pick up with you again. I think you help me write. Love and Kisses, Claudia. PS I will write our workshop, but I need time to let your words and pictures sink in and spin out.

**SDi:** Mary Kelly's witty and lucid instruction required

deep entry into the intricacies of pure theory. It was a luxurious bath of ideas, amplified for many of us by the rarity of intensive engagement of this duration in reading, discussing, applying theory and collectively critiquing work. The questions that haunted me throughout the seminar remain: to what extent is psychoanalysis an historically situated, but viable map of a specific social and cultural structure, one which revolves around a profoundly inegalitarian patriarchal construct where women lack and men have? To what extent is it a dialectical methodology which allows for a transformation of its own conditions? To what extent does it delineate certain unshakable "truths" about the nature of human functioning cross-culturally which condemn us to a dualistic structure of oppositions based on who has or hasn't got "the phallus" at a given moment. And what does it mean, at this moment in history to enter into or embrace another metadiscourse? The jury may remain out, but the seminar provided a beginning from which to examine the value of this theory to our own practice and to do this with members of our own community.

**MB:** *Over-determined* and *going-too-far* are two terms which Mary Kelly used, and which we participants came to use, during the crits. They are especially useful tools both for producing and interpreting artwork. We used *over-determined* in the sense of 'more than one determining psychological factor', and also for 'excessively determined' (as well, there are many other interesting permutations based on the word 'determine'). The *going-too-far* tool stops the viewer from transgressing the codes which are in the work itself, therefore warding off the tendency to take the work in directions which it doesn't want to go. I think that these two terms/tools go a long way toward understanding the internal machinations of an artwork from both the producers' and the viewers' points of view, therefore toward an integration between those levels of art practice. This course was quite a magical mix of art and psychoanalytic theory, discussion of specific artworks through clear and measured crit process (a rare and truly wonderful experience!), with an integrated feminist analysis — including attention to social change — implicit in the entire process.

**SDo:** Lacan's "return to Freud" has provided feminists with a precise vocabulary for describing sexual difference and its precipitates — but for men who share their interests, a parallel return to *Sophocles* might be more provocative. Throughout the first play of the cycle, Oedipus is well aware of his fate and does all he can to evade it, even though he half-knows that he already inhabits the "unnatural" relations foretold. When he is finally made to recognize his situation, his response is repentant self-mutilation, "the pain of spikes where I once had sight, the flooding pain of memory, never to be gouged out." He blinds himself. But while feelings of guilt prove a good conscience, they change nothing, and Oedipus

asks for exile, for an *elsewhere*. "Drive me out of this country as quickly as may be, to a place where no human voice may meet me." Male sexuality and masculine desire are supposedly obvious because they are two of the more significant determinants of our culture, but one of their favourite deceptions is, precisely, abdication. (During the seminar we heard a particularly fine example of this.) It is easy enough to make ourselves invisible (because we are not). What is more difficult is to place ourselves at *risk*.

**KC:** It's crucial to understand that phallogocentrism is a *linguistic* term and is not to be confused with the term patriarchy. After considerable study in psychoanalysis I can consider now working with the idea that the phallus as signifier structures the unconscious—but only with this provision: that men also be able to move out of the notion that this linguistic condition fixes privilege. I despair that a mis-recognition of the stakes will continue. Women can know that the signifier circulates, in a sense, because we know *we don't have it*. The task then becomes not so much women reconciling themselves to a condition of the symbolic which revolves around a signifier so *apparently* indexed to the biological, but rather that men need to divest themselves of just this *apparency*—to comprehend what it means when Lacan says, "no one has it and no one is it". Montrelay speaks of woman being "too close to her own body". Perhaps the crux is, rather, that man is too close to his own body—too retinally fixed there to recognize the detached, distanced, circulatory condition of the signifier.

**AR:** June 16, 1989: It was Friday night and fifty people were gathered on the fourth floor of the Vancouver Art Gallery to witness and to participate in a "conversation" between Griselda Pollock and Mary Kelly. Framing their discussion by an initial emphasis on the notion of practice, Pollock and Kelly spoke of the importance of the pleasure in the process of making and the need to identify the audience one is "desiring to please"; the advantage of conceiving of one's work as "feminist interventions in art/historical practice" rather than "feminist art/history"; the political distinction between academic institutions and the entertainment industry (galleries, etc) and the different meanings that can be constructed within these two sites; the complex and contradictory relationship between feminism and modernism; the use of psychoanalysis as a tool to construct and/or discern the construction of the subject in art. During their exchanges, Kelly and Pollock failed to agree on a number of issues, but generally, the disagreements turned around matters of strategy rather than fundamental politics. What was instructive—at times exciting—was to observe how Kelly and Pollock were stimulated by their differences within feminism itself.

**DC:** Mostly I/We am/are left with questions: How can I/We take a position in what seems, at times, to be overwhelming theory? What is my/your stake? How can psychoanalysis be used in a way which undermines, to some extent (to what extent?) its own mastery? How can it be used with a historical/socialist analysis? Whose psyche analysed? Is the unconscious a universal truth? Can I/We work with it to move beyond binarisms?

**AH:**  
**ATTRACTED** by the work of this woman/ these women  
 who speak(s) to my memory of my desire  
 when with infant to produce work too  
 turning to words text the body  
 sexual politics and parenting now  
 my child is woman grown/growing  
**RESISTED** the father fundamental Freud  
 (certainly seminal my god! yet another  
 boy's story  
**SEDUCED** by the rigour intensity of  
 engagement with text(s)  
**PLEASURED** by the exercise critical eyes  
 minds voices the concert  
 passionate inquiry pain/play and strain  
 to unravel gender the gift of  
**DREAMED** vivid deep despite  
**NEED** now to sustain the brave bonds  
 vigilance  
 and laughter

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 Griselda Pollock: Vision and Difference  
 Victor Burgin: Between  
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September 1989

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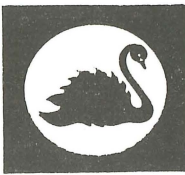
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column

## PROVINCIAL AFFAIRS

patrick ready

We live in the middle of a great opportunity and the time has come to take control of the situation! Winter shall NO LONGER be remembered as soggy foundations supporting gritty floors, screaming children, and shorted circuits.

Do they sit huddled around fires in Quebec, cursing the cold? They do not! They suck maple syrup out of trees, slam sleds down on the snow and beat hell to Gran's. Polynesians laugh merrily at the volcanos, and float on the sea. And so it goes for the Inuit and the snow, the Yanomamo and the mighty Amazon.

We on the other hand get depressed BECAUSE it rains. Ask any Saudi if this is sane! This is water, the staff of all life, falling on us all as equally as death itself will fall too soon. It alone accounts for the lushness and resilience of our forests in the face the chainsaws, fires and ANOTHER Social Credit government. It purges the air. Moistens our morning coffee and freezes for the ice cubes in our after-dinner drinks.

Socially responsible artists have at this time a great duty to perform for the people of this province. It is time to USE the rain! And incorporate it into our West Coast culture! No one need be reminded that the foundation upon which culture reclines is its art. And so I put it to you that the art which we create from now on will not only celebrate but depend upon the rain.

Sculptors must use precipitation. Throw out your soluble plaster busts and sundials and erect thrusting water clocks, musical fountains, pissing permanent statues that weep and sweat real water. From now on painters will only use colors that work against grey skies and wetted surfaces. They shall invent ways that the rain itself can create the picture.

And likewise for the music of this New Era! It will incorporate the percussive beats and melodies of rain falling on sidewalks, car roofs, streaming down windows and alleys. There shall be water dances and performances where everyone goes home if it DOESN'T rain. All the sprinklers in the Vancouver Art Gallery will be spraying permanently from this point on.

Soon fashion will follow as it does and there will be hats that grow grasses out in the winter, rubber dresses that accentuate and flatter when they glisten, amazing parasols and paraphernalia: coats that come alive with colours when they've been wetted, inflatable shoes for quiet evening strolls

ON the ocean.

Industry will take up the pace with water cars, communication systems based on laminar jets of water, water-filled lenses for solar collectors that increase their light yield the more it rains. And more.

People will try to imitate what will become known as "The Vancouver Style" in Paris, L.A. and Rome but because they don't have the rain it just won't work. THEY won't be happy. They'll have to come here.

?? ? ? ? ? ?

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GRANVILLE

**BOOK**

COMPANY

*petits annonces*

Use this space for your personal messages, invitations and announcements. Please submit by mail. Rates are \$2.50 per line, prepaid only.

**Wanted: moms writing** (poetry, journals, advice, diaries, etc) for radio series. Box 105

Return of desire. Box 203

**Prints by William Burroughs** signed and numbered edition. Box 103

Love of pleasure. Box 210

Jane Ellison's exercise classes resume Sept 5. Alignment course starts Sept 27 They'll make you feel better. For info: 681-2083. Box 104

Truth of Knowledge. Box 218

**Call for Submissions 8th Annual Western Front Art Fair.** Open to all artisans. Nov. 25/26. Box 103

**Call for Volunteers** incl. receptionist, assist recording engineer, word processing. Western Front—876-9343

The Western Front Society (est. 1973) is an artist-run centre that focuses on the production and presentation of new art. It offers programs of exhibition, performance art, video production, computer graphics, telecommunications, poetry, dance and music. Through a unique residency program, local, national, and international artists are invited to create new works in this interdisciplinary environment.

Karen Henry, Administrator  
 Randy Anderson, Office Manager  
 Kate Craig, Curator, Video Production  
 Kye Goodwin, Curator, Computer Graphics  
 Ann Hepper, Accountant  
 Annette Hurtig, Curator, Front Gallery  
 Brice MacNeil, Archives  
 Iain Macanulty, Technician  
 Tess Mergens, Intern  
 Eric Metcalfe, Curator, Performance  
 Alex Varty, Curator, Music  
 Charles Watts, Curator, Poetry

Membership policy: First time visitors to live events are asked to pay a \$5 membership fee included in the cost of admission. A Subscribing membership costs \$20/year and includes a subscription to FRONT Magazine, special invitations, and free use of the print and tape archives.

The Western Front gratefully acknowledges the support of the following agencies and corporations: The Canada Council, Employment and Immigration Canada, the Government of British Columbia through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Recreation and Culture, the City of Vancouver, the Goethe Institute, the Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation, Atari Canada, B.C.T.V., Custom Plastics, General Paint, Hemlock Printers, Northstar Mills, and Strider Computers.

The trustees of the DOUGLAS JAMES BROWN MEMORIAL FUND wish to announce a continued appeal for donations. The fund has been established to commemorate Doug's dedication and spirit. It will be used to help deserving individuals during apprenticeship as technicians at the Western Front. Cheques should be made payable to DOUGLAS JAMES BROWN MEMORIAL FUND and sent to The Western Front Society, 303 East 8th Avenue, Vancouver B.C. V5T 1S1

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 THE VANCOUVER DESKTOP PUBLISHING CENTRE  
 1062 HOMER STREET VANCOUVER BC V6B2W9  
 TELEPHONE: 681-9161



**BEST WESTCOAST JAZZ  
 WITH  
 JUNE KATZ AND FRIENDS**

September 1989

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Ron Johnston Ken Lister	2 Ron Johnston Ken Lister
6 Fraser MacPherson Oliver Gannon	7 Patti Hervey Oliver Gannon	8 Alan Matheson Shane Fox	9 Ross Taggart René Worst
13 Fraser MacPherson Oliver Gannon	14 Phil Dwyer Oliver Gannon	15 Phil Dwyer John Forrest	16 Phil Dwyer Campbell Ryga
20 Fraser MacPherson Oliver Gannon	21 Russ Botten Oliver Gannon	22 <b>Special Event</b> <b>The George Robert - Tom Harrell Quintet</b>	23 <b>\$10.00</b>
27 Fraser MacPherson Ron Johnston	28 Ross Taggart René Worst	29 Chris Sigerson Ken Lister	30 Chris Sigerson Ken Lister

**THE ALMA STREET CAFÉ**  
 2505 ALMA ST.  
 222-2244





Japanese Restaurant  
601 West Broadway  
876-9267

Western Front Society  
303 East 8th Avenue  
Vancouver B.C. Canada  
V5T 1S1

SECOND CLASS  
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