Robert Houle's

Palisade

Michael Bell
This publication supplements the exhibition
Robert Houle's Palisade
at Carleton University Art Gallery

© Carleton University Art Gallery 2001 and Robert Houle.
ISBN 0-7709-0453-9

Carleton University Art Gallery
Carleton University
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, Canada
K1S 5B6

Voice: 613.520.2120
Fax: 613.520.4409
WWW: http://www.carleton.ca/gallery

Director: Michael Bell
Administrator/Registrar: Sandra Dyck
Curatorial Assistant: Patrick Lacasse

Table of Contents

Preface and Acknowledgements 4
Robert Houle's Palisade
I Palisade... 7
II Smallpox past... 8
III The Amerindian and smallpox... 10
IV Amherst and the infected blanket... 14
V Postscripts... 27
VI Smallpox present... 29
VII Houle's History... 30
VIII Toward an ethics of responsibility... 31
Works in the exhibition... 38
Robert Houle... 39

Editing: Carleton University Art Gallery
Type: Carleton University Art Gallery
Printing: Carleton University Graphic Services
Photography: David Barbour; Patrick Lacasse, fig. 11.
Cover: Vermine Virus (no. 1)
This publication supplements the exhibition
Robert Houle's Pallisade
at Carleton University Art Gallery

© Carleton University Art Gallery 2001 and Robert Houle.
ISBN-0-7709-0453-x

Carleton University Art Gallery
Carleton University
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, Canada
K1S 5B6

Voice: 613.520.2120
Fax: 613.520.4409
WWW: http://www.carleton.ca/gallery

Director: Michael Bell
Administrator/Registrar: Sandra Dyck
Curatorial Assistant: Patrick Lacasse

The Canada Council for the Arts
La Conseil des Arts du Canada

Editing: Carleton University Art Gallery
Type: Carleton University Art Gallery
Printing: Carleton University Graphic Services
Photography: David Barbour; Patrick Lacasse, fig. 11.
Cover: Vermine Virus (no. 1)

Table of Contents

Preface and Acknowledgements 4
Robert Houle’s Pallisade

I Pallisade. 7
II Smallpox past. 8
III The Amerindian and smallpox. 10
IV Amherst and the infected blanket. 14
V Postscripts. 27
VI Smallpox present. 29
VII Houle’s History. 30
VIII Toward an ethics of responsibility. 31
Works in the exhibition 38
Robert Houle 39
Preface and Acknowledgements

This is the third project that Robert Houle and I have worked on together. Each has dealt with aspects of the history of the encounter of Europeans and the Indigenous peoples of North America.

Our engagement has been one of conversation, not the mode of collaboration advanced in recent years. In the course of the conversation there is the potential of emancipation, of moving beyond the seemingly obdurate political obstacles to an understanding of the reality of interdependence. The notion that we have a responsibility for each other, that the goal of human development is the achievement of interdependence, offers an ethical alternative to the usual short term political exigencies.

Again, I wish to thank Robert Houle for making this work and the Mackenzie Art Gallery (Regina) for agreeing to lend it for this exhibition so soon after making it a part of its collection.

Sandra Dyck and Patrick Lacasse, in their usual professional way, did their share to make this installation a success.

The Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council have supported this exhibition, and their support is deeply appreciated.

Michael Bell
Director

The deliberate reintroduction of smallpox into the population would be an international crime of unprecedented proportions. A spreading, highly lethal epidemic in an essentially unprotected population, with limited supplies of vaccine, no therapeutic drugs, and with shortages of hospital beds suitable for patient isolation is an ominous specter.

D.A. Henderson, 

Risk of a Deliberate Release of Smallpox Virus

The idea of healing suggests that to reach 'whole health,' Aboriginal people must confront the crippling injuries of the past. Yet, doing so is not their job alone. Only when the deep causes of Aboriginal ill health are remedied by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people working together will balance and harmony—or health and well-being—be restored.

Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: 

Gathering Strength (1996)
Preface and Acknowledgements

This is the third project that Robert Houle and I have worked on together. Each has dealt with aspects of the history of the encounter of Europeans and the Indigenous peoples of North America.

Our engagement has been one of conversation, not the mode of collaboration advanced in recent years. In the course of the conversation there is the potential of emancipation, of moving beyond the seemingly obdurate political obstacles to an understanding of the reality of interdependence. The notion that we have a responsibility for each other, that the goal of human development is the achievement of interdependence, offers an ethical alternative to the usual short term political exigencies.

Again, I wish to thank Robert Houle for making this work and the Mackenzie Art Gallery (Regina) for agreeing to lend it for this exhibition so soon after making it a part of its collection.

Sandra Dyck and Patrick Lacasse, in their usual professional way, did their share to make this installation a success.

The Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council have supported this exhibition, and their support is deeply appreciated.

Michael Bell
Director

The deliberate reintroduction of smallpox into the population would be an international crime of unprecedented proportions. A spreading, highly lethal epidemic in an essentially unprotected population, with limited supplies of vaccine, no therapeutic drugs, and with shortages of hospital beds suitable for patient isolation is an ominous specter.

D.A. Henderson,
Risk of a Deliberate Release of Smallpox Virus

The idea of healing suggests that to reach 'whole health,' Aboriginal people must confront the crippling injuries of the past. Yet, doing so is not their job alone. Only when the deep causes of Aboriginal ill health are remedied by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people working together will balance and harmony—or health and well-being—be restored.

For where we stand in regard to the past, what the relations are between past, present and future are not only matters of vital interest to all; they are quite indispensable. We cannot help situating ourselves in the continuum of our own life, of family and group to which we belong. We cannot help comparing past and present... We cannot help learning from it, for that is what experience means. We may learn the wrong things—plainly we often do—but if we don’t learn, or have had no chance of learning, or refuse to learn from whatever past is relevant for our purpose, we are, in the extreme case, mentally abnormal.1

The set of practices in responsibility for the past are repentance, confession, forgiveness, and remembrance.2

Robert Houle’s Palisade

Robert Houle’s visual arts practice has successfully joined modernist formalism with activist initiatives to review the ‘history’ of the intersection of the North American Indian and the colonizers, military and settlers. Palisade3 takes its place in a group of works (for example, Hochelaga [1992],4 Kanata [1993],5 Zero Hour [1989],6 Pontiac Conspiracy [1996],7 and Premises for Self Rule: The Royal Proclamation [1994]) that examine the intersection of Amerindian history and contemporary issues. These intersections inform the relationship between North America’s First Peoples and those Europeans who have encountered them since 1492, in the course of the establishment of a Neo-European society in North America.

I. Palisade

palisade: noun, verb, a fence of pales or stakes set firmly in the ground, as for enclosure or defense.8

The installation Palisade comprises eight vertical canvases, each 8 feet high and 2 feet wide,9 a group of studies for the project, and a digitally collaged graphic, produced originally to be used in the production of outdoor billboards in the first occurrence of the installation in Saskatoon.
For where we stand in regard to the past, what the relations are between past, present and future are not only matters of vital interest to all: they are quite indispensable. We cannot help situating ourselves in the continuum of our own life, of family and group to which we belong. We cannot help comparing past and present... We cannot help learning from it, for that is what experience means. We may learn the wrong things—plainly we often do—but if we don’t learn, or have had no chance of learning, or refuse to learn from whatever past is relevant for our purpose, we are, in the extreme case, mentally abnormal.1

The set of practices in responsibility for the past are repentance, confession, forgiveness, and remembrance.2

**Robert Houle’s Palisade**

Robert Houle’s visual arts practice has successfully joined modernist formalism with activist initiatives to review the ‘history’ of the interactions of the North American Indian and the colonizers, military and settlers. Palisade3 takes its place in a group of works (for example, Hochelaga [1992],4 Kanata [1993],5 Zero Hour [1989],6 Pontiac Conspiracy [1996],7 and Premises for Self Rule: The Royal Proclamation [1994]8) that examine the interaction of American history and contemporary issues. These intersections inform the relationship between North America’s First Peoples and those Europeans who have encountered them since 1492, in the course of the establishment of a Neo-European society in North America.

1. **Palisade**

Palisade: noun, verb, a fence of pales or stakes set firmly in the ground, as for enclosure or defense.9

The installation Palisade comprises eight vertical canvases, each 8 feet high and 2 feet wide,10 a group of studies for the project, and a digitally collaged graphic, produced originally to be used in the production of outdoor billboards in the first occurrence of the installation in Saskatoon.
The eight green canvases are each painted a solid, distinct hue, moving sequentially in value from the first panel, from the lightest to the last one, which is the darkest. The sequence of colours is: Cobalt Green, Winsor Emerald #708, Chrome Green Deep Hue, Terre Verte, Winsor Green #720, Prussian Green, Sap Green, Olive Green. Pontiac’s intended signal to his warriors to attack the occupants of Fort Detroit was to turn the wampum belt to show its green side.11 Each of the eight panels stands for one of the eight forts captured by the tribes in Pontiac’s Confederacy in 1763. The panels are installed in three groups: one group of two, one group of five, and a single panel. Each group occupies, in a ‘virtual’ manner, the same conceptual space on the wall: precisely 17 feet, 9 inches: 16 feet for the panels and 3 inches between each panel. Where you see two panels, you must imagine all eight; where you see five panels, you must imagine all eight; and, where you see one panel, you must imagine all eight. The result is to construct around the gallery walls the conceptual effect of a Palisade.

The digital graphic collages many of the elements developed in the studies. In addition Houle introduces disturbing documentation. The first is a National Post column (after the New York Times)12 discussing the fate of the last live stocks of variola virus—commonly known as smallpox. The other documentation, reproductions of the postscripts of letters exchanged between Lord Jeffrey Amherst, Commander-in-Chief of British Forces in North America during the Seven Years’ War (1756-63) and the Swiss mercenary, Colonel Henry Bouquet, stationed at Fort Pitt, advocates the ‘inoculation’ of the Indian’s gathered loosely under the leadership of Pontiac, with gifts of blankets infected with the smallpox virus.13

II. Smallpox past

Smallpox: noun, an acute, highly contagious, febrile disease, caused by a virus, and characterized by a pustular eruption that often leaves permanent pits or scars.14

Eurasians have a long history living in close proximity to their domesticated animals; Amerindians do not share this history. In this difference rests the reason for the presence of smallpox in European and Asian societies, and the total susceptibility of the Amerindian population to the same virus.

Most and probably all of the distinctive infectious diseases of civilization transferred to human populations from animal herds. Contacts were closest with the domesticated species, so it is not surprising to find that many of our common infectious diseases have recognizable affinities with one or another diseases affecting domesticated animals... smallpox is certainly connected closely with cowpox and with a cluster of other animal infections.15

As William H. McNelis so amply demonstrates in Plagues and Peoples, “Disease and parasitism play a pervasive role in all life. A successful search for food on the part of one organism becomes for its host a nasty infection or disease.”16

Smallpox is one of the many microorganisms—tiny organisms like viruses and bacteria—that sustain their own vital process by finding a source of food in human tissues. Unlike many microorganisms, smallpox provokes an acute disease in humans, killing most that it attacks, or producing an immunity that gives the human host a means to kill off the infecting microorganism. Sometimes the host shows few, if any, symptoms, yet harbours the microorganism and becomes a carrier, infecting others. There are yet other microorganisms that establish stable relations with their human host, hardly interfering with the normal functioning of their host. Smallpox cannot be counted among these.

By the time Europeans encountered the Amerindian population, epidemics of smallpox had raged throughout Europe, killing many and leaving survivors with lifelong immunity and disfigurement.
The eight green canvases are each painted a solid, distinct hue, moving sequentially in value from the first panel, from the lightest to the last one, which is the darkest. The sequence of colours is: Cobalt Green, Winsor Emerald #708, Chrome Green Deep Hue, Terre Verte, Winsor Green #720, Prussian Green, Sap Green, Olive Green. Pontiac's intended signal to his warriors to attack the occupants of Fort Detroit was to turn the wampum belt to show its green side. Each of the eight panels stands for one of the eight forts captured by the tribes in Pontiac's Confederacy in 1763. The panels are installed in three groups: one group of two, one group of five, and a single panel. Each group occupies, in a 'virtual' manner, the same conceptual space on the wall: precisely 17 feet, 9 inches: 16 feet for the panels and 3 inches between each panel. Where you see two panels, you must imagine all eight; where you see five panels, you must imagine all eight; and, where you see one panel, you must imagine all eight. The result is to construct around the gallery walls the conceptual effect of a Palisade.

The digital graphic collages many of the elements developed in the studies. In addition Houle introduces disturbing documentation. The first is a National Post column (after the New York Times) discussing the fate of the last live stocks of variola virus—commonly known as smallpox. The other documentation, reproductions of the postcards of letters exchanged between Lord Jeffrey Amherst, Commander-in-Chief of British Forces in North America during the Seven Years' War (1756-63) and the Swiss mercenary, Colonel Henry Bouquet, stationed at Fort Pitt, advocates the 'inoculation' of the Indian's gathered loosely under the leadership of Pontiac, with gifts of blankets infected with the smallpox virus.

II. Smallpox past
smallpox: noun, an acute, highly contagious, febrile disease, caused by a virus, and characterized by a pustular eruption that often leaves permanent pits or scars.

Eurasians have a long history living in close proximity to their domesticated animals; Amerindians do not share this history. In this difference rests the reason for the presence of smallpox in European and Asian societies, and the total susceptibility of the Amerindian population to the same virus.

Most and probably all of the distinctive infectious diseases of civilization transferred to human populations from animal herds. Contacts were closest with the domesticated species, so it is not surprising to find that many of our common infectious diseases have recognizable affinities with one or another diseases afflicting domesticated animals. Smallpox is certainly connected closely with cowpox and with a cluster of other animal infections.

As William H. McNeil so amply demonstrates in Plagues and Peoples, "Disease and parasitism play a pervasive role in all life. A successful search for food on the part of one organism becomes for its host a nasty infection or disease."

Smallpox is one of the many microorganisms—tiny organisms like viruses and bacteria—that sustain their own vital process by finding a source of food in human tissues. Unlike many microorganisms, smallpox provokes an acute disease in humans, killing most that it attacks, or producing an immunity that gives the human host a means to kill off the infecting microorganism. Sometimes the host shows few, if any, symptoms, yet harbours the microorganism and becomes a carrier, infecting others. There are yet other microorganisms that establish stable relations with their human host, hardly interfering with the normal functioning of their host. Smallpox cannot be counted among these.

By the time Europeans encountered the Amerindian population, epidemics of smallpox had raged throughout Europe, killing many and leaving survivors with lifelong immunity and disfigurement.
Smallpox is a breath-borne ‘droplet’ infection, as are many childhood diseases in societies [European and Asian] with dense populations in cities (civilized). It is also possible to acquire the disease by physical contact with a person in the infective stage, from a corpse up to three weeks after death, and rarely, from ‘fomites’—objects that have been in close contact with a patient can remain infective for up to a year.17

From an epidemiological standpoint, smallpox’s most important features are: its rapid and fully effective transmission, resulting in infection rates of close to 100% in non-immune populations; its short infective period of fourteen days; and survivors’ acquired immunity to second attacks. Once infected with the variola virus, the disease must run its course. There are two varieties: variola major and variola minor. The former is classic smallpox, extremely lethal, with a fatality rate of some 30%. The latter is less severe, with a fatality rate of 1%. In America identified epidemics of variola minor did not occur until the late 1600s. Both varieties are now extinct, with the last recorded cases reported in 1978. By 1980, the World Health Organization, following an extended campaign to eradicate the virus from the globe, could document success with a parchment certificate dated 9 December 1979.18

III. The American and smallpox

American, noun, a member of any of the aboriginal Indian and Eskimo peoples of North and South America.

Smallpox is a disease with seven-league boots. Its effects are terrifying: the fever and pain; the swift appearance of pustules that sometimes destroy the skin and transform the victim into a gory horror; the astounding death rates, up to one-fourth, one-half, or more with the worst strains. The healthy flee, leaving the ill behind to face certain death, and often taking the disease along with them. The incubation period for smallpox is ten to fourteen days, long enough for the ephemerally healthy carrier to flee for long distances on foot, by canoe, or, later, on horseback to people who know nothing of the threat he represents, and there to infect them and inspire others newly charged with the virus to flee to infect new innocents.19

Recent scholarship, following the lead of Alfred W. Crosby, has investigated the singular role of imported plants, animals, and diseases in modifying the environment soon to be occupied by Neo-European nations following the European explorers who eventually, with Magellan’s extraordinary deed, circled the globe in 1519-22. For the indigenous populations, the introduction of Eurasian diseases, was the most catastrophic. And smallpox, a most lethal pathogen, figured most prominently in the decimation of ‘virgin soil’ populations encountered by white Europeans, questing for the fabulous Indies.

From early in the sixteenth century, when the first smallpox pandemic spread like wildfire in the Americas, destroying whole civilizations from Mexico south to Inca hand, smallpox was a recurrent visitor, eventually killing either directly or indirectly upward of 90% of the indigenous population. Once the virus entered a virgin soil population, especially a small population with no immunity, it burned itself out, leaving a small remnant of now-immune survivors who, because of reduced numbers and infertility, were unable to replace the lost population. When the survivors died, leaving a smaller population unexposed to the virus and thus lacking immunity, it too was totally susceptible to the next wave of infection. Through cycles of first pandemic, and then epidemic infection, the 18 million Amerindians who occupied North America alone were reduced by the late nineteenth century to less than 300,000.20

We are accustomed, because of the historicization of the cruel adventures of the Spanish conquistadores in Central and South...
fourteen days, long enough for the ephemerally healthy carrier to flee for long distances on foot, by canoe, or, later, on horseback to people who know nothing of the threat he represents, and there to infect them and inspire others newly charged with the virus to flee to infect new innocents.¹⁹

Recent scholarship, following the lead of Alfred W. Crosby, has investigated the singular role of imported plants, animals, and diseases in modifying the environment soon to be occupied by Neo-European nations following the European explorers who eventually, with Magellan’s extraordinary deed, circled the globe in 1519-22. For the indigenous populations, the introduction of Eurasian diseases, was the most catastrophic. And smallpox, a most lethal pathogen, figured most prominently in the decimation of ‘virgin soil’ populations encountered by white Europeans, questing for the fabulous Indies.

From early in the sixteenth century, when the first smallpox pandemic spread like wildfire in the Americas, destroying whole civilizations from Mexico south to Inca land, smallpox was a recurrent visitor, eventually killing either directly or indirectly upward of 95% of the indigenous population. Once the virus entered a ‘virgin soil’ population, especially a small population with no immunity, it burned itself out, leaving a small remnant of now-immune survivors who, because of reduced numbers and infertility, were unable to replace the lost population. When the survivors died, leaving a smaller population unexposed to the virus and thus lacking immunity, it too was totally susceptible to the next wave of infection. Through cycles of first pandemic, and then epidemic infection, the 18 million Amerindians who occupied North America alone were reduced by the late nineteenth century to less than 300,000.²⁰

We are accustomed, because of the historicization of the cruel adventures of the Spanish conquistadores in Central and South
America, to think only of those areas as being the locale for advanced civilizations like the Mayan and the Inca. Closer to home, in the area to the south and west of the Great Lakes, there is ample evidence of an art-producing and monument-building culture, the Mound Builders. Its disappearance can only be explained by impact of disease, in all likelihood smallpox. The argument is convincing. Swords and gunpowder did not achieve victory for the Europeans. Disease, especially smallpox, consistently arriving before the rag-tag 'armies,' cleared the way for exploitation, conversion, and settlement.

The impact of smallpox on the indigenous of...the Americas was more deadly, more bewildering, more devastating than we, who live in a world from which the smallpox virus has been scientifically exterminated, can ever fully realize. The statistics of demographic decline are cold, the eyewitness accounts at first moving, but eventually only macabre. The impact was so awesome that only a writer with the capabilities of a Milton at the height of his powers could have been equal to the subject... 21

George Siou suggests that we put 'the microbes on trial,' rather than insisting that the burden of guilt be borne by the carriers of the smallpox virus (or any other pathogen).

Since the first coming into contact, both the carriers and receivers have suffered from an inability to recognize the true instigators of the great disaster in which they have been plunged; to recognize this situation would serve, not only to indict the guilty party [the microbes], but also and most importantly to enable all of us to work together towards a reorientation of human thought. 22

The claim here is that the Anacrindians, through their understanding of nature, can offer a new model of thinking about 'life and the universe by studying the spiritual essence of America.' 23

### Chronology of the Indian Defensive War

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22 February 1761</td>
<td>Amherst forbids presents of food and arms to Indians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 July 1761</td>
<td>Senecas present a war belt to Detroit Indians; it is rejected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 1762</td>
<td>War bells circulate among western Indians, encouraged by Senecas and Frenchmen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 August 1762</td>
<td>Major Henry Gladwin takes command of Detroit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 April 1763</td>
<td>Pontiac proposes to Ottawas, Petunatimies, and Hurons near Fort Detroit that they attack and plunder the fort. He inspires them with the teachings of the native Delaware Prophet Neolin. Pontiac's ruse is betrayed to Major Gladwin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 May 1763</td>
<td>Pontiac lays siege to Fort Detroit with Ottawa, Chippewa, Petunatimies, Huron, Shawnee, and Delaware warriors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 1763</td>
<td>Tribal allies destroy forts at Venango, Lebouf, and Presque Isle. Senecas wipe out a convoy near Niagara. Forts at Detroit, Pittsburgh (Fort Pitt), and Niagara hold out against attackers. With sanction from Amherst and Bouquet, the garrisons at Fort Pitt starts an epidemic among the Indians by infecting besiging chiefs with blankets from the smallpox hospital. Indians withdraw from siege of Fort Pitt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1763</td>
<td>Sir William Johnson treats with the Iroquois and admits Senecas back to the Covenant Chain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 August 1763</td>
<td>Colonel Bouquet fight off an attack at Bushy Run and forces attackers to withdraw.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 August 1763</td>
<td>Sir William Johnson treats with the Iroquois and admits Senecas back to the Covenant Chain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-20 September 1763</td>
<td>Pontiac lifts siege of Detroit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 October 1763</td>
<td>Amherst embarks on return to Britain. He is succeeded as Commander-in-Chief by General Thomas Gage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early April 1764</td>
<td>Iroquois attack eastern Delawares and turn prisoners over to Johnson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 August 1764</td>
<td>Bradstreet, on his way to Detroit, treats with Delawares and Shawnees at Presque Isle. Bradstreet treats with Detroit chiefs but not Pontiac for peace under Britain's sovereignty. He immediately applies for a grant of lands to make a new colony. Pontiac treats with Johnson for peace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1766</td>
<td>Pontiac treats with Johnson for peace.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
America, to think only of those areas as being the locale for advanced civilizations like the Mayan and the Inca. Closer to home, in the area to the south and west of the Great Lakes, there is ample evidence of an art-producing and monument-building culture, the Mound Builders. Its disappearance can only be explained by impact of disease, in all likelihood smallpox. The argument is convincing. Swords and gunpowder did not achieve victory for the Europeans. Disease, especially smallpox, consistently arriving before the rag-tag ‘armies,’ cleared the way for exploitation, conversion, and settlement.

The impact of smallpox on the indigenous of the Americas was more deadly, more bewildering, more devastating than we, who live in a world from which the smallpox virus has been scientifically exterminated, can ever fully realize. The statistics of demographic decline are cold, the eyewitness accounts at first moving, but eventually only macabre. The impact was so awesome that only a writer with the capabilities of a Milton at the height of his powers could have been equal to the subject... 21

George Siou suggests that we put ‘the microbes on trial,’ rather than insisting that the burden of guilt be borne by the carriers of the smallpox virus (or any other pathogen).

Since the first coming into contact, both the carriers and receivers have suffered from an inability to recognize the true instigators of the great disaster in which they have been plunged; to recognize this situation would serve, not only to indict the guilty party [the microbes], but also and most importantly to enable all of us to work together towards a reorientation of human thought. 22

The claim here is that the Anacostians, through their understanding of nature, can offer a new model of thinking about ‘life and the universe by studying the spiritual essence of America.’ 23

Chronology of the Indian Defensive War

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22 February 1761</td>
<td>Amherst forbids presents of food and arms to Indians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 July 1761</td>
<td>Senecas present a war belt to Detroit Indians; it is rejected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 1762</td>
<td>War between Iroquois and Delaware Indians, encouraged by Senecas and French.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 August 1762</td>
<td>Major Henry Gladwin takes command of Detroit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 April 1763</td>
<td>Pontiac proposes to Ottawas, Petunotomies, and Hurons near Fort Detroit that they attack and plunder the fort. He inspires them with the teachings of the native Delaware Prophet Neolin. Pontiac’s ruse is betrayed to Major Gladwin. Pontiac lays siege to Fort Detroit with Ottawa, Chippewa, Petunotomies, Hurons, Shawnee, and Delaware warriors. Tribal allies destroy forts at Venango, LeBourc, and Presque Isle. Senecas wipe out a convoy near Niagara. Forts at Detroit, Pittsburgh (Fort Pitt), and Niagara hold out against attackers. With sanction from Amherst and Bouquet, the garrison at Fort Pitt starts an epidemic among the Indians by infecting besieging chiefs with blankets from the smallpox hospital. Indians withdraw from siege of Fort Pitt. Colony Bouquet fights off an attack at Bushy Run and forces attackers to withdraw. Sir William Johnson treats with the Iroquois and admits Senecas back to the Covenant Chain. Pontiac lifts siege of Detroit. Amherst embarks on return to Britain. He is succeeded as Commander-in-Chief by General Thomas Gage. Iroquois attack eastern Delawares and turn prisoners over to Johnson. Bradford, on his way to Detroit, treats with Delawares and Shawnees at Presque Isle. Bradford treats with Detroit chiefs but not Pontiac for peace under Britain’s sovereignty. He immediately applies for a grant of lands to make a new colony. Pontiac treats with Johnson for peace.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IV. Amherst and the infected blanket

Infect, verb, to affect or contaminate (a person, organ, wound, etc.) with disease-producing germs.

In the Americas, the Seven Years' War was a dispute between the English and the French. France, with its colony New France, along the St. Lawrence, and a series of posts south and west of the Great Lakes and into the Mississippi River valley, reaching as far as the Gulf of Mexico, seemed to be closing off the potential for expansion by England's Thirteen Colonies, ranged along the eastern seaboard.

By 1760, the English forces and their Indian allies had vanquished the French forces and their Indian allies, and sought to establish their military presence wherever the French had set down posts. The Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces in North America, Lord Jeffrey Amherst, systematically took charge. He sent small detachments to forts scattered around the Great Lakes, restricted trade to these forts, thus controlling the flow of liquor and ostensibly stopping the worst trading practices, and halted the practice of giving 'presents' to the indigenous groups. The Indian allies of the French felt some degree of disappointment, especially as they realized that settlers would continue to move into and occupy their territory.

Rumours abounded, and hatchets and Seneca war belts circulated among the disaffected groups, culminating in what conventional Neo-European 'history' has called the Pontiac Rebellion or Conspiracy, and what contemporary First Nations call Pontiac's Confederacy. In front of the Ottawas and a Huron band, Pontiac proclaimed:

'It is important for us, my brothers, that we exterminate from our lands this nation which seeks only to destroy us. You see as well as I that we can no longer supply our own needs, as we have done from our brothers, the French. The English sell us goods twice as dear as the French do, and their goods do not last.

Scarcely have we bought a blanket or something else to cover ourselves with before we must think of getting another; and when we wish to set out for our winter camps they do not want to give us any credit as our brothers the French do... we must all swear their destruction and wait no longer. Nothing prevents us; they are few in numbers, and we can accomplish it.

All the nations who are our brothers attack them—why should we not strike too? Are we not men like them? Have I not shown you the wampum belts which I received from our Great Father, the Frenchman? He tells us to strike them... I have sent wampum belts and messengers to our brothers, the Chippewas of Saginaw, and to our brothers, the Ottawas of Michilimackinac, and to those of the Thames River to join us. They will not be slow in coming, but while we wait let us strike anyway. There is no more time to lose.'

Loosely confederated under the leadership of Pontiac, who in turn was influenced by the Delaware Prophet, Neolin, the tribes captured eight palisaded forts and killed or took captive the British soldiers: Fort Venango (13 June, 1763); Fort LeBoeuf (16 June, 1763); Fort Sandusky (16 May, 1763); Fort Miami (27 May, 1763); Fort Ouiatone (31 May, 1763); Fort St. Joseph (25 May, 1763); Fort Michilimackinac (2 June, 1763); and, Fort Edward Augusta (15 June, 1763). The Amerindians also laid siege to Fort Pitt (where Amherst corresponded also with Captain Simeon Ecuyer) and Detroit. The latter siege lasted from 9 May to 31 October, 1763, under the direction of Pontiac, whose original plan to attack from inside the fort during talks with the commander had been revealed to the British, who could then be prepared.

continued on page 27

Note: in the following portfolio of illustrations, the two, five and one panel installations emulate the scale of the installation in the gallery: the 'extra' white space stands for the gallery wall, and is not a mistake.
IV. Amherst and the infected blanket

infect, verb, to affect or contaminate (a person, organ, wound, etc.) with disease-producing germs.

In the Americas, the Seven Years’ War was a dispute between the English and the French. France, with its colony New France, along the St. Lawrence, and a series of posts south and west of the Great Lakes and into the Mississippi River valley, reaching as far as the Gulf of Mexico, seemed to be closing off the potential for expansion by England’s Thirteen Colonies, ranged along the eastern seaboard.

By 1760, the English forces and their Indian allies had vanquished the French forces and their Indian allies, and sought to establish their military presence wherever the French had set down posts. The Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces in North America, Lord Jeffrey Amherst, systematically took charge. He sent small detachments to forts scattered around the Great Lakes, restricted trade to these forts, thus controlling the flow of liquor and ostensibly stopping the worst trading practices, and halted the practice of giving ‘presents’ to the indigenous groups. The Indian allies of the French felt some degree of disappointment, especially as they realized that settlers would continue to move into and occupy their territory.

Rumours abounded, and hatchets and Seneca war belts circulated among the disaffected groups, culminating in what conventional Neo-European ‘history’ has called the Pontiac Rebellion or Conspiracy, and what contemporary First Nations call Pontiac’s Confederacy. In front of the Ottawas and a Huron band, Pontiac proclaimed:

It is important for us, my brothers, that we exterminate from our lands this nation which seeks only to destroy us. You see as well as I that we can no longer supply our own needs, as we have done from our brothers, the French. The English sell us goods twice as dear as the French do, and their goods do not last.

Scarcely have we bought a blanket or something else to cover ourselves with before we must think of getting another; and when we wish to set out for our winter camps they do not want to give us any credit as our brothers the French do...we must all swear their destruction and wait no longer. Nothing prevents us; they are few in numbers, and we can accomplish it.

All the nations who are our brothers attack them—why should we not strike too? Are we not men like them? Have I not shown you the wampum belts which I received from our Great Father, the Frenchman? He tells us to strike them...I have sent wampum belts and messengers to our brothers, the Chippewas of Saginaw, and to our brothers, the Ottawas of Michillimackinac, and to those of the Thames River to join us. They will not be slow in coming, but while we wait let us strike anyway. There is no more time to lose.

Loosely confederated under the leadership of Pontiac, who in turn was influenced by the Delaware Prophet, Neolin, the tribes captured eight palisaded forts and killed or took captive the British soldiers: Fort Venango (13 June, 1763); Fort LeBoeuf (18 June, 1763); Fort Sandusky (16 May, 1763); Fort Miami (27 May, 1763); Fort Ouiatenon (31 May, 1763); Fort St. Joseph (25 May, 1763); Fort Michilimackinac (2 June, 1763); and, Fort Edward Augusta (15 June, 1763). The Amerindians also laid siege to Fort Pitt (where Amherst corresponded also with Captain Simeon Ecuyer) and Detroit. The latter siege lasted from 9 May to 31 October, 1763, under the direction of Pontiac, whose original plan to attack from inside the fort during talks with the commander had been revealed to the British, who could then be prepared.

continued on page 27

Note: in the following portfolio of illustrations, the two, five and one panel installations emulate the scale of the installation in the gallery: the ‘extra’ white space stands for the gallery wall, and is not a mistake.
Figure 3: Palisade (1999) Cat. 5. Two-panel element.
Figure 3: Palisade (1999) Cat. 5. Two-panel element.
Figure 4: Pulisade (1999) Cat. 5. Five-panel element.
Figure 4: Pulisade (1999) Cat. 5. Five-panel element.
Figure 5: Petisade (1999) Cat. 5. Single-panel element.
Figure 5: Petlisek (1999) Cat. 5. Single-panel element.
Wacousta

In Canadian fiction, these events are memorialized in Major John Richardson's novel Wacousta or, The Prophecy: A Tale of the Canadas (1832), in which at the beginning, he sets the scene for the siege of Detroit:

Painful and harassing as were the precautions it was found necessary to adopt on these occasions, and little desirous as were the garrison to mingle with the natives on such terms, still the plan was pursued by the Governor from the policy already named: that, it was absolutely essential to the future interests of England that the Indians should be won over by acts of confidence and kindness; and so little disposition had hitherto been manifested by the English to conciliate, that every thing was to be apprehended from the untameable rancor with which these people were but too well disposed to repay a neglect at once galling to their prides and injurious to their interests.

Such, for a term of many months, had been the trying and painful duty that had devolved on the governor of Detroit; when, in the summer of 1763, the whole of the western tribes of Indians, as if actuated by one common impulse, suddenly threw off the mask, and commenced a series of the most savage trespasses upon the English settlers in the vicinity of several garrisons, who were cut off in detail, without mercy, and without reference to age or sex. On the first alarm the weak bodies of troops, as a last measure of security, shut themselves up in their respective forts, where they were as incapable of rendering assistance to others as of receiving it themselves. In this emergency the prudence and forethought of the governor of Detroit were eminently conspicuous: for, having long foreseen the possibility of such a crisis, he had caused a plentiful supply of all that was necessary to the subsistence and defence of the garrison to be provided at an earlier period, so that, if foiled in their attempts at stragem, there was little chance that the Indians would speedily reduce them by famine. 21

After bringing his forces inside the fort ostensibly to talk peace with Major Gladwin, Pontiac held up "a belt of wampum, white on one side and reputedly green on the other", and displaying the white side, Pontiac spoke at length. But "according to two contemporaries, the turning of this belt from the white to the green was the signal for the massacre...Pontiac gave no sign", as he was with an English garrison prepared to defend itself.

Needless to say, Amherst, stationed in New York, was not pleased with the murder and mayhem in the territory that he had believed to be under the control of his sparsely manned forts: in the captured forts, the British presence ranged from 12 to 28 enlisted men and officers, and they were all killed or taken captive.

V. Postcripts

postcript, noun, a paragraph or phrase etc. added to a letter that has already been signed by the writer.

It is in this context that Amherst corresponded with his commanders in the field, specifically with Colonel Henry Bouquet and Captain Ecuyer. In postscripts to the correspondence Amherst exchanged comments about the potential use of smallpox infected blankets to spread the disease among the Indian groups causing so much disturbance. It is this series of letters, particularly the postscripts, that inspired the Polisade project just at the time when the World Health Organization (WHO) was entering into the discussion regarding the destruction of the last live stocks of smallpox virus held in Atlanta (the Centers for Disease Control) and in Kolosovo, Novosibirsk Region (Russian State Research Centre of Virology and Biotechnology). WHO had in mid-century mounted a massive programme of vaccination in many of the world's most poverty stricken and populous countries to eradicate smallpox, and it met with success as mentioned above. It is ironic that the same organization is now trying to determine whether these remaining sources of live virus should be destroyed or preserved. The only
Wacousta

In Canadian fiction, these events are memorialized in Major John Richardson’s novel Wacousta or, The Prophecy: A Tale of the Canadas (1832), in which at the beginning, he sets the scene for the siege of Detroit:

Painful and harassing as were the precautions it was found necessary to adopt on these occasions, and little desirable as were the garrison to mingle with the natives on such terms, still the plan was pursued by the Governor from the policy already named: nay, it was absolutely essential to the future interests of England that the Indians should be won over by acts of confidence and kindness; and so little disposition had hitherto been manifested by the English to conciliate, that every thing was to be apprehended from the untameable rancour with which these people were but too well disposed to repay a neglect at once galling to their prides and injurious to their interests.

Such, for a term of many months, had been the trying and painful duty that had devolved on the governor of Detroit; when, in the summer of 1763, the whole of the western tribes of Indians, as if actuated by one common impulse, suddenly threw off the mask, and commenced a series of the most savage trepasses upon the English settlers in the vicinity of several garrisons, who were cut off in detail, without mercy, and without reference to age or sex. On the first alarm the weak bodies of troops, as a last measure of security, shut themselves up in their respective forts, where they were as incapable of rendering assistance to others as of receiving it themselves. In this emergency the prudence and forethought of the governor of Detroit were eminently conspicuous: for, having long foreseen the possibility of such a crisis, he had caused a plentiful supply of all that was necessary to the subsistence and defence of the garrison to be provided at an earlier period, so that, if foiled in their attempts at straglem, there was little chance that the Indians would speedily reduce them by famine.36

After bringing his forces inside the fort ostensibly to talk peace with Major Gladwin, Pontiac held up “a belt of wampum, white on one side and reputedly green on the other”, and displaying the white side, Pontiac spoke at length. But “according to two contemporaries, the turning of this belt from the white to the green was the signal for the massacre... Pontiac gave no sign,” faced as he was with an English garrison prepared to defend itself.

Needless to say, Amherst, stationed in New York, was not pleased with the murder and mayhem in the territory that he had believed to be under the control of his sparsely manned forts: in the captured forts, the British presence ranged from 12 to 28 enlisted men and officers, and they were all killed or taken captive.

V. Postscripts

postscript, noun, a paragraph or phrase etc. added to a letter that has already been signed by the writer.

It is in this context that Amherst corresponded with his commanders in the field, specifically with Colonel Henry Bouquet and Captain Ecuyer. In postscripts to the correspondence Amherst exchanged comments about the potential use of smallpox infected blankets to spread the disease among the Indian groups causing so much disturbance. It is this series of letters, particularly the postscripts, that inspired the Palisade project just at the time when the World Heath Organization (WHO) was entering into the discussion regarding the destruction of the last live stocks of smallpox virus held in Atlanta (the Centers for Disease Control and in Koltsno, Novosibirsk Region (Russian State Research Centre of Virology and Biotechnology). WHO had in mid-century mounted a massive programme of vaccination in many of the world’s most poverty-stricken and populous countries to eradicate smallpox, and it met with success as mentioned above. It is ironic that the same organization is now trying to determine whether these remaining sources of live virus should be destroyed or preserved. The only
justification that seems to be able to be mounted to follow the latter course of action is to be able to deter bio-terrorist attacks. Houle's linkage of this contemporary dilemma with the historic actions of the British military in the eighteenth century serves to highlight the revulsion and fear we experience at the prospect of the deliberate release of any deadly virus as an act of war:

The deliberate reintroduction of smallpox into the population would be an international crime of unprecedented proportions. A spreading, highly lethal epidemic in an essentially unprotected population, with limited supplies of vaccine, no therapeutic drugs, and with shortages of hospital beds suitable for patient isolation is an ominous specter.33

Houle's interpretation of the historical event documented in the Amherst correspondence is necessarily shaped by his own heritage as a First Nations person, a different history," but one which carries an enormous moral and ethical potential. As almost all historians agree, the intentions of Amherst and his field commanders were unambiguous:

The records for about this time contain more than one specific incident showing the introduction of smallpox among the Indians by a voluntary act of the whites. Such acts were possibly not all malicious, ... but another incident occurred in the same year [1763], from which the conclusion of malice aforethought and deadly intent seem unescapable. During an Indian uprising when attempts were being made to destroy the British garrison and the posts west of the Allegheny Mountains, Sir Jeffrey Amherst, commander-in-chief of the British forces, harassed by the knowledge of his limited resources and by the extent and seriousness of the revolt, wrote in a postscript of a letter to Bouquet the suggestion that smallpox be sent among the disaffected tribes. Bouquet replied, also in a postscript, 'I will try to inoculate the ... with some blankets that may fall into their hands, and take care not to get the disease myself.' This could easily have been done since smallpox had broken out in Fort Pitt, where Bouquet was stationed. To Bouquet's postscript Amherst replied, 'You will do well to try to inoculate the Indians by means of blankets as well as to try every other method that can serve to extirpate this execrable race.' On June 24, Captain Ecuyer, of the Royal Americans, noted in his journal: 'Out of our regard for them [i.e., two Indian chiefs] we gave them two blankets and a handkerchief out of the smallpox hospital. I hope it will have the desired effect.' A few months later the smallpox raged among the tribes of the Ohio...34

Nevertheless, it is all too evident from the account from which the above was taken, that for two centuries, smallpox epidemics had cycled throughout the Americas repeatedly without intentional infection by foes, but still with tragic consequences.

VI. Smallpox present

World Health Assembly, noun, representatives of the entire membership of the World Health Organization, who govern this specialized United Nations agency.

The WWF site for the Center for Civilian Biodefense Studies provides access to a memorandum of the meeting of the WHO Variola Research Committee, a committee mandated by the 52nd World Health Assembly through the Director-General to "establish what research, if any, must be carried out to reach global consensus on the timing for the destruction of existing variola virus stocks." The Assembly also "reaffirmed the decision of previous Assemblies that the remaining stocks of variola virus should be destroyed and authorized retention of the virus 'up to not later than 2002 and subject to annual review.' The research programme proposed by the committee dealt with obtaining DNA sequence information, the development of novel diagnostic techniques, the need for antiviral drugs, the need for monoclonal antibodies, the need for novel smallpox vaccines, the need for a non-human
justification that seems to be able to be mounted to follow the latter course of action is to be able to deter bio-terrorist attacks. Houle's linkage of this contemporary dilemma with the historic actions of the British military in the eighteenth century serves to highlight the revulsion and fear we experience at the prospect of the deliberate release of any deadly virus as an act of war:

The deliberate reintroduction of smallpox into the population would be an international crime of unprecedented proportions. A spreading, highly lethal epidemic in an essentially unprotected population, with limited supplies of vaccine, no therapeutic drugs, and with shortages of hospital beds suitable for patient isolation is an ominous specter.  

Houle’s interpretation of the historical event documented in the Amherst correspondence is necessarily shaped by his own heritage as a First Nations person, a different “history,” but one which carries an enormous moral and ethical potential. As almost all historians agree, the intentions of Amherst and his field commanders were unambiguous:

The records for about this time contain more than one specific incident showing the introduction of smallpox among the Indians by a voluntary act of the whites. Such acts were possibly not all malicious, … but another incident occurred in the same year [1763] from which the conclusion of “malice aforethought and deadly intent seem unescapable. During an Indian uprising when attempts were being made to destroy the British garrison and the posts west of the Allegheny Mountains, Sir Jeffrey Amherst, commander-in-chief of the British forces, harassed by the knowledge of his limited resources and by the extent and seriousness of the revolt, wrote in a postscript of a letter to Bouquet the suggestion that smallpox be sent among the disaffected tribes. Bouquet replied, also in a postscript, ‘I will try to inoculate the ... with some blankets that may fall into their hands, and take care not to get the disease myself.’ This could easily have been done since smallpox had broken out in Fort Pitt, where Bouquet was stationed. To Bouquet’s postscript Amherst replied, ‘You will do well to try to inoculate the Indians by means of blankets as well as to try every other method that can serve to extirpate this exorable race.’ On June 24, Captain Ecuyer, of the Royal Americans, noted in his journal: ‘Out of our regard for them [i.e., two Indian chiefs] we gave them two blankets and a handkerchief out of the smallpox hospital. I hope it will have the desired effect.’ A few months later the smallpox raged among the tribes of the Ohio...”

Nevertheless, it is all too evident from the account from which the above was taken, that for two centuries, smallpox epidemics had cycled throughout the Americas repeatedly without intentional infection by foes, but still with tragic consequences.

VI. Smallpox present

World Health Assembly, noun, representatives of the entire membership of the World Health Organization, who govern this specialized United Nations agency.

The WWW site for the Center for Civilian Biodefense Studies provides access to a memorandum of the meeting of the WHO Variola Research Committee, a committee mandated by the 52nd World Health Assembly through the Director-General to “establish what research, if any, must be carried out to reach global consensus on the timing for the destruction of existing variola virus stocks.” The Assembly also “reaffirmed the decision of previous Assemblies that the remaining stocks of variola virus should be destroyed and authorized retention of the virus ‘up to not later than 2002 and subject to annual review.’ The research programme proposed by the committee dealt with obtaining DNA sequence information, the development of novel diagnostic techniques, the need for antiviral drugs, the need for monoclonal antibodies, the need for novel smallpox vaccines, the need for a non-human
primate or other animal model for smallpox infection, and the need for basic research. The committee arrived at consensus on all these points subject to time limitations (complete before 2002): a laudable goal.35

On the other hand, there are those who advocate maintaining stocks of the live virus as part of an ethos of deterrence, in the Cold War mode. Articles abound, in 1999 some 200 or more, addressing the notion of smallpox as a biological weapon, either by nation states or by bio-terrorists. Those who engage in this line of argument seem to have learned little from the past, and certainly do not subscribe to the views of D.A. Henderson, who countered their main reasons effectively in January 1999.36 U.S. President Bill Clinton, however, decided to retain the U.S.-held stocks of smallpox virus.

VII Houle’s History

‘history’, noun, the branch of knowledge dealing with past events.

Houle’s construction of history is ironic. The juxtaposition of the Amherst correspondence with the newspaper accounts recounting some of the discussions surrounding the destruction of the last living stocks of smallpox virus, highlights the powerful ethical and moral potential in Houle’s reading of the past. Houle always reads the past in ways that serve the present and open paths to a better future. The irony?37 European powers were instrumental in the spread of the smallpox virus to the Americas, and the British military, at least in the persons of Amherst and his field commanders Bouquet and Ecuyer, intended to infect the Indians involved in Pontiac’s Confederacy.38 Two centuries later, through the programmes of the WHO, these same European powers, with the assistance the Neo-European powers, carried out a global campaign of vaccination to rid the world of smallpox: the campaign was successful.

Houle’s two events, separated by two centuries, relate a history in an unconventional way, not in a linear narrative, but in ironic juxtaposition. In Why Ethics?, Robert Gibbs’ exegesis on Benjamin’s critique of ‘history’ is pertinent here:

The risk of studying ‘history’ is that one will not challenge the present, but will interpret it as justified (The world’s history as the world’s judgment). That challenge to the winners, moreover, is distributable over not only the past, but also the transmission of the past, the winner’s stories through time. The task of juxtaposing dialectical images is not merely asymmetric with respect to time, but also bears a unique responsibility for the past...for the past as unjust.39

This is the kind of history advocated by some critics of conventional history40 following suggestive insights of authors such as Baudrillard, who advocated alternatives to the familiar conventional linear forms. The notion of a “poetic alternative to the disenchedt confusion, the chaotic profusion of present events”41 has some definite resonance with Houle’s eight green monochrome panels placed deliberately to insist upon their completion as poetic postmodern ‘imaginaries.’

Houle’s history holds much in common with the petit-narratives advocated by Lyotard as an antidote to the erasure of particulars in the meta-narratives of universal history. The proliferation of local narratives offers the possibility of survival for difference and radical alterity. Conventional ‘history’, exclusively past-looking, is no longer suitable in our postmodern times. Robert Jenkins extends his polemical argument to the notion of ethics: “Its demise coincides with the rise of ‘knowledge’ of the undecidedibility of the (moral) decision.”42

VIII Towards an ethics of responsibility

ethics, noun, a system of moral principles.
primate or other animal model for smallpox infection, and the need for basic research. The committee arrived at consensus on all these points subject to time limitations (complete before 2002): a laudable goal.20

On the other hand, there are those who advocate maintaining stocks of the live virus as part of an ethos of deterrence, in the Cold War mode. Articles abound, in 1999 some 200 or more, addressing the notion of smallpox as a biological weapon, either by nation states or by bio-terrorists. Those who engage in this line of argument seem to have learned little from the past, and certainly do not subscribe to the views of D.A. Henderson, who countered their main reasons effectively in January 1999.26 U.S. President Bill Clinton, however, decided to retain the U.S.-held stocks of smallpox virus.

VII Houle's History

'history', noun, the branch of knowledge dealing with past events.

Houle's construction of history is ironic. The juxtaposition of the Amherst correspondence with the newspaper accounts recounting some of the discussions surrounding the destruction of the last living stocks of smallpox virus, highlights the powerful ethical and moral potential in Houle's reading of the past. Houle always reads the past in ways that serve the present and open paths to a better future. The irony?29 European powers were instrumental in the spread of the smallpox virus to the Americas, and the British military, at least in the persons of Amherst and his field commanders Bouquet and Ecuyer, intended to infect the Indians involved in Pontiac's Confederacy.30 Two centuries later, through the programmes of the WHO, these same European powers, with the assistance the Neo-European powers, carried out a global campaign of vaccination to rid the world of smallpox: the campaign was successful.

Houle's two events, separated by two centuries, relate a history in an unconventional way, not in a linear narrative, but in ironic juxtaposition. In Why Ethics?, Robert Gibbs' exegesis on Benjamin's critique of 'history' is pertinent here:

The risk of studying 'history' is that one will not challenge the present, but will interpret it as justified (The world's history as the world's judgment). That challenge to the winners, moreover, is distributable over not only the past, but also the transmission of the past, the winner's stories through time. The task of juxtaposing dialectical images is not merely asymmetric with respect to time, but also bears a unique responsibility for the past...for the past as unjust.26

This is the kind of history advocated by some critics of conventional 'history'29 following suggestive insights of authors such as Baudrillard, who advocated alternatives to the familiar conventional linear forms. The notion of a "poetic alternative to the disenchantment of the past...for the past as unjust." Houle's history holds much in common with the petit narratives advocated by Lyotard as an antidote to the erasure of particulars in the metanarratives of universal history. The proliferation of local narratives offers the possibility of survival for difference and radical alterity. Conventional 'history', exclusively past-looking, is no longer suitable in our postmodern times. Robert Jenkëns extends his polemical argument to the notion of ethics: "For him, the base coincides with the rise of 'knowledge' of the undecidability of the (moral) decision."42

VIII Towards an ethics of responsibility

ethics, noun, a system of moral principles.
If our practice of ethics in the past, one shaped by the hegemony of
the individual, is no longer appropriate for the postmodern present,
then we need a replacement, perhaps an ethics that gives
legitimacy to interdependence as the goal of human development.
An attractive alternative is an ethics of responsibility. Robert Gibbs,
in *Why Ethics?* offers a semiotic account of an ethics that addresses
‗history‘ and our responsibility for the other, and the other‘
responsibilities, that is, our social relationship to others: "The
question Why? opens up a realm of ethics: an ethics of
responsibility, of an ability to respond arising in the exigency to
attend to another‘s questioning." Gibbs characterizes this ethics
as asymmetric; that is to say, my responsibility for others differs
from the way they are responsible for me. It is this excess that
grounds the mutuality of our responsibility for others, because,
a community, despite its hope or pretension, is never alone. It
stands over against other communities, and in judging the
others it itself judged. This ethics will place extreme
responsibility on each community for its others, discerning ways
for the ‗we‘ to be responsible for its ‗you.‘

The relevance of this idea in a discussion of *Palisade* is clear, given
the troubling relationship Neo-Europeans have with the indigenous
peoples, dispossessed over the past four centuries. We often hear
the statement, when it comes to present day reparations for past
injustices, that present day Neo-Europeans really have no
responsibility for what was perpetrated centuries ago. But an ethics of
responsibility:

extends asymmetrically into the past, too. Here the gap between
responsibility and blame accentuates the lack of control in
responding. For some things we are to blame, but for much
more we are responsible...called to respond for the sake of the
future. For if we are responsible for the actions of others in the
past, it means primarily that ours are the tasks of remembering
and mending the damage wrought in the past.

These are mutual tasks, and that is the message that Robert Houle
is sending in *Palisade*. It is also an admonition to care for the
future, to ensure that it is emancipatory—that our mutual
responsibilities always be asymmetric and excessive, for the
necessary healing, as the authors of the *Royal Commission on
Aboriginal Peoples (1996)* recognized, rests in Aboriginal and non-
Aboriginal people working together to achieve balance and
harmony.

Michael Bell, December 2000

Endnotes

Press, 2000), 369
3 First installed in Sleatown under the auspices of TRBE, and subsequently
bought by the Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina. Carleton University Art Gallery
undertook to exhibit the installation in the interim.
5 Michael Bell, "Robert Houle's *Palisade*," *Gq* (Ottawa: Carleton University Art
Gallery, 1998). The mixed media work central to this installation, the multi-pannelled
painting/drawing containing a panoramic replica of Benjamin West's "The Death of
 Wolfe", is in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, where the most
important version of the West painting is located.
6 Originally installed in the Vancouver Art Gallery exhibition, *Beyond History*, (1998),
this multimedia installation was re-installed, for a second time, in the Agnes
Art Gallery Art Centre, Queen's University, Kingston, in 1999. It has been re-
installed yet again (31 October 2000 - 16 March 2001), subsequent to its purchase
by the Kingston gallery in 1998 with a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts
Arts Assistance program.
7 *cornell* Press Gallery, Toronto, 1996.
8 Included in the exhibition *Sovereignty, Super-Subjectivity*, (Whitney Art Gallery,
1999), and now in the collection of the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art,
North York, Ontario.
9 The dictionary definitions throughout are derived from *The Random House
Dictionary of English Usage*, (unabridged edition), 1979—with one exception: the
World Health Assembly.
10 The artist conceived the work in imperial measure. With a modest reduction in
size, the panels echo the proportions of the body. The repetitive application of
If our practice of ethics in the past, one shaped by the hegemony of the individual, is no longer appropriate for the postmodern present, then we need a replacement, perhaps an ethics that gives legitimacy to interdependence as the goal of human development. An attractive alternative is an ethics of responsibility, Robert Gibbs, in Why Ethics? offers a semiotic account of an ethics that addresses ‘history’ and our responsibility for the other, and the other’s responsibilities, that is, our social relationship to others. "The question Why? opens up a realm of ethics: an ethics of responsibility, of an ability to respond arising in the exigency to attend to another’s questioning." Gibbs characterizes this ethics as asymmetric; that is to say, my responsibility for others differs from the way they are responsible for me. It is this excess that grounds the mutuality of our responsibility for others, because, a community, despite its hope or pretension, is never alone. It stands over against other communities, and in judging the others it is itself judged. This ethics will place extreme responsibility on each community for its others, discerning ways for the ‘we’ to be responsible for its ‘you.’

The relevance of this idea in a discussion of Palisade is clear, given the troubling relationship Neo-Europeans have with the indigenous peoples, dispossessed over the past four centuries. We often hear the statement, when it comes to present day reparations for past injustices, that present day Neo-Europeans really have no responsibility for what was perpetrated centuries ago. But an ethics of responsibility:

extends asymmetrically into the past, too. Here the gap between responsibility and blame accentuates the lack of control in responding. For some things we are to blame, but for much more we are responsible...called to respond for the sake of the future. For if we are responsible for the actions of others in the past, it means primarily that ours are the tasks of remembering and mending the damage wrought in the past.

These are mutual tasks, and that is the message that Robert Houle is sending in Palisade. It is also an admonition to care for the future, to ensure that it is emancipatory—that our mutual responsibilities always be asymmetric and excessive, for the necessary healing, as the authors of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) recognized, rests in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people working together to achieve balance and harmony.

Michael Bell, December 2000

Endnotes

3 First installed in Senekâton at the vanguard of TRIBÉ, and subsequently purchased by the McEwan Art Gallery, Regina. Carleton University Art Gallery undertook to exhibit the installation in the interim.
5 Michael Bell, Raminata: Robert Houle’s Histories, (Ottawa: Carleton University Art Gallery, 1998). The mixed media work central to this installation, the multi-panelled painting/drawing containing a grid-like replica of Benjamin West’s The Death of Wolfe, is in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, where the most important version of the West painting is located.
6 Originally installed in the Vancouver Art Gallery exhibition, Beyond History, (1999). This multimedia installation was re-installed, for a second time, in the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen’s University, Kingston, in 1992. It has been re-installed yet again (31 October 2000 - 18 March 2001), subsequent to its purchase by the Kingston gallery in 1998 with a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance program.
7 Carmel Press Gallery, Toronto, 1996.
8 Included in the exhibition Sovereignty: Over Subjectivity, (University Art Gallery, 1996), and now in the collection of the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, North York, Ontario.
10 The artist conceived the work in imperial measure. With a modest reduction in size, the panels echo the proportions of the body. The repetitive application of
colour, contributing to intense depth, also gives each canvas a strong presence of the body.

19 The relevant sections are excerpted in Sieving, Amburst and Smallpox Blankets, a site on the World Wide Web, http://www.nativeweb.org/pages/legal/anihilate/9900.10.11. House obtained this images of the manuscripts from this site.
23 Robert Boyle, The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence: Introduction Infectious Diseases and Population Decline Among Northwest Coast Indians, 1774-1874. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), 253. On the efficacy of 'tourists' there is dispute. Alfred W. Crosby comments: "This is as good a place as any to deal with the old legend of intentional European bacteriological warfare. The colonists certainly would have liked to wage such a war and did talk about giving infected blankets and such to the indigenes, and they may even have done so a few times, but by and large the legend is just that, a legend. Before the development of modern bacteriology at the end of the nineteenth century, diseases did not come in amulets, and there were no refrigerators in which to store the amulets. Disease was, in practical terms, people who were sick—an awkward weapon to aim at anyone. As for infected blankets, they might or might not work. Furthermore, and most important, the intentionally transmitted disease might swing back on the white population. As whites lived longer and longer in the colonies, more and more of them were born there and did not go through the full gamut of Old World childhood diseases. These people were dedicated to quarantining smallpox, not to spreading it."
26 Alfred W. Crosby, Ecological Imperialism, 201. Stein and Stein give a moving example: "Among the tribes particularly hard hit at this time was the Gros Ventres. In 1791 a war party of Kanesians, Assiniboins and Ojibways proceeded from the great Kanesian village on the Dead River near its outlet into the Red River of the north, and moved westward to the Missouri River until they came to the village of Gros Ventres, which they attacked. Resistance made to their attack was so feeble, so that they soon rushed forward to secure their scalps. They found the lodges of the villages filled with dead, and the scene so terrible that they quickly retreated, carrying the scalps of those they had killed. One exceptionally large scalp they fixed to a stick, and, on their journey homeward, this stick was planted erect in the ground at night while they camped. On the successive mornings they found the scalp leaning toward the west, and this phenomenon aroused their superstitious fear, so that, after one of their party became sick and died, they fled precipitately homeward. However, every day some sickened and died, so that, out of the considerable number of warriors who had started on the journey, only four survived to return to their village on the Dead River. Smallpox was desolated the village. Because of the great mortality, several thousand having died there, the river was named Ne-ha, or Dead River. The Ojibways, in their attempt to flee from the stricken village, spread the scourge to Sandy Lake. This village in turn lost most of its inhabitants. From here the epidemic spread by way of Pigeon River to Lake Superior at Grand Portage, and proceeded up the lake to Fond du Lac, and, after ravaging it, attacked the 'Pilger' band of the Ojibways, who carried it to Sandy Lake. At this point, after causing many deaths, the epidemic stopped. Between fifteen hundred and two thousand Ojibways died from smallpox during this epidemic." E. Wagner Stein and Allen E. Stein, The Effect of Smallpox on the Destiny of the American Indians, 48.
29 George E. Stoic, For an Amuridian Antihistory, 4.
30 Ibid, 3.
31 The Infected Blanket is echoed in Eric Robinson and Henry Bird Quinnie, The Infected Blanket, (Winnipeg: Queens-p House Publishing Co. Ltd, 1980), xxii: "When Canada brought its Constitution home from London in 1867, it knowingly backed out of the Treaty agreements which were solemnly signed between the First Nations and the British Crown... The First colonists were sometimes not aware that the blankets they distributed to the Indians were Fletchered with disease, and so too now, many Canadians think that they are doing Indians a big favour by weaving Indians into the fabric of Canada's Constitution and Confederation. Yet to do so and the way it is set out and determined by non-Indians, is to kill off the Sovereignty of Indian Nationhood... Unfortunately, too many Indian people and leaders are craving so desperately for political recognition of any type from Canada, that they are willing to accept the demeaning burdens of the Constitutional blanket. Just as Indians before did not know that the blankets needed for warmth were disease ridden, so today many do not realize the killing power of the Constitution. Yet the result is the same as before--grievous."
colour, contributing to intense depth, also gives every canvas a strong presence of the body. 19


23 Robert Boyd, The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence: Introductory Infectious Diseases and Population Decline Among Northwest Coast Indians, 1774-1874, Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998, 253. On the efficacy of 'tobacco' there is dispute. Alfred W. Crosby comments: 'This is as good a place as any to deal with the old legend of intentional European bacterial warfare. The colonists certainly would have liked to wage such a war and did talk about giving infected blankets and such to the indians, and they may even have done so a few times, but by and large the legend is just that, a legend. Before the development of modern bacteriology at the end of the nineteenth century, diseases did not come in epidemic forms, and there were no refrigerators in which to store the amulets. Disease was, in practical terms, people who were sick—an awkward weapon to aim at anyone. As for infected blankets, they might work or might not work. Furthermore, and most important, the intentionally transmitted disease might swing back on the white population. As whites lived longer and longer in the colonies, more and more of them were born there and did not go through the full gauntlets of Old World childhood diseases. These people were dedicated to quarantining smallpox, not to spreading it.' Alfred W. Crosby, Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 345, note 38. His position is not unchallenged. See Ann P. LeChateau, Vector of Death: The Archaeology of European Contact, Alouettes: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 143.


25 Alfred W. Crosby, Ecological Imperialism, 201. Steam and Steam give a moving example: "Among the tribes particularly hard hit at this time was the Gros Ventres. In 1791 a war party of Kanesesne, Assiniboin and Ojibways proceeded from the great Kanesesne village on the Dead River near its outlet into the Red River of the north, and moved westward to the Missouri River until they came to the village of Gros Ventres, which they attacked. Resistance made to their attack was very feeble, so that they soon rushed forward to secure their scalp. They found the lodges of the villages filled with dead, and the scouts so sensible that they quickly retraced, carrying the scalps of those they had killed. One exceptionally large scalp they fixed to a stick, and, on their journey homeward, this stick was planted erect in the ground at night while they camped. On the successive mornings they found the scalp blazing toward the west, and their companions assumed their supernatural fear, so that, after one of their party became sick and died, they fled precipitately homeward. However, every day some sickened and died, so that, out of the considerable number of warriors who had started on the journey, only four survived to return to their village on the Dead River. Smallpox was depopulated the village.

26 Because of the great mortality, several thousand having died there, the river was named Ne-ho, or Dead River. The Ojibways, in their attempt to flee from the stricken village, spread the scourge to Rainy Lake. This village is now lost most of its inhabitants. From there the epidemic spread by way of Pigeon River to Lake Superior at Grand Portage, and proceeded up the lake to Fort du Lac, and, after ravaging it, attacked the 'Pilger' band of the Ojibways, who carried it to Sable Lake. At this point, after causing many deaths, the epidemic stopped. Between seven hundred and two thousand Ojibways died from smallpox during this epidemic." E. Wagner Steam and Allen S. Steam, The Effect of Smallpox on the Destiny of the American Indians, 46.


29 George E. Stoel, For an Amerindian Autonomy, 4.


31 The infected blanket is echoed in Eric Robinson and Henry Bird Quaiche, The Infested Blanket, (Winnipeg: Queenston House Publishing Co. Ltd, 1985), xxix: "When Canada brought the Constitution 'home' from London in 1867, it knowingly backed out of the Treaty agreements which were solemnly signed between the First Nations and the British Crown... The First colonists were sometimes not aware that the blankets they distributed to the Indians were covering with disease, and so too now, many Canadians think that they are doing Indians a big favor by weaving Indians into the fabric of Canada's Constitution and Confederation. Yet to do so and the way it is set out and determined by Non-Natives, is to kill off the Sovereignty of Indian Nations... Unfortunately, too many Indian People and leaders are viewing so desperately for political reognition of any type from Canada, that they are willing to accept the deforming wounds of the Constitutional blanket. Just as Indians before did not know that the blankets needed for warmth were disease ridden, so today many do not realise the killing power of the Constitution. Yet the result is the same as before—gibeace."
"After the surrender of Canada in 1760, fighting ceased in North America, although the war continued elsewhere in the world and French forces in the west remained ready to resume hostilities if given the opportunity. In military calculations the western garrisons of the French represented a threat to security that Amherst would ignore his recommendations. The denial of presents—especially ammunition so that they couldn’t hunt to feed themselves—condemned them to starvation. See oliver P. Dickason, Canada’s First Nations: A History of Bounding Peoples from Earliest Times, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992), 181.

Howard H. Pecham, Frontier and the Indian Uprising, 150-50. See also Oliver P. Dickason, Canada’s First Nations, 179 ff.


Howard H. Pecham, Frontier and the Indian Uprising, 131-32.

The Director of the Center for Civilian Biodefense Studies, D.A. Henderson, wrote in January 1999: "Smallpox was probably first used as a biological weapon during the French and Indian Wars, (1754-67), by British forces in North America...the potential threat of smallpox as a biological weapon greatly diminished after Jenner’s discovery of vaccination in 1796...in fact, the possible use of smallpox as a biological weapon received almost no attention until the last few years.” Risk of a Deliberate Release of Smallpox Virus: Its Impact on Virus Destruction: http://www.hopkins- biodefense.org/pages/news/ meeting.html (2000.10.11). Henderson led the WHO programme to eradicate the smallpox virus.


E. Wagner Stein and Allen E. Stein, The Effect of Smallpox on the Destiny of the American Indians, 45, (yes emphasised). There is still discussion about this event and the British intention. See the newsgroup archive posted at http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/-west/threads/dsc-smallpox.html


For an engaging and wide-ranging discussion of irony in contemporary culture, see Linda Hutcheon, Irony’s Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony, (Routledge: London, 1994). Chapters 1, 4, and 7 are particularly relevant.

Waves were notorious for spreading disease, since there was often rapid movement of potentially infected individuals over large distances.


Jean Baudrillard quoted in Jenkins, Why Ethics?, 69.

Keith Jenkins, Why Ethics?, 89.


Ibid. 4.


Figure 10: Installation view of Palisade.
35 "After the surrender of Canada in 1760, fighting ceased in North America, although the war continued elsewhere in the world and French forces in the west remained ready to resume hostilities if given the opportunity. In military calculations the western garrisons of the French represented a threat to security that Anherssir with habitual thoroughness determined to eliminate by systematically replacing French troops with British," Francis Jennings, Empire of Fortune, 429.

36 Sir William Johnson was the consummate negotiator with the Indians, although Anherssir would ignore his recommendations. The denial of presents—especially ammunition—so that they could hunt to feed themselves—condemned them to starvation. See Ole P. Dickason, Canada’s First Nation: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart. 1992), 181.

37 Howard H. Peckham, Pontiac and the Indian Uprising, 115-20. See also Ole P. Dickason, Canada’s First Nation, 179 ff.


41 Howard H. Peckham, Pontiac and the Indian Uprising, 131-32.

42 The Director of the Center for Civilian Biodefense Studies, D.A. Henderson, wrote in January 1999: "Smallpox was probably first used as a biological weapon during the French and Indian Wars, (1754-67), by British forces in North America...the potential threat of smallpox as a bioweapon greatly diminished after Jenner’s discovery of vaccination in 1796...in fact, the possible use of smallpox as a biological weapon received almost no attention until the last few years..." Risk of a Deliberate Release of Smallpox Virus: Its Impact on Virus Destruction. http://www.hopkins-biodefense.org/pages/news/meeting.html, (2000.10.11) Henderson led the WHO programme to eradicate the smallpox virus.


44 E. Wagner Starn and Allen E. Starn, The Effect of Smallpox on the Destiny of the American Indians, 45 (toy emphasized). There is still discussion about this event and the British intention. See the newsgroup archive posted at http://www2.lanl.gov/~west/threats/dic_TransSmallpox.html.


37 For an engaging and wide-ranging discussion of irony in contemporary culture, see Linda Hutcheon, Irony’s Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony, (Routledge: London, 1994). Chapters 1, 4, and 7 are particularly relevant.

38 Wars were notorious for spreading disease, since there was often rapid movement of potentially infected individuals over large distances.


42 Keith Jenkins, Why History?, 89.


44 Ibid., 4.


Figure 10: Installation view of Palisade.
The Works

This installation was purchased in 1999 by the Mackenzie Art Gallery (Regina) with the assistance of the Canada Council Art Acquisition Programme. All measurements are in centimetres, height preceding width.

1. **Vermime Virus** (1999)
   - acrylic, graphite, collaged mat board
   - signed and dated in pencil L.r., Heule '99
   - titled in pencil L.L., Vermime Virus
   - 27.6 x 31.1

2. **Study for Smallpox** (1999)
   - acrylic, collage, white vinyl letters, graphite, ballpoint ink
   - inscribed L.L. in pencil study for Smallpox
   - 45.7 x 61

3. **Postscript** (1999)
   - acrylic, graphite, ballpoint ink, computer printout from WWW site, photocopy, mat board
   - titled u.c. in ballpoint "Postscript" 1999
   - inscribed u.c. in ink Amherst to Bouquet, dated 16-July 1976
   - Each piece of collaged mat board carries a colour sample and is inscribed with the names of the respective colours used in the panels: cobalt green, Winsor Emerald #708, Chrome Green

Deep Hue, Terre Verte,
Winsor green #720, prussian green, sap green, olive green, signed and dated in blue ink L.C. July 21/89 Heule
45.7 x 121.9

4. **Postscript** (study)
   - acrylic and ballpoint ink, computer printout from WWW site, National Post article (20 May, 1999), black vinyl letters
   - titled u.c. in ink Colonel Bouquet to General Amherst,
   - dated 13 July 1763/Amherst to Bouquet,
   - dated 16 July 1763
   - dated in ink, L.C., July 21/99
   - signed in graphite, L.R. Heule '99
   - 45.7 x 61

5. **Palisade** (1999)
   - eight units
   - acrylic on canvas (Cobalt green, Winsor Emerald #708, Chrome Green Deep Hue, Terre Verte, Winsor Green #720, Prussian Green, Sap Green, Olive Green)
   - 61 x 244

   - digital photographic print
   - originally used for outdoor billboards in Saskatoon
   - 121.9 x 165.2

---

Robert Houle

Education
1975 McGill University, Montreal, Quebec
1977 University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Bachelor of Arts (Art History)

Solo Exhibitions
2000 Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon
2000 Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto
1999 Art Gallery of Hamilton, Hamilton
1999 AGA, Saskatoon
1998 Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg
1998 The CN Tower, Toronto
1996 Garret Press Gallery, Toronto
1994 Garnet Press Gallery, Toronto
1993 The Kennedy Gallery, New York
1993 Carlton University Art Gallery, Carleton University, Ottawa
1993 Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
1992 VYZ, Toronto
1992 Uffizi Gallery, Florence
1992 Articule, Montreal
1992 Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston
1991 Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff
1991 Uffizi Gallery, Florence
1991 Thunder Bay Art Gallery, Thunder Bay
1991 MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina
1991 Hood College, Frederick, Maryland
1991 Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Calgary
1991 Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull
1990 Garnet Press Gallery, Winnipeg
1990 Uffizi Gallery, Florence
1990 St. Joseph's Hospital, Toronto

Selected Group Exhibitions
1999 NFL Life, Harbourfront Centre, Toronto
1997 Ghostwriter III, Mercer Union, Toronto
1997 Transitions: Contemporary Indian and Inuit Art, Canadian Cultural Centre, Paris, France
1996 PrairieArt: Intersecting the Prairie Landscape, Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg
1996 Real Pictures: Four Canadian Artists, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
1996 My/Grouping: A Living Legacy, McMichael Canadian Collection, Kleinburg
1995 Gallery Artists/Institutional, Garnet Press Gallery, Toronto
1995 Notions of Conflict, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands
1995 Displaced Histories, Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, Ottawa
1994 Hidden Treasures, McMichael Canadian Collection, Kleinburg, touring nationally through 1996
1994 On Claremont, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
1994 Future Traditions, North York Performing Arts Centre Art Gallery, North York
1993 Trajectories of Meaning, Garnet Press Gallery, Toronto
1992 Re倘enigten Historie, Merve Union, Toronto
1992 Traveling Theory, Jordan National Gallery, Amman, Jordan
1991 Art/Other World, Center for Contemporary Art, Cleveland, Ohio
The Works

This installation was purchased in 1999 by the Mackenzie Art Gallery (Regina) with the assistance of the Canada Council Art Acquisition Programme.

All measurements are in centimetres, height preceding width.
L.l. lower left; l.r. lower right; u.l. upper left; u.r. upper right; u.c. upper centre; l.c. lower centre.

   acrylic, graphite, collaged mat board
   signed and dated in pencil L.r., Houle '99
   titled in pencil L.l. Vermiline Virus 27.6 x 31.1

2. Study for Smallpox (1999)
   acrylic, collage, white vinyl letters, graphite, ballpoint ink
   inscribed L.l. in pencil study for Smallpox 45.7 x 61

   acrylic, graphite, ballpoint ink, computer printout from WWW site, photocopy, mat board
   titled u.c. in ballpoint "Postscript" 1999
   inscribed u.c. in ink Amherst to Bouquet, dated 16 July 1763
   Each piece of collaged matte board carries a colour sample and is inscribed with the names of the respective colours used in the panels: cobalt green, Winsor Emerald #708, Chrome Green

Deep Hue, Terre Verte,
Winsor green #210, prussian green, sap green, olive green, signed and dated in blue ink i.e. July 21/99 Houle 45.7 x 121.9

4. Postscript (study)
   acrylic and ballpoint ink, computer printout from WWW site, National Post article (20 May, 1999), black vinyl letters
   titled u.l. in ink Colonel Bouquet to General Amherst,
dated 13 July 1763/Amherst to Bouquet,
dated 16 July 1763
dated in ink, l.e. July 21/99
   signed in graphite, l.r. Houle '99 45.7 x 61

5. Polisade (1999)
   eight units
   acrylic on canvas (cobalt green, Winsor Emerald #708, Chrome Green #210, Prussian Green, Sap Green, olive green)
   61 x 244

   digital photographic print
   (originally used for outdoor billboards in Saskatoon)
   121.9 x 163.2

Robert Houle

Education
1975 McGill University, Montreal, Quebec
Bachelor of Education (Art Education)
1972 University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba
Bachelor of Arts (Art History)

Solo Exhibitions
2000 Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon
2000 Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto
1999 Art Canada Institute, Toronto
1999 KONA, Kona, Quebec
1999 Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg
1998 360, The CN Tower, Toronto
1998 Garnet Press Gallery, Toronto
1994 Garnet Press Gallery, Toronto
1993 The Kennedy Gallery, North Bay
1993 Caledon University Art Gallery, Caledon, Ontario
1993 Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
1993 YWCA, Toronto
1992 Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
1992 Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
1992 Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston
1991 Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff
1991 Mendel Art Gallery, Ottawa
1991 Thunder Bay Art Gallery, Thunder Bay
1991 Macleay Art Gallery, Regina
1991 Hood College, Frederick, Maryland
1991 G自治ven, Ahebna Institute, Calgary
1991 Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull
1990 Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg
1990 Mendel Art Gallery, Ottawa
1990 Thunder Bay Art Gallery, Thunder Bay

Selected Group Exhibitions
1999 Still Life, Harbourfront Centre, Toronto
1997 Ghostwriter III, Mercer Union, Toronto
1997 Translations: Contemporary Indian and Inuit Art, Canadian Cultural Centre, Paris, France
1996 Prismatic: Intimacy and the Prairie Landscape, Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg
1996 Real Pictures: Four Canadian Artists, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
1996 Bay/Grouping: A Living Legacy, McMichael Canadian Collection, Kleinburg
1995 Gallery Artists/Institutional, Garnet Press Gallery, Toronto
1995 Notions of Conflict, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands
1995 Displaced Histories, Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, Ottawa
1994 Hidden Treasures, McMichael Canadian Collection, Kleinburg, touring nationally through 1995
1994 On Classtroom, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
1994 Future Traditions, North York Performing Arts Centre Art Gallery, North York
1993 Trajectories of Meaning, Garnet Press Gallery, Toronto
1992 Retaining History, Mercer Union, Toronto
1992 Traveling Theory, Jordan National Gallery, Amman, Jordan
1991 A/Other Voice, Center for Contemporary Art, Cleveland, Ohio
1991 Submade Shau, Evergreen State College, Olympia, Washington (traveling exhibition)
1990 Numbers, Art Gallery of Hamilton, Hamilton
1990 Contemporary India, White Water Gallery, North Bay, (traveling)

Visiting Artist
1991 Hood College, Frederick, Maryland, Between two Worlds
1990 Gettysburg College Art Gallery, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Why do you call us Indians?
1985 De Meernvaart, Amsterdam, Netherlands, Challenges in Contemporary Native Art in Canada
1983 The Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona, Innovations in Native American Painting
1983 Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, Symposium on Contemporary Native American Art

Artist in Residence
1997 The Tamayo Institute, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico
1989 The McMichael Canadian Collection, Kleinburg
1989 The Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg

Awards
1993 Janet Braid memorial Award, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston

Public Collections
Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen’s University, Kingston
Art Gallery of Hamilton, Hamilton
Art Gallery of Kelowna, Kelowna

Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
Burnaby Art Gallery, Burnaby
Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa
Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull
Carleton University, Ottawa
Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton
E. A.社会实践, Ottawa
Glenbow Museum, Calgary
Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Ottawa and Toronto
Kelowna Art Gallery, Kelowna
Laurentian University Museum and Arts Centre, Sudbury
McGill University, Montreal
McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg
Metcalf Gallery, Saskatoon
Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
Nickles Art Gallery, Calgary
North York Performing Arts Centre, Art Gallery, North York
Owen’s Art Gallery, Sackville
Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa
Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto
Southwest Museum, Los Angeles, California
Terry Thomas Gallery, Owen Sound
Thunder Bay Art Gallery, Thunder Bay
Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver
University of New Mexico Art Gallery, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Whitby Station Art Gallery, Whitby
Windsor Art Gallery, Windsor
Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg
Woodland Cultural Centre, Brantford

Private Collections
Daines, Ward, Beck, Toronto
Deutsche Bank, Toronto
Ernst and Young Inc., Toronto
George Murray, Oakville, Ontario
Gray Development Ltd., Toronto
Guardian Capital Group, Toronto
Imperial Oil Limited, Toronto

McCarthy, Tetrault, Toronto
Northern Telecom, Toronto
Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement Savings, Toronto
Oudek Hinkson & Harrington, Ottawa
Proscott Corporation, Toronto

Figure 11: Artist’s talk, 14 November, 2000, Carleton University.
Subkow, Shau, Evergreen State College, Olympia, Washington

1990

Numbers, Art Gallery of Hamilton, Hamilton

1990

Contemporary Rhythm, White Water Gallery, North Bay, (traveling)

1990

Why do you call us Indians?, Gettysburg College Art Gallery, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania (traveling)

Visiting Artist

1991

Hood College, Frederick, Maryland, Between Two Worlds

1990

Gettysburg College Art Gallery, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Why do you call us Indians?

1987

The Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona, Recent Generations: A Forum on the Birth of Contemporary Native Art

1985

De Muervaat, Amsterdam, Netherlands, Challenges in Contemporary Native Art in Canada

1983

The Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona, Innovations in Native American Painting

1983

Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, Symposium on Contemporary Native American Art

Artist in Residence

1987

The Tamarind Institute, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico

1989

The Timmick Canadian Collection, Kleinburg

1989

The Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg

Awards

1993

Jarret Brade Memorial Award, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston

Public Collections

Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, Kingston

Art Gallery of Hamilton, Hamilton

Art Gallery of Relsona, Relsona

Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

Burlaby Art Gallery, Burlaby

Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa

Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull

Carleton University, Ottawa

External Affairs Canada, Ottawa

Hellas Museum, Phoenix, Arizona

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Ottawa and Toronto

Kelowna Art Gallery, Kelowna

Laurentian University Museum and Arts Centre, Sudbury

McGill University, Montreal

McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg

McMullen Gallery, Saskatoon

Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Nickel Art Gallery, Calgary

North York Performing Arts Centre

Art Gallery, North York

Owen Art Gallery, Sackville

Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa

Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto

Southwest Museum, Los Angeles, California

Tom Thomson Gallery, Owen Sound

Thunder Bay Art Gallery, Thunder Bay

Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver

University of New Mexico Art Gallery, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Whitby Station Art Gallery, Whitby

Whitney Art Gallery, Windsor

Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg

Woodland Cultural Centre, Brantford

Private Collections

Davies, Ward, Beck, Toronto

Deutsche Bank, Toronto

Ernst and Young Inc., Toronto

G hemat Murray Daily News, Toronto

Gray Developments Ltd., Toronto

Guardian Capital Group, Toronto

Imperial Oil Limited, Toronto

McCarthy, Tetraunet, Toronto

Northern Telecom, Toronto

Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement Savings, Toronto

Osler Hoskin & Harcourt, Ottawa

and Toronto

Royal Bank, Toronto

Trelle Corporation, Toronto

Figure 11: Artist's talk, 14 November, 2000, Carleton University.