

## Mark Grady / **ADA**: DIGITAL HISTORIES

### ANN ROSENBERG / **ADA, ADA**. WHO OR WHAT IS SHE?

According to Mark Grady, these letters signify three states integral to his current practice. **ADA** (Analogue/Digital/Analogue) is more than a teasing sobriquet for what he does.

Since 1991, when he produced his first suite of computer-generated works for Gallery t.o.o., Grady has seldom painted or used any labour-intensive, hands-on means to create the images incorporated into his art. Increasingly, he has espoused the most important tool of this era as the principal medium through which his chosen visual sources are channelled and transformed.

L'ART MODERNE PRIMITIF (1992) in **ADA**: DIGITAL HISTORIES is based on an example of 20th Century design. The electrical power station by W. Klingenberg and W. Issel was reproduced in Maurice Casteel's L'Art Moderne Primitif (Paris, 1930). Grady took this book plate analogue of a building that once existed and transubstantiated it into more than one **digital** document which had different details than those in the illustration from which it derived. When output on archival paper as prints in this diptych, each became a new **analogue** that could be considered as an "original," a piece of Grady's own art history.

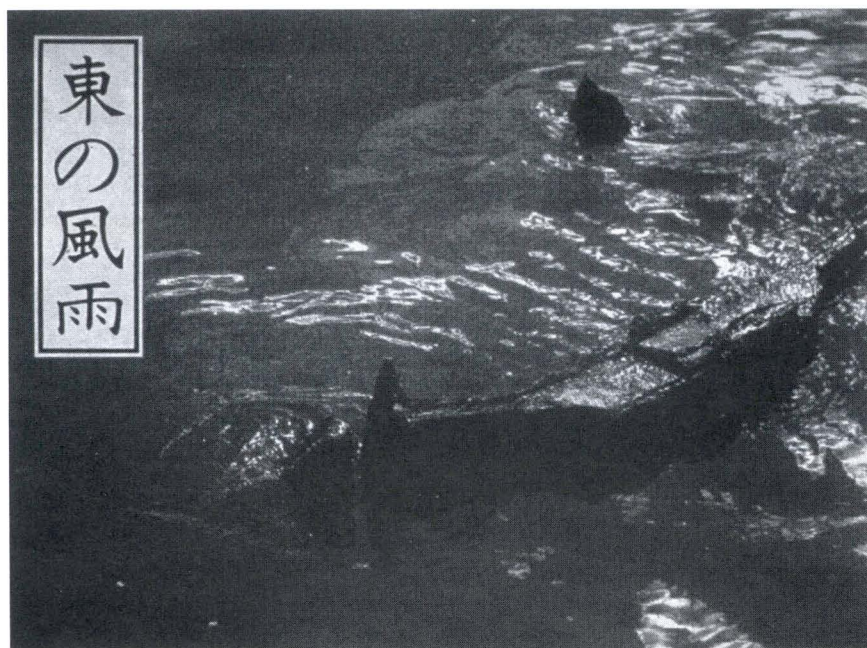
As the result of computer manipulation, this pair of images now appears to be sketches, "drawings" that the architects might have presented to their client before the electrical substation came into being.

Grady's 1992 SYNTHETIC LANDSCAPE: *C Kunstmeister* and SYNTHETIC LANDSCAPE: *D. Stückmeister* are also digitally engendered limited edition prints which resemble drawings. The five panoramas in this series are extrapolated from photographs of obscure German landscape sites published in *The Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1941-2. These have been cropped, stretched, added to, and subtracted from through electronic means. In final form, they are convincing falsifications of hand-rendered natural motifs signed with fictitious artists' names. *Meisterwerks* by *Meisters* worthy of the Führer's approval.



A different, no less powerful leader from the same historical period issued the poetic “East, Wind, Rain” code that was the Japanese pilots’ signal to bomb Pearl Harbour in WWII. In PEARL HARBOUR WEATHER REPORT: EAST (1993), the “command” is recorded in the computer-constructed Japanese colophon that floats over the stormy ocean like a scroll unfurled. The seascape is a medium-resolution, pixilated “copy” of one of the photos Grady shot during a boat tour organized by the Pearl Harbour Museum in 1992 as he overlooked the spot where the US battleship U.S.S. Arizona languishes in its watery grave.

Again, the viewer is encouraged to wonder about the sources of reference in, and the authorship of, an image that seems to have been created by an oriental sensibility.





GREAT SCHISM (1995) is one of several more recent works that include photographs in b/w or colour in the final piece. The upper portion of this diptych is a large mural based on a reproduction Grady discovered in Tony Letessier's Berlin Then and Now (London, 1992). Because this illustration required no computer "assistance," it is the only image in DIGITAL HISTORIES that bypassed the **D** in the **ADA** process. Jean-Jacques Henner's Dead Christ in the panel below, in contrast, is a colour photograph created from a Photoshop "touch up" of the colour plate in Robert Rosenblum's Paintings in the Musée D'Orsay (Paris, 1989). The tattoo on Christ's arm is a computer-produced "false signature" that transforms the entombed saviour into a victim of the Holocaust. Although it is a tiny addition, its impact on the meaning of GREAT SCHISM is monumental.







In *PROUD MONSTER: FIERO MONSTRUO* (1995) the left panel of the diptych apparently contains a large b/w photograph of a group of S.S. Panzer officers conferring about military strategy. It is substantially based on a photograph obtained from the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz that gave Grady a more perfect document to “rework” than the first reference to the group he encountered in Eric Lefèvre’s Panzers in Normandy – Then and Now (London, 1983).





As the process sequence demonstrates, the face of Mark Grady's carefully staged self-portrait "invaded" the WWII document and became the seamless, totally believable substitute for S.S. Standartenführer Kurt Meyer's visage.

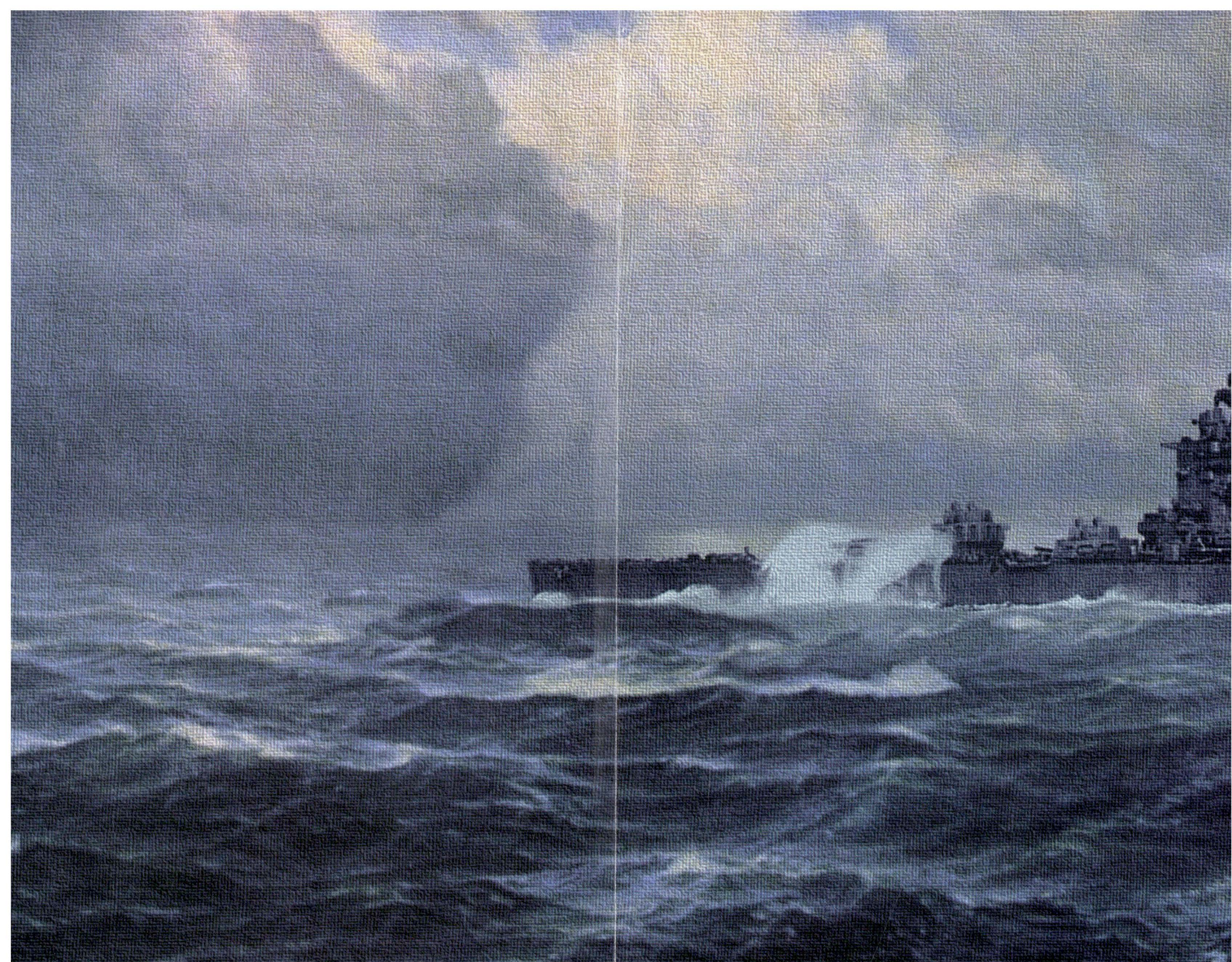






W. J. M. 1914







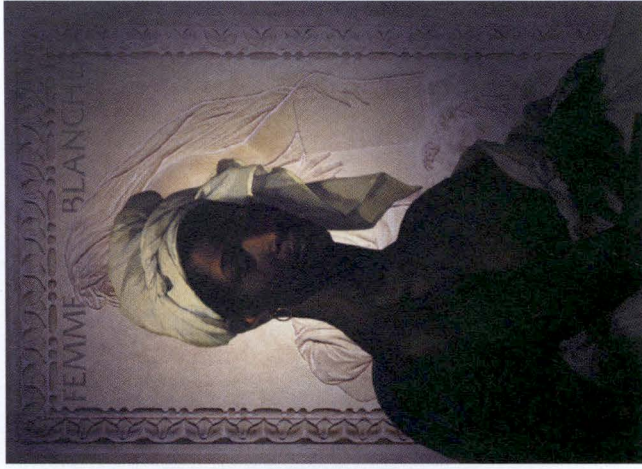
The right hand panel of PROUD MONSTER is a computer “reading” of a colour plate contained in Alfonso Sanchez’s Goya and the Spirit of Enlightenment that has transformed the artist’s studio into a claustrophobic, grey cell. In this chamber, Goya appears to be the willing servant of Conde de Floridablanca, his aristocratic client. His physical attitude and conduct parallels the subservient (yet proud) obsequiousness Grady assumed when he stepped back into history to become Kurt Meyer.

“Fiero Monstruo,” the Spanish words that are part of PROUD MONSTER’s title, are engraved, in reverse, on two aluminum plaques situated on the frame. These computer-generated words acknowledge that Goya is responsible for the name of the piece. These same words should have been engraved, mirror-fashion, into the metal plate for his *Disasters of War* etching no. 81, but were not. Grady’s title “attachments” redresses Goya’s omission. This small detail is in its own way as significant as the tattoo on Christ’s arm.

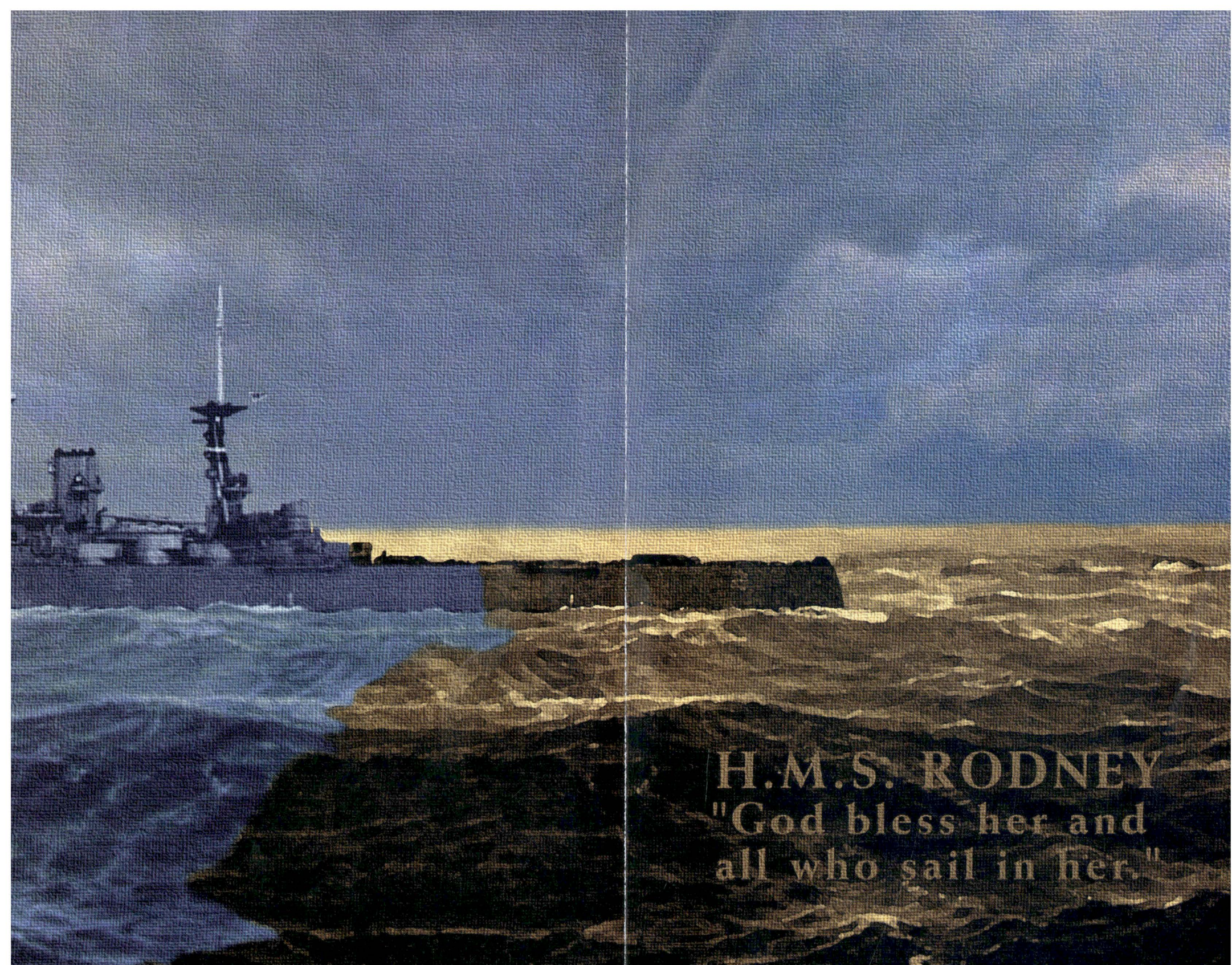


Fiero  
Monstruo



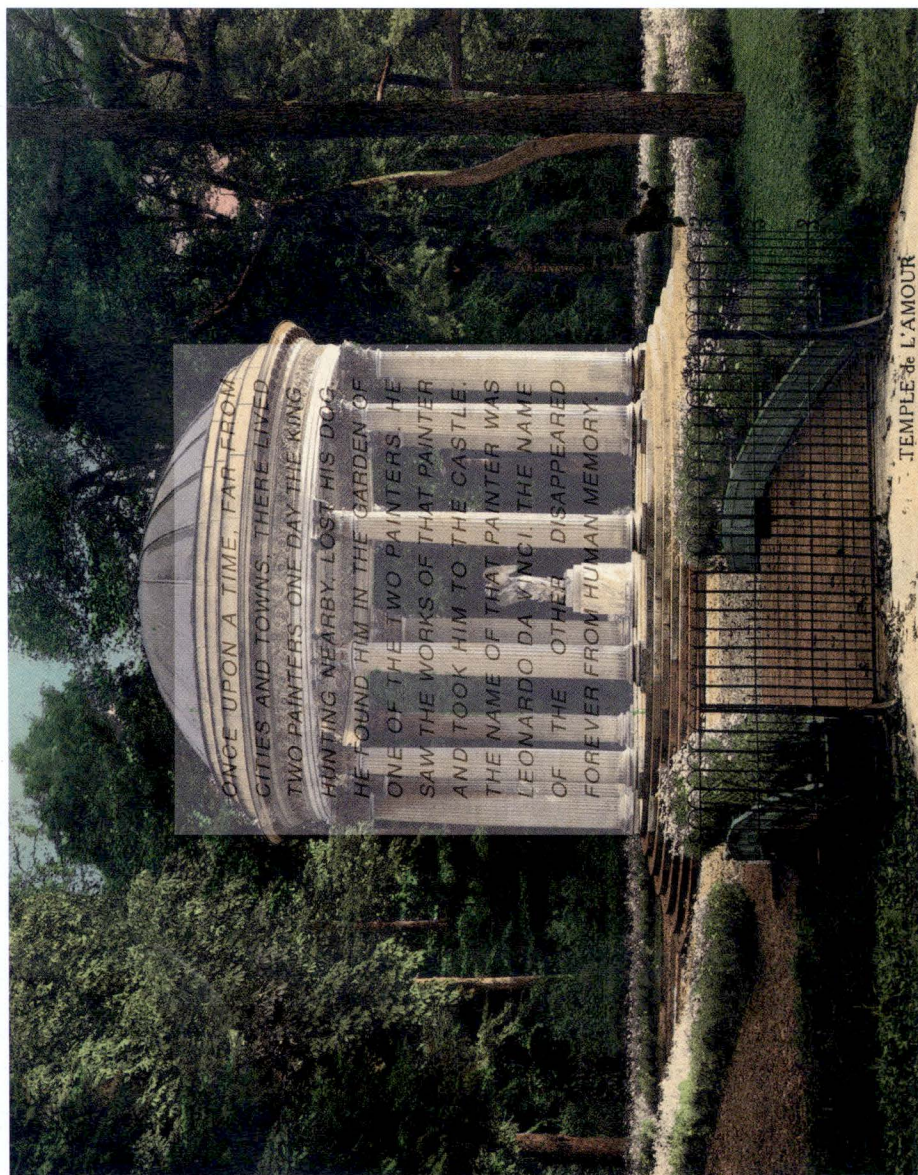






H.M.S. RODNEY  
"God bless her and  
all who sail in her."





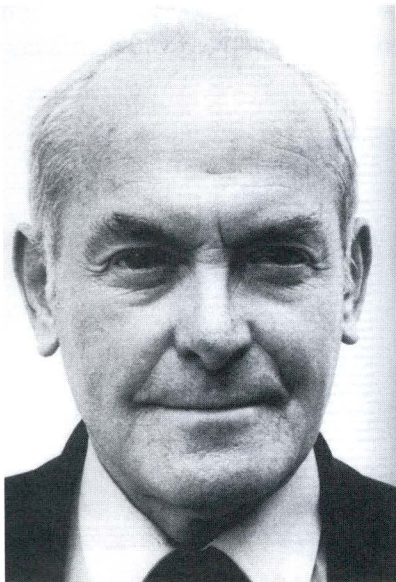
TEMPLE de L'AMOUR



Although it has a light-hearted aura, REVERIE #1: LE TEMPLE DE L'AMOUR (1995) is in keeping with the other works so far described. While it looks as pretty as a Rococo daydream, its subject is not frivolous. This work, no less than PROUD MONSTER and SCHISM, is about the figures and structures of power and the concepts of fame and deception.

The Temple of Love at Versailles is a garden "ornament" that never was a place for worship, but it was a sanctuary for romantic trysts. It is a well-known example of French Renaissance Classicism that poses an interesting parallel and contrast to the elegant substitution in L'ART MODERNE PRIMITIF which has no life in the public consciousness. The *übermensch* conjured by the image is Louis XIV, who transformed a mire into this magnificent site.

When viewing Grady's piece we remember Leonardo too, because this famous artist is referred to in the inscription that has been programmed to float over the surface of the photographic image like a veil. The quotation, which is a unifying motif in all the REVERIES, is taken from a Conceptual art piece by Braco Dimitrijevic, published in the Fall issue of C Magazine (1989).



ONCE UPON A TIME, FAR FROM  
CITIES AND TOWNS, THERE LIVED  
TWO PAINTERS. ONE DAY THE KING,  
HUNTING NEARBY, LOST HIS DOG.  
HE FOUND HIM IN THE GARDEN OF  
ONE OF THE TWO PAINTERS. HE  
SAW THE WORKS OF THAT PAINTER  
AND TOOK HIM TO THE CASTLE.  
THE NAME OF THAT PAINTER WAS  
LEONARDO DA VINCI. THE NAME  
OF THE OTHER DISAPPEARED  
FOREVER FROM HUMAN MEMORY.

Each of the landscapes in the REVERIES is based on a hand-tinted postcard of a garden confection at Versailles taken by an unknown photographer. Dimitrijevic's text and the "picture postcard" images occupy the netherworld between truth and fiction.



To make the sense of time-warp more complete and to present an amusing challenge to the viewer, Grady has digitally transported into the three images of Versailles a different, suitably-scaled French poodle based on illustrations in Bruce Fogle's The Encyclopedia of the Dog. This "gesture" serves as a subtle allusion to the meaning of the poodle in the art produced by the Canadian Neo-Dada collective, General Idea.



H.M.S. RODNEY (1997) like many other works in **ADA** connects readily with other WWII - inspired artworks and to the portraits Grady has made this year.

The war vessel that triggered the construction of this image first caught Grady's attention in Robert Ballard's The Discovery of the Bismark, a book published in 1990. What piqued his special interest in the battleship was the fact that the H.M.S. Rodney's name is also the first name of Rodney Graham, an artist Grady considers to be "a Capital Ship" of the Canadian art world.

A picture of the ship obtained from the Imperial War Museum of London provided a better resource from which to work, although much of the "original" has vanished in the course of digitally-induced "improvements."

Unsatisfied with the bland weather and cloudless sky of the archival photograph, Grady created a more dramatic environment for the vessel. Crashing waves and glowering heavens were imported digitally into the H.M.S. Rodney's surroundings from a Turner-esque seascape by Johannes Holst reproduced in Michael Leek's Art of Nautical Illustration (New Jersey, 1991). But the sailing ship in the centre of the painting *Four Masted Bark* was consigned to the cybernetic equivalent of Davy Jones' locker.



Portions of the painting's rolling breakers and stormy skies were "colourized" and others were "rendered" in grisaille. Finally, Photoshop allowed Grady to underlay the whole image with a texture that gives it the semblance of an oil on canvas. Like Graham's career it is a "work in progress."



In WHAT IS IT ABOUT WHITE WOMEN #1 - #3, Grady “stages” his commentary on the representation of female artists in art history in a room that appears to be part of a high-status European gallery.

In each panel of the triptych, a woman poses in front of a marble, bas-relief backdrop as though “standing” for a portrait-painter or a photographer. The first woman in the trio is Elizabeth Vigée-LeBrun — a well-known artist from the Louis XVI period — who has stepped out of her own 1791 oil painting to become part of this physically impossible but intellectually plausible situation. To the right, a self-possessed unknown black woman from a slightly later French painting by a lesser known female artist (Marie-Guillemine Benoist) claims a place in history by being included in this virtual site. In the third panel, Danna White, (an “undiscovered” artist who happens to be Mark Grady’s wife) takes her place in Grady’s aesthetic pantheon.

The backdrop for the women is a relief of St. Mark — a 1544 sculpture by Jean Goujon, owned by the Louvre — published in Andres Chastel’s French Art, The Renaissance (Paris, 1995). Into this thrice-repeated slab of stone Grady has cybernetically chiseled a sequence of words that constitutes his own French epigram, the equivalent to the “Et in Arcadia Ego” that Nicholas Poussin “carved” into a rock in his 17th Century enigmatic paeon to lost culture.

# COMMUNIST LA FEMME BLANCHE SE DISTINGUE?

WHAT IS IT ABOUT WHITE WOMEN is bound to make viewers (especially female ones) think about Feminism and the Patriarchy.

LE FLÂNEUR #1 - #3 is another triptych that conflates and distorts “real time” while it raises the profile of certain artists, in this case Todd Davis, Randall Anderson and Mark Grady.

The visuals that form the basis of the triad of symbolic portraits are taken directly from three different reproductions of examples of early 20th Century design found in the pages of Casteel’s L’Art Moderne Primitif. These Modern environments are used to emblemize the Post Modern sensibilities of these Vancouver artists.

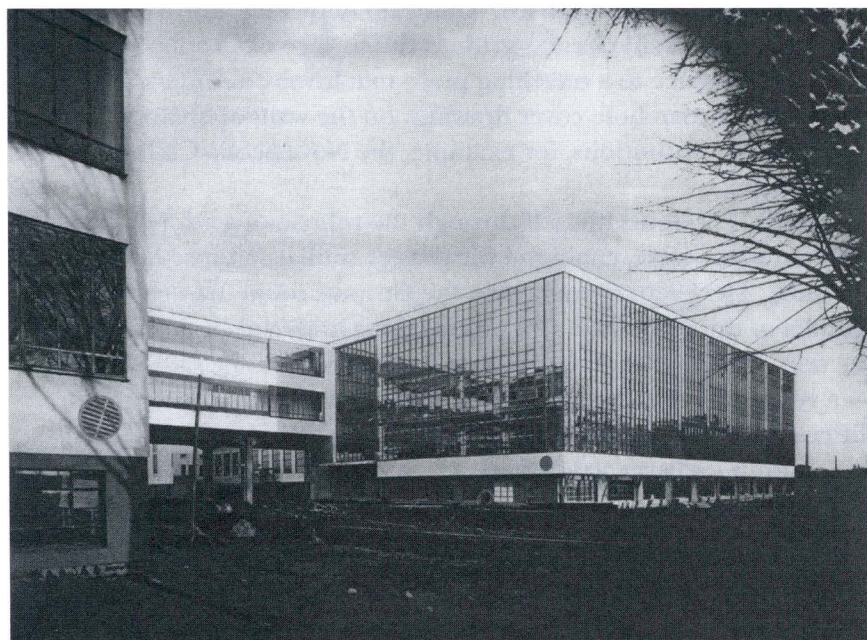
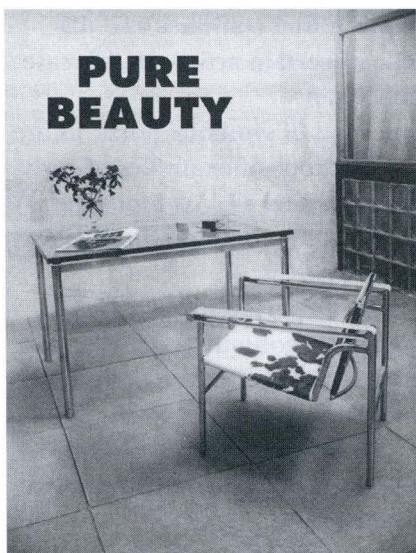
In this series Todd Davis is portrayed as a Spartan interior by Le Corbusier — that, like his current living space, contains a glass-topped table, smoking paraphernalia, reading materials and a vase of flowers. The words “PURE BEAUTY” that hover in this pristine environment are the content (and title) of a large scale concrete poem that Davis placed on the glass of a window in Vancouver’s Cathedral Place during the 1992 STANDARD STOPPAGES Exhibition.

If words are Davis’s customary medium, Anderson is perhaps best known for his performance art. Grady, in depicting him, has applied two slightly different circular grids to the surface of Gropius’ Bauhaus. This is a reference to a travelling piece that involved Anderson’s placement of man-hole cover drawings on the walls of analogous Canadian art institutions, for example, the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

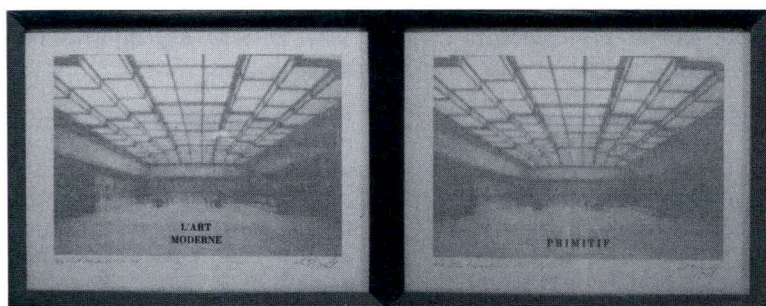
Grady represents himself through the vehicle of a Gropius interior that contains a desk, chair and file drawer similar to those he has in his study. The 1920s typewriter in the Gropius room is an early century parallel of the 1990s Mac and printer that Grady uses in his art production. On the wall of the room is a presentation of Grady’s aesthetic — a revised version of a previously produced analogue that, in a different context, was a limited edition print that seemed to be the sketch for a 1920s electrical station.



**PURE  
BEAUTY**







With this final image the reader is taken back to the start of the ellipse, **ADA** (Analogue/Digital/Analogue). But the process that makes the dialectic possible in **DIGITAL HISTORIES** is never in a state of closure.

## IMAGE LIST

**L'ART MODERNE PRIMITIF**, 1992  
(Diptych) each image 12" x 15" digital  
limited edition print

**SYNTHETIC LANDSCAPE #3: C.**  
Küntsmester, 1992 12" x 30" digital  
limited edition print

**SYNTHETIC LANDSCAPE #4: D.**  
Stückmeister, 1992 12" x 30" digital  
limited edition print

**PEARL HARBOUR WEATHER REPORT: EAST**, 1993 16" x 30" digital  
limited edition print

**GREAT SCHISM** detail of lower image

**GREAT SCHISM**, 1996 (Diptych) 60" x 60" digitally-based photographs

**ARCHIVE PHOTO** Bundesarchiv,  
Koblenz, Germany

**PROUD MONSTER: FIERO MONSTRUO** 4 process images

**PROUD MONSTER: FIERO MONSTRUO**, 1996 (Diptych) 40" x 60" digitally-based photographs

**PROUD MONSTER: FIERO MONSTRUO** detail of right image, detail of title inscription

**H.M.S. RODNEY** 48" x 28" digitally-based photograph 1997

**WHAT IS IT ABOUT WHITE WOMEN?** 1997 (Triptych) each 30" x 22" digitally-based photographs

**REVERIE #2: TEMPLE DE L'AMOUR** 1996 40" x 57" digitally-based photograph

**PROJECT FOR C MAGAZINE** 1989 detail by Braco Dimitrijevic



ORIGINAL HANDTINTED PHOTO-  
GRAVURE publisher and photogra-  
pher unknown

REVERIE #2: TEMPLE DE L'AMOUR  
detail

H.M.S. RODNEY 48" x 28" digitally-  
based photograph 1997

LE FLÂNEUR #1: T.A. DAVIS 1997,  
38" x 30" digitally-based photograph

LE FLÂNEUR #3: M.T. GRADY 1997,  
38" x 30" digitally-based photograph

LE FLÂNEUR #2: R. W. ANDERSON  
1997, 38" x 30" digitally-based photo-  
graph

L'ART MODERNE PRIMITIF, 1992  
(Diptych) each image 12" x 15" digital  
limited edition print

WHERE'S PABLO?, 1997 (Diptych)  
each 30" x 24" digitally-based photo-  
graphs

**NOTE:** Where *is* Pablo?

Good question. This diptych was not illustrated in the article for reasons of space and legibility. Like other pieces cited in the list above, it will be shown in Mark Grady's solo exhibition called **ADA: DIGITAL HISTORIES** at:

The Monte Clark Gallery  
1727 West Third Avenue  
Vancouver, B.C.  
V6J 1K7

May 1-31, 1997

Although it helps to know that *le flâneur* translates roughly into *loafer*, with the implication that the person loafing about is a cultivated haunter of sidewalk cafés, the contemporary Canadian art source (and context) for the title of Les Flâneurs 1-3 may be discovered in Vancouver Anthologies, edited by Stan Douglas (Vancouver, 1991), a book of essays that discusses art in Vancouver.

This illustrated document, which you, careful reader, have pursued to the finish is not the work itself, and its words can only form an inadequate summary of all the historical, art historical, technical, temporal and topical references of the individual works.

If you really do know who or what **ADA** is, drop a cryptographic observation into *TCR's* new website at <http://www.capcollege.bc.ca>.

A.R.



## MARK GRADY

### ONE PERSON SHOWS

May 1997	ADA, (Digital Histories), Monte Clark Gallery, Vancouver, BC
Aug. 1994	The New Pointilism, Project Gallery, Vancouver, BC
July 1990	The Small Museum, Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver, BC
Jan. 1989	Two Portraits, Gallery T.O.O., Vancouver, BC
Nov. 1986	One Gold Piece, Artspeak Gallery, Vancouver, BC
Apr. 1985	The Pantheon Series, Third Eye Centre, Glasgow, G.B.
Nov. 1984	The Pantheon Series, studio show, Vancouver, BC
Nov. 1983	Preliminary Drawings, OR Gallery, Vancouver, BC

### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

Sep. 1996	Temps Perdu, Monte Clark Gallery, Vancouver, BC
Feb. 1996	Sketchbook Project, Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver, BC
Mar. 1995	Fascism and the Spectacular State, various venues, Vancouver, BC
Oct. 1993	Artropolis, Vancouver, BC
Feb. 1993	Seattle Art Fair, Seattle, Wash.
Dec. 1992	L.A. Art Fair, Los Angeles, Calif.
Jun. 1992	Inaugural Exhibition, Prior Editions, Vancouver, BC
Feb. 1992	Standard Stoppages, Cathedral Place, Vancouver, BC
Feb. 1991	5 Year Anniversary Show, Artspeak Gallery, Vancouver, BC
Jan. 1991	Art in BC, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, BC
May 1989	Portfolio T.O.O., Gallery T.O.O., Vancouver, BC
Jun. 1988	Inaugural Show, Gallery T.O.O., Vancouver, BC
Jan. 1988	Dialogue, OR Gallery, Vancouver, BC
Oct. 1987	Lost, Unbuilt Vancouver, Urbanarium, Vancouver, BC
May 1986	A View Through Windows, various locations, Vancouver, BC
Jan. 1986	Art About Issues, Surrey Art Gallery, Surrey, BC
Nov. 1983	North of the Border, Gallery 911, Seattle, Wash.
Oct. 1983	The October Show, 1078 Hamilton St., Vancouver, BC
Feb. 1983	Drawn From, Main Exit, Vancouver, BC