



Gary Lee-Nova & Alan Miller /  
OUT TO METRIC

*Out to Metric was first exhibited in a major exhibition of B.C. sculpture held at the Burnaby Art Gallery in Spring, 1975. It is a two-sided room with a floor, composed entirely of Acme rulers. An enigmatic, incomplete chair waits within.*

*Photograph: Gerry Nairn*

Now, a little on the history of measures. The metric system that is being installed in Canada and Britain at this moment was introduced in France in the late eighteenth century and was subsequently adopted by the Soviet Union in 1918, and later by most of Europe and Japan. When Canada and Britain adopt the Metric system, 90 per cent of the world's measures will be standardized. You may wonder what our new standard measure relates to; it appears to relate to nothing. The standard Meter, believe it or not, is defined as 1,650,763.73 wavelengths of Krypton 86 under standardized conditions. Before the Metric system, the French used the *Pied de Roi* (originally the *undecimal* version of the *Roman Foot*). The Roman Foot? It was a trimmed version of the Greek Foot before it. The Paris Meter became one ten-millionth part of 30,784,440 Pieds de Roi (taken after the survey of the 1790's gave this as the length of a meridian from the equator to the pole which we now know to be some 2000 Paris Meters longer).

Let's face facts. It is not conceivable that everything will someday be an exact number of *any* kind of units. In the long run, standard measures are important as standards but not as measures. The size, provided it is standard, is immaterial. In the woodworking shop where I work (as in many others) the practice has been to mark each end of a stick to take the *measure* of an object.

The sculpture, however, had the last word. It came to light as we prepared an inventory for shipping *Out to Metric* that there are — with the ceiling, the floor, the large wall, the door wall (in three sections), the door, door frame and chair — exactly *ten pieces*.

— ALLAN MILLER

Note:

For further information about measurement, see Peter Thompkins, *Secrets of the Great Pyramids* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 287-382.

## IMAGES

Overview and details of *Out to Metric*. *Out to Metric* is a mixed media work, approximately 8'6" x 7'6" x 6'6". It is composed of Acme Rulers, metal fittings and window shade. The lettering on the office door is in gold leaf.

*Photography: Tod Greenaway*















