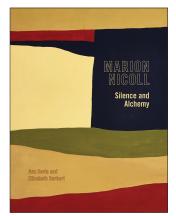


# **University of Calgary Press**

www.uofcpress.com



# MARION NICOLL: SILENCE AND ALCHEMY by Ann Davis and Elizabeth Herbert

ISBN 978-1-55238-757-3

THIS BOOK IS AN OPEN ACCESS E-BOOK. It is an electronic version of a book that can be purchased in physical form through any bookseller or on-line retailer, or from our distributors. Please support this open access publication by requesting that your university purchase a print copy of this book, or by purchasing a copy yourself. If you have any questions, please contact us at ucpress@ucalgary.ca

**Cover Art:** The artwork on the cover of this book is not open access and falls under traditional copyright provisions; it cannot be reproduced in any way without written permission of the artists and their agents. The cover can be displayed as a complete cover image for the purposes of publicizing this work, but the artwork cannot be extracted from the context of the cover of this specific work without breaching the artist's copyright.

**COPYRIGHT NOTICE:** This open-access work is published under a Creative Commons licence. This means that you are free to copy, distribute, display or perform the work as long as you clearly attribute the work to its authors and publisher, that you do not use this work for any commercial gain in any form, and that you in no way alter, transform, or build on the work outside of its use in normal academic scholarship without our express permission. If you want to reuse or distribute the work, you must inform its new audience of the licence terms of this work. For more information, see details of the Creative Commons licence at: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/

## UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE YOU MAY:

- read and store this document free of charge;
- distribute it for personal use free of charge;
- print sections of the work for personal use;
- read or perform parts of the work in a context where no financial transactions take place.

## UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE YOU MAY NOT:

- gain financially from the work in any way;
- sell the work or seek monies in relation to the distribution of the work:
- use the work in any commercial activity of any kind;
- profit a third party indirectly via use or distribution of the work;
- distribute in or through a commercial body (with the exception of academic usage within educational institutions such as schools and universities);
- reproduce, distribute, or store the cover image outside of its function as a cover of this work:
- alter or build on the work outside of normal academic scholarship.



Acknowledgement: We acknowledge the wording around open access used by Australian publisher, re.press, and thank them for giving us permission to adapt their wording to our policy http://www.re-press.org

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

p. vi Marion Nicoll
Sicilia #5 The House of Padrone, 1959
Oil on canvas
90.0 × 105.5 cm
Collection of Nickle Galleries

p. 10 Marion Nicoll

Untitled (Automatic), 1948

Watercolour on paper
29.2 × 22.9 cm

Art Gallery of Alberta Collection,
purchased with funds donated by Gulf
Oil Canada Ltd.

p. 11 Jock Macdonald
Crimson and Black, 1946
Watercolour with pen and black ink on
wove paper
17.8 × 25.5 cm
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
Photo © NGC

p. 12 Marion Nicoll
Untitled (Automatic Drawing), 1948
Watercolour on paper
30.0 × 22.5 cm
Art Gallery of Alberta Collection,
purchased with funds donated by
Gulf Oil Canada Ltd., 1981

p. 13 Marion Nicoll
Chinook, 1945
Tempera on board
37.00 × 50.00 cm
Collection of Nickle Galleries

p. 14 Marion Nicoll
Graveyard and Hoodoos, 1955
Oil on canvas board
50.7 × 40.5 cm
Collection of Alberta Foundation
for the Arts

p. 18 Marion Nicoll

East From the Mountains, 1964
Clay print, 3/20
27.9 × 33.0 cm
Private Collection, Calgary

p. 19 Marion Nicoll
End of Summer, 1963
Oil on linen
137.2 × 114.3 cm
Collection of Roxanne McCaig, Calgary

p. 20 Marion Nicoll

Prairie Railway Siding, 1967

Acrylic on canvas

92.0 × 107.0 cm

Collection of Alberta Foundation
for the Arts

p. 24 Marion Nicoll
Little Indian Girl II, 1977
Cardboard print on paper, 11/60
55.6 × 25.9 cm
Art Gallery of Alberta Collection,
purchased with funds from the
Soper Endowment

- p. 25 Marion Nicoll

  Prairie Farm, 1970

  Collograph, ink on paper.

  28 × 48.3 cm

  Collection of Art Gallery of Alberta
- p. 28 Marion Nicoll
  One Minor Deity, 1962
  Oil on canvas
  106.7 × 81.3 cm
  Private Collection, Calgary
- p. 29 Marion Nicoll
  Ritual II, 1963
  Oil on canvas
  128 × 152.8 cm
  Collection of Alberta Foundation
  for the Arts
- p. 31 Marion Nicoll
  Runes "B", 1972
  Cardboard print on paper, 4/18
  60.0 × 55 cm
  Art Gallery of Alberta Collection,
  donated by the Alberta
  Art Foundation
- p. 36 Marion Nicoll

  Journey to the Mountains: Approach,
  The Mountains, Return, 1968
  Oil on canvas
  Approach 274.3 × 114.3 cm;
  The Mountains 274.3 × 152.4 cm;
  Return 274.3 × 129.5 cm
  Collection of Nickle Galleries
- p. 42 Marion Nicoll

  The Model, 1958

  Watercolour on paper
  26.5 × 20 cm

  Collection of Alberta Foundation
  for the Arts

- p. 43 Marion Nicoll
  Sketchbook, 1968
  Pencil, ink, felt pen on paper
  26.9 × 21 cm
  Collection of Alberta Foundation
  for the Arts, 1978.048.001.A-O,
  Capital Arts M5-5
- p. 49
  A. C. Leighton
  The Lake, Molar Mountain, ca. 1948
  Pencil and watercolour on paper
  29.2 × 29.5 cm
  Art Gallery of Alberta Collection,
  purchased with funds donated by
  Dr. Brian Hitchon, 81.20
- p. 50 A. C. Leighton

  Valley of the Giants, Banff, ca. 1950
  Oil on canvas
  45.72 × 55.88 cm
  Leighton Art Centre, Calgary, Alberta
  Leighton Foundation Collection
- p. 56 Marion Nicoll

  Alberta VI, Prairie, 1960
  Oil on canvas
  60.9 × 152.4 cm
  Private Collection, Calgary
- p. 57 Marion Nicoll

  Bowness Road, 2 am, 1963
  Oil on canvas
  136.0 × 186.0 cm
  Collection of Glenbow Museum
- p. 58 Marion Nicoll
  Foothills No. 1, 1965
  Oil and lucite 44 on canvas
  136.0 × 186.0 cm
  Collection of Glenbow Museum,
  gift of Don and Shirley Grace, 1995
- p. 59 Marion Nicoll

  Calgary III 4 a.m., 1966

  Oil on canvas

  113.5 × 136.2 cm

  Collection of Nickle Galleries

p. 68 Harry Palmer p. 87 Marion Nicoll Jim and Marion Nicoll, 1983 Zoomorphic Figure, 1957 Silver print Rayon satin batik 22.0 × 31.5 cm 123.5 × 51.5 cm Collection of Nickle Galleries Collection of Alberta Foundation for the Arts 1981.155.271, Capital Arts 1-4 Marion Nicoll p. 72 Batik, ca. 1967 Textile p. 90 Marion Nicoll 193.0 × 134.6 cm Batik, ca. 1950 Leighton Art Centre, Calgary, Alberta Aniline dye on silk  $100 \times 92.5 cm$ Leighton Foundation Collection National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa p. 75 Marion Nicoll Gift of Joyce and Fred Zemans, Untitled (Automatic), 1960 Toronto, 2008 Watercolour on paper Photo © NGC  $35.0 \times 22.7 \text{ cm}$ Jock Macdonald Art Gallery of Alberta Collection, p. 91 purchased in 1982 with funds from Batik, 1951 the Miss Bowman Endowment Aniline dye on cotton 95.5 × 96.5 cm p. 76 Marion Nicoll National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa Untitled (wall hanging), 1956 Gift of Joyce and Fred Zemans, Fabric dye on silk Toronto, 2008 50.8 × 116.8 cm Photo © NGC Collection of Glenbow Museum p. 94 Marion Nicoll Indian Girl I, 1976 p. 78 Installation view of the 1971 exhibition Jim and Marion Nicoll: Paintings at Cardboard print on paper, 26/50 Glenbow Museum. At right is Batik, 19.7 × 45.7 cm ca. 1967, now in the Leighton Collection of Masters Gallery Ltd., Foundation Collection. Calgary Glenbow Archives, D769-13. p. 99 Marion Nicoll Marion Nicoll, ca. 1971, with Batik, ca. 1967. Prophet, 1960 Glenbow Archives, D769-9. Oil on canvas 106.7 × 82.6 cm Marion Nicoll Collection of Glenbow Museum p. 83 Fishes, 1955 Donated by Shirley and Peter Savage Silk-rayon velvet batik 157 × 94 cm p. 101 Marion Nicoll Collection of Alberta Foundation Assorted bracelets and pair of for the Arts earrings, n.d. 1981.155.270, Capital Arts 2-3-T8 Sterling silver and amethyst cabochons

Private Collection

### INDEX

Α abstract painting Kandinsky on, 5-6 Carr, Emily, 30 M. Schapiro on, 1-3 in New York, 44-45 88-89, 92-93 W. Barnet on, 3-4, 44, 52. See also Nicoll, Clark, Garth, 93 Marion: STYLE/MEDIA

Addison, Joseph, 51–52, 62–63 Adeney, Bernard, 89, 92 Alberta College of Art and Design (ACAD), 79, 80.

See also Provincial Institute of Technology and Art

Alberta Craft, 96 Alberta Craft '62, 97, 107n82 Allen Walton Textiles, 93 Alloway, Lawrence, 38

bold page numbers indicate illustrations

automatic drawing, 7-9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 17, 33n19, 37–38, 40, 41, 74, **75,** 95

#### В

Baker, Suzanne Devonshire, 84 Banff School of Fine Arts, viii, 52, 63 Barnet, Will on abstract painting, 3-4, 44, 52 importance of nature to, 15, 17 influence on MN, 1, 6, 15, 23, 30, 32, 39, 40, 44, 52-53, 79, 104n17 and Kandinsky, 5 and native American art, 26, 27 Bates, Maxwell, 8, 16, 81 Beaudoin, Kenneth, 26-27 Belton, Robert, 82 Billington, Dora, 92

Borduas, Paul-Emile, 8 Breton, André, 7, 8 Brown, Annora, 86, 88 Burke, Edmund, 48

#### C

Campbell, Joseph, 39, 63-64 Central School of Arts and Crafts (London), 73, craft narrative, 80, 81-82, 93, 95, 98

#### D

Dow, Arthur Wesley, 27

#### Ε

Emma Lake Artists' Workshop, 1, 6, 23, 40, 41, 66n9

#### F

Fenton, Terry, 48, 50 Flood, Sandra, 89, 92

#### G

Grant, Duncan, 89, 92-93 Greenberg, Clement, xi, 44, 70, 79, 100

#### Н

Harper, J. Russell, 81 Harrod, Tanya, 82 Hofmann, Hans, 7 Hogg, Carol, 82, 84

I.	Pacific Ocean Experience, 16
Indian Space Painting, 26–27	and spiritualism, 21 and transcendentalism, 16–17 Marc, Franz, 22
J	Mastin, Catharine, 74, 85, 97–98 materialism, 22, 27
James, William, 22	Mednikoff, Reuben, 8
Janvier, Alex, 81	Metcalfe, Bruce, 97
Jim and Marion Nicoll: Paintings (exhibit), 78, 85	Mondrian, Piet, 3
Jung, Carl, 30, 37, 39, 41, 47	Moppet, Ron, 45, 46
	Motherwell, Robert, 3, 38–39
K	mysticism, 22. See also spiritualism
Kandinsky, Wassily, 5–6, 22 Kant, Immanuel, 48	N
Karasz, Mariska, 98	Nash, Paul, 93
Kerr, Illingworth, 77, 80	Native American art, 26–27
Kuspit, Donald, 5–6	nature
1	and A. C. Leighton, 39
	and Jock Macdonald, 15–16, 17
L	and MN, 17-21, 39-40, 51, 53, 73
Laviolette, Mary-Beth, 82	Newman, Barnett, 27, 30, 39, 84, 104n17
Leach, Bernard, 92	Nicoll, Jim, 44, 53, <b>68,</b> 73, 74, 77, 104n11, 104n17
Leighton, A. C.	Nicoll, Marion
as influence on MN, 1, 39, 40, 41, 46, 47–48, 52,	INFLUENCES
71, 73, 77	A. C. Leighton, 1, 39, 40, 41, 46, 47-48,
The Lake, Molar Mountain, 49, 51	52, 71, 73, 77
and sublime, 39, 48–50, 51–52	B. Adeney, 89, 92
Valley of the Giants, Banff, 50, 51–52	B. Newman, 84, 104n17
Leighton, Barbara, 1, 108n91	D. Grant, 89, 92–93
Lord, Barry, 81	Jock Macdonald, 6, 8–9, 15, 30, 32, 37–38, 74, 84, 102
	New York, 44-45, 47, 77, 104n17
М	W. Barnet, 1, 4, 6, 15, 23, 30, 32, 39, 40,
Macdonald, Barbara, 85	44, 52–53, 79, 104n17
Macdonald, J. E. H., 71	W. Kandinsky, 5, 6
Macdonald, J. W. G. 'Jock'	LIFE AND CAREER
Crimson and Black, 11	at Central School of Arts and Crafts
on G. Pailthorpe, 7, 8	(London), 73, 88–89, 92–93
on importance of nature, 15–16, 17	as craft and design instructor at Provincial
as influence on MN, 6, 8–9, 15, 30, 32, 37–38,	Institute of Technology and Art, 9,
74, 84, 102	40, 70, 73, 74, 79–80, 81, 93, 95–96,
Kelowna Landscape, 15	106n51, 107n74

critical reviews, viii, 70, 77, 79, 81, 82, 84,	SUBJECTS		
96, 98, 100	bold forms, 47, 51, 54		
diversity of jobs held, 73-74	mountains, 17, <b>18</b> , <b>36</b> , 39, 51, 60, 62–65		
early talent of, 86	Native Indian art, 30–32		
at Emma Lake Artists' Workshop, 1, 6, 23,	nature, 17–21, 39–40, 51, 53, 73		
40, 41, 66n9	nature of vision, 61–62, 63		
exhibitions, viii–ix, 71, 77–79, 82, 85, 97,	spiritualism, 21–22, 23–26, 30		
98, 107n82	WORKS		
fights sexism, 71, 77, 80, 81, 89	Alberta VI, Prairie, 17, 55, <b>56,</b> 64		
formal crafts training, 86, 88-89, 92-93	Batik (1950), <b>90</b>		
honours, 80	Batik (1951), <b>91</b>		
illness, 65, 71, 79	Batik (1967), <b>72, 78,</b> 85		
legacy, vii-viii, 102, 108n91	Batik (booklet), 97, 100		
marriage, 73, 74, 104n11	Bowness Road, 2 am, 57, 60–61		
at Ontario College of Art, 47, 71, 86, 88	Bridge, 23		
as organizer and judge of crafts, 96–97	Bright Day, 15, 51		
as painting teacher, 104n5	Calgary III – 4 a.m., 26, <b>59,</b> 60, 62		
photos, 68, 78	Chinook, <b>13</b> , 15		
physical presence of, 88	Chinook IV, 21		
as student at Provincial Institute of	East from the Mountains, 17, 18		
Technology and Art, 46, 47–48, 71,	End of Summer, 17, 19		
73	February, 26		
teaches art as occupational therapy, 73-74	First Snow, 97		
as woman pioneer, viii, 73, 77, 79-80, 81	Fishes, 83		
OPINIONS OF	Foothills No. 1, 21, 58, 60		
art instruction, 80–81	Graveyard and Hoodoos, 14, 15		
art school, 89	Indian Girl I, <b>94</b>		
Calgary, 60	Journey to the Mountains, 36, 39, 62–64, 65		
colour, 46	La Paz, Red Rock, Black Rock, 21		
a craftsman, 96	Little Indian Girl, 23, 24		
STYLE/MEDIA	Mermaid, 108n88		
abstract painting, vi, 1, 37–38, 40–41,	The Model, 42		
45–56, 52, 74, 77, 97, <b>99</b>	One Minor Deity, <b>28</b> , 30, 35n69		
automatic drawing, 8-9, 10, 12, 15, 17,	Pansies, 15		
33n19, 37–38, 40, 74, <b>75,</b> 95	Prairie Farm, <b>25</b> , 26		
clay prints, 17, 18	Prairie Railway Siding, <b>20,</b> 21		
crafts, <b>72, 76,</b> 81, 82–86, <b>87,</b> 96, 98, 100,	Prairie Sun, 17		
<b>101</b> –102	"Procession of Birds," 100, 108n86		
jewellery, <b>101</b> , 107n74	Prophet, 99		
sculpture, 97	Ritual II, <b>29,</b> 30, 32		
watercolors, <b>13–14,</b> 15	Runes "B," 31, 32		
	Sicilia #5 the House of Padrone, vi, 23		

INDEX 115

Sicilia II, The House of the Padrone, 53-54 S Sketchbook, 43 Schapiro, Meyer, 1-3, 4, 5, 6 Untitled (1948), 12, 15 Scully, Sean, 54-55 Untitled (1960), 9, 75 Untitled (wall hanging), 76 semeiologists, 26-27 silence and alchemy, 5-6, 23, 32  ${\it Untitled Drawing Automatic (1948), 9, \bf 10}$ Simmins, Geoffrey, 55 "Young Rooster," 98 Snow, John, 21 Zoomorphic Figure, 87 Spickett, Ron (Gyo-Zo), 21-22, 55 Nochlin, Linda, 84 spiritualism, 21-22, 23-26, 30 Stella, Frank, 54 0 sublime and A. C. Leighton, 39, 48-50, 51-52 Ohe, Katie, 22, 106n51 and mountains, 62-63, 64-65 "The Old Cabin Crafts," 96 R. Rosenblum on, 53 Omega Group, 92-93 Surrealism, 7-8, 30, 38 Ontario College of Art (OCA), 47, 71, 86, 88 System and Dialectics of Art (Graham), 27 T Pailthorpe, Grace, 6-8, 9, 30, 32 Tippett, Maria, 84 Panko, William, 81 Townshend, Nancy, 82 Picasso, Pablo, 61-62 transcendentalism, 16-17 primitive art, 26-27, 30 Primitive Art (Boas), 27 Provincial Institute of Technology and Art, 46, U 79-80. See also Nicoll, Marion: LIFE Underhill, Evelyn, 22 AND CAREER R regionalism, xi Van Herk, Aritha, vii Varnedoe, Kirk, 30, 44 Reid, Dennis, 81 Robinson, Clifford, 100 Rosenblum, Robert, 53 W Rothko, Mark, 45, 54-55

Whitman, Walt, 16-17

"The essays in this book represent a major step forward in Nicoll scholarship. Davis and Herbert do a real service to our understanding of Nicoll's place in the larger context of abstract art during its development period. By extension, we begin to understand that there was a significant contribution from Alberta. This will definitely become a source, if not the source, for Nicoll in our century. The essays each cover a different aspect of Nicoll's work and development to provide a full picture of this important artist." — Tony Luppino, Executive Director, Leighton Art Centre

Marion Nicoll (1909–1985) is a widely acknowledged and important founder of Alberta art and certainly one of a dedicated few that brought abstraction into practice in the province. Her life and career is a story of determination, of dedication to her vision regardless of professional or personal challenges. Nicoll became the first woman instructor hired at the Provincial Institute of Technology and Art (now the Alberta College of Art and Design) – and, although limited to teaching craft and design, she became a significant mentor for generations of artists.



ANN DAVIS is a prominent curator, teacher, and art critic.

ELIZABETH HERBERT is an independent curator and author.

JENNIFER SALAHUB is an art and craft historian teaching at the Alberta College of Art and Design in Calgary. CHRISTINE SOWIAK is the curator of art at The Nickle Galleries at the University of Calgary.



www.uofcpress.com