A catalogue of the exhibition
Icao Sanami/Morrell: Real Life and Landscapes
held at Kamloops Art Gallery,
Curated by Jen Budney.

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Foreword
Beverley Clayton
Acting Director

Isao Sanami/Morrill paints landscapes of the Thompson–Nicola and Okanagan regions with refreshing candour, illustrating the unique geography along with aspects of our modern culture, such as power lines, housing developments, highway ramps, and household objects of convenience. Consisting of artworks produced between 2000 and 2006, Real Life and Landscapes showcases Sanami/Morrill's unique approach to painting and pastel. The influence of both Japanese and Western art techniques can be seen in her subtle application of pigment, manner of composition, and colour sensibility. Sanami/Morrill recently moved to Nova Scotia after spending most of the last twenty years in the Southern Interior of British Columbia. This exhibition represents her gift to this region.

The Kamloops Art Gallery is pleased to present this solo exhibition of works by Isao Sanami/Morrill along with this beautiful publication, which includes insightful essays by Jen Budney, former Kamloops Art Gallery curator and new Associate Curator at the Mendel Art Gallery in Saskatoon, and Ross Nelson, Academic Director for the Faculty of Arts and Professor in the Department of Geography at Thompson Rivers University.

On behalf of the Kamloops Art Gallery, I thank all those who made this exhibition and publication possible, including Isao Sanami/Morrill, Jen Budney, Ross Nelson, photographer Victor Hamin, and publication designer Richard Winchell, along with KAG staff and board. The Gallery is grateful to the Province of British Columbia through BC150 Years, a Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts initiative, and to media sponsor B-100 for supporting this exhibition. The Gallery is also grateful to the City of Kamloops, British Columbia Arts Council, and Canada Council for the Arts for providing operational funding.
Landscapes of the Post-Cowboy West
Ross Nelson

On March 29, 2008, the darkened skylines of cities in earlier time zones dominated Kamloops’ evening news. The unusual scenes were the result of a global campaign by the World Wide Fund for Nature that asked households, corporations, and governments to reduce electricity consumption together for a period of one hour. Intrigued by the images on my television screen, I donned a coat and set out on foot to gauge local participation. My expectations were modest. Civic leaders had endorsed the campaign. However, in the small cities and rural periphery beyond the Vancouver-Victoria-Nanaimo conurbation of southwest British Columbia, particularly in regions like ours, with long histories of resource extraction, and where the collective percentage of commuters by foot, cycle, or public transportation can be tallied on the digits of one hand, environmental attitudes tend to the utilitarian. Along my route, I passed a number of darkened homes, some with flickering candles on sills or dinner room tables, cheerful signs of participation. Yet, from the prospect afforded by a hillside in one of the city’s newest neighbourhoods, the pockets of dark were no competition for the sea of light. In the distance, as bright as ever, the city sparkled with the artemis orange and the backlit red, white, and blues of our modern service economy. At hand, the diffuse glow of drop lens, cobra head street lamps—standard issue for over 40 years but now the bane of dark- sky advocates—illuminated icons of our energy-intensive age: a curvilinear network of snout houses, freshly rolled turf, thirsty cedar hedges, and fire-truck-wide thoroughfares.

Despite the brevity of the event and the enormity of the problem, Earth Hour was a success. The 60-minute campaign drew media-wide attention to the threat of global warming and to the ameliorative roles individuals and organizations can play. Polls indicated that almost one-half of Canadians participated in some way and that 94 per cent felt our governments should do more to combat global climate change. Organizers were understandably pleased, as no doubt were environmental groups and others who champion related causes. And the same, I suspect, was probably true for the artist Isaac Santer. His landscapes are not the Super Natural lane through which we normally see and see the province of British Columbia: Instead, her work documents the everyday, built environment—bumps and warts included—of the dry south-central interior of B.C. Her subjects are housing tracts, power lines and light poles, fences and NO TRESPASSING signs, scarred hillsides, and urban intrusions in our rural and mountainous environs. Like Earth Hour, Santer’s focus invites us to reconsider the state of our lived environment in a time of escalating demands and concern. The goal of my brief essay is to describe some of the key forces currently shaping our regional landscape, and thereby underscore the artist’s message.

Economic Shifts
The rhythm and character of urban settlement in southern British Columbia has been the product of irregular pulses of economic stimuli and accompanying waves of immigration. The nineteenth century brought successive waves of fur traders and forts, gold prospectors and instant towns of hotels, beer halls, and laundries, and near century’s end, hard rock miners, railroads, dry land farmers, and land speculators. The gridiron cadastral patterns and oversized streets of our urban cores are artefacts of this optimistic phase. In the twentieth century, three long decades of strong commodity prices, corporate maga- projects, and massive public investments in highways and hydroelectric power fuelled a so-called golden age of post-war economic expansion that extended and reworked the province’s urban fabric. It was an age of sprawl, of bypass strips and cinder block architecture, shopping malls, arterial strips, and cul-de-sacs of uniformly unadorned and highly affordable accommodation. It was also a time of amalgamation and organization. Many places created their first official community plans while preconceived instant towns sprang to life in the resource rich wilderness. In other cases, as on Kamloops’ north shore or the string of satellite suburbs that stretch the city’s eastern boundary, growth outran the ability of public officials to plan. The resultant urban scenes were more haphazard, less to its credit, typically more expensive to service. Kamloops 1974 was the city’s first overarching attempt to deal with these challenges.

Post-war expansion came to a rapid close in the early 1980s as soaring oil prices, sky-high interest rates, and cratering resource and housing markets took their toll. A second expansionary phase, more cautious and geographically uneven than its predecessor, arose shortly thereafter. Larger centres and communities favoured by the retained have benefited most. The population of Kelowna and Vernon jumped 78 per cent and 79 per

1. "Super Natural" is a long-standing advertising theme used by the provincial government. It sells the province as a pristine wilderness and recreational paradise of snow-clad mountain crags, breeching killer whales.
cent between 1986 and 2006, with Peachland (67 per cent), Osoyoos (63 per cent), Salmon Arm (45 per cent), Penticton (38 per cent), and Kamloops (32 per cent) following in order. In contrast, many smaller communities, especially those dependent on resource industries, have stagnated or shrunk, such as Midway (-1 per cent), Princeton (-6 per cent), Ashcroft (-11 per cent), Greenwood (-17 per cent), and Clinton (-22 per cent)—or, like Logan Lake, struggled to recoup populations lost when the post-war expansion went bust.

The duality of this experience is symptomatic of a broad shift in the region's economy. Jobs in the agriculture, forestry, mining, and fishing industries accounted for four per cent of the labour force in 2006, down from five per cent in 1951. The current share is slightly higher in the Thompson-Okanagan region (six per cent) but the trend is the same. A recent study of the character of regional economies estimated that only five per cent of the income generated in Kelowna and Penticton is now tied to forestry compared to 18 per cent and 28 per cent in Ashcroft and Princeton. In the region's largest cities, business and professional services, education, health care, and tourism have joined traditional retail and governmental operations to become the new backbone of the local economy.

Amenity Migrants

The shift from resource extraction economies to service economies is reflected in migration patterns. In the past, people settled in Interior BC in tandem with fluctuations in commodity prices and the fortunes of resource communities. In-migration peaked at the top of the economic cycle, and ebbed when jobs and the prices upon which they depend turned south. Statistical analyses indicate that the connection has weakened in recent decades and that new relationships are emerging between the provinces urban core and its less settled hinterlands. Current migration patterns in the south-central interior and on the outskirts of Vancouver are residential rather than employment phenomenon.

Thomas Power and Richard Barrett, economists who have examined similar transitions in the USA, argue that at a time when the spine of the Rocky Mountains have entered a "post-cowboy" phase in which place-based "amenities" in the form of unspoiled scenery, recreational opportunities, local culture, and a sense of community and safety are critical regional assets. Collectively known as the mountainous west, this region has consistently eclipsed national growth averages over the last 40 years despite the decline of its once dominant resource industries and wage rates below national norms. Power and Barrett contend that many migrants consciously trade these weaker economic prospects for more attractive natural and cultural features: "Clearly, people care about where they live, and they act economically in the pursuit of their preferences," including making "major sacrifices in pursuit of higher-quality living environments." If this analysis is correct, the mountainous west and presumably the interior of British Columbia are places where the financially mobile are choosing to live in order to recreate.

Major urban centres are the largest source of in-migrants to British Columbia's south-central interior, and presumably the majority are amenity-oriented newcomers. Vancouver and Victoria together supply half of the in-provincial migrants entering the Thompson-Okanagan, with Vancouver accounting for the bulk of the numbers. Despite, or perhaps because of, its status as an economic powerhouse and magnet for immigrants around the Pacific Rim, Greater Vancouver has annually exported since 1967, without exception, more people than when it has received from the rest of the province. The exodus peaked in the early 1990s when upwards of 17,500 people annually escaped the rain, congestion, and overpriced property values of the Lower Mainland. The numbers have fluctuated since this time, but still average a net outward flow of 5,500 per year. The balance would favour Interior destinations even more if migrants beyond the Rockies or those who maintain second homes and commute on a seasonal basis were included. Amenity migrants tend to relocate to smaller communities; that is, they travel down rather than across or up the urban hierarchy.

Beautiful Hyper-Suburban British Columbia

If the character of urban settlement is intimately connected to the driving economic forces of an age, what, one may ask, does the built environment of amenity migration look like? One might suspect that amenity migrants, given their big-city origins, would carry in their cultural baggage a taste for high-density, mixed use, and, above all, vibrant urban landscapes; or that economic development agencies, in the competition to win them, would encourage the same. The regional scientist Richard Florida argues that dynamic urban scenes are essential for attracting the creative class, the vanguard of the new economy. Amenity migrants are also thought to be "greener" folk.

American surveys indicate that they place a high value on the natural environment and are willing to pay dearly to non-consumingly enjoy it. Their influx has consequently changed the dynamics of public opinion and led to heated arguments about the relative merits of the old versus new economies and legal struggles over back-country access to the proper management of rural lands.

British Columbia has witnessed its own viticultural battles and, occasionally, physical confrontations over land-use plans. However, for the most part, amenity migrants have not prejudiced municipal agendas. There are, of course, exceptions. Kelowna renovated its waterfront and constructed a canoe and fisherman's district to support its aspiration claim to become "Canada's Silicon Vineyard," while Kamloops' Sun Rivers neighbourhood is one of the country's largest geothermal neighbourhoods. However, on balance, amenity migrants seem to be buffered by natural rather than urban amenities. The design elements advocated by the New Urbanism and Smart Growth—dedicated bicycle lanes, integrated walkable places, traffic calming roundabouts, low energy and carbon neutral structures, and tightly knit communities of smaller homes and front porches—have consequently found little purchase in the oft Clinton of the Thompson-Okanagan region.

The built environments of amenity migration are hyper-suburbs. Hyper-suburbs are automobile-dependent, residential landscapes that take sprawl and exclusivity to new extremes. They occur in a variety of forms. Common examples are the gated communities for the "over 55" crowd and the verdant neighbourhoods of trophy homes that hug the land and architecture, and push away from friendly street networks and landscaping. Smart Growth broadly refers to non-governmental organizations across North America that promote similar socially and environmentally responsible planning policies.
edges of modern golf courses. Dedicated space
golf cart storage, home theatres, fitness
rooms, show case kitchens, and grand halls in
some enclaves have inflated the average space
we consume. The average Canadian house
contained 800 square feet in 1945; today it is
2,000 square feet, and 2,500 square feet in B.C.,
the highest in the nation. The significance of
this increase is further magnified by a decline
in the average household size. In 1951 the
average Canadian household contained 3.9
persons; in 2006, but 2.5.

Further out are exurbs, resort
communities, and the gentrified range. Exurbs are large-lot, low density, fully serviced,
single use developments. They are typically
found beyond municipal borders in rural or
undeveloped areas, but also appear on the
edges of smaller towns that lie within the
commuter sheds of regional centres. Long
stripes of the Okanagan corridor fit this
description, as do the upscale real estate
ventures marketing on the shores of Nicola
Lake. Resort communities are hyper-suburbs clumped around ski hills, beaches, national
parks, or cultural attractions. Some have
morphed from seasonal tourist destinations
into year-round towns. Others are purpose
built, catering to full-time residents from
the start. Whistler, Banff, and Canmore are
prime Canadian examples, while Silver Peak,
Silver Star, and Big White ski resorts, and the
newly minted Tobiano golf community outside Kamloops, and soon perhaps Merritt's Active
Mountain complex are regional illustrations.
The gentrified ranges, so-named by the
geographer William Travis, are working farms
that have been carved into ranchettes (purely
residential) or converted into hobby ranches.

Both are typically occupied by affluent
urbanites who continue to work elsewhere.
The gentrified range is less common in south-
central British Columbia, as narrow valleys
and the Agricultural Land Reserve limit
possibilities. The situation in the United States
is a different story. Studies there suggest that
around one-half of western farms now fit this
category.

Hyper-suburbanization has exploded
the boundaries of our functional urban areas,
creating immense urban bubbles around the
traditional cores of our cities. According to
Census Canada, which uses population density
and commuting patterns to define the area
that functions as an urban place, the Kelowna
census agglomeration stretches from Sun
Peaks to Logan Lake, and from the outlet of the
Little Shuswap Lake to the outlet of Kalamalka
Lake. In total the region encloses some 5,000
square kilometres. By this measure, Kalamalka
is the sixth largest city in Canada and almost
twice the size of metropolitan Vancouver.
Kelowna also makes the top twenty list at
just under 3,000 square kilometres. However,
Kelowna's urban boundaries shut both of
Vernon and Penticton. Together, the three urban
termites consume over 6,500 square kilometres.
In the not too distant future, one will probably
be able to refer to the Okanagan conurbation, a
continuously settled landscape of urban cores,
suburban fringes and hyper-suburban flows
reaching northward from the American border to
Salmon Arm and the shores of Shuswap Lake—or, given the disappearance of a few
rural buffers, and in the spirit of megalopolis
acronyms, we may refer to the supra-urban
region of Kamloops too.

The Necessity of Post-Cowboy Art
In 2006, 87 per cent of British Columbians
lived in one of the province's 26 largest urban
centres. In the Thompson and Okanagan
valleys, the five largest communities—
Kelowna, Kamloops, Vernon, Penticton, and
Salmon Arm—accounted for 84 per cent of
the region's population. We are definitely an
urban society. We are not, however, a highly
urban culture. Our economy has swung from
extractive resource activities to urban-oriented
and supposedly clean information services.
But here, in the south-central interior of British
Columbia, we still seem to be trying to escape
or deny our urban possibilities. We live in a
country where land and goodness are relatively
inexpensive, and the dream of the single
family home with a view of a sweeping Fairway
(or quiet waterfront or sun dappled ridge)
remains strong. As hyper-suburban amenity
seekers and amenity ranchers, we willingly
trade urban congestion for the new suburbia
and believe we can pocket the differences.
We locate universities—the engine of the new
economy—on the outskirts of our cities.
We reject water meters in our dirtiest cities.
We consume twice the energy, water, and space
that Europeans do, yet marvel at the beauty
and efficiency of their cities.

We cannot expect Sanam/McGill's work to
single-handedly rein in the hyper-suburbs and
undermine the consumer ethic that drives
them. But it is a start. Like the Earth Hour
campaign, her landscapes challenge us to
recognize the imprint of our residential choices
and, in turn, to question the values upon which
they are based.

6 For a longer description, see
William Travis' book,
Geographies of the American
West: Land Use and the
Doming Patterns of Place
(Washington, DC: Island
Press, 2007)

7 White pixels have jumped dramatically
over the past 12 months,
gasoline is still inexpensive
in North America compared to
other developed parts of
the world. It will be
interesting to see if the
increased cost will affect
our commuting patterns
and ultimately the way we
plan and develop our cities.