

## FIRST UMBRELLA SHOW REVISITED

**Place:** Burnaby Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada  
**Time:** July 1967  
**Artist:** Joel Smith  
**Media:** Umbrellas attached to 48" x 48" white beaverboard mounts, each with a spotlight

Umbrellas protect by function. The exhibit in Canada in 1967 explored, rather, the umbrella as a metaphor, as an anthropomorphic symbol.

A ribbed umbrella skeleton becomes a metal dandelion in seed, fireworks, aluminum daddy long-legs or a sunburst spraying to all compass points. . . handles protruding from the beaverboard mount appear capable of lifting the earth.

Umbrellas found in the streets after a rain struggle to retain their shape after being bus-crushed. . . those found on the sidewalk still bear the umbrella print of a strong wind fluttering wildly in concrete canyons.

Bound and strapped umbrellas are black garbed, and tumescent, waiting for a blooming release. . . the top of an unfurled shape suggests breast-shaped roses filled with black milk.

An umbrella lying stiffly in a plastic case becomes for the mourners the death of a metaphor. Reality intrudes: umbrellas for sale.

### The Ontology of an Umbrella

Contraction. . . . .Expansion  
Pull. . . . .Push  
Nude . . . . .Clothed  
Bone . . . . .Skin  
Active . . . . .Passive  
Tragedy. . . . .Humour  
Dead . . . . .Alive  
Fly . . . . .Crawl  
Disclose. . . . .Enclose  
Explosion . . . . .Implosion  
Expose . . . . .Protect

—Joel Smith  
Macomb, IL



