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# EDITORIAL

Welcome to the 8th issue of NMP, theme: BEAST. In case you missed no. 7 WOUND, worry not, it is available to you for free as we do and will do with the first issue of each new year. You can also buy a hard copy or the PDF.

So, the theme of this issue is BEAST.

*Beast as in:*

*an animal other than human, the wild side of the animal.*

*Bête:*

*personne dominée par ses instincts.*

I had the pleasure and privilege of interviewing Jane Siberry a few months ago when she performed in Montréal. What I discovered after my time with Siberry is that we could all learn a thing or two from tapping into our inner beasts, which, while unruly at times, think and act for themselves.

As always, NMP's regular contributors Nicholas Little and Elisha Lim really deliver.

Au tournant du siècle, un groupe d'artistes a tant choqué le public avec leurs œuvres d'art qu'ils ont été appelés "wild beasts" ou "fauves", en français. Avec un style très émouvant, cru, et même choquant et violent, les artistes ont souvent opté pour des couleurs, des lignes et des formes exprimant l'émotion plutôt que de représenter le monde réel.

Voir : Valérie Sury.

Illustrators abound this issue, see also Daryl Vocat and Elisha Lim.

*Beast as in:*  
*animal nature as opposed to intellect or spirit.*

Dayna McLeod interviews Simone Jones about her epic installation work inspired by first-draft flying machines and early mechanical inventions.

McLeod also writes about the work of cover photographer Elinor Whidden, who recently had a show at Gallery 44 in Toronto with collaborative duo, 12 Point Buck. This essay was commissioned and first published by Gallery 44 in the publication *Natural Artifice*. This cover is so beautiful, it brings me right back to the open furrows...

Visual and sonic artist Reena Katz offers herself in digital portraits as the illegitimate offspring of Zionist tendencies in an integrated circuit of ethnicity, nationalism and violence through her most feared alter egos.

Yasmin Nair argues that neoliberalism is structured around an affective relationship between humans and animals. According to Nair, capitalism in its current form would have us believe that advances in increased communications between humans and animals and more compassionate methods of care and slaughter also advance the reach and survival of the "natural world".

Lindsay Shane explores the intimacy of isolation and the effects of the landscape in her fictional piece, "Core Samples".

Nelson Henricks interviews photographer Shari Hatt's dog, Garry-Lewis James Osterberg, formerly known as "Chico", about his soft sculpture work and obsession with Iggy Pop.

*Beast as in:*  
*A brutal, contemptible, cruel, coarse, filthy, or uncivilized creature.*

Savage nature or characteristics: the beast in wo/man [Latin *bestia*]

*Bêtes noires:*  
*Personne ou chose que l'on abhorre et redoute.*

In an interview, Nikki Forrest lets us in, into the depth of her artist-as-beast, to where inspiration meets terror. Be sure to check out the beautiful collection of drawings/photographs included with the interview – amazing!

Thanks again to everyone who helped assemble this issue and big, big, love to m-c MacPhee and Dayna McLeod, curators extraordinaire.

It's great to see so many of you comment on the various articles—keep on doing that—contributors are always appreciative of this. Dear readers, we are still and always committed to bringing forward an untamed and feral magazine bimonthly.

*Mél Hogan*

With the help of M-C MacPhee + Dayna McLeod

# THE PARTY OF NOT TALKING ABOUT IT

*Nicholas Little*

After running an art gallery and giving sex-ed classes in prairie high schools, six months working in a bathhouse in San Francisco and a summer spent in his Newfoundland hometown, in 2005, performance artist and HIV activist Mikiki set up shop in Ottawa. There he revamped Ottawa's languishing gay men's outreach program for the AIDS Committee of Ottawa while immersing himself in SAW Gallery's queer-positive community. Mikiki left Ottawa in 2006 and has since worked for AIDS service organizations in Montreal and Toronto.

Mikiki is both a mentor and one of my best friends. In early 2008, we sat down to talk about what it means to be gay in various Canadian cities, how he adjusted to his own sero-conversion and whether or not AIDS killed all the cool people.

This is an edited version of the second part of the interview. You can read all four parts in full at <http://bit.ly/9iOQyT>

**NL: I want to read you something. It's from Bruce LaBruce's introduction to the Taschen compendium of the first five years of BUTT Magazine[1]:**

**"You may notice that BUTT is very post-AIDS... even though, as we all know too well, AIDS never really went away. Whoever kick-started AIDS in the first place – the CIA, God, the Pharmaceutical Industry, Patient Zero, Liberace – you have to admit that they did a pretty good job of wrecking our party. Everything was going just swimmingly until the gay plague came along. It would be futile (fruitless?) to attempt to list the countless gay icons that have been lost to the disease since it appeared in the mid eighties, many of whom, in a kinder world, would have probably ended up gracing the pages of BUTT. But it's that very pre-AIDS history, gay interrupted, that**

**BUTT seeks to continue, an objective that includes taking some of the fear out of sex and trying to make it fun again.**

**Many of the interviewees in BUTT ruminate about the devastation that rampant promiscuity (let's face it) and AIDS (exacerbated by the shameless disinclination of politicians and the medical establishment alike to find a cure) has reeked on the gay community. It almost makes you want to cry when Peter Berlin... reveals that he talks to his friends who've died of AIDS as he walks down the streets of San Francisco. ...In the same issue, the artist and performer Jonny Wooster tells a harrowing story about years of unsafe sex at the Bijou in New York (been there) and subsequently coming down with a nasty case of stage two syphilis (done that), and then confesses to not having as much sex as he used to, "...because the sex I was having... Some of it was good. A lot of it was just messy. Most of it was all over the place, and I can't fucking remember ninety percent of it." I think a lot of us can relate. It's gay men like Wooster, ...whose stories I most gravitate to: old school fag survivors who've fucked their way through oblivion and are still looking for love. ... Personally I like to regard AIDS, and all the other assorted STD's we've come to know and hate, as mere speed bumps. ...I like to quote Fran Leibowitz's famous, chilling line: "AIDS killed all the cool people."**

Mikiki: (laughs) I kind of hate Bruce LaBruce, but it's not easy to dismiss him when he's actually saying something. He's got a really good analysis on that situation.

(pause)

I feel like everything wasn't going fine. I mean, I wasn't there. But even from reading *Dancer from the Dance* and seeing *Gay Sex* in the 70s, I feel like everything wasn't hunky dory and that there was this sense of... not "This party must come to an end!", but rather that there's something kind of lurking. Maybe this is my romanticized way of reviewing or re-examining that history. I certainly don't want this to become a parable or "this is the moral of the story" because it's important to encourage people to participate in their sexuality however they want to and to acknowledge that everyone is an "innocent victim" of HIV. But yeah, that Fran Leibowitz line is really intense.

It's weird too, now thinking of myself as becoming a statistic.

**NL: Because you're positive?**

Mikiki: Yeah. And it's kind of terrifying. Like when I realized I was making AIDS art, say four years ago, and realized that all my work was about HIV and AIDS, and then thinking, "Well I'm so glad I'm not positive because then I'd just be making AIDS art because I'm positive." (laughs) And now I'm in a position to examine why I was interested as a negative person in the first place.

**NL: Why were you?**

Mikiki: Well because it's an issue that has destroyed the sense of entitlement of our community. By entitlement I mean a sense of security within our own desire. Whenever my friend and I hear of someone who is pregnant, we look at each other and call it out: "Barebacking!" You know?

I think there's a way that queer sexuality is still pathologized and the naturalism of unprotected sex is something that was, and still is, so taboo to talk about. That became one of the key points that informed how I did outreach as a negative man, and still do. Talking about barebacking is not, first and foremost, even

about harm reduction. It's about people's natural inclination. And about the fact that straight people get to do something that we, culturally, aren't allowed to even name.

**NL: It's a great relief to hear you say that. At a recent conference, a doctor who is a player in the Ottawa HIV scene gave a very useful talk in terms of physiology – really broke transmission down better than I've ever heard it – about how, for example, if HIV is going to be shared through oral sex, exactly how it happens. I really understood it. And then he went through it with anal sex, from top to bottom and from bottom to top. I appreciated that. But it also left me feeling two things: angry, and also incredibly disempowered. On one hand, I really like rooting transmission in physiology, in our bodies, because it takes it away from discussions of fear and hearsay and ideology and morality. It shifts it to, “No, dude, it's about your body.”**

Mikiki: Yup.

**NL: So I like that. But what he didn't say after all that, after explaining how HIV could be transmitted from mouth to dick or dick to mouth, was what the Canadian AIDS Society[2] says: which is that there are 6 billion people on this planet, and I imagine that the number of blow jobs happening around the world in any given minute is in the thousands and thousands, and we've been searching for the last 25 years and we still have no recorded evidence of someone contracting HIV from receiving a blow job.**

**To me, it's unethical not to mention that point in a discussion on the physiology of oral transmission. I left there feeling afraid. And I know how it plays out because**

**this week I hooked up with a buddy who I see about once a month to have sex with other people together. I only see him in a sexual context and I don't know anything about this guy. And we hooked up with this other, older man and my buddy was just gonna watch and I was gonna suck this dude's dick. And one reason I left feeling like the encounter wasn't that great was because I just didn't like the older guy, it just didn't work for me. But the other reason was that, because it didn't work for me, and I'd sucked this dude's dick - and he just came on my face, he didn't even cum in my mouth – but I had internalized what this doctor at the conference had said and I walked away thinking, “Was that really worth it?”**

Mikiki: Arrggggh!

**NL: I know, and my main concern isn't even really for me. I've negotiated regular unprotected anal sex with one primary partner and he's my real concern. I'm not as concerned if I became HIV+ myself because I know I could deal with it. But I would have much more difficulty knowing that I passed it on to this other man that I care about.**

Mikiki: Yup.

**NL: And this is what freaks me out because, in my head, I know that even if that older dude was HIV+, the likelihood of transmission while sucking him is low. The Canadian AIDS Society uses the words “quite remote” and I think it's even less chance than that.**

Mikiki: Yeah.



**NL: But it left me feeling like, “You know what, Nicholas? It would have been better to stay home, watch porn and jerk off.”**

Mikiki: Isolate yourself.

**NL: Isolate yourself. And also: negate what is natural. Or shroud what is natural in this feeling of fear, guilt, shame and blame. Even though I’m an HIV outreach worker, even though I understand the physiology inside out, even though I get how social factors and socio-economics play into it. I still can’t totally resist that doctor’s message, which is: “Be afraid. Be very afraid.”**

Mikiki: And when you position transmission information that way, then the condom becomes the signifier of fear, guilt, shame and blame. Because that’s the barrier that you could have used to potentially reduce that risk. Because now you think of that activity as a risk. You don’t think of that activity as being a remote possibility. You don’t think of the reality of that situation in terms of epidemiology or in terms of transmission. You think about it as a risk. And that makes the condom become something that it shouldn’t be. We don’t talk about the fact that it’s about a 1% chance that someone like me - highly infectious, not on meds, in the first couple of months of being infected, a super high viral load – still has only a 1% chance per encounter of transmitting HIV via oral sex. We can’t talk about that in terms of prevention because that would then also lead to mass! barebacking! parties! Which, of course, are already fucking happening. But all of that stuff just keeps enforcing the guilt. It repositions all of the prevention work we do and all of the condoms and physical tools we give to people. It puts those objects in a different perspective. It makes those objects something that remind people of the fact that they are taking risks – and depending on the act and the details, it sometimes leaves them with the feeling that the risks are greater than they actually are.

**NL: I agree. And what I also think was lost in that moment – and what that doctor at the conference certainly didn’t affirm – was that everything I did in that encounter was good in terms of harm reduction.**

Mikiki: Yup.

**NL: I like to take it up the ass. I could have taken it up the ass with those dudes. Instead I opted to suck that older guy off. We should be applauded for choices like that. Instead I leave there and everything is soaked in a fear of HIV. Whereas I should have left feeling, “What a laugh! I’m 28, life is grand, I’m out doing stuff that is so ridiculously low risk that it makes no difference. I’m having a great time. That sexual encounter was kind of shitty but hey, chalk it all up to experience.” I should have walked away and said, “So what’s next?”**

**But instead: I was a man who was horny so I set up a scenario where I could have an outlet for that horniness. I went through with it and I walked away feeling regret. I wished I would have just not bothered. And I don’t think we’ve taken account of what that does to men’s psyches and our feeling of...well, you talked about entitlement. Queer people are not entitled to the same freedom of sexuality that straight people are.**

Mikiki: I think that having a queer identification and, specifically, having queer sex means that we’re not allowed to have the life of our sex become its own narrative in our lives. It’s always a negotiation with whether we’re becoming an epidemiological statistic.

**NL: And because it’s always masked by the bio-medical, my sexuality becomes about 50 year old white, female nurses, who can**

**be allies but who, on the whole, are not. They are testing me, they don't get my world, and they reduce my sexuality to, "Don't you think you should have used a condom?"**

Mikiki: Yup.

**NL: So I go in to the clinic because my partner called me up to say he has Chlamydia and we were having unprotected sex. And the nurse says to me, "If you're here today for Chlamydia, don't you think you should consider using condoms?"**

**My sexuality is none of your business. Just give me the fucking test. Gay men are rarely given credit for taking the right steps, for the fact that a majority of us report consistently using condoms for anal sex with strangers. For the amount of behaviour change we've achieved in just three decades.**

**I walked in there the day after my partner told me he had Chlamydia and I asked for a test. And they said, "Sorry we can't do it for you here. You've gotta go down to the Market cause we don't have the resources to test you here." Nobody said, "Way to fucking go, man. You showed up the day after to get tested." Instead the nurse said, "Don't you think you should consider using condoms?" and I looked at her and I said, "Don't you think a gay man has no choice but to consider using condoms? What gay man can escape condoms? Don't you think I've already considered using condoms?"**

Mikiki: Yes. And so I feel a really weird and interesting sense of liberation to not always have to negotiate condoms now. It's fucking crazy. We talked about moving to Ottawa from Calgary. The reason I

left Calgary was because I was sexually assaulted and, in large part, I think that's why I sero-converted later down the line. I was having a lot of unprotected sex and I had a real difficulty using condoms after I was sexually assaulted. I've talked about this with a few different women who are sexual assault survivors. It was because I was sexually assaulted that I was unable to start addressing the fact that, "I have these behaviours, I'm participating in these activities that I'm not ok with and I'm doing them out of some sort of compulsion – for affirmation, for whatever..." There was this point for like a year where I was unable to name it. I was unable to talk even to my closest friends about the fact that I was doing these things that I didn't know how to control. I didn't know how to negotiate and I didn't know how to navigate that. And I was terrified. And I also knew that I was a sex educator. And how the fuck am I supposed to tell someone that I just had sex without a condom? How the fuck am I supposed to say that I want to re-create this situation of abuse? Of rape. To be able to name that I was that fucked up, you know? I was really terrified.

When I went back to Newfoundland afterward, my dad was very gracious about it. But he also didn't know how to deal with a son that was quite empowered and knew his own self. I knew myself. But he didn't know how to deal with me coming back with my tail between my legs in a very vulnerable, very hurt space. So he did what he thought was best – and I thank him for it – he sent me to the gayest city on Earth – (laughs) – which was in the middle of this very intense sero-sorting thing. I got turned down so many times in San Francisco because I was sero-negative. I would try to pick people up and was told, "If you pick someone up online after one in the morning, they're on crystal, and you don't go online after one in the morning unless you want to party." And I had no experience with this context at all. And thankfully I was able to re-establish my own ability to negotiate condom use when I was in San Francisco. I was proud of myself for doing that. But then that waned a little bit more when I came back to Canada before I started therapy again.

I had a partner and we had made a decision based on the fact that we had both taken some risks and, you know, we were both willing to suspend our disbelief and not use condoms with each other. And this was an informed decision between the two of us. And then he went for his regular test and they said, “Why didn’t you come back to see us six months ago when you had your last test?” And he said, “You didn’t call me. Why would I come back?” And they said, “Your last test was positive.” And they had lost his file and didn’t call



him back. And I was the only one he had put at risk, blah blah blah. "Oh how tragic!" You know? But when he told me, it was a beautiful moment but it was also really sad. Because it was like, ok... we had had a lot of sex. And it was all without condoms. And he was so upset because he knew that there was a very great possibility that he had helped me sero-convert. And I knew it too. But I think that was maybe one of the most exciting moments, realizing, “This is not about stats.” This is the moment where I felt like I should know, “My life has now turned into a statistic.” But instead it was about recognizing that my friend was really upset. Someone I cared about, and a lover, and he was scared for what he might have done.

And that is the story of HIV that is not spoken of. People making their own decisions... and having them backfire. And finding ways of continuing their relation-

ships through that. And acknowledging that we make decisions, and we’re ok with them at the time, but we can’t see the future. Knowing that I still have this person in my life and we still have this relationship – it’s not as close, he has another partner now – but I was able to use that moment to help support him. I didn’t need the support in that moment because I didn’t know what my situation was, but I knew that in that moment, he felt like shit. Because he had put me at risk. He was dealing also with what his sero-conversion meant to him, and thinking that he was imposing that onto me. But for me, I knew that I had taken risks in the past and I had also had other poz people in my life--I wasn’t as freaked out about it. I think I knew more about HIV at that time than he did.

So that was nice to be able to have that experience. As terrible and terrifying as it was, it was a beautiful experience to have that conversation with my friend and to say, “We made this decision together.” And I’m not going to charge you with aggravated sexual assault. Which is the other thing that we’ve all been trying to negotiate: this criminalization, this pathology of poz sexuality. But then that’s a whole other issue...

#### References

- [1] LaBruce, B. (2006). Fats and Femmes, Please!. In: J. Van Bennekom & G. Jonkers (Eds.), *Butt Book: The Best of the First 5 Years of BUTT* (pp. 9-13). Cologne, Germany: Taschen.
- [2] Canadian AIDS Society (2004). *HIV Transmission: Guidelines for Assessing Risk* (5th ed.). Ottawa, ON: Canadian AIDS Society.

*Nicholas Little is an Anglo-Albertan who decamped to Montreal sometime in the late nineties “to learn French and be gay”. He then moved to Ottawa, Ontario, where he was an HIV outreach worker in bathhouses, bars and online chat rooms for several years. In 2008 Nicholas helped found POWER (Prostitutes of Ottawa-Gatineau Work Educate and Resist), an organization of current and former sex workers advocating for recognition of their labour, Charter and human rights. Nicholas currently lives in the UK.*



*self portrait as my mother in Jerusalem, 1957*

# BINAH: A CONFIGURATION OF THREE

Reena Katz

Inside my lived body there is a tension spanning what I know, and what I know. This tension birthed the body of Binah, named after the third step in the Kabbalistic tree of life. S/he[1] represents Understanding, and in some translations, the human vulva. Here, in the form of three digital self-portraits, I offer my body as the illegitimate offspring[2] of Zionist tendencies in an integrated circuit of ethnicity, nationalism and violence. Binah masquerades as my most feared alter egos: my adolescent Mother, a boyish Jewish Terrorist and a violent Israeli Settler.

The mainstream Jewish community's conservative insistence that we comply with Zionism's outdated body politic suggests ambiguous ethnic allegiances. It disciplines community members to stay away from territory of dissent and solidarity with the abject Other, known as 'Arab' in the racism of Zionism, meaning the Palestinian people. Because I freely cross the dangerous territory and side with their Other, my community has demonized me. Binah helps me ask: What is the anatomy of the national Jewish body I have apparently terrorized? How does my own body both transgress and affirm the conventions of this collective body?

## **Mimicry and Political Anatomy**

In my lived experience of Jewish culture, an emergence of dualisms has occurred: legitimated knowledge vs. oral history; linear time vs. circular memory; and persistent exile vs. ultimate belonging. In the spirit of Haraway, I attempt to work with these binary codes as an "imaginative resource suggesting some very fruitful couplings." [3] These dueling duets merge and multiply in Binah to create a body filled with the contradictions of my Jewish identity. Through mimicry and mimesis, s/he embodies the many racialized and gendered layers of power in the Zionist project.

## **Mimicry and Cultural Logic**

Binah takes apart a static Jewish body politic in order to understand its pieces. It is mimicry of colonial geopolitics itself that allowed Ashkenazi[4] Jews to jump from their diasporic identity of underling to that of military bullies in one short generation. By becoming the very bullies to which we were subjects in Europe, Jewish cultural practice took on a whole set of new logics. Is there a crack in that foundation? Most certainly. This crack is represented by the huge numbers of Jews

who oppose Zionism worldwide, but remain under-represented in the public body politic. So, what is our body politic then? To explore that, we might need a kind of drag and satire. In Binah, the “national is no longer naturalizable,”[5] and becomes a site of mockery and contemplation.

### Mimicry and Photographic Truth

Binah is represented through photography as a visual gesture to the deconstructive performance that Daniel Boyarin proposes in his examination of photographic truth. There is also an evocation of destruction in the frozen images of Mother, Terrorist and Settler. As Helen McDonald evokes from Barthes: “by configuring nature as a sign and arresting the body in motion, photography invokes a premonition of both eroticism and death.”[6] Binah signals a sensual wondering that offers the possibility of decay on a static body politic.

The modernist technology of the camera was used to “capture” Indigenous people by classifying, eroticizing and racializing the non-European global majority. The camera also captures Binah’s body, an elusive act that divulges her many faces. She uses the camera machine to invite the viewer into an anachronistic journey of blood memory and oral history. In this vein, photographs played a huge role in my education of the place called Yisrael in Hebrew, Israel in English[7]. Seeing the bodies of my loved ones surrounded by the guns, uniforms, and Jewish landmarks of Yisrael’s anatomy burned a reluctant brand into my memory. It marked a confusing bridge from shtetl[8] to suburb that my lived culture defined. Binah’s body feels the contradiction of displacement within an insistence of ethnic loyalty.

### Anatomies and Objects

Binah teases out the particular anatomy of power in operation with the Zionist project in my lifetime. This anatomy is productive, using a variety of techniques intended to create loyalty and compliance with the need for a Jewish state. Within diasporic Zionist infrastruc-

tures, Jewish bodies are reduced to a “political force at the least cost and maximized as a useful force.”[9] Binah’s triptych of Mother, Terrorist and Settler have discreet roles in this anatomy, rendering invisible the polyvocality of Jewish history into a political taxonomy that insists on a linear, violent genealogy[10].

### Mapping A Corporeal Triptych

How does this research configure itself in the genetics of Binah? The three bodies s/he mimics time travel through different sides of the integrated circuit of Zionist violence. With the Mother mimic, I probe a gendered relationship to Yisrael and the assimilation of Hebrew into her mouth and body. From this pair of eyes, Binah sees the bright future of possibility in “a land without people for a people without a land.”[11] In the Irgun I I[12] terrorist, Binah embodies the conundrum of the post-Holocaust Jewish male in his attempt to escape a wounded ghetto masculinity; as well as the irony of historical narratives that racialize Arabs as terrorists, without naming the role of terrorism in the founding of the State. Finally, the Settler mimic is an examination of the psychosexual facets of Zionist violence. Binah charts him (the Settler) as a latent queer, desiring the very subject of his hate, and revealing the source of his self-revulsion.

### Mother

A photograph of my mother, taken at 15 Katamon Street in Jerusalem, 1957[13], provided an experience of *jamais vue* – seeing myself there in the image, but not recalling where or when I’d been there. After realizing it was my mother, not myself in the photo, I remembered how truly alike we are physically. In Binah, the Mother mimic marks a cultural imperative: my matrilineal relationship to Zionism and my loyalty to the Israeli Nation State. By replacing my mother’s body with my own, I am marking my hesitations, cynicisms and ultimate mockery of that ideal. For many years, my unreasonable disgust of my mother’s physical body pointed to her strange encounters in Yisrael, a place I had no interest

in whatsoever. I often contrasted her Katamon Street portrait with one of my grandmother and great aunts in Poland from the 1920s, an image I poured over for hours, memorizing (and romanticizing) every detail. In this regard, language is key. Yiddish, rather than Hebrew, represents a territory my mother wished to depart from, and one to which I have been deeply magnetized. This extends to my reluctances around Zionism, and affinities to Yiddishist socialisms. As Seidman explains:

The historical circumstances that connected Yiddish with women readers in the 16th century have a curious corollary in the late 20th century, when the 2nd wave of Jewish feminism has combined with diaspora ideology (part ethnic nostalgia, part disillusionment with Zionism, part postmodernism) to generate a surge of interest in women and Yiddish.[14]

### **Terrorist**

How hypocritical that Zionists racially brand Palestinians as terrorists. In fact, the early ‘founders’ of the state of Israel were involved in a variety of far-right organizations, many of which supported violence against civilians. The Irgun followed the revisionist call of Vladimir “Ze’ev” Jabotinsky, a prime example of Herzlian masculine panic. Binah’s Irgun mimic embodies the reclamation of the biblical Jewish man to which these terrorists ascribed. Here, Binah’s Zionist is proudly violent and fearless, willing to sacrifice his personal Jewish body for the greater good of his Jewish body politic. In Binah, his body ascends[15] in spiritual return, shedding the ghetto and entering the sunlight of the Holy Land.

In the narrow Jewish street our poor limbs soon forgot their gay movements; in the dimness of sunless houses our eyes began to blink shyly. Let us take up our oldest traditions; let us once more become deep chested, sturdy, sharp eyed men.[16]

### **Settler**[17]

In Nissim Mossek’s documentary of Iraqi-Jewish activist Ezra Nawi, there is a settler who taunts Ezra shamelessly about his “small dick”. Ezra encounters the settler while protesting the violence of his colony against a neighbouring Palestinian village. As a gay Arab Jew, Ezra’s body is positioned within multiple subjects in the Zionist imaginary. The Palestinian political body, and Palestine itself is the object of the Jewish State through Herzlian Zionism. Palestinians are seen as disposable at best, and at worst, completely invisible.

The settler’s de-masculinizing and homophobic comments left me with a deep impression of his psychosexual relationship to Zionism’s colonial anatomy of power. In the scenario of ownership, bodies of land are stolen, repositioned and governed. This control and conquer ideology seemed to mirror the settler’s own control of his homoerotic desires, which slipped out only through his consistent fixation on the size of Ezra’s dick. Binah’s Terrorist mimic embodies his bitterness, shame and smallness in all its manifestations. He mirrors my fears in relationship to extremist Zionist ideology. The experience of mimicking his body left me feeling poisoned and ugly. Binah felt his sublimated queer desire, and longed to emerge from beneath the holy garments he donned with hypocritical fervor.

### **Beginning**

The Triptych of Binah exerts a “mimicry that emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal.”[18] Hir chaotic location within the triad of Mother, Terrorist and Settler gestures to a symbiosis in my understanding of Zionism in terms of its familiarity (body memory) and difference (political objection). By recognizing my location within Zionist history while simultaneously renouncing it, Binah challenges the multiple forms of violence articulated by Zionist cultural logic and exposes their ethnic and gendered fault lines.

## Endnotes:

1. In order to represent Binah's multiple genders, I am using pronouns: s/he and hir.
2. Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto" in *The CyberCultures Reader*. London: Routledge, 2000. Pp. 293.
3. Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto" in *The CyberCultures Reader*. London: Routledge, 2000. Pp. 292.
4. Eastern European
5. Bhabha, Homi K. "Of Mimicry and Man" in *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Pp. 122.
6. McDonald, Helen. "Re-visioning the female nude" in *Erotic Ambiguities: The Female Nude in Art*. London: Routledge, 2001. Pp. 40.
7. A cartography that intentionally marginalizes and erases that place called Palestine to the British and Falastine to Palestinians. These three places exist in the same geographic space, but their various body politics remain extremely separate, both intentionally (through architectures such as checkpoints and the Separation Wall) and covertly.
8. Yiddish word for small Jewish towns of Eastern Europe, destroyed in WWII.
9. Foucault, Michel. "Panopticism" in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1977. Pp. 221
10. Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto" in *The CyberCultures Reader*. London: Routledge, 2000. Pp. 299.
11. Zionist credo, obviously erasing any Indigenous existence.
12. One of many right-wing Zionist terrorist groups. They claimed responsibility for blowing up the Kind David Hotel in 1946, which housed the Headquarters of the British Forces in Palestine.
13. Interview with my mother - June, 2009.
14. Seidman, Naomi. *A Marriage Made in Heaven: the Sexual Politics of Hebrew and Yiddish*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. Pp. 135.
15. English translation of Aliyah, the Hebrew word for moving or 'returning' to Yisroel. Spoken idiomatically in English as "making Aliyah".
16. Hessing quoted in: Bell, J. Bower. *Terror out of Zion: The Violent and Deadly Shock Troops of Israeli Independence, 1929 – 1944*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977. Pp. 210.
17. Term used for Israeli citizens who choose to live in illegal outposts inside Palestinian territory. The Settler movement sees the entire region of "Greater Judea" as belonging to the Jewish people and often patrol the land with rifles. There are many cases of Settler attacks against Palestinians who come to harvest olives from trees belonging to their families for generations.
18. Bhabha, Homi K. "Of Mimicry and Man" in *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Pp. 125.

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6. Citizen Nawi. Dir; Mossek, Nissim. Biblical Productions, 2007.
7. D-Day and Combat May 44 to October. The First Division. June 22, 2009. [www.geocities.com/eco16thin/ORDPAGE\\_GRENADE.jpg](http://www.geocities.com/eco16thin/ORDPAGE_GRENADE.jpg)
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9. Foucault, Michel. "Panopticism" in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1977.

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11. Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto" in *The CyberCultures Reader*. London: Routledge, 2000.

12. Katz, Gilda. First person interview, June 20, 2009.

13. McDonald, Helen. "Re-visioning the female nude" in *Erotic Ambiguities: The Female Nude in Art*. London: Routledge, 2001.

14. Seidman, Naomi. *A Marriage Made in Heaven: the Sexual Politics of Hebrew and Yiddish*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. 112 – 120.

15. Silcoff, Mireille. "Undiscovered Country: Michal Heiman and the found pictures of Keila Pruzanski" *Guilt & Pleasure*, 4 (2007): 104 – 115.

16. *The Couple in the Cage: A Guatinaui Odyssey*. Dir. Fusco, Coco & Herein, Paula. Authentic Documentary Productions, 1993.

Photography: Jo Simalaya

Gender Transformation Consultant: Hershel T. Russell

*Reena Katz uses recorded sound, handmade electronics, wood and live performance to create diverse listening spaces. Her work explores gender, ethnicity, migration and anachronism with a constant reference to collectivity and oral archive. Katz focuses on the use and re-use of analog sound technologies, as well as fibers and materials from a variety of wounded landscapes. Guided by a deep love of collaboration, Katz has developed an inventive and strong voice across disciplines. Her collaborations include film and video, poetry, dance and grassroots organizing. She teaches music, listening practice and audio production in a variety of educational settings. Katz's compositions, installations and performances have been exhibited at galleries, festivals and on radio internationally, including Toronto, Montreal, New York and Berlin. Most recently, her emerging curatorial practice has engaged exhibitions with the Toronto Palestine Film Festival, and A Space Gallery.*  
[www.radiodress.ca](http://www.radiodress.ca)



*self portrait as a homophobic Settler*



*self portrait as a Jewish terrorist*





## SIMONE JONES IS THE PERFECT VEHICLE

*Simone Jones | Dayna McLeod*

Walking on water, flapping to fly, breathing machines into movement. The mechanical dreams of early inventors are realized with an elegant intimacy through the work of Simone Jones. Crafted with meticulous detail and beauty, Jones's machines realize the ambitions of the Industrial Age, when early airplane designs crashed charmingly into barns as the first flicker of film captured their failures. With a playful nod to the past, Jones creates installation works that feature epic film loops of her machines in action, where rake-like wings flap without flight, water buoys keep afloat a walk across the water, and a series of breaths can carry the body immobile across the landscape. In Jones's 3-minute excerpt from her installation, we see the breath-by-breath movement of the Perfect Vehicle. It noses its way into the frame, traveling into the distance, into the horizon, towards far-off mountains like a silver cowboy, a go-kart funeral, a naked racecar stripped down to its skeleton. Jones's Silver Surfer inches its way across the Bonneville Salt Flats, the antithesis of speed.

**Dayna McLeod: Where did the idea for Perfect Vehicle come from? Is there a relationship to the cyborg?**

Simone Jones: It's the third in a trilogy of work. The two that preceded it were from a project called Mobility Machines. Mobility Machines was a play on the idea of extending your body, kind of like a cyborg but not explicitly like a cyborg. They were more about go-

ing back to people's early desires to move their bodies through space using machines. Early examples would be people who invented airplane contraptions that obviously were wrong, based on the idea of the bird with flapping wings and things like that. Early examples of car design, boats, ships show things that people were trying to come up with in order to make their bodies more mobile. And so I was interested in taking an old-fashioned look at this, rather than looking at the sci-fi kind of stuff, the Donna Haraway[1] take on it. It's not anti-cyborg. The inspiration comes from a simpler time when you had to do things to augment our bodies in a very mechanical kind of way. And I thought, 'wouldn't it be great if I could use my own body as the template for building a machine?' So that's where that idea came from. And then I thought, 'now that these things fit my body, maybe I could somehow use them in performance,' but I was not so interested in performance as a live project, I was more interested in performance that would be done specifically for the camera. That's where the films came in. And then I thought it would be great to project these things as a larger installation and to show them as loops. So the first two, the Walking on Water Machine and the Wing Machine were made to be shown together, and they were edited in such a way that the rhythm of the flapping of the Wing Machine and the rhythm of the legs of the walking of the Walking on Water Machine were kind of in synch: they were enacting a certain rhythm that was methodical and just constantly moving forward in this loop. That's where they came from. I really enjoyed doing that and I wanted to go larger scale, and I was interested in the mythology around vehicles and cars and speed, and I've always been a fan of Bonneville. So again, it gave me an opportunity to reference technology, and in this case, I was referencing a site where the land speed record was broken.

**DMC: What is Bonneville? Why is it so famous?**

SJ: Every year they run the Bonneville Speedway where you can take your vehicle and test it to see

how fast it goes. I've been there three times now. It's awesome. It's absolutely amazing.

**DMC: So that's actually salt in Perfect Vehicle. My winterized Canadian brain was reading it as snow.**

SJ: It looks like snow but it's actually salt. That's actually a desert. It was over one hundred degrees when we shot that. It's the flattest place on earth. That's why people go there to test for speed trials. And so in a humorous way, I thought, 'what would be the slowest vehicle that I could come up with, to go there with?' I also wanted it to run off of my body, again referencing Mobility Machines. So I thought, 'breathing', and again there was a rhythm involved in it, the rhythm of the body. I call it 'embodied time', so that's why the speed of the object is dictated by the speed of the body. So with Perfect Vehicle, if you breathe faster, it goes faster. If you slow down your breathing, it slows down to mimic that. It travels probably less than five miles an hour. It's very slow, and it goes in stops and starts because when you breathe in, you move forward, when you breathe out it stops, when you breathe in, you move forward. So it's not a continuous motion. And again, that references early mechanical inventions where gears were being used to push things forward. It was always interlocking mechanisms in early designs of machinery, and it's not digital at all, which is a funny kind of thing for me, because that's what I teach -- that's what I do. But there is a small computer inside Perfect Vehicle and that's used to communicate between the sensor that monitors the breathing and the motor.

**DMC: How does it work, and, do you have an engineering background? How do you figure all of this out? How do you build this?**

SJ: I went to OCA in the 80s and I took an electronics class for artists, and I got hooked. I originally went to OCA to study photography. When I started to make sculpture that was kinetic and time based, I started

to see an element of performance creeping into the work, whether it was performance of the machine or performance of the viewer moving around the machine, or performance of you in the machine, and when I realized that I could hook film into that and work on a larger scale, like with installation, everything began to fall into place. Photography was there, film was there, the machines were there -- all of that kind of sculptural stuff was there. It takes four or five different media to make the work.

**DMC: In terms of taking on the technology behind it -- you're blowing my mind when you talk about a computer sensor that's monitoring and communicating between the body and the actual mechanism...**

SJ: That's a very simple thing. Because I'm self-taught, there's a lot of readily available stuff out there that wasn't there when I was younger.

It was actually harder when I was younger. Now there are so many more hackers in the world, and so many more people sharing stuff online, it has really opened up how you can approach making things. Back when I started, the philosophy was, take something that's broken and see if you can fix it, or find something that's been thrown away and see if you can salvage parts and then make something new out of it. And that was a very OCA-based approach. And Active Surplus on Queen Street in Toronto was a place where everybody did their shopping. Now everybody shops online, but back then, it was like going to a garage sale that was happening every day for electronics. Sensors are actually things that I found online that are used in factories for counting packages that go by on an assembly line. And if I didn't have the kind of mind that could say, 'well, I can use that to trigger my breathing'... again it comes back to that philosophy of how can we rethink something that's a tool that's already there and use it for something else.

**DMC: It's very sleek and gorgeous. What is it made out of?**

SJ: It's made out of metal and wood that forms the base of the cradle that you're lying in, and aluminum for that beautiful furring that is all welded by a friend of mine from OCAD.

**DMC: Is that a bike wheel on the front?**

SJ: Yes. I'm a big fan of bicycles, so it has a bit of a bicycle design to it. It's also influenced by race cars and Egyptian funeral sarcophagi to lie down in. It's got a few of those things in it because I wanted it to point towards things that were air streamed but also that's sort of a funny thing because it moves so slow.

**DMC: When you're in the machine, what do you think about? Do you focus on your breathing? Is it about meditation? Concentration?**

SJ: You focus on the breathing. Because it was a performance done for the film, the pressure was, can I keep my breathing consistent? The breathing is propelling me forward so I want to make sure that I'm breathing deep enough to actually get going. So you are totally fixated on the breathing and you can't see ahead of you because you're looking straight up at the sky. You just sort of rest into it and just breathe as evenly as you can. A friend of mine said that the whole piece felt like death, and I was a bit surprised about that. The music was actually composed for the piece. But I asked the guy who was doing it (Tom Third) to think more about the Romantic period in opera -- I thought it should be monumental because the landscape is so monumental.

**DMC: It's absolutely epic. I can't believe I thought it was snow...**

SJ: And how hot it actually is.

**DMC: Was that a concern during the shoot?**

SJ: Yes, because I was wearing a PVC suit. Between takes, there were people there with umbrellas keeping me shaded. We had a big tent that you had to go under and drink a lot of water. We had to get a permit to go there, so they knew that we were out there shooting. It has a sadness to it and I like that about it.

**DMC: How long did the shoot take? Did you cover the entire Flats?**

SJ: We shot for two days and because when you go there, you have to tell them where you're going to be, so they had a zone mapped out for us. It's so big, you couldn't do all of it; the Salt Flats are huge. We stayed in our little zone and I guess the fragility of the body is the thing that comes through, and I think that's really interesting about it. We often take for granted the fact that we don't have as many limits as we think that we do, because technology helps us to forget what our limits are. You can imagine that if you had a power failure right now, tomorrow, you'd be freezing in your house. So it's that instant fragility -- the enormity of the Salt Flats and the dryness of it and the desert of it really makes you feel small and fragile, and I think that's a nice thing. I like that quite a bit. It wasn't something that I thought about deeply before I did it, but it just started to come out when all of the elements came together.

**DMC: It's interesting how the actual experience of performance can change the intention of the work and its direction. With Perfect Vehicle and Mobility Machines, you are performing specifically for the camera. Can you talk more about performance and documentation-as-performance within your work?**

SJ: It comes back a little bit to the 70s and a lot of work that artists were doing when cameras became more accessible: video, for example. I've been a fan of

Bruce Nauman for a while. I find his work to be really smart and interesting but I couldn't watch it for too long because it's so un-cinematic. But the idea that he could be in his studio space and he could have an idea-concept and he would just enact it for the camera, and this would be a document... But there were also elements in his work and in other artists' work with the same kind of thing where the video became the art, not just a document, but the art itself. Dennis Oppenheim did a piece where it was a close-up of his hand slapping against a wall, and it was projected in a room where there were four hands slapping the walls of the gallery. The sound of the slapping, obviously, was the sound that was recorded at the time, but it also seemed as if there was a hand actually slapping the wall of the space. I really liked that slippage that can occur between your experience of the work and what the work is actually doing. The sound has a way of tricking you. And then the notion of real time, which is again, something that people were doing a lot of in the 70s, they weren't editing or using montage. So that's why I became interested in filming these machines because when I started making sculpture, just the sculptures, they became performers for me. I would sit there, plug them in and watch them do whatever they were doing and I realized that the component of performance was an interesting thing to think about.

As soon as I put myself in the work, I thought, 'well this is interesting, I don't need to do it in front of other people. I could just create a whole work based around my interaction with the machine'. I don't think I'll do it all of the time; it would only be if I built something for my body. Rebecca Horn was another big influence.

**DMC: The beauty and otherworldliness of your machines and their performance remind me of Matthew Barney's Cremaster Cycle. In both yours and Barney's work, there is a controlled intimacy with the objects that is mediated by film for us, the audience.**



SJ: That's right. And he creates situations. There are actors and all sorts of stuff in the work, but his sculptures appear in the work too, and I think that that's kind of interesting.

**DMC: There also seems to be a direct relationship between your body and the object that doesn't humanize the machines nor mechanize you, but there is this intimacy that we, the audience, witness.**

SJ: I think that just comes out of making them myself, and making them fit the scale of my body. Perfect Vehicle does have someone else's hands there because it was welded by another person, but it was totally designed by me. Sometimes there's a clumsiness to the work too, which I like. It's not so polished and high-tech, and I'm always trying to move away from that. I guess it's because I like sculpture. There's a tactility about it that I want and that handmade-ness to be part of it, to be part of the object and part of the experience. People always want to touch the stuff too, which I think is great, when they encounter it in the gallery. I like that. People have asked me to put the machines on and wear them in public performances and I always say no.

**DMC: Why do you think this becomes important, this idea of performing for a live, present audience? Because if you look at your body of work, this seems kind of obvious to me: that the work is complete, and this other kind of performance, this suggested/requested kind of performance isn't what the work is about.**

SJ: No, and I think that there's so much more that you can bring into the work when you add sound, when you edit. You can create more of an experience for people.

**DMC: You are interested in Sontag's ideas of, "cinema as the transcription of real**

**unstaged life" and "cinema as invention, artifice, illusion, fantasy", not as "oppositional forces but rather, as strategies for investigating our relationship to making and consuming images". How do these different approaches manifest themselves in your practice? "What is real?" "What is illusion?"[2]**

SJ: That's the million-dollar question. I think one of the reasons that I'm drawn to installation work is that if I just worked with film, I wouldn't take in all of the other things that come into ways of seeing. Your body has definitely got to be there. And so when you work with installation, you get a chance to engage the body somehow. That's why I love sculpture. But then if you can do something with the body to make it think one thing, and then do something to the eyes to make it think something else, now you're starting to get into rich territory. I'm trying to work with conventions of the form, so cinema, as Sontag says, can either be a document or a fiction. If you acknowledge that and say, 'okay, that's interesting stuff to investigate, how can I use what we conventionally think of as either being fiction or documentary, and then create something out of it?'

That's how I think about it. I'm constantly going back to those two modes and seeing how I can use those strategies to undermine the technology that we take for granted and ways of looking at or depicting the world.

**DMC: Un-Photoshopping the world and our experience of it.**

SJ: Exactly. Because for me, it's endlessly exciting. And I think that there are a lot of artists who work that way. They may not be explicit about it, but Jeff Wall, for example, has staged photography -- he's definitely grappling with those questions.

**DMC: When you show the work, it's in an installation setting. After the intimacy of the edit and putting the film together, taking it to a public space and projecting it with the object there, what is that experience like for you?**

SJ: At first I didn't want them to be in the same space together, but every curator who has ever programmed the work has always wanted the two things there, and I've come to think that there's a nice scale relationship, because the projections are really large and I look larger than life and the machines look larger than life and you encounter this thing that you can actually look at and examine, it's like an artifact that you've seen on the film. I went to see Tim Burton at the MoMa, he's got a huge retrospective there right now and that was a weird experience because first of all, it was overwhelmingly crowded with people and work, but they tended to show a lot of props from the films. Because you couldn't see the films, and you just encountered these props, they felt kind of dead because the films weren't there at the same time, so that was kind of interesting to observe. It makes me think that it's nice to have the films with the objects. And it kind of humbles you and brings you back to the awkwardness of the object and references back to this body always wanting to be more, but maybe not always getting there. There's a sense of failure that I think is really interesting too, that I like.

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[2] Susan Sontag, "A Century of Cinema", *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Germany, 1995 (<http://southerncrossreview.org/43/sontag-cinema.htm>)

*Born in a Red Cross outpost in northern Ontario, Canada, Jones graduated from the Ontario College of Art with a concentration in Experimental Art and received her MFA in Sculpture Installation from York University in Toronto. Jones was the Jill Kraus Visiting Assistant Professor of Art at Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, with a joint appointment in the School of Art and Robotics from 2000 - 2003. Jones is currently an Associate Professor of Art at the Ontario College of Art and Design, Toronto where she teaches in the Integrated Media Program.*

*Dayna McLeod is a writer and intermedia artist whose work is ripe with humour and socially charged situations. She is in the second year of 52 Pick-Up, (<http://52pickupvideos.com>) a video website where participants make one video a week for an entire year. <http://daynarama.com/>*



# JANE SIBERRY: THOUGHTS ON CREATING A MONSTER

Jane Siberry | M el Hogan

*I am supposed to meet Issa for an interview in 15 minutes. My phone rings. It's Issa. She tells me she is still at the hair salon. She is running late. Could I do her a favour and get her a salad—something with protein, something vegetarian—and meet her at the Green Room at 7 instead. I'll pay you back, she says.*

*It's November in Montreal and it is pouring rain and dark. But because I'm about to interview the woman who sang the best song on my favorite mix tape from my first big love in high school, a little salad-fetching in the dark of the winter night seems totally reasonable. And, as I would later understand, Issa's straight-forwardness is just part of her agenda-free, free-thinking experiment. She lives her politics—and having sold all her belongings, including her house in Toronto—she lives everywhere. The night we spoke she made Montreal her home and I was determined to make it a place she would want to return to often.*

*I arrive at the Green Room, where she was to perform later that night. She is sitting at the piano, writing up her guest list. She wonders if perhaps there would be a venue better suited for her, somewhere else. The thought passes and we sit down to talk. She is at once intense and soothing, passionate, and present. She tells me she's recently changed her name (back from Issa) to Jane Siberry.*

*A bit nervously, I dive right into the idea of 'improvisation' without much preparatory small talk. It seems to me improvisation is a core concept of self-determination, of adapting, and of what I would later understand from Jane as freethinking.*

**MH: Improvisation is certainly not something that is new for you, but would you say you have more creative freedom now that you are free from a major label?**

JS: There was a certain point with Warner Brothers when I couldn't do interesting side projects like when I did Maria, which was not a commercial record. I said no problem. I'll do it the way I like it, but I will give you a companion EP of the most commercial versions of these songs you could ever want. I will do remixes for you. But they didn't have a system that could handle that kind of thing. I said we could use the commercial versions for the videos, too.

There are so many hooks in those songs that never repeat, and while I knew how I was going to do it, it didn't fit into their system. And then I started feeling limited from other things too...

**MH: So that was the beginning of your transition away from major label representation?**

JS: Yes, the main reason was that they wanted to enforce a producer into what I did. I didn't think that made sense unless I wanted one. And sometimes I have wanted one. It was a statement they made, so I knew it wasn't right for me anymore.

**MH: So you felt they wanted control over your creative process?**

JS: Yes, they wanted to control it very much.

**MH: And now, you can't release some of your own music because of licensing restrictions and copyright issues...**

JS: I have learned my lesson. When I enter into a new contract I make sure that it is win-win for everybody. I can never own the masters for When I was a Boy or Maria.

I was trying to figure out with my new name, Issa, how to maintain the rights, full control over my music, which meant not joining SOCAN as 'Issa', and it also meant not collecting money from them. So I would lose a lot of money, which is OK. But, unfortunately SOCAN won't separate Issa and Jane Siberry. So I am just curious—I am not upset or anything—I am just curious as to what controls have to be maintained now before they expand, so that people won't be penalized for playing my music on their website without paying. Because I say they can. You know that eventually websites will have to pay some kind of collection fee.

**MH: So you think one day there will a hit counter or something that will track what everyone listens to, a SOCAN for the web maybe, to distribute fees...**

JS: Yes, they will be able to check easily I think, to see what copyrighted music is played on any website. It's simple. It's not that difficult a thing.

**MH: Would you get rid of copyright altogether?**

JS: That's what I was checking out with my lawyer. Lawyers aren't used to thinking that way, so I used to brainstorm with him. I would ask him, what would happen if I never put any name on a song? What if I just let them go out with no name? Or make them public domain right away...

**MH: Which you can... with Creative Commons licensing.**

JS: Yes... can you?

**MH: Yes...**

JS: ...make it public domain already?

**MH: Yes. Lawrence Lessig, an American lawyer, argued that copyright was a default... he was proposing that with all the technological changes, the internet in particular, copyright had to be re-thought to accommodate the way things circulate. He is often credited as proposing Creative Commons as an alternative. You have different licenses that allow different permissions. Attribution, non-commercial use, etc.**

JS: That means that SOCAN or ASCAP or any collection agency has to know all those fine-tuned definitions of copyright ownership... oh my gosh...

**MH: Maybe. I don't know...**

JS: It's going to create a huge monster.

**MH: So it's not just about music distribution, the effects on creativity, on writing, on making music...**

JS: There is something very wrong when people put out music and words that are in the air so that they become part of our language... and then you can't use those words... which in three words makes a point greater than two linear sentences. And then you can be sued for it. It's so far from my thoughts that I can't be quite clear right now, but that's wrong. That's not the point of music! And writing... I mean it is a generous thing that has to flow and be pulled forward even further by other people. If you start policing it, it will create more and more distortions, and there already are a lot. I'm trying to rethink all of this from the ground up and not get myself into a contract that will bind me for the future.

**MH: Who is the contract with for your last album?**

JS: There is no contract. I own the songs. I own the physical... I paid for the CDs. There is no record label that has any rights to my music. I own the master rights so I can give anyone the right to use this in films and wherever they like. I own the publishing rights for synch licenses. But I am a member of SOCAN – that’s where the hooks are.

**MH: That’s interesting because... Well, I don’t know the history of SOCAN but I imagine it was created so that artists get properly recompensed for their creations. I imagine the intentions were different when SOCAN started.**

JS: Yes! Correct... but it also represents publishers. So that’s the other side of the equation. So when they get too strong they start pushing forward things that are not artist-friendly. I forget the name of it, but my lawyer Burt Harris did a lot to stop it. If artists didn’t step forward and make a statement, that something naturally defaulted to the publisher, rather than the artist, which was much, much, more in the favour of the publisher.

He went to bat—embarrassed some people—and changed that at SOCAN, and then he died. He taught me so much about it even if I don’t have a brain for retaining it. The shape of his thinking is in me still. So, yes, SOCAN is supposed to be in the best interest for the artist but we all need to keep working at the agencies that represent us. So this was the first time they had to deal with something like me—where I was saying I don’t want copyright on my Issa songs and I don’t want you putting my financial statements together with Jane Siberry’s because what if I want to send all my Issa royalties to a trust fund or to a charity?

I am not going to pay my accountant to separate out all the songs. You have to be able to let artists have different personas.

**MH: So [pointing to the new CD With What Shall I Keep Warm?]... here it says Issa and Jane Siberry on the album.**

JS: Yes. That’s new in fact. I officially changed my name back to Jane Siberry two weeks ago.

**MH: Oh! Really...**

JS: Yes. So now my career will be Jane Siberry. Issa is me, but... all the Issa/Jane Siberry things happened before that. So that was an exercise in what SOCAN really represents. But now everything is simplified again.

The third CD of the trilogy will be Jane Siberry.

**MH: I was thinking about this, though it doesn’t really have anything to do with the name change per se... but your career path and your trajectory as a musician is particularly interesting because you were a musician before the internet so you have seen “both sides”: the pre- and post-web.**

**I was wondering how much of this system you have created, the self-determined pricing for example, and the freedom you have allowed yourself, how much of that is based on having a really solid fan base that was created by traditional means... I mean, do you think emerging artist would have...**

JS: No... I know exactly what you mean. I’m not sure how you would handle it but I had a foothold already so that really helped me. For an emerging artist... I think we all, at whatever level we are at, we just have to hunker down and do our best and... just put ourselves in the hands of the greater. And I don’t mean to sound fey or too general but...

**MH: So there is no utopia of the internet... more access to more people...**

JS: No, because there are still thousands and thousands of musicians vying to be heard. And repetition is a great way for people to get used to people, especially if you are original. So there is no commercial radio anymore. I hope there are some aficionados creating really great stations. They have an open playing field to do that now, right? But

I think it is easier now, for sure, globally. If you have a song that people like, that should be the calling card. It's not so hard to reach listeners as it used to be... especially without commercial radio.

**MH: How did you come up with the idea of a self-determined pricing system online?**

JS: I think one of the most telling moments was when I was standing at my door, from inside, and I was watching a man on a bench, 50 feet from me, and I locked the door: I stood there and I closed the door and I locked the door. And I was in a house, safe, and he was outside, and I just hated that so much. Which doesn't mean you invite everyone into your home, but it's almost as though I invited myself out of my home.

It upsets me so much that I, at least in my own little world, don't want to police things.

So I am not exactly an example of a good business model that would make a profit money-wise, but I think it is a business model that is in the air because a lot of people are like-minded and more empowered than they used to be.

A lot of people ask for my template for the store. People can download from a neutral place and it is part of a greater open-source system, so I won't ever be responsible if it doesn't work. It will be autonomous. It will be self-sufficient.

**MH: In terms of the self-determined part, how do you determine value? How do you determine how much a song is worth? Is it not about money at all?**

JS: No, I do have my own sense. I have to. If someone asks me to do a show for \$300 I will definitely say "no". It's not like I want to do everything for free. I do value things and some things should be really expensive. At a certain time... I didn't answer your question clearly but... I value that it is a transaction, which is why I don't say "free" much though I suppose I just did, but I mean a "gift from the artist"... Or, "pay it forward". Because I am also in this world

and if you are "paying it forward" I am also benefiting. It's not necessarily daring though; it's almost from frustration. Anger at being policed. At being disrespected. At feeling the dumbing down of everyone...

At least I have created space for myself. And I have such high regard for everyone... I feel really blessed to have the people around me, the people who like my music. They have pulled me way more forward than I would have gone myself. Every idea I have, someone tops it. And improves it... [laughs]

**MH: Like what?**

JS: Well I had self-determined pricing at my shows, people could put in what they want, and I overheard someone say "I don't have any money to pay for the CD, but it's OK, I'll just go to her site today and pay through her site, through PayPal"... just thinking for herself. And now that's in my system... yes, if you don't have cash, go to my store tonight. That kind of thinking. And I love to see that. That's just one example...

**MH: But it's all about trust, right, ultimately?**

JS: Yes, trust, but I don't call it the "honour system".

The honour system means that you will pay what the person expects, but I mean you pay what feels right to you, and wheeling into that is the respect for me, too. But it's not a guilt trip. There is no expected pay. It just kills me when people want me to see them put money in the box. Because they still feel guilty for taking something... that's a sad reflection of where we are at... I don't know. In my own little world I just try to do my thing.

**MH: And I see that your new CD is available through CD Baby.**

JS: They're amazing. Derek Sivers, who started it—he is no longer there and it might change but—they don't control anything. Anyone can distribute through them. Just send 5 CDs. They don't say no. So all I need is a mail order company... to me they are just a mail order company. I've

done mail order before and it is not a good use of my time [laughs].

**MH: Right, but CD Baby doesn't offer the self-determined pricing.**

JS: No, I'll still have that on my site for the downloads but not for the physical CD.

**MH: Or maybe CD Baby will adopt your system for the artists who want the self-determined option?**

JS: That has been mentioned. But they always take 4 dollars per CD. So they would need to have a default of 4 dollars, and that's easy enough to program, so that they always get their amount.

**MH: A lot of people are downloading music "illegally", a lot of people are using torrents and Limewire and things like that to access music. What are your thoughts on this?**

JS: I love downloading.

I can't tell you how useful it has been when I have to do a cover version and I go to Limewire and get 20 versions of Nature Boy. It's so efficient! I don't pay a dollar a song. I use my own sense of balance. I buy lots of CDs from bands that I never listen to.

**MH: Finding more of a balance... things had titled too much and the internet...**

JS: ...is showing a leveling effect.

**MH: The other thing I find interesting is that when I do an online search for "Jane Siberry" or "Issa", your music comes up on LastFM and MySpace and sites like that...**

JS: What's LastFM?

**MH: Oh, so you don't know that you are on LastFM? [laughs]**

JS: No...what is LastFM?

**MH: LastFm is a bit like MySpace. It's a UK-based website with music streaming, videos, concert listings, comments, and so on.**

**It's more chic than MySpace... It has links to buying the album and to similar artists.**

**You have a huge fan base there, commenting on your work and your music and your tour so...**

**How does that change your relationship to your fan base? And your perception of yourself... do you track yourself more?**

JS: I try not to. You can imagine how self-conscious that might make you feel...so I try to let people do their thing and not eavesdrop. But I make it a rule not to join any forums or if people send me things in forums to look at... people need their privacy. They need it just as I do.

**MH: And not knowing you are on LastFM doesn't feel like a breach?**

JS: No. I mean, how can you stop it? It's natural, right? You can police it or you can work with it. And policing never works, I don't think.

But that's an open thing and not a private thing so I might go look at that...

**MH: I use Grooveshark—I don't know if you have ever heard of it—but basically it just streams music without downloading...**

JS: Oh cool!

**MH: Yeah, I just punch in Jane Siberry and a list of a hundred songs comes up... all your albums mixed together...**

JS: That is fantastic!



**MH: So that's not coming from you?**

JS: No and I'm so glad. I couldn't do it... I don't have the energy to do it or the time. But that is great and that is the way it should be.

**MH: In one place I also read that you wrote 33 songs in 33 days and another place I read you thought the good rate for releasing music would be about 3 tracks every ten years.**

JS: Yes... I said both things. And I did write a song a day until I got to 33 songs but they were not consecutive days... I would wait until I had money, and then go into the studio and do one song a day.

**MH: And offline, you have your salons.**

JS: The only reason a salon is good is because it is efficient. The people are happy to have you and they are respectful. It's not that I mind clubs—I love beautiful concert halls and I love the theatre—you can give more to the audience, the lights, you know, everything works for you. But right now the salons are more efficient, matching with the artist's energy and the audience. And I say, "don't spend any money," and then I take all the ticket money.

When did we ever get into this idea that we are holding back out music unless you give us something?

That to me seems to be the ultimate basic distortion.

Hopefully other ways will come forward. Oddly enough this salon thing, I get treated like a queen and I can do with very little money, people are putting me up... I don't care anymore, I used to love hotels...

The salon thing is very efficient. Instead of thinking I can't do this alone unless I get 2500 dollars, I get picked up at the airport, I get accommodation, I get food, I get treated as someone who has something to offer. And you don't need much money, so maybe there is some kind of answer there.

**MH: And now you are touring. You have sold****all your belongings, including your house in Toronto, as a means to be free to make your music.**

JS: Yes, for now. The point was to not control, so I can't control it if it does change back... to having a place.

**MH: But it is definitely linked to distributing music online, to freeing yourself from a label...**

JS: I would work with a record label if that felt right, too.

I did check out some but... I really want music to reach people and it is hard without promotion. So I have put myself in the hands of the universe. There are many ways to get my music out there—in a film—and so on. I am not deliberately trying to shoot myself in the foot.

**MH: Ok, so it is an openness in every direction and not a harsh political statement.**

JS: Yeah. You got it. There is a subtle difference but you get it.

Anyway. I really like your questions and what you are trying to get at and I really respect that so I am happy to help in any way possible...

*Jane and I talk for a good hour, and I feel we are speaking the same language and have the same hopes for arts... though her ideas are far more developed, more lived, more refined than my own. After the conversation, Jane asks me to tend to her merchandise table, which includes taking tickets at the door. I oblige, all too happy to be able to return the favour—and what I come to understand is the balanced transaction she believes in. The Green Room fills up quickly, with people willingly dropping 20 dollar bills into the CD box even after I explain, on behalf of Jane, that they are free to pay later through her website, or via other means. People insist on paying for her performance—in a sense rejecting the idea that is at the core of Jane's distribution system—adamant about the way worth is determined through money. The room is full, and Jane gives all of herself and transforms the slightly dive-y Green Room into a magical happening, living up in every way to her reputation as an enchanting performer.*

<http://www.janesiberry.com>



# SEARCH AND DESTROY TOY: THE GARRY-LEWIS JAMES OSTERBERG INTERVIEW

*Nelson Henricks | Garry-Lewis James Osterberg*

**Nelson Henricks: Garry-Lewis, you seem to have experienced what could only be described as a meteoric rise to fame. Your recent show at Paul Petro Gallery in Toronto seems to have sealed your reputation as Canada's premier canine artist. Can you fill me in about what you've been up to since I saw you last -- your career up until now, and how the Petro show came about?**

Garry-Lewis James Osterberg: Hey, Nelson. Long time no see. I've been in group shows at Paul's off and on for a few years now, and the solo exhibition just fell into place. In summer 2009, I debuted the beginning of the Iggy Pop series at Naco Gallery in Toronto, in a group show called Daddy that was curated by Patrick DeCoste. The work underlined the fact that Iggy is the father of punk. I am huge fan of Iggy Pop -- I am constantly mistaken for him. I work intuitively and channel him when I make my sculptures. That's how the exhibition I'm Worth a Million in Prizes came about, and the Iggy is Dog video where I dance with Iggy.

**NH: Let's talk about the Petro show a bit. You presented a series of stuffed toys that had been ripped open, distressed, ruptured. The white fluffy stuffing comes billowing out in places where the plush skin has been torn, forming what looks like great clouds of smoke or spilled guts. What strikes me about these sculptures is that they are at once violent and ethereal. We can read them in the tradition of expressionism, but they also feel very cool and intellectual. Can you talk about your process a bit? Do you see these works as expressionistic and cathartic, or are they more of a conceptual critique of commodity culture?**

GLJO: I didn't get neutered until I was three years old, so I've always had a lot of pent-up energy. My process is definitely cathartic and expressionistic. I often start by gorging myself on chicken or beef and asparagus. Then I put on Raw Power or Fun House -- something LOUD -- and I shake and dance and tease and get all worked up... and then I GO. I'm an exhibitionist so it



helps if there are people around watching the action. I lose myself completely in the process, going into a protein-induced trance that can last for the length of a song, sometimes longer, depending on the quality of the meal and the size and twee appeal of the sculpture material. To get to the core of meaning I need to destroy the meaning. I like to be dangerous, sexual, aggressive -- unpredictable. I transform and transfigure. Afterwards, it is not unusual to discover that I have verbally and physically abused myself or others -- exposed myself, turned my studio upside down, clawed at the door, barked until the neighbours complain, shed my fur, ripped into the carpet, pissed on myself -- you get the picture. Sometimes a sculpture is finished in one act. Sometimes it takes months before I'm satisfied with it. And sometimes I have gone too far and the work is totally shredded and has to be trashed.

**NH: It's refreshing to talk to an artist who is revitalizing modernist tropes such as self-expression. The work feels brutal in its unfiltered honesty.**

**The attack on pop culture icons – I'm thinking of the Pokémon piece here – seems linked to pop art, but filtered through the violence and aggression of punk. But the violence of punk is also very post-modern: the anarchic readiness to deconstruct status quo values and dominant ideologies. Greil Marcus made convincing arguments linking punk to Guy Debord and the French Situationists, and of course, Iggy and the Stooges were really ahead of everyone, even the New York Dolls and The Ramones came later. The titles of your works are borrowed from Iggy Pop songs, and James Osterberg was Iggy's name before he was Iggy. What's your connection to him and his music?**

GLJO: Like David Bowie, I'm into reinvention.

I was once Chico from Dollard-des-Ormeaux, but then I got thrown in jail. I did my time and then I moved to Montreal and became Garry. I moved to New York and took on the last name of one of my favorite artists: the anti-painter Peter Lloyd Lewis from the UK. And then I began exhibiting my early sculptures. When I got to Toronto, I added Iggy's real name to the mix as a way of acknowledging his influence on my life and my work.

**NH: I love the Iggy is Dog video where you appear with Iggy. It's so energetic and alive, and it really communicates a lot about your work and process. How did that come about? Do you think of it as collaboration or a mash-up? And does Iggy know about it?**

GLJO: I haven't been in contact with him, but I would love to send him a sculpture -- as a thank you for his intense contributions to music and art. I am moved by early rock and roll androgyny and the fearlessness that went with it. Little Richard's eyebrows, Elvis and his mascara, Bowie and his miming, Carol Pope's shoulder pads, Iggy's fluidity of movement -- it's like Iggy is made entirely of elastic bands. Oh, I could watch him perform for days. You gotta feel me!

I aspire to this fluidity and have tried to capture his intensity in the Iggy is Dog video. I think Iggy would get a kick out of it. I would love to collaborate with him. We could make I'm Only Five Foot One -- I won't grow anymore! My philosophy is "you can only ask". If he says "no" then I go to the grave knowing I tried.

**NH: It certainly doesn't hurt to ask. Maybe you could contact him through Peaches. She's a Toronto musician and she did a duet with him a few years back. Plus I've heard that Iggy is very knowledgeable about art and culture. Someone was quizzing him about Canada in an interview and he mentioned Jeff Wall. And you are totally right**



**about Iggy as a performer, that clip from the Cincinnati show is amazing. I remember seeing him on the Zombie Birdhouse tour in 1982. He was playing in a small venue, maybe just a couple hundred people, but he was riveting: one of those performers who can immediately captivate an audience. At a certain point he pissed off the band. The drummer kicked over his kit and walked off stage, and the bass player and the guitar player followed. But Iggy went on without them, singing I Wanna Be Your Dog a cappella. So how about it, Garry? Do you want to be Iggy's dog?**

GLJO: I'll lay right down in my favourite place...

**NH: Ha ha ha! Oh Garry, you are such a naughty little doggie! Maybe Iggy will read this and get in touch with you...**

GLJO: Can you imagine me being Iggy's dog? Wow. I already have the perfect outfit, too: bare chest with my silver PVC trousers, my pink rhinestone cat collar and leash, black eyeliner and painted claws! A true p-mosexual tart I am! Let me tell you, people go crazy when I wear that outfit.

**NH: Anyway, what's coming up for you now? Do you have any shows or projects in the works?**

GLJO: I have a group show coming up at the Tom Thomson Gallery in June 2010 (curated by Kim Fullerton). I'm working on some new video stuff -- I just did a short piece with the Velvet Underground and I'm acting in a video with the amazing artist Jenn E Norton this month. I am experimenting in the studio with a new sculpture technique that I call open up and bleed. I'll let you know how that goes.

When Elvis was at his most beautiful, the '68 Comeback Special for NBC – just 9 years before he OD'ed

(which I state as everyone loves to focus on "Fat Elvis" but that was just the last 3 years of his life) -- he sang "Trying to Get to You":

Of that performance, Greil Marcus said: "If there ever was a music that bleeds, this is it." I'm trying to get to that place. I'm singing: lalala lala lala la.

And I'm singing: Who left the fucking door wide open???





To learn more about Garry-Lewis James Osterberg visit him at:

<http://www.myspace.com/garrylewisjamesosterberg>  
<http://twitter.com/garrylewisjo>  
<http://www.paulpetro.com/projects/2009/osterberg.shtml>  
[www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)  
Sound Bites

Garry-Lewis James Osterberg creates sculptural works that exude an air of spontaneity and expressivity. Although formally complex, his works remain sensitive and intimate befitting the artist's personal sense of scale. GLJO's unique approach to artmaking suggests an almost ghoulish admixture of Alberto Giacometti with Jeff Koons.

- Christopher Eamon, NYC, 2009

Garry-Lewis James Osterberg should really be looked at as a multi-media artist. When his contributions to the worlds of theatre, music and contemporary art are accessed together we realize that what we're witnessing is the emergence of a true renaissance dog.

- Noam Gonick, Winnipeg, 2009

Garry-Lewis James Osterberg - in his work and his iconic image -- is richly resonant -- running back and forth as he does between charm and critique, covering all points between, and raising meaningful issues left, right and centre. GLJO is an artist who connects with the public without being stupid -- high quality content with popular appeal -- while pursuing a successful innovative artistic process of social engagement.

- Myra Davies, Vancouver, 2009

#### Photo Credits

Raw Power (2009) ©Garry-Lewis James Osterberg - Collection of Kim Fullerton  
Photo: Shari Hatt

Brown Bear #1 (2006) ©Garry-Lewis James Osterberg - Private Collection  
Photo: Shari Hatt  
Garry-Lewis James Osterberg with Exploding Bee #1 (2007)  
Photo: Shari Hatt

*Nelson Henricks was born in Bow Island, Alberta and is a graduate of the Alberta College of Art (1986). He moved to Montréal in 1991, where he received a BFA from Concordia University (1994). Henricks lives and works in Montréal, where he has taught at Concordia University (1995 - present), McGill University (2001-2003) and Université du Québec à Montréal (1999, 2003). He has also taught at the University of Toronto (2003). A musician, writer, curator and artist, Henricks is best known for his videotapes, which have been exhibited worldwide. A focus on his video work was presented at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, as part of the Video Viewpoints series (2000). His writings have been published in Fuse, Public, Coil magazines, and in the anthologies "So, To Speak" (Editions Artex, 1999), "Lux" (YYZ Press, 2000) and "Caught in the Act" (YYZ Press, 2004). With Steve Reinke, Henricks coedited an anthology of artist's video scripts entitled "By the Skin of Their Tongues" (YYZ Press, 1997). Henricks was the recipient of the Bell Canada Award in Video Art (2002) and the Board of Governors' Alumni Award of Excellence from the Alberta College of Art and Design (2005).*

*Garry-Lewis James Osterberg is a soft sculpture artist and carpet dancer from Quebec. Formerly "Chico", GLJO was rescued from the Montreal SPCA in 2004 after a tumultuous upbringing. He has been creating art ever since. GLJO is neutered and weighs in at 5 pounds wet. Incredibly, in March 2007, he spent 2.5 days running around alone and naked in downtown Toronto - surviving the mean streets of Queen and Spadina. He managed to parlay this incredible journey into his first solo exhibition: I'm Worth A Million In Prizes. GLJO considers himself the re-embodiment of Iggy Pop. He is constantly mistaken for Iggy.*

# MATERIAL TRACES: VIDEO, SOUND & DRAWING BY NIKKI FORREST

Nikki Forrest | Mél Hogan

*Nikki Forrest is a multidisciplinary artist, born in Scotland, raised in Saskatchewan, and based in Montreal. Her work explores ideas related to memory, perception, and failure. After nearly 20 years of working with video, her practice has recently expanded to include drawing and sound. This winter, we spoke about some of her interests and recent projects.*

## **MH: What interests you as an artist?**

NF: Resistance has always been a preoccupation. What are some of the different forms resistance can take? Can this include small gestures or ways of thinking? Material processes? Silence? These questions interest me.

I'm also very interested in perception. How do we know what we think we know? How do we work with assumptions to interpret our surroundings? And how are the senses shaped by assumptions?

As an artist is it possible to create situations or gestures where those assumptions are challenged at a sensory level - or at least made visible. Is it possible to create ruptures in the surface and flow of apparently seamless structures.

I'm interested in how the senses are one of the primary ways of interacting with the world and with other people. These ways of knowing are under-acknowledged and probably under-used. So many things are set up to disconnect us from our embodied physical self and to dampen our senses.

I'm also interested in those things specific to art-making, which differ from other types of communication, for example, material processes and how ideas are transformed when materialized or worked through in some kind of physical way.

Failure is an interesting part of this kind of production. This is where creativity comes from, and goes against mainstream ideas about success, or, at least, the appearance of success and "keeping it all together".

I read this thing on an online discussion about drawing recently, taken from a book by James Elkins' on the nature of seeing, called "The Object Stares Back." One chapter of the book talks about the pathology of blindness as a way to think about visual perception. Elkins writes, "A mark is born in blindness, and as pictures are drawn they slowly emerge from blind-





ness without ever leaving it behind. There is partial blindness in every drawing as the image hovers between the real and the imaginary, and a finished drawing preserves that balance.” I like this idea of hovering between two things - never complete, absolute or definitive. For me, art comes from a desire to communicate, especially through the senses, and the understanding that communication in whatever form is never complete and always partly a failure.

**MH: Can you expand on how failure ties into your work... is it about content or process or both? How do you know failure? What does failure look or feel like?**

NF: Failure looks incomplete but full of potential. I'm thinking about it in terms of both process and content. It's a productive part of process if it's experimental and transformative, which it has to be if the work is going to be interesting. In terms of content, if you think about something like memory: failure, loss, repetition and change are features of memory that interest me. These elements are things I try to work with formally and materially in video.

Instead of telling a story about memory I'm more interested in trying to find material processes that enact it in some way. The residue of that enactment becomes the work. I don't usually think about form and content separately.

From my own experience, an example is immersion in an unknown language. You can't really communicate, but there are so many interesting things that arise out of that experience.

As you learn more of the language, and you begin to communicate more, you lose some of the other heightened perceptions that came from the inability to communicate verbally.

As a proper adult woman, I'm a complete failure in so many ways! But that just implies that categories

are too narrowly defined. Being a failure in terms of traditional definitions usually provides an interesting perspective.

Something like silence could be understood as the failure to communicate or it could be thought of as a very specific form of communication, or as a specific answer, or type of response.

**MH: Based on this idea of memory as process, talk to me about your video work...**

NF: I'm interested in how a video can enact rather than represent a concept. Beyond the limitations of narrative and storytelling, which can also be really interesting, what are some other ways to work?

My older work used a lot of text and voice-over. I was attempting to use it in a poetic and associative, rather than descriptive way. I've gradually moved towards more abstract, non-narrative and other conceptual approaches.

For example, is a recent video called "School Colours from Memory". As a starting point, I was thinking about how we remember something like color, especially when it's associated with a particular time and place. Without looking at a reference, I mixed colors in a video editing software to produce a series of blank color screens with very slow dissolves between each one. A lot of other shades, tones and digital artifacts arise out of the dissolves.

The translation of the original colors, through memory and then through technology, produces new information. The sound track is based on pure sine waves, using frequencies that are roughly equivalent through a mathematical translation to the frequencies for each color. Again, long slow dissolves between each sound, produces additional tones, noise and interference. My intention is that the end result is somehow meditative and emotionally engaging, as well as evocative of the way memory works.

**MH: Why is resistance important in your work? Does this stem from a feminist or queer politic?**

NF: Yes, for sure. Growing up queer in the 70's in Saskatoon I really felt like an outsider. There were some threatening aspects to that. When I finally got out of high school and into University, I became involved with this "alternative music society". This was basically a group of outcasts, punks, queers and a few art students. We organized concerts, and hung out in one of the local discos, which happened to have a slightly alternative DJ. This was really a big thing for me. Queer was not the focus, but we all identified with the idea of "alternative" around music and DIY aesthetics. But queer was ok in that circle. Nobody cared. We were into Bauhaus, Cabaret Voltaire, Joy Division, The Clash. It was around 1982 - 83. Eventually through art history classes, I started reading feminist theory. I was captivated by things like bell hook's, "Choosing the Margin as a space of radical openness", which I somehow related to the more idealistic possibilities of Punk. There was a kind of freedom and openness in our little Saskatoon version of "Alternative", which was a lot of stuff mixed together. I'm not sure if this happens in the same way in larger cities. Obviously, some versions of punk were/are very homophobic and misogynistic, but for us, it meant a lot of creative play and experimentation with identity/appearance/aesthetics. I love local small town versions of things like that.

If you were a punk, a mod, or a new romantic, you might be the only one, so you could really make up your own version. In fact, you had to! I think play and nonsense can be powerful forms of resistance. I'm still very idealistic!

**MH: What inspires you to create?**

NF: A desire to communicate and my failure to communicate in other ways. A desire to stay in touch with sensory ways of knowing. Also, a basic interest in ma-

terial processes: the pleasure of working with images, sound, film, drawing, etc, the transformation of my own thinking that happens.

I also want to make things that people like at some level: I want to touch people and make them feel something.

**MH: What are some specific projects you've been working on?**

NF: BÊTES NOCTURNES

I've always been interested in sound as part of my video work, particularly how sound operates with images, and what happens in the space between the two. Recently, I participated in a couple of collaborative performances with a group called, "Bêtes Nocturnes". Nancy Tobin initiated this project for a show at La Centrale last summer (2009).

I was really inspired by this collaboration. I understood something new about live performance and collaboration, and about listening, playing together, and how the whole can end up being a lot more than just the sum of its parts.

**MH: So is collaboration fairly new in your practice? How is it different from working solo?**

NF: I have tried a few times. It does not always work, but I'd like to do more. When it works, it takes my thinking somewhere new, and shows me new ways of looking at what I'm already doing.

**MH: What are other projects you are working on right now?**

NF: PORTRAITS AND ERRORS

Another series is loosely based on the idea of portraits: portraits of places, portraits of ideas and self-portraits, and the idea that portraits are never complete.





## PARK.

I've been collecting video footage in public parks in different cities. I'm interested in, for one thing, the limits of what you can still do in public space. When will someone tell you to stop recording and why? It's quite different in different cities.

Trying not to be obtrusive to anyone's privacy or personal space, I set up the camera as a kind of frame for observation. What happens if you look at one thing or in one direction for a long time, with a kind of detached but present and focused observation? I thought of this as an experiment in looking and occupying public space, and I would go back to the same locations many times. I wanted to find out the kinds of rules and limitations would ensue, and how the public space of the park was controlled, and how it was like a "stage".

## FALL / DROP / CRAWL / FLIP

This video series is based on studio performances exploring perception and space. They are experiments where you can observe yourself, wondering and questioning which way is "up". It's pretty obvious what's happening in some of the sequences, but what's interesting is to observe your brain and your perception in action: knowing, wondering, questioning, and being confused.

## **MH: Tell me about these drawings.**

NF: I started drawing again a couple of years ago. After working so much with video, I wanted to do something more direct and less technical. I like how drawing is a trace of process, of activity, of time, or of a thought.

I'm interested in processes like repeating one kind of mark to build up a structure. I'm looking for different processes that are linked to ideas, like self-replicating systems, patterns and mutations, and marking systems that allude to some kind of blur or hybrid between man-made and "natural" systems.



**MH: You had mentioned that the BEAST theme appealed to you. Can you tell me more about the role of the beast in your life and work?**

NF: I'm fascinated by the idea of an unknown creature.

The part of you that is animal and that "knows" through the body and through the senses, and the part that exists on the edge of everything structured, controlled, and socialized.

I also recently had this strange experience. I caught some kind of parasite and saw first-hand what happens when you don't meet the established criteria of the medical system.

If there's something wrong with you physically and you know it, but it's not immediately apparent or visible in a recognized way, people start to think it's all in your head, imagined, a psychosis. It's interesting.

Even if your symptoms are visible, some people will see something while others will see nothing even though they are looking at the same thing. Perception is shaped to a large extent by assumptions; by whatever knowledge systems the person is working with. It becomes hard to think, or to see anything outside of that system, unless you are really open, and tuned into your senses.

What I experienced is really nothing compared to what many people go through. It just gave me a small glimpse at some of the assumptions and power structures in the medical system. A lot of artists have worked on this in great depth. I'm not sure where to take these thoughts yet; it just makes me see the whole system in a different way. Where is the beast, anyway? Inside? Outside? Is it in me, or is it me? Is it a self-replicating system? A pattern, a virus, a technological mutation? Or am I just trying, like everyone else, to negotiate living in its belly.

**MH: Will your future art confront the beast?**

NF: I'm not big on confrontation, but I'm interested in exploring this blur between "natural" and "technological", as well as the part of us that is "animal." The beast is always there, one way or another.

*Nikki Forrest is a video, sound and visual artist based in Montreal. Her short experimental videos have been shown at festivals thought North America and Europe including The Oberhausen Short Film Festival (Germany), the Mix Festival (New York), Space Junk at The Lux Center (London), and Signal and Noise (Vancouver). Her 2009 video "Fall / drop / crawl / flip" will be shown in March 2010 at the Festival International du Films Sur l'Art (Montreal). She will also present her work in conversation with curator Nicole Gingras in February 2010 at Group Intervention Video, Montreal.*

# NATURAL ARTIFICE: ELINOR WHIDDEN AND 12 POINT BUCK

Dayna McLeod

*This essay was commissioned and first published by Gallery 44 in the publication, Natural Artifice.*

Featuring photographs, installation and video projection, Elinor Whidden and 12 Point Buck charge head-on into deconstructing and assembling nature through artifice, representation, kitsch farce, consumption criticism and epic landscape in their shared exhibition at Gallery 44. While the collaborative duo of 12 Point Buck uses artifice and paper stand-ins of nature to question our nostalgic relationship to nature, Elinor Whidden inserts herself into Canada's heroic frontier history to circumvent and transform it into a post-apocalyptic future that quietly waits for car culture to die.

Elinor Whidden maximizes the breathtaking reality of nature and capitalizes on the authentic Canadian landscape within her series, Ford Explorer. Whidden subverts the automobile industry's agenda by imagining its demise, as it mysteriously disappears into Canada's bucolic landscapes leaving behind only innocuous remnants. Windshield wipers, side-view mirrors and the steel belting in tires are the only things left to scar Whidden's sublime wilderness. Her questioning of the

colonialist practice of recording history in grandiose portraits of explorers and settlers gazing proprietarily over the landscape parallels the domination of the automotive industry over our contemporary car consumer culture.

Within her sculptural, performance and photographic work, Whidden questions colonialist representations of history and humanity's conquest over nature by infiltrating the very scenes she depicts with the ultimate symbol of progress: the car, or more specifically, car parts. Carrying, dragging and portaging windshield wipers deep into the Canadian wilderness in knapsacks, Whidden follows the fur trade routes of early trappers, traders and explorers to create Windshield Wiper Tent deep in the wilderness of northern Ontario. Whidden's lean-to shelter becomes a farcical, ineffective, obsessive accumulation of car parts of the past in a post-apocalyptic future where nature has regained control, featuring Whidden as the sole survivor. The contradiction in function cannot be lost on us here: both cumbersome and useless without the context of a car, 150 pounds of windshield wipers carried on Whidden's back like bundles of fur over a portage, become a satirical adventure in endurance,

with the resulting Windshield Wiper Tent nestled in the open landscape our reward. As the car industry slips into bankruptcy [1] and driving habits change, a future without cars may in fact be realized within our lifetime, and Whidden's prophetic wish of such a future may actually come true.

Capturing big skies, epic vistas, dense wilderness and the natural magnitude of the Canadian landscape, Whidden situates herself in her images simultaneously as an historical figure and a post-apocalyptic explorer. At first glance, we are drawn to the epic proportions of Whidden's images; Sunny Lake Ridge grandly showcases the vastness of the deep blue skies peppered with soft billowing clouds, while Smoke Lake and Georgian Bay feature a confident, masterful figure gazing over a rough and rugged landscape. The formal composition and feeling of vastness is reminiscent of paintings of the Canadian wilderness by the Group of Seven, Tom Thomson and Paul Kane. These paintings reflect a late 19th and early 20th century Romantic dream of a new frontier and a humble attitude toward the majesty of nature in the untouched landscapes of the Canadian wilds. When we examine Whidden's photographs more closely, we see anachronistic details that lead us to ask questions that complicate a seemingly colonialist depiction of our conquerable country. Questions arise about time, place, car culture, consumption and how we will survive when the last vehicle fails to start.

Dressed in t-shirt and cargo pants, Whidden strikes a slight pose in the traditional colonialist position, making post-apocalyptic man, a woman. Challenging the narrative structure and accuracy of our Canadian history and how we create narrative out of our collective memories, Whidden's lone figure travels through the epic vistas of northern Ontario in both the distant past and distant future. Armed with a musket fashioned with a car's side-mirror, our heroine can see her past as readily as she sees her future, and guards against it.

Whidden cleverly references colonialist ideals mirrored in car industry rhetoric that we are bombarded with daily through television, print, and web branding propaganda; "built for the open road" [2], "moving forward" [3] and "no boundaries" [4] are slogans that attempt to position the car as a means of escape, freedom and adventure, and propose that you can just as easily experience nature by looking at it from the comfort of your car as you can by experiencing it first hand. Car windows and windshields act as mediator between a visceral or authentic experience of nature, allowing the driver to assume their rightful place as colonizer and to dominate the landscape simply by driving through it.

It seems fitting then, that Whidden's occupation of this industrialist/colonialist position within her work should occur in her fantasy of their demise. Her photographs are documents of a process of her own exploration of colonialist representations of Canada, history, nature, conquest and consumption. The resulting performances ambitiously take a road less travelled through the act of walking, while playfully satirizing a romanticized new frontier and a modern day car culture that is trying desperately not to fall apart.

Where Elinor Whidden parodies the codes and signs of epic documentations of landscape, 12 Point Buck deconstructs representations of nature through artifice and examine our culture's disneyfication [5] of wildlife in their photographic, installation and video work. Using the codes and language of a consumer culture that places kitsch on the mantelpiece beneath the big game, mounted moose head trophy, this Lethbridge Alberta collaborative duo challenges our experience of nature by questioning how we construct these experiences in the first place. Their work explores our longing to mesh with a collective nostalgia of nature and its artifice. They play with stylized pop representations of wildlife to examine how we romanticize, fetishize and trivialize the very ecosystems on which our lives depend. They begin by taking us on

a search for the wild via dioramas situated in the vitrines of Gallery 44. Images of found landscape paintings and photos form the backdrop of their whimsical world. 3-D paper tole [6] figurine animals complement the scene, playfully pulling at our heartstrings while revealing the absurdity of their (re)construction. Soothed by these familiar representations of nature, 12 Point Buck reminds us of a shared figurative language of craft, allegory and metaphor that has transformed nature through our consumption to comfort us in our growing distance from the natural experience. These sanitized interpretations in paper, paint and plaster have transported us to an unquestioned homogenized landscape that has become a substitute for the real thing. Kitsch cultural objects are photographed, cut apart, and reassembled by 12 Point Buck to stand-in for real wilderness, focusing our attention on the artifice of nature's representation, and how we accept that representation despite it being airbrushed and constructed just as liberally as a supermodel on the cover of a fashion magazine.

But this distancing of the natural experience has a much darker side. "The whole Walt Disney philosophy eats out of your hand with these pretty little sentimental creatures in grey fur coats. For my own part, I believe that behind these smiling eyes there lurks a cold, ferocious beast fearfully stalking us." [7] Although Baudrillard is talking about the twisted and dysfunctional relationship with nature that Disney has inflicted on us, and perhaps the corporate impetus of Disney itself, this statement also communicates how distanced we've become from our experience of the wild, and its potentially sinister repercussions. There are no helpful woodland creatures with sewing, cooking, and performance skills in real-life; according to YouTube, Pepsi drinking Thai monkeys, obese rabid squirrels, and grocery store gate-crashing bears are the closest we have to these artificial stand-ins, and they don't sing.

This disneyfication sanitizes and sentimentalizes our relationship with the wild, resulting in a dulled ex-





perience of the real thing. We need to look no further than Werner Herzog's *Grizzly Man* [8] to see the harsh consequences of this numbing down of the wild in a real-life context. By removing the blood and gore of humanity's confrontation with nature, we anthropomorphize the unpredictable and threatening aspects of the wild to make it safe. But this safety is conditional on our buying into this new version of our relationship with nature. Enter *Deer Me*, 12 Point Buck's 5-minute video projection that features a deer/man hybrid creature with fur coat and rubber deer mask awkwardly slipping and sliding through the barren, snow-spotted scrub brush landscape of southern Alberta. We hear the footsteps of the cameraperson; they are our eyes as we stalk the deer man on his precarious travels through the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. We hunt him, we observe him and we consume him, boldly assuming our "rightful" place in the deer man's habitat. He is both of nature and not: representative with the signs and symbols of the wild. He is a bastardized creature of the landscape who is a disjunction of our expectations of nature and the reality of nature; a fissure of these expectations that is hunted, fragile, precarious and temporary.

12 Point Buck reveal the vast difference between consumption in the wild as a means of survival, butt-up against our consumption culture that gorges on excess and is manifested in objects intent on decorating our homes. Their work points to how we have cultivated a shallow and unhealthy relationship to nature that has instilled a forgetfulness of survival and the reality of actually living in nature; how we have evolved into a culture that permits a person to clear-cut land for their mansion on the hill and fill it with landscape paintings, Bambi figurines and wildlife photographs and call themselves a nature lover or environmentalist. We have boiled down the natural world into simplified terms that permit the exploitation of the land and mediate our experience of what is nature.

This false sense of security has distanced us from the original experience of the wild so much so that we











must make a point of visiting nature. We take camping trips. We go on car safaris. We visit zoos. Postcards, souvenirs and images captured through the lenses of our digital cameras and cell phones also mediate our experience of nature. As we become more out of touch with the wilderness and are pushed further and further away from it into urban landscapes wrought with cement, hanging wires and high-rises, our experience of nature necessarily becomes more and more mediated by technology.

Yet despite this mediation, our yearning to bond with our natural environment remains unsatisfied. But which version of nature are we yearning for? It is here where 12 Point Buck so cheekily interferes with our memory by stirring feelings of loss, hope, humour and adventure. They easily access our collective memory through familiar artifacts and crafting techniques from childhood like ceramic figurines transformed by paper tole or three-dimensional decoupage. They layer nostalgic artifacts in their work to stimulate the viewer into a sense of heartfelt longing. By rewriting these narratives and examining their effect on memory, 12 Point Buck asks if we are experiencing nature through our own actions in the wild, or plugging into a collective consciousness that remembers through artifice and representation. They use these nostalgic artifacts to situate the artifice of nature as nature.

Both 12 Point Buck and Elinor Whidden question the authorship of shared memory through Canadiana kitsch and epic landscape. Incorporating installation into their practices, they create rich and lush photographs and tableaus that speak to our sense of history and our relationship to the land and its inhabitants. Their aesthetic critiques our romantic relationship with the wilderness, the sentimentality we have for the wild, and our nostalgic experience of nature. With tongue-in-cheek precision, they approach their subjects from different angles, united through a formal sense of beauty, and critical thinking.

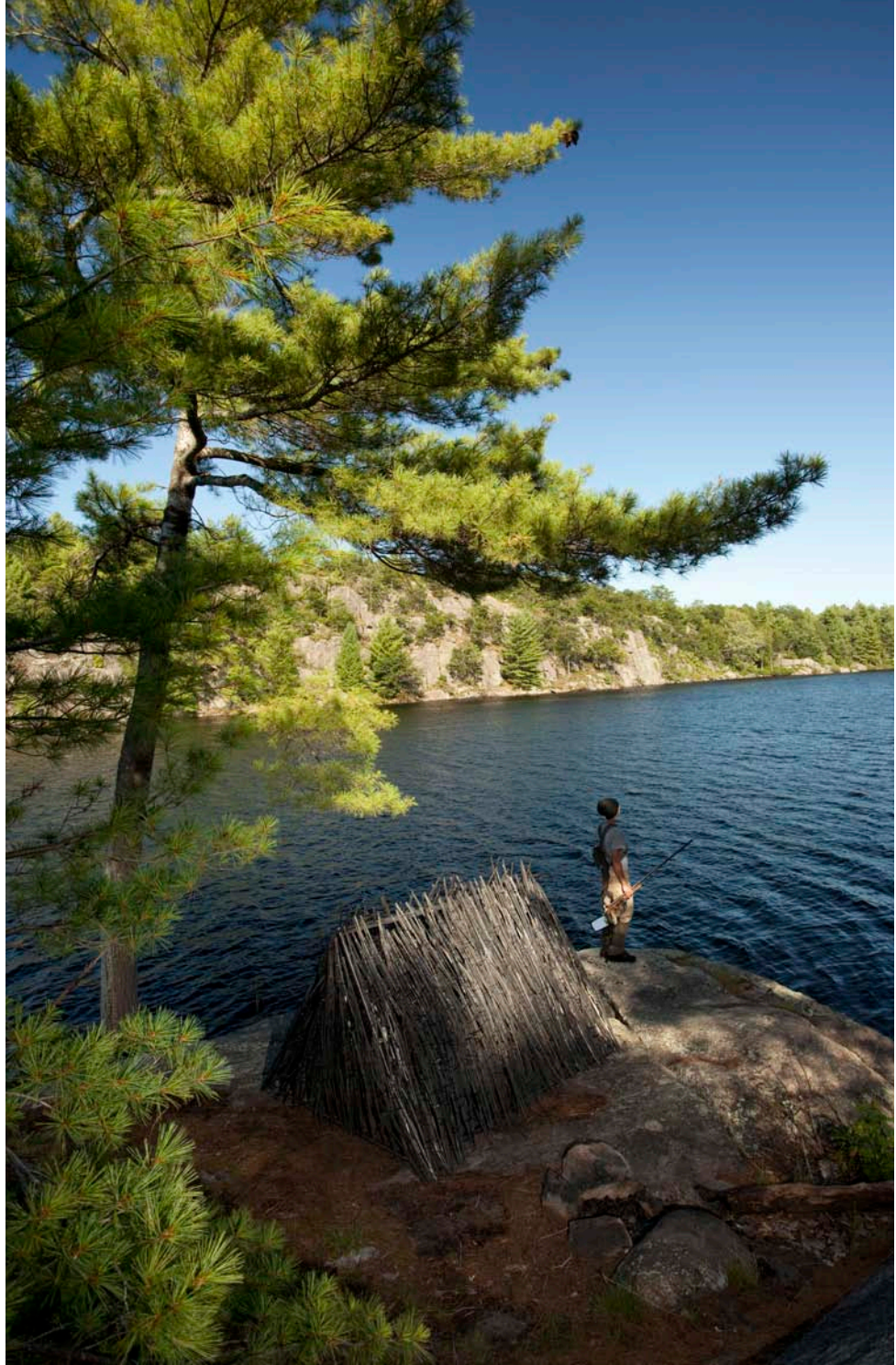
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*Elinor Whidden has exhibited throughout North America, recently showing work in Nova Scotia, Ontario, and Buffalo NY. Whidden's exhibition Ford Explorer continues her quest to find a way to survive and adapt in a world increasingly threatened by contemporary car culture.*

*12 Point Buck is a collaborative duo comprised of Lethbridge artists Chai Duncan and Leila Armstrong. They have been working collaboratively for two years as 12 Point Buck. In 2008 their first video, Deer Foraging was shown as Part of the Toronto Urban Film Festival (aka TUFF). From October through November 2009, they worked in situ at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery where they also launched their first publication, 12 Point Buck.*

*Dayna McLeod is a writer and intermedia artist whose work is ripe with humour and socially charged situations. She is in the second year of 52 Pick-Up, (<http://52pickupvideos.com>) a video website where participants make one video a week for an entire year. <http://daynarama.com/>*



# THE TRANSLATOR'S CONUNDRUM

*Daryl Vocat*

The Translator's Conundrum is a series of screen prints that explores the creation and maintenance of ideology. It looks at the intersections between natural, cultural and social influences, and how an understanding of these concepts influences who we are, what we identify with, and how we act.

The Conundrum looks at how information is received, interpreted and transformed during communication. Rather than viewing artistic practice as a form of unique individual expression, The Conundrum asserts that art is a form of communication, and that a key element of creative practices is the act of translation. The translator consciously collects, interprets and recombines information in a process of evolution. In order to demonstrate how ideas are understood, and to partake in a continuum of knowledge, a story is told, edited, and told again in a different way. Through reconfiguration and retelling, different stories and ideas are revealed, and a more complex, irreducible body of knowledge is developed.

This body of work takes information and ideas from disparate sources, and brings them together as a fragmented, yet unified, whole. As a result, The Transla-

tor's Conundrum acts as a form of ideological collage. Rather than striving for the creation of something completely unique, this work strives to look at old information in new ways. As such, reconfiguration is both the process, and subject matter, of The Translator's Conundrum. On the one hand, it looks at information to affirm and support, and on the other, to question and challenge.

Notions of identity and difference are explored by using images of animals. In this context, animals provide a connection to the natural world, or to an understanding of the natural world. Images of animals, through their difference from humans, help to articulate and define concepts of both 'sameness' and 'otherness.' By including natural elements in a culturally-determined setting, The Conundrum questions the division of nature and culture into separate entities. Instead of asking whether behaviour and identity are based on biological or cultural determinants, assuming the two are opposites, this work suggests that nature and culture are part of a complex, interwoven continuum.

The act of translation is both an impossibility, and a necessity. An impossibility because language inevitably



fails, or betrays authorial intentions through misunderstanding and reduction. And a necessity because communication, and the evolution of ideas depend on translation in order to proliferate and evolve. Within the leap from self to other, from assertion to interpretation, behind the desire to communicate, lies the translator's conundrum.

This body of work was created in 2006/2007.

For more information: **<http://www.darylvoat.com>** or email: **[daryl@darylvoat.com](mailto:daryl@darylvoat.com)**

*Daryl Voat, born in Regina, Saskatchewan, is a visual artist living and working in Toronto. He completed his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at the University of Regina in Saskatchewan, and his Master of Fine Arts degree at York University in Toronto. His main focus is printmaking, specifically screen printing. He works out of Toronto's Open Studio. His work has been acquired by the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, The Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop in NYC, The Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery permanent collection in British Columbia, The Saskatchewan Arts Board permanent collection, and the City of Toronto Fine Art collection.*







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SAME

Valerie  
Curry



# LA BELLE ET LA BÊTE

Valérie Sury

*Valérie Sury est une artiste française, peintre, sculpteure et dessinatrice. Formée à l'École des Beaux-arts, elle expose depuis 1994, dans diverses expositions et lieux prestigieux : Bordeaux (la Galerie du Triangle), Michigan (Lakeside Gallery), Chicago (March Gallery)). Elle a aussi été récipiendaire d'une distinction spéciale du jury du Forum des Itinéraires d'artistes organisé par le Conseil Régional d'Aquitaine.*

*Valérie Sury vit et travaille à Montréal où elle vend des livres du Dernier Cri, légendaire éditeur français de l'international underground. Art Kills Texas!, son nouveau projet, est actuellement présenté dans différentes galeries et a été exposé à la maison de la culture de Pointe aux Trembles (Montréal).*

*La composition complexe de ses toiles peintes à l'acrylique et son application méticuleuse des textures et des couleurs rappellent, par leur intensité, l'art brut. L'aspect pictural de ses dessins mélange judicieusement expressions enfantines, graffitis délirants et bande dessinée sauvage et hybride.*

*Les sources d'inspiration de Valérie Sury sont multiples. Elle s'inspire d'artistes comme Keith Haring et Jean-Michel Basquiat, mais aussi de la bande dessinée et des ex-voto et icônes de la culture pop américaine. Quant aux formes figuratives qu'elle crée en utilisant la technique du papier mâché, elles rappellent le travail de Niki de St-Phalles et de Louise Bourgeois.*

*Dans ses livres d'artiste, Valérie Sury réunit ses esquisses et les croquis de ses carnets de voyage. Autobiographiques et ponctués de dessins incisifs et de récits tranchants, ils transposent sa vision du monde. Il est tentant de décrire ses livres d'artiste, pour la plupart sérigraphiés, comme relevant autant de la bande dessinée d'auteur actuelle que des créations purement arty et graphiques.*





# SUCH BEASTLY LOVE: ANIMALS AND AFFECT IN A NEOLIBERAL WORLD

*Yasmin Nair*

## **I. From Russia, with Cute and Fuzzy Dog-Love**

A striking bronze statue of a dog sits in the Mendeleevskaya subway station of Moscow. The city has been home to roving packs of semi-feral canines since the Soviet era, and many of them have made their homes in the warmer spots of the stations. In the old days, the dogs lived in the industrial zones of the city and often found their food while sifting through garbage. With neoliberalism came drastic changes in the city's landscape. The old factories became shopping malls and apartment buildings, and the dogs were now compelled to learn a few new tricks. These included learning to travel back and forth between the city and the suburbs on the subway and riding escalators.

An article and video from The Sun in 2009 shows the animals dog-napping on subway seats inside cars. Malchik, the dog now immortalised in bronze, is described as "gentle" in a Wall Street Journal article which also reported that she was repeatedly stabbed to death by a crazed fashion model: "[H]orrified celebrities and ordinary city residents raised money" for the memorial.

*WSJ article with photo of dog statue:*  
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121123197068805001.html>

*Video (also from the WSJ):*

<http://www.noob.us/miscellaneous/russian-stray-dogs-ride-the-subway/>

There is so much to ponder in this story of the mad model and the unsuspecting dog. The words evoke a sadening image and the sounds of a crazy woman stabbing a helpless dog to death. And yet, it is unusual to hear of a dog being stabbed. More often, we hear of dogs being clubbed or beaten or kicked to death. This story of stabbing implies a history of deliberate intent, of passion gone awry.

The affective register continues with the accompanying photograph of the dog's statue being caressed by a woman and the flowers that lie at its base. It is unclear whether the dog got her name before or after her death. What is clear is that Malchik's bronze memorial, shrouded in affect, effectively recuperates a narrative of dogness into a story about a city's beloved pet.

As it turns out, the Moscow dogs are not at all pet-like. They have finely attuned their behaviour to maximum effect. In a WSJ video, we see one of them stand in front of a couple some minutes, and then turn away, having quickly discerned that they are not going to share their food. Zoologists who have studied them note that they

have learnt to not nuzzle or touch humans, knowing that their physical proximity is not always welcome. While they are not exactly wild, they are also not the kind of cute and cuddly dogs you would want to take home to your child.

The statue of Milchak mitigates that loss of doggy-affect because it is endearingly posed sitting down and looking upwards at an invisible human master,— even though she never had one. Rather than standing and staring at us, as the dog in the WSJ video does, she sits as if at someone's feet and looks up. In death, the stray dog is domesticated.

All traces of ferality are made to vanish, replaced by the bronze warmth of a domestic pet for the whole city. But such a vanishing of animality into the affective register of universal petness comes with a cost to us. As the following sections will show, our affective relationship to animals enables and structures neoliberalism.

## **II. From Animals to Pets: A History of Love, Fidelity, and Suffering**

The Moscow dogs are not atypical even in today's world. Such roving packs are common sights in cities like Calcutta and Delhi which, despite their recent ascendancy into neoliberalism, are still burdened with the kind of economic inequality that makes the lives of wild and stray dogs a metaphor for the kinds of lives endured by many of their residents. Indeed, some of the fascination with the Moscow dogs (the news story made its way around the internet) may have to do with the uneasy sense that the city is not supposed to function like one in the "third world."

Such dogs would likely have been common in England until well into the 19th century. In the U.S, suburbia has brought with it a need to possess animal companions and also a sharp increase in the breeding — and miniaturising — of dogs and cats into forms and shapes that would be unrecognisable to an average 19th century urban or rural citizen. In Charles Dickens' novel *Oliver Twist*, the villain Bill Sykes is accompanied by an equally villainous bulldog

Bulleye whose loyalty to his master remains unchanged even after numerous beatings. But this image of Bullseye bears no resemblance to the dog we now know.

<http://www.regencybulldog.com/history.html>

Bull baiting was a popular sport in Medieval England, and the dogs used in these events were gradually bred to best enable them to tackle their combatants. As is evident from the images of the period, the bulldog of an earlier time had longer and sturdier legs. Today's bulldog, with its lower jaw far outreaching the upper, the multiple extraneous folds covering much of its face and the short stubby legs that go nowhere fast is a cartoon of a dog.

The history of animals turning into pets designed to do no more than look cute while being (often, but not always) lavished with attention is inextricably linked to the history of the animal rights movement. That latter history forms the riveting tale of Kathryn Shevelow's *For the Love of Animals: The History of the Animal Protection Movement*.

The focus of Shevelow's book is the Ill-Treatment of Cattle Act of 1822, described as "the first national law anywhere in the world, passed by a democratically elected legislature which dealt specifically and entirely with cruelty to animals." But the Act took decades to come to pass, and Shevelow provides us histories of the various public and philosophical discourses that made it possible, along with biographies of the men and women who kept up the pressure to ensure that animals were actually seen as deserving of rights and freedom from harm. These included the famed beauty and early animal rights philosopher Margaret Cavendish, and Richard Martin, who helped pass the Act and was among the founders of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Shevelow is careful to give us the histories of lesser-known but equally diligent activists like Arthur Broome, who called the first meeting that led to the SPCA and spent much of his life toiling in penury for his cause.

It may seem shockingly obvious to us today that animals should be treated without cruelty, given how much of the Western world focuses on animals as a natural part of

rights discourse (whether or not that template of rights can or even should be part of a “natural” discourse of rights is a topic that cannot be explored at length here). But England for a long time was home to the most horrifying forms of cruelty to animals, and bull-baiting was only one manifestation of that. Until the passage of the Act, animals were considered mere property and incapable of feeling pain.

By the eighteenth century, England had earned a reputation as the cruellest nation, based on what foreigners saw of its treatment of animals (my friend J., a historian of the period, is quick to remind me that it was also notoriously cruel towards humans). Carts and coaches were routinely overloaded, and the horses or donkeys that dragged them were badly beaten and crippled. Shewlow gives a telling example of “[o]ne man who had torn a horse’s tongue from its mouth – it is striking how often this particular cruelty was reported in the newspapers during the century – was arrested but, since there was no evidence he had done it to injure the horse’s owner, he was set free.”

The work of prominent writers and reformers like Alexander Pope and Jeremy Bentham was creating more sympathy for the idea that animals had the right not to suffer, which necessitated an acceptance of the idea that they could suffer in the first place. At the same time, people were acquiring animals as pets and keeping them in their homes. Popular empathy towards animals was also greatly enabled by numerous stories about the devotion of beasts to their human companions. In July 1805, a shepherd leading his flock to pasture in the Lake District heard the howling of a dog. Searching for the source of the sound, he eventually came upon a small terrier apparently guarding the decayed and headless body of her master, Charles Gough.

The terrier, named Foxey, became a national heroine and both William Wordsworth and Sir Walter Scott who penned poems to her. Scott’s words in particular are indicative of the strength of the affect engendered by the public’s growing sense that animals could suffer, as well as the increasing tendency to anthropomorphise them:

How long didst thou think that his silence was slumber?  
When the wind waved his garment, how oft didst thou start?

How many long days and long nights didst thou number  
Ere he faded before thee, the friend of thy heart?

The tale of Foxey began what has now become a genre of stories about dog fidelity. For a while, however, the story of her incredible devotion was almost marred by a suggestion that floated about for a while: That she may have actually stayed near Gough’s body in order to sustain herself by eating off his carcass. But this other and darker (and perhaps more realistic) story was quickly squelched as a vicious rumour and Foxey regained her status as the Dog Who Stayed By Her Master Even After Death.

The idea that animals could feel such fidelity and love certainly helped make the case for them as sentient beings worthy of our regard, and this marked a change from a period when animals were tried for crimes against humanity. In 1386, “a sow convicted of murdering a child in Normandy was forced into men’s clothes before being hanged in the public square.” But crimes by animals were not just those that came about by accident or in defense; bestiality was punishable by death (and was a crime in Britain till 1861). In 1677, one Mary Hicks was found guilty of having sex with her dog, based on assertions by her neighbours. In court at the Old Bailey, the dog sealed his fate and hers when he greeted her by wagging his tail and “making motions as it were to kiss her.” Hicks was forced to watch him hang before she herself was executed. As we shall see in later sections, such notions of animal criminality are not entirely absent from today’s public discourse.

With the passage of Martin’s Act and subsequent ones that also ensured the rights of domestic animals, the animal protection movement soon began to gather momentum and legitimacy. In 1835, Princess Victoria, a lover of animals, became a member of the SPCA. She became Queen in 1837 and, in 1840, the SPCA became the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, ending its long and beleaguered history as an organisation struggling to survive.

### III. Be My Beast Forever: Dracula as the Un-Affective Vampire

As animal rights began to expand, so did the vast reaches of the British Empire. Victorians had a sometimes literal feast of animals to pick from, and they included the sort of creatures that stood out for their difference from the natural fauna of Britain: Gorgeously hued peacocks, enormous elephants, and strange creatures like the platypus that looked like they had been stitched together from parts of other beasts. Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, and that and other works in the growing field of evolutionary science fuelled a restless curiosity about the origins of humans – as well as an anxious desire to know and understand the dividing lines between man and beast (and man, indeed, was the sole concern here).

The fiction of the period following *Origin* would reflect the anxiety about origins and tenuousness of the idea that man was the centre of the universe. It would also reflect an anxiety about what the expanding Empire could bring into the nation. In 1886, Robert Louis Stevenson published *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* about a scientist who discovers a way to unleash another and more vicious man within. In 1896, H.G. Wells wrote *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, about a mad scientist's attempts to turn animals into men. Both these novels were about botched scientific experiments and embedded in a combination of suspicion and hope about what science could bring to the world.

While both works explored the concept of a beast or beast-like creature within (or, in Well's book, the man within the beast), it was Bram Stoker who took the fear of the animal within into the supernatural realm in *Dracula*. Borrowing from established European folklore, Stoker created a narrative about a man who could turn into a beast sucking the blood of humans to stay alive, and who would fearsomely enter the heart of the Empire, London from a foreign country, and attempt to establish his residence in it. As Count Dracula, he is at first an extraordinarily gracious human host, greeting Jonathan Harker, the first of the narrators of the story, as he enters his castle in the Carpathians. As the nights go

by, Harker discovers that he is a prisoner of the Count and slowly begins to discern his true identity. His fears are realised when he looks out his window one night and sees Dracula leaving by his own window, but not in the way any human might:

“I was at first interested and somewhat amused, for it is wonderful how small a matter will interest and amuse a man when he is a prisoner. But my very feelings changed to repulsion and terror when I saw the whole man slowly emerge from the window and begin to crawl down the castle wall over that dreadful abyss, face down, with his cloak sprawling out around him like great wings....I saw the fingers and toes grasp the corners of the stones... and by thus using every projection and inequality move downwards with considerable speed, just as a lizard moves along a wall.”

Much of the fear of Dracula comes from the fact of his ability to metamorphosize into other animals. He can change from man to wolf, or from man to bat and back again. In other words, Dracula is not a man with a beast within – he is something else altogether, someone who looks like a man but can change solidly into an actual animal. That makes his human prey much more vulnerable, and it literalises a discourse of anxiety around the beast within.

But what makes Dracula most alarming to his opponents is his lack of affect. Nowhere in Stoker's text is there a hint that he particularly cares for anyone or anything; all are merely future corpses to aid his way to relative freedom in London.

In today's renditions of Dracula or the simulations thereof, we are given hints – and more – of longing and even pain raging within the vampiric breast. Angel, of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* fame and the ubervampire of the millennium, is a tortured soul. He is also a thoroughly modern vampire, given to modernist restraint in his art collection and furnishings and, as Xander once put it, “that whole tall, dark, swishy-coat thing.”

Today's vampire no longer speaks to our anxieties about the beast within. Our representations of them evoke

little more than humans gone slightly awry, essentially people who can change from humans to slightly bumpy-forehead humans, but who stay essentially human nonetheless. Even Dracula, on an episode of Buffy, is now merely a slightly morbid, slightly foolish vampire. Today's vampire is no beast. He has great cheekbones and is a really cool dude. In his stead, animals have been returned to their rightful place.

#### **IV. Translating Temple Grandin: Autism, Animals, and a Bridge to Affect**

What or where, exactly, is the rightful place of animals in a neoliberal world where we can no longer locate them within us or in the supernatural, and where we are engulfed by contradictory narratives and images about animals as pets and as food? The United States in particular stands at a nexus of extreme devotion to household pets and a sharp increase in farmed meat consumption. There are approximately 77.5 million owned dogs and 93.6 million owned cats in this country. In 2009, 22,281 cows were slaughtered, as were 5,800,295 chickens. There are approximately 304,000,000 people in this country.

I do not point out these figures to criticise the fact that we kill some animals for meat while we fetishise others as pets (and some, like rabbits, may function as both). Rather, I want to point to the discordant effects of affect in a country where pet ownership and kindness towards certain animals is valued even as we turn our eyes away from a massive meat industry whose spread and endless dissection of the product it churns out has enabled most of us to forget that there are actually animals involved in the process. The problem with the discordance is not that we eat animals as much as we love them. The problem is that we forget how our attempts to reconcile our contradictions around animals extend economic exploitation of both humans and animals.

The last decade or so has seen the rise in a new kind of food literature. Where food writers of the past revelled in providing gateways to gastronomic travels or wrote cookbooks and treatises on the origins of cuisines, today's food writers are assiduous about pointing to the

failure of the farming and meat industry to provide sustainable and nutritious food and the cruel treatment of animals who are herded and slaughtered in conditions that are as dangerous to us as to them. The overproduction of meat has led to disastrous eruptions of food crises. As a result, organic and supposedly sustainable forms of farming have been gaining attention in the media. Along with this has come some amount of pressure on the commercial meat industry to reform its ways and ensure that its products are as humanely created as possible.

But does any of this really make sense? Is it really possible to create the conditions for "humane slaughter" without perpetuating the disastrous model of overproduction and overconsumption of meat that this country relies on? What does it mean to treat animals in a humane way when we are the humans who lead them to their slaughter? How do we begin to understand what "humane" means in this context?

Temple Grandin, who has become something of a high priestess of the animal rights movement whose name is invoked most in conversations where such questions are asked. Grandin has earned some unique and contradictory distinctions. Besides her job as Associate Professor of Animal Science at Colorado State University, Grandin serves as a consultant to the livestock industry. In 2004, she received the Proggy award from PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals). On its website citing Grandin's work, PETA writes: "Renowned animal scientist Dr. Temple Grandin doesn't seem like the sort of person who would receive PETA's Proggy Award. An associate professor of animal science at Colorado State University, Dr. Grandin consults with the livestock industry and the American Meat Institute on the design of slaughterhouses! However, Dr. Grandin's improvements to animal-handling systems found in slaughterhouses have decreased the amount of fear and pain that animals experience in their final hours, and she is widely considered the world's leading expert on the welfare of cattle and pigs."

This is high praise indeed, coming from an organisation that is otherwise well known for guerrilla tactics that



include throwing paint at the fur coats worn by Anna Wintour, editor of *Vogue*. Grandin's supposed success at making slaughterhouses more humane – and PETA's bolstering of that supposition – comes in part because of a biographical detail that she has consistently claimed makes her more empathetic to animals: She is autistic.

Born in 1947 in Boston, Massachusetts, Grandin grew up with undiagnosed behavioural problems. In 1951, she was diagnosed with autism. Since she was one of the lucky ones of her generation to have a supportive family with access to resources, Grandin was able to continue her education and complete it with a doctorate in Animal Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Today, Grandin is well known as an inventor of various devices that are meant to provide more security and comfort to animals in their feed lots or on their way to inventions. As she often tells it in her many books (which tend to repeat the same anecdotes), her solutions can be modifications in the structures surrounding animals, like the sweeping curved corrals intended to reduce stress in animals being led to slaughter, or as simple as installing lights at the end of tunnels so that pigs don't balk at entering the darkness.

*Image of corral: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:CurvedRaceCattleCorral.jpg>*

Grandin's claim, explicitly laid out in her book *Animals in Translation: Using the Mysteries of Autism to Decode Animal Behaviour*, is that she thinks much like animals do – on a visceral, sensory, and visual level – and that allows her the unique ability to grasp their needs. For her work and lectures on autism and animal science, Grandin has received numerous accolades and it is difficult to find any substantive critique of her, except on the occasional vegan blog where her assertions about “human slaughter” are roundly denounced (as is PETA's award). Grandin's theories about the link between autism and animal welfare dovetail our “love of animals” with our need to recognise and perhaps even overly fetishise people with recognised disabilities. Today, Grandin is enjoying unprecedented popularity in the wake of an HBO documentary on her life starring Clair Danes.

The problem with Grandin is that her proximity to animals along with her autism has become a way to construct a particular narrative about autism itself that it is not a disability like others but a condition that might even endow autistic people with special powers. Given her educational history, she clearly has a right to claim expertise in livestock environment design, but the fact of her autism does not necessarily make her an expert on the topic. In fact, *Animals in Translation* is filled with instances where she provides only the fuzziest evidence for her claims. In a section about frontal lobe functions, she writes: “A major autism researcher told a journalist friend of mine that if you compared the brain scan of an autistic child to the scan of a sixty-year-old CEO, the autistic child's brain would look better.” She provides no details about this anecdotal evidence.

But it is in relation to the specific ways she relays animal experiences and lives that we find Grandin engaging a vastly affective discourse where animals deploy human modes of interaction and values. In a section titled “Rapist Roosters,” she writes of finding a hen freshly killed by a rooster. Outraged at what she considers an overturning of natural law, she consults animal scientists and finds out that “the rooster courtship dance had gotten accidentally deleted in about half of the birds.” When a hen did not see the dance, she would not crouch down so that the rooster could mount her. Enraged, the rooster would try to force the hen to mate and, when she tried to get away, slash her to death.

On the face of it, Grandin's explanation via her friends makes sense, given our understanding of how overbreeding can have harmful effects on animals by making them lose some or all of their natural instincts. The problem is that Grandin makes no connection between this overbreeding and the sheer size of the livestock industry which she works with. Teasing out that connection would throw the whole enterprise into question – and presumably diminish her role as a consultant to the same industry. Instead, Grandin chooses to overlay the problem with affect by choosing a term as loaded as “rapist” to describe the roosters.

This allows us to transpose and amplify an affective human trait onto an animal while ignoring the systemic reasons why such traits exist in the first place. In another instance, she writes about rats choosing “bad-tasting” painkillers over sugary solutions, and the notion that animals can discern good or bad taste based on human perceptions of the same is echoed in other parts of the book.

Yet, cats and dogs regularly and assiduously lick their own bums, will sometimes chew on their own vomit, and seem to consider toilet bowl water a particularly fine treat. Surely, the concept of “bad-tasting” food is not one that translates easily from the human to the animal worlds.

The level of affect in Grandin’s work is the result of living in a culture that only allows humans to interact with animals through a relentless anthropomorphising that requires us to transpose our emotions and proclivities onto them. It is also a necessity in a culture that needs to constantly locate farming in an idyllic imaginary of family-owned enterprises, rather than remember that it is a mega-industry that thrives on the use of hard labour, much of it undocumented.

On May 12, 2008, the U.S Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) division of the Department of Homeland Security carried out the single largest raid of a workplace in U.S history, arresting nearly 400 people working as undocumented workers. The raid happened on the premises of the Agriprocessors Inc. kosher slaughterhouse and meat packing plant in Postville, Iowa. The raid had cataclysmic effects on the town of 2, 273 and was marked by a particularly egregious and brutal set of procedures which involved treating undocumented workers as hardened criminals, even though many of them had done nothing more than work with false papers.

The Agriprocessors plant had been in trouble long before the raids. In September 2005, workers at the company’s distribution site in Brooklyn, New York, voted to join the United Food and Commercial Workers union and were challenged by the company, which falsely claimed that the workers’ votes were invalid because they were undocu-

mented (the National Labour Relations Act places no requirement of documentation). Workers also alleged that Agriprocessors engaged in egregious employment practices, like failing to pay overtime. In October 2008, Agriprocessors was fined \$9.99 million for various violations of state labor law by the Iowa Labor Commission.

In the meantime, PETA had been secretly recording slaughterhouse practices on the animals inside the factory and found cattle having their tracheas and esophagi being ripped out of their necks and surviving even after the ritual slaughter. The video made headlines, prompting discussion in the Jewish community over whether such practices rendered the meat nonkosher or not. Temple Grandin was called in by PETA to testify that the slaughter practices were indeed painful for the animals. In 2006, Agriprocessors received a visit from Grandin, who said that the plant required continuous monitoring. An August 2009 article in the Kansas City Jewish Chronicle notes that the company is now under completely new management and quotes Lindsay Rajt of PETA stating that the organisation would be monitoring the slaughterhouse practices and supporting Grandin’s recommendation to have video cameras installed.

The raid spotlighted the Agriprocessors’s labor infractions as well as the issues with slaughter processes. For many Jewish activists, the incident was especially fraught because of the tradition of tying ethics standards to the requirements of kashrut. A Jewish Daily Forward written shortly after the raid quotes Rabbi Morris Allen, director of the Hechsher Tzedek Commission: “For too long, we’ve ignored that production of kosher food has taken place in a world where we’re concerned about the ritual aspects of food preparation and not the ethical considerations.”

Yet, such concerns appear to not have affected either Temple Grandin or PETA, whose attention to the slaughtering practices appears in a vacuum. Indeed, what is peculiar about Grandin’s writing about agribusiness in *Animals in Translation* is that she has nothing to say about the human labour conditions in an industry that depends so much on undocumented labour. The only time that she mentions the undocumented is when she refers to

some Mexicans who enter the country undetected because they are able to conceal themselves among corralled herds of Brahmin bulls. According to Grandin, the bulls' fierce horns and large humps make them intimidating creatures and enforcement officers are reluctant to go too near them. The point of the story is simply to point out how fearsome the bulls are.

Temple Grandin was brought in to the slaughterhouse to oversee killing practices, and it could be argued that she has a right to stay focused on only that aspect of the business. But it could also be argued that neither Grandin nor her supporters at PETA nor the owners of companies like Agriprocessors can afford to connect the ethical treatment of animals to the ethical treatment of the workers. To do so would require a fundamental shifting of the industry, at a cost that is unsustainable to all concerned. To Temple Grandin, all that matters is the overlaying of affect onto animals and her use of affect is what structures and sustains animal and human exploitation. The question remains: What would capitalism look like without that exploitation? And how have we used animals to facilitate capitalism?

## **V. Invisible Renderings: Animals and Capitalism**

A little-known fact about the physical history of cinema is that photography and film stock is coated with gelatin. As Nicole Shukin writes in *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times*, "gelatin binds light-sensitive agents to a base so that images can materialize." Even today, gelatine remains indispensable in the production of film stock. Shukin makes note of this curious bit of visual history in order to make a point that runs through the book: Capitalism is shot through and through with such material remnants of animal life, even as it seeks to make them invisible in order to sustain the popular fiction that modern life is divorced from what Shukin terms animal capital. Shukin, a Canadian academic currently housed at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, has written a work that bears the hallmarks of a dissertation turned into a book, such as the need to restlessly cite various theoretical sources in order to legitimise its own forms

of inquiry, but without completely absorbing them into the material of its arguments. Nevertheless, *Animal Capital* is a profoundly important book that offers some searing insights into the ways that animals have been made creatures of sentiment, instinct, and affect even as their presence enables the spread of neoliberalism.

We live in a time when we are constantly told that the only sustainable way to live is to constantly recycle and use our resources to their maximum effect. The rendering industry takes this logic of reuse to the world of slaughterhouses. In the home kitchen, rendering is the simple process of turning fatty animal tissue into a purer fat, as in the making of duck confit. On an industrial level, rendering involves turning the unwanted and inedible leftovers of animals into products as varied as soap (from tallow) or cat food. Rendering has long been valorised as the meat industry's built-in mechanism for ensuring that nothing is wasted, in a kind of ecological service to society and as a corrective to more wasteful forms of industrialisation. But as Shukin points out, "More than just mopping up after capital has made a killing, the rendering industry promises the possibility of an infinite re-subjection ("return") of nature to capital. The "industrial ecology" metaphor of the closed loop valorizes the ecological soundness of waste recovery and recycling just as the rendering industry effectively opens up a renewable resource frontier for capitalism."

We may at first be hard-pressed to find a reason to critique rendering which, after all, seems to provide a way to use up the surplus generated by capital in the literal mounds of offal it throw out. But the problem with such an uncritical view of rendering is the same as the problem with Temple Grandin's myopic view of the livestock industry. In focusing so narrowly on only creating "humane" practices of killing, Grandin and her ilk leave unchecked the many dangerous effects on both human and animal consumers and labor. Similarly, believing that the rendering industry is some form of good and innocent capitalism allows us to forget that we should not be overproducing meat in the first place.

*Animal Capital* offers a way out of the morass of affect left us by the likes of Grandin. Shukin's work also offers

a significant departure in the reading of capital that may not sit well with some: It decentralises the “privileged figure of the laborer...as the focal historical subject of industrial capitalism.” Shukin’s central questions are: How do animals enable and make capitalism perform better even as their presence is literally and metaphorically and violently erased? What can we regain in our understanding of how capitalism works when we place animals at the center of an analysis? To answer these questions, she returns us to the primal scenes of capitalism which, it turns out, were interpenetrated with animal life from the start – the use of gelatin on film being only one example.

Henry Ford’s assembly-line production in Dearborn, Michigan is routinely credited – or blamed – for the birth of Fordism. However, Ford in fact designed his automobile production methods after watching the moving lines in the “vertical abattoirs of Cincinnati and Chicago, with deadly efficiency and deadly effect.” Similarly, in Chicago and New York City, former meat markets are transformed into trendy neighbourhoods. All around us, animals penetrate capital.

Where Grandin uses affect to locate and keep animals in their place (if we could just think like them, we could end their suffering, just before killing them in vast numbers), Shukin points out that affect is ruinous. She repeats the question posed by Donna Haraway in *Primate Visions*: “What forms does love of nature take in particular historical contexts? For whom and at what cost?” *Animal Capital* is thus critical of the modern rush to express our collective love for the “natural world” and our impulse to endlessly engage the logic of vanishing. The oft-repeated and plaintive cry of the ecological movement is that all modern life is built upon the disappearance of species and even humans from the face of the earth. Much of this is true, but the sentimentality and affect through which this discourse appears to us is wrapped around notions of authentic “other” (non-white) cultures and species that could be lost to us if we (white) saviours do not rush to their rescue.

Shukin produces a telling genealogy of animals within capitalism, showing how they are still deployed within its vectors, and she persuades us to dismantle the far easier

idea that technology and animals only existed together in a far-away and pre-industrial time. Crucially, she reminds us that forgetting the materiality of animal life within capitalism allows us to erase the violence of the forced contact between the two.

What then, of the animals themselves? Shukin gestures towards the possibility of animal agency, but acknowledges that there are few ways to judge the existence of such: “... the rendering of animal capital is surely first contested by animals themselves, who neither “live un-historically” nor live with the historical passivity regularly attributed to them.” For that, we have to turn to present-time incarnations of animal eruptions.

## **VI. Animal Eruptions: Or, When Dogs and Whales go “Wild”**

On February 24, 2010, a killer whale named Tilikum attacked and killed a trainer at Sea World. The incident sent shock waves through a world long accustomed to seeing the giant creatures cavort and play tricks for the benefit of spectators. As the story unfolded, details emerged that made it seem like that Tilikum was a repeat criminal offender. It turns out, according that the same the whale had been blamed for killing a trainer who lost her balance and fell into the pool in 1991 at Sealand of the Pacific in Victoria, British Columbia in 1991. Tilikum was also implicated in a 1999 death, when he was found floating with the body of a man draped over his back.

Recent weeks have seen reports of packs of Beagles in Long Island going on seemingly mindless and feral attack raids on humans and their more timid domestic dog partners. The problem here is man-made: Hunters buy the animals to aid them in the hunting of rabbits, and the dogs that don’t make the cut are simply dumped in the wild. Left on their own, they apparently revert to a feral state. Recently, a woman reported that she was walking her retriever when she found herself hounded down by a pack of 4-5 Beagles.

Snoopy, it seems, has gone native.

Whales and dogs are subject, like so many other animals, to the affective fictions we construct around them. We convince ourselves that putting a giant whale in an enclosed space and teaching it tricks means that we have established a loving relationship with the beasts. Dolphins, we tell our children, are eternally smiling at us when in fact their mouths are simply naturally upturned. Elephants sway their heads from side in their enclosures, and we convince ourselves that they are listening to some ethereal music when in fact the gesture simply means that they are slowly going mad in their cramped and unnatural habitats.

When animals explode and turn upon us, we are left with no more affect with which to sustain our mythology that we have formed a deep and connective bond with them. To save ourselves from further disillusionment, we retreat into our archive of animal criminality. While we may no longer hang sows for murder, we do not hesitate to invoke the past record of a killer whale and subtly indict him for the possession of a murderous character. All the while, we use animals to further and legitimate our exploitation of them.

Dracula may vanish and turn into a bat, animal fat may be rendered reusable by capital, and we may turn all conceivable creatures into our pets. We might memorialise a dead and semi-feral dog and render her into a beloved icon, but are we really prepared for the consequences of sustaining our affective fictions about animals as our companions and cohabitants? How do we end the ways in which we use our beastly love to sustain and extend neoliberalism?

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# CORE SAMPLES

*Lindsay Shane*

October 24th, 2009

3:26 p.m.

She has walked for hours to get here. Under a sullen sky, dull like newspaper. Light falling snow. Down an old mining road, now a solid and deeply rutted mud track. Around a bend lined with striated stones, trembling aspen hanging on to rusty leaves, tiny sparrow-like birds. Through her apprehension and the question why are you leaving and her answer I don't know. Passed by a father and son with rifles cradled in their arms walking in the opposite direction. Passed by a defunct mine site littered with core samples and old machinery speckled and dented by shotguns. East along a chain of rock ranges covered in naked jack pines twisted like wire and lichen, dried and frozen stiff. Dipped down into hollows filled with frozen muskeg, dense growths of spruce and tamarack. Climbing up the other side. North across a field of exposed granite and spikes of charred trees. Early prospectors, and dirty ones at that, sometimes torched the forest to expose the rock, she once read, so they could see whether or not there were precious minerals or metals to be had.

She had stopped once. Spellbound. Clouds moved at a glacial pace. Berry Hill in the distance. Endless waves of barren shield rock and bands of stunted spruce unrolled in every direction as far as her eye could see: the taiga in its most classic form. She stayed long enough to

feel the cold start to seep through her clothes. Then, taking a rough compass bearing, kept walking.

Here. The east shore of Banting Lake. A prospector tent tucked in a small cove, protected from southwesterly winds. Dirty white canvas with a blue tarp covering the roof. She slides away a large grey box and a sheet of plywood that were placed in front of the door to discourage animal visitors. Unzips the flap. Inside, the prospector is fairly dark and mostly bare. Wood half-walls. A mattress low to the floor. Plenty of blankets. A green velour wing-backed chair. A long black rectangular box-stove perched on a flat slab of stone. Above this a hanging gridded shelf made of steel, a few pots and a well-seasoned cast iron pan neatly organized upon it. A bucket of sawdust with a square plywood lid. Another bucket. A small table. Tea cups sitting on a ledge. A thermometer by the door. She stands on the narrow porch and breathes cool air into her lungs, looks out across the lake. Its low shores are hemmed with rock and spruce. The water is smooth and steel blue.

7:17 p.m.

There is no wind. No moon. Just pitch-black, motionless night and stillness weighted with cold. The lake is sleeping beside the shore. In the tent, thick shadows and heat. Strong smell of boiling pitch. She is sitting in the chair beside the box-stove, staring at the roof, listening hard for hints of sound. The fire crackles. A log

shifts and scrapes the side of the stove. Silence hammers down. I am completely isolated, she thinks, and anonymous. Three candles smear orange light on the walls, which falls just short of the door. She reaches for pen and paper and begins to transform her retention of the day into recollection. Notices her raw, slightly chapped hand.

October 25th, 2009

2:04 a.m.

She wakes freezing cold. Re-lights the fire. Stokes it. Turns the sleeping bag around on the mattress closer to the stove so her face can catch the warmth. Throws a comforter and two woollen blankets on top of the sleeping bag. She then peeks outside in search of the Northern Lights. But it is overcast and the only things glowing are three pale clouds lined across the sky. Back in bed she nuzzles down into the heat, remembering a winter trip to Montreal years ago to see a good friend. Em lived on the first floor of a row house in St. Henri. Her flat was like an icebox. Always. Under the weight of many blankets, and a whitish furry throw Em called “Le Mouton”, they had stayed up talking into the early morning hours about what they thought formed the marrow of love, and why we tend to smash it. They came to no conclusions.

5:15 a.m.

She struggles to wake. She has been dreaming in high speed and loud sound and she now wonders if she is dead and whether or not what she dreamt is her version of hell. Fire is out again. Slightly dazed, she tries to remember a sentence from Lacan about dreams—something about a dream being an act of homage to a reality that can no longer produce itself. Gives up and renews the fire. Burrows deeper into the blankets.

8:56 a.m.

Nature calls. She steps out into a grey light. Finds snow. Not too far from the prospector sits the outhouse, in

this case a simple box made of wood. She has to encourage herself to relax as her bare ass touches the sub-zero ceramic seat. When she is done, she finds herself thinking about the uncanny number of Hollywood cowboys who get offed while taking a shit in some sad looking outhouse, pants around their ankles.

10:20 a.m.

The wind carries a light snow. She hears the long thunder of a plane above and later the faint, flat sound of a rifle somewhere far off. She is working to gather kindling and to cut more wood for the coming days. Splitting wood reminds her of a time when she was slightly crazed, although not in a gleeful way. It was thirty degree and almost summer. She was living in a small lake-side cabin on the edge of a town in northern Ontario, shunning the wearing of shoes. Religiously she listened to Bach (how else does one listen to Bach?). Each blow of the axe a soothing balm for her mind. She had two axes, for different sizes of wood. Far from thirty degrees now, she thinks, lets the blade fall and watches another log split neatly in two. Blonde knotted innards, preserved memories of branches long since outgrown, accumulate at her feet.

3:15 p.m.

Snow at mid-ankle. Warm water in a bladder and snacks wrapped up in a blanket sit tight to her back. She is caught up in the rhythm of naming things—sedimentary rock, spruce, paper birch, raven, caribou moss, low-lying scrubby thing. On top of the next ridge, a dull roar that is growing louder joins the thin sound of wind. She smiles. The stream I've been looking for. She arrives at its side a few feet down from a shelf, at a place that she can step across with a single, long stride. The stream is a slim line of black running fast down-slope through a cleft between two low ridges. Its banks are hemmed by dead sedge grass and crisscrossed by leather-leaved shrubs whose red limbs are intricately knit and laden with ice. The heavy branches hang over the stream's shallow body a foot above the flow. For a short time

she stands surrounded by the sound of the stream, listening to the layered voices of water on water on water. Then she crouches down so she is eye level with that place where the rushing water and the ice on the branches meet, and she becomes slightly entranced by the movement created there. She turns upstream, walks a few metres to where water pours over the shelf into a pool. She stands just off to the side, gazing down into it. Watches the black muscle of water boil to white, then hurl forward in a thick twisting current. Conscious of the receding light, feeling a slight edge of anxiety, she decides to walk no further.

October 26th, 2009

9:30 a.m.

The low light of morning filters through the walls. But something is different today. Excited, she gets up. There's a dusting of snow on the porch and the moon is still out. Most of the stars have faded except for the brightest. The lake is flat calm and full of mist. On the opposite shore back-lit spruce are blackening and beginning to stand out in crisp relief. The horizon is flooding salmon-pink. I have yet to see this country in the sun. She wanders over towards the treeline to piss. Burns a hole through the snow.

9:47 a.m.

She sweeps off the porch, and then wraps herself up in the two woollen blankets to sits with a small pot of oatmeal in her lap. She sips from a cup of hot tea. Wood smoke rises from the stovepipe behind her. The mist is lifting upwards and slowly drifts along the lake's bruised surface. The sky is no longer dark; it radiates orange like embers glowing. Two ducks casually swim by close to shore, dipping their bills into the water. She marvels at the surface stillness of their bodies as she imagines their feet folding up and pushing back hard and fast underneath. She waits for the sun to break over the trees.

11:56 p.m.

Unable to sleep, with her face and body turned towards the box-stove, she thinks about her day. How the sun was short-lived. How she had let herself drift across the terrain, drawn by the current of her curiosity, barely stopping to rest. As her cold soles walked across what was once the trough of an ocean floor or the bottom of a glacial lake, she found her mind plodding through her past. Lost loves. Things said and unsaid. The winding path of her desires. Insecurities. How far she is willing to go for the sake of \_\_\_\_\_. Habits and repetitions. Hundreds of small lessons. She discovered a whole pack of people was walking with her. Morgan saying, don't you think it is better to be wanted than needed? Mary Oliver reminding her that she only has to let the small animal of her body love what it loves. And in your sad machines, Mathew singing Smashing Pumpkins, you'll forever stay burning up in speed. Their proximity startled her, if only for a moment.

She hears waves striking a steady rhythm on the shore. Realizes she has to piss. Outside, a curtain of green light extends up from the treeline and arches across the sky, appearing to waver: aurora Borealis! More excitement. Stars fill the sky. She goes inside to get the woollen blankets. Comes back. Stands still, watches. I can see every star there is to see, she thinks. A sound makes her stop and look around. She strains her ears for things moving in the dark. Searches for shapes looming, malicious green-lit eyes of some higher order creature that eats small adventuring boys. She finds herself without courage and does not resist the impulse to go back inside. And she is cold. Yes, cold.

October 27th, 2009

10:25 a.m.

More snow during the night. The air is colder than yesterday. She is down at the water's edge, pinkie finger stuck in the lake after burning it on the door of the box-stove while adding wood to the fire. Her breath



forms a white mist. Sun pours through a gap in the overcast sky and lights up a tuft of grass almost entirely encased in ice growing out of a crack in the rock. She watches the unfrozen tips of each blade lift in the breeze and wave back and forth as water splits itself around the base of the tuft. Spots of white foam crowd the shore. She is trying to remember her dream. It was about Morgan's ass. A long and smooth ass that curves firmly with authority on the undersides. In her dream, she is lavishing much attention upon it—rubbing and licking it along its broad faces and where its two halves come together. It sits solidly in her cupped hands and, for some reason, it makes her think of bullets.

Mid-day.

Flash of a cliff in the not-too-far distance catches her eye, tempts her to change course. She meanders down the broad face of a slope, breaks out of a tight pocket of spruce, and is met by a wall of greenstone rising sheer out of a small, thin lake. Around a bend in the shore she discovers the cliff acts as both a border and termination. Clustered at its base, where the water ends, massive angular chunks of rock. Many of the rocks have fallen to sit in such a way that one can look at the cliff face and mentally fit them back in their exact spots. She climbs up on the top of a boulder that sits tight against the sheer. She looks up: the crown of a dead jack pine peering back over the edge. Looks east: lines of low rock, dome-shaped like a school of surfacing grey whales arching out of a frozen bog. She jumps down and scurries across their spines, follows them into a small clearing where she decides to snack. She is joined by a talkative red squirrel that seems curious about her presence. Or maybe it's unhappy. The squirrel chirps and chatters and moves amongst a few nearby trees, eventually settling on a branch overtop of her. It looks down with small black eyes and a trembling tail, and unleashes a scolding that goes on for a long time. She reaches into her pocket, pulls out a bag of nuts and seeds, and leaves a pile on the crust of snow—a nomad's tithe.

8:15 p.m.

She lies in the dark listening. A log ignites. A jack pine creaks. Between thick rushes of wind, snow crawls across the roof. She waits to feel tired, hopes for unbroken sleep.

October 28th, 2009

Late afternoon.

She is moving up along a slope on the side of Berry Hill, her footsteps falling like anvils on the hard snow. She feels a growing sense of familiarity—an at-homeness. Two hills over, a raven rises from the trees, circles wide, and drops down again through the canopy. She discovers freshly churned up snow and dirt, the tracks of a four-wheeler, and finds herself unsettled by traces of human existence. Eventually she makes her way up onto a high rock, eye level with the treeline. Plays a game of finding form in the split and misshapen crowns—a jack out of its box, an inverted tripod, a shaggy fleur-de-lys, a flagpole, a naked lady. She senses a start of wind. It's subtle, the kind of little breeze one would find in a hospital corridor. Motionless she listens—treetops click—then turns slowly on the rock. In the distance, land, lake and horizon have dissolved into a wall of thick, snow-filled air.

5:15 p.m.

Night is falling. The air is so full of snow she can hardly see a thing. She is remembering sitting in the backseat of the family station wagon, a 1978 Ford Country Squire, her mom driving, and watching the snow break up and over the hood. It looked like they were moving at warp speed.

9:21 p.m.

Wind is keeping her from sleep. It howls and wails, steadily beats on the walls, swallows all other sound.



She does not want to go outside to piss so she uses the extra bucket.

October 29th, 2009

9:35 a.m.

The storm has long passed. Her eyes snap open as she wakes to the cold edge of morning pressing down on her. She takes in the shadow of snow on the roof, notices that snow has found its way underneath the door. She shivers as she dresses. She lights a fire and then opens the door to a hushed forest and at least a foot of snow covering everything. Bark sparkles with frost. There are the looping tracks of some large bird stamped in the snow in front of the porch. The unruffled surface of the lake reflects a cloudless pale blue sky overhead. She goes to get water; she breaks through a translucent crust of shore ice and dunks the pot, pushing the lake away. When she takes the pot out she watches the lake come back.

Noonish.

She is following a thin corridor running between ridges of shield rock. Single lines of tracks made by animals, none of which she can name with certainty, cross the trail at all angles. A raven calls out from a tree edging the corridor. She calls back, stopping beneath the tree it is perched in. It calls again. She reciprocates. Both are still. She watches a clump of snow fall from a branch and disintegrate. Minutes pass before the raven jumps up and flies off. She watches until it disappears, smiles and walks on. She moves across a clearing strewn with juniper and network of gnarled roots no longer attached to any sort of tree, over a lumpy carpet of frozen muskeg and through a long hollow full of curvaceous, black-boned paper birch skeletons with three inches of light snow draped on their limbs. Finally she comes to rest on the top of a tall, saddle-shaped slope. There is a breeze blowing from the north, but it hasn't the cold bite of the previous days. It shakes her collar and slaps her in the face, but she does not feel it. Far to the left

a significant break in the trees suggests the presence of Jackson Lake and Banting Lake. Beyond that sits a radio tower and an ocean of hills shrouded in snow. To the south and west are a number of small unnamed lakes, long fingers of bedrock reaching through the spaces in between. A dead jack pine stands out against the sky. She watches the wind move its arms, crossing and uncrossing them over and over again. The sun is strong enough to cast lean, soft blue-edged spruce shadows. She sees the hint of a trail that might be her route home four days from now. In the distance, Yellowknife. Behind her, the slow rise of Berry Hill. Everywhere spruce runs over the land like the veins in her hand, their spires puncturing the horizon.

On her way back, she is struck by an impulse to run. And so she does without a second thought. She bounds down the corridor, bouncing from hummock to hummock, sprints under the canopy of a spruce stand whose floor is covered in a spongy blanket of green white lichen under a thin veil of snow. She continues to run, simply because she can.

8:37 p.m.

Inside the prospector the air is hot. A touch of summer in the mouth of winter. Light from the stove keeps her from becoming part of the dark. She is sitting in the chair arms folded over her chest trying to piece together what she is becoming. She catches the scent of overly warm clothes and sweaty armpits and decides a quick bath is in order. Stripped down she squats over the extra bucket, pours warm water from a pot over her bits. Feels a strange satisfaction. She takes a cloth to the rest of her body and then dries off. She sits back down in the chair wearing only her pants and tries to write about the day's impressions, the patterns she sees, but the quality of her thought is poor. She is surprised to find that words have gone missing.

October 30th, 2009

8:30 a.m.

Wind calls through her sleep, wakens her. A draft sucks out the canvas door from within the wood frame. Whump! A coldness floods over her as she opens her eyes and finds the canvas soaked in a deep blue glow of early morning light. It's like she is beneath the sea. She is thinking about Morgan working at her desk and sipping tea, while she lays in bed in another room, book across her chest, watching the plastic on the windows breathe, feeling the house surge. Whump! Draft pushes the door back in like a sail under full wind.

4:34 p.m.

She arrives back at the prospector at the onset of twilight. There is a coating of snow spread across her shoulders. Bits of stowaway spruce branches stuck to her sweater. A white fur of ice covers the ends of her hair. From the knee down, her pants are frozen armour-hard by the cold. She amuses herself trying to make them stand up by themselves before hanging them above the box-stove. The ice loosens. The melt-water falls onto the surface of the stove for a few minutes, a constant hiss as it evaporates. She feeds the fire. Unpacks. Feeds herself.

84 October 31st, 2009

NMP

11:11 a.m.

Around the curve of a corridor and over the crest of a hill she is met by two tall spruce bent at the hip who usher in a scene of absence. Thirty feet from the shore an old shack half-sunken, slowly being swallowed by a small frozen bay. It is not yet rotting, but its face is water stained. The front door is missing, as is the pane of glass in the window beside it. She can see a pool of open water just inside the doorway. On the front right edge, running half of the shack's length, a section of roof and overhang is also missing. She walks around to the

left side of the bay to look at the cabin in profile. The side window is intact. In the background, on the eastern shore, a tall ridge stands with one of its knuckles gone. She wonders if the shack was built by men with dreams of gold and dynamite strong enough to shatter stone. She turns to leave but pauses, moves closer to the treeline, and crouches low on her heels to shit. She feels eyes from somewhere behind her back and slowly rotates her head to meet the silent and fearless stare of a grey jay. She stares back, slightly sheepish. Is nothing sacred?, she says aloud. Laughs. The grey jay flies off.

4:10 p.m.

Steep ridges rise up and edge both sides of the lake. She climbs up one side of a ridge, steers along a plateau, and starts down the other side. Repeat. She weaves between jack pine, passes by rose-pink boulders with mint-green and rust-orange splatters of lichen covering their surface. To her left an island follows close to the shore, forming a narrow channel. Dusk is approaching and there is no sign of the trail that was marked on the map just past the tip of the island. Trust no map, she thinks as she scrambles up a steep incline of jagged rock to get her bearings. Wind attacks her body. To the southeast, Berry Hill. Always take a compass. Slips it back in her pocket. She drops down into a frozen fen filled with sedge and hummocks and moves through it quickly. In her wake she leaves a trail of footsteps and a small snow-white duck with black tail feathers hurriedly beating itself into the air. She clammers up the side of another hill, panting, sweating, balancing on the balls of her feet to grasp rocky outcrops as she goes. From the top she sees the cliff face from days before and an arm of Banting. The ledge she is standing on ends at her feet. Carefully she leans forward and glances over. Below is a grove of spruce, a small stream. Beyond, another hill to climb. She turns and walks to the left, looking for another way down.

5:03 p.m.

First she smells it. The faint odour of woodsmoke. Then she sees it. The blue tarp. She stumbles out of the forest, relieved to be home.

November 1st, 2009

7:53 a.m.

She wakes up laughing out loud, contemplating the edge of Morgan's hip bone in her mind. The laughter and image entirely unconnected. She realizes it's November. Forgets about the extra hour given back during the night. Outside the world is still sleeping under darkness and a fresh layer of snow.

11:14 a.m.

Green-grey crinkly edged lichen stiff with frost. A parade of paw prints stamped in the snow. Old Man's beard hanging from down-swept branches. The bright red hips of a wild rose bush off to the side of her well-worn trail. How did I not notice those before she thinks as she slides through a wall of spruce like a blade. The air parts, then moves back in to fill the space where her body has been. Memories come and begin to fray. Thoughts arrive and fall away quickly. Her movement has longer breaths in it. Each step falls with the gravity of a consciousness becoming more feral. Her efforts create the sudden luxury of an envelope of heat around her body. A sheen of sweat begins to form. She takes her hat off, screws it into her back pocket. Opens up her collar. Stops. Feels a strong pulsing in her ears. Sniffs. Nothing but cold and the faintest hint of Labrador tea, even down on her hands and knees, nose to the ground.

2:30 p.m.

She looks. Daily the taiga offers more of itself, lures her to keep looking. It empties her in increments. Tattoos itself in her imagination and holds her in rapt attention. Atrophies other desires and enticements.

Shifts her frames of reference. Edges her towards silent contemplation. And she looks. Casts out a pressing stare. The taiga stares back. Looks right through her. Unmoved. Untouched. Then leans away as a tapestry of muted black-green trees mottled with snow extending headlong into the distance. A limitless play of density, colour, grain. Absent are feelings of Romantic awe. She neither mistakes the land for pastoral and pretty, nor is she consoled by its vastness. Instead she feels homely, ragged, and small in the order of things. The land doesn't need me at all she thinks, but I need it. All she can do is look at it. Stretch out alongside it. Attend to it, quiet and still. Move on, wondering.

9:30 p.m.

Lying on the mattress she watches the firelight from the box-stove dance across the floor, candle flames pitch forward in unison as a shock of air comes from under the door. It is her last night here. She goes back to the city tomorrow. Her head is packed with images of slender branches, the smell of woodsmoke and an awareness of her growing addictions. To the horizon, to the momentum of walking and the slow trance of the mind working at three kilometres an hour. To unfettered space. To the blindfold of not knowing. She blows out the candles, angles her body away from the light. High above her an orchestra of wind plays through the trees. Eventually it lulls her to sleep.

November 2nd, 2009

4:00 a.m.

Where am I?

This is the House of the Church of Comfort For the Soul.

She looks at the old woman quizzically. Fingers the curtain to look outside. From the hall she can see into a room. In the middle, a long box. And just off to the side, mostly obscured from her view, a pair of wizened, pur-



ple-veined legs and bent knobby knees. Is you mother dead?, she says to the old woman. I can help you put her in the box. She moves down the hall and opens a door. A zombie is rising from a bed. She closes the door and opens the next. Another zombie is coming towards her. She opens the next door and steps outside. There is nothing except the horizon and open space. The ground begins to ripple as though something is burrowing just under the surface. And then, suddenly, buildings are bursting forth, spreading out like an accordion. She awakens with a start—Whump! Draft blows the door in—and opens her eyes to absolute darkness, her sense of whether she is awake or not so uncertain, that she has to strike a match and light the candles. Yellow flame leaps up from the wick, smokes for a second. She rises to piss and look outside. Catches sight of a hard small moon passing by and then disappearing behind a bank of clouds. She tries to go back to sleep but feels the dream trying to come back. She doesn't want to go back. Pulling up the blankets she rotates onto her belly knowing she has to get out of her head and into her half-awake body. She imagines roughly forcing Morgan back-tight against the door, pulling off her grandma-knit cardigan, unbuttoning her shirt, wanting her bad you want it, pretty bitch, bad enough to take her then and there, until Morgan is twisting into a corner, until both of them are utterly exhausted. Her breath quickens as her pelvis rocks forward into the mattress, and her spine stiffens like a frozen hydraulic jack. A liquid snap; she trembles and falls back into a deep dreamless sleep.

*Lindsay Shane is an adventurer and writer just getting back in the game. After a brief stop over in Toronto for a couple of months, she is now back on the move. When she settles again, Shane will continue working on her first novel. Many thanks to Andrea Zanin and Laura Kane for their amazing feedback and editing.*



# The Illustrated Gentleman



disha



## In the changeroom

Laura didn't feel awkward in the men's section at all. "If I feel uncomfortable anywhere," she said, "it's in the women's section. In the women's section I think, what are people thinking when they look at me? What sort of questions do I need to ask here?"

These are some of Laura's rules to outfitting: "Boxer briefs are essential. They're a gentleman's bra. They squeeze and uplift your ass. Other than that: a great hat, a great belt, a great watch and great shoes.



## Pearls

For me, the hardest thing about suit shopping is an intimidating shopping trip. So I took a survey for some tips to be as informed, confident, and as entitled as any cis-gendered man would be without thinking twice.

Farrah: Shop for a vintage or second hand suit and then take it to a tailor. Then try it on again before paying.

Abla: The shoulders have to hug yours.

Jiating: You should be able to hold the bottom of the jacket and there shouldn't be more than a fist's worth of space between the buttons and your binder.

Nadia: Show a bit of sleeve. And double vents are in (the splits at the bottom of the back).



# THE ILLUSTRATED GENTLEMAN

*Elisha Lim*

Elisha's previous NMP comic strip *100 Butches* has been bought by Alyson Books New York, who publish seminal work like *Heather Has Two Mommies* and a lot of gay smut. *100 Butches Volume 1* will come out in April 2010, and she's thrilled to bits to be touring with Michelle Tea on her annual American reading tour *Sister Spit*.

Her new strip, *The Illustrated Gentleman*, is an illustrated series of dandies, butches, fags and any queers obsessed with men's clothes. It is a work in progress and she would love to hear new suggestions for the subtitles or layout.

*Elisha came out late. When she was 26 she broke up with her fiance and moved to Berlin, which started a sharp learning curve of lesbian squat houses, queer trailer parks, transgender pride parades and an Ethical Slut reading group. She came to terms with her butch identity and draws a comic tribute to a lifetime of butchness from Singapore to Toronto. It has been featured in magazines in Australia, England, Austria and the U.S. and will be published as a graphic novel in April 2010. You can check out more of her beautiful comics here: [www.newhearteveryday.blogspot.com](http://www.newhearteveryday.blogspot.com)*