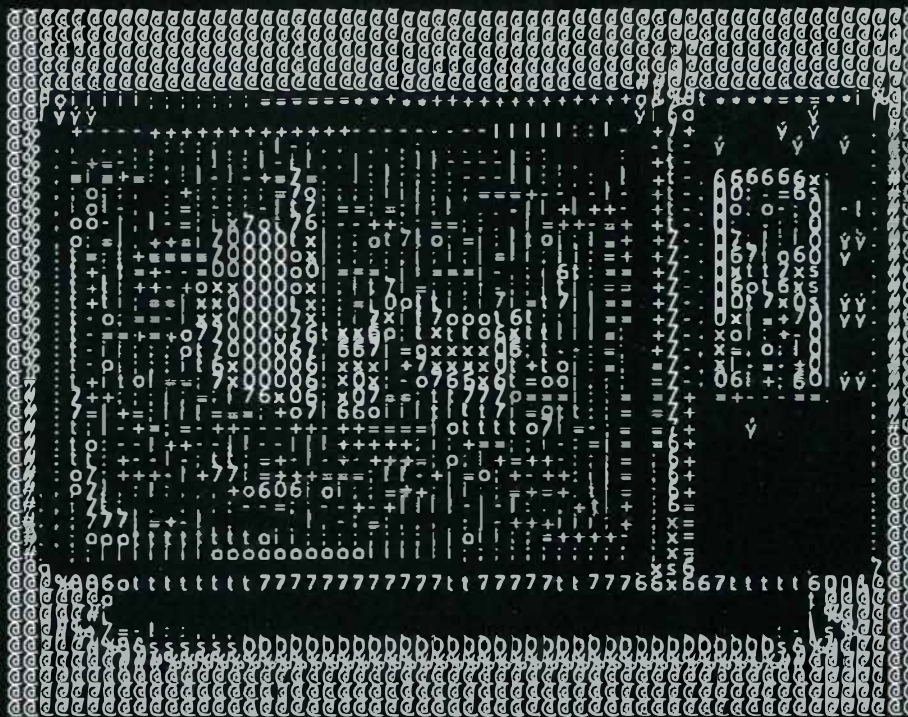


V TAPE PRESENTS CURATORIAL INCUBATOR: V.4

# That 80s Show

Jon Davies Randy Grskovic Taryn Sirove Sarah Todd



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January 20 – February 3, 2007

SARAH TODD presents

***Test Signals***

Andrew James Paterson and Alan Fox *How Many Fingers?*, 1981, 8:30

John Watt *Two Way Mirror*, 1980, 2:30

February 10 – 24, 2007

TARYN SIROVE presents

***Regulating Images: I draw the line at feet...and picnics.***

Gary Kibbins *Henry Kissinger Won the Nobel Peace Prize*, 1986, 12:00

Michael Balser and Andy Fabo *Pogo Stick Porno Romp*, 1987, 9:00

Laura Kikauka *Them Fucking Robots*, 1988, 2:50

Colin Campbell with Rodney Werden *Snip, Snip*, 1981, 30:00

March 3 – 17, 2007

JON DAVIES presents

***Irony Rising: The body and AIDS in the 1980s***

Steve Reinke, *Excuse of the Real*, 1989, 4:31

John Goss, *Stiff Sheets*, 1989, 19:05

John Greyson, *The Perils of Pedagogy*, 1984, 4:58

Rodney Werden, "I'll Bet You Ain't Never Seen Noth'n Like This Before",  
1980, 21:13 (excerpted from 36:00)

March 24 – April 7, 2007

RANDY GRSKOVIC presents

***Re-presentation: an Investigation into Narcissism in 1980s Video Art***

Colin Campbell *Dangling By Their Mouths*, 1981, 60:00

Wendy Geller *Seven*, 1987, 11:41

# VIDEO FOR THE YOUTUBE GENERATION

LISA STEELE

Vtape was born in 1980, so it seemed fitting to invite young curators to study, research and otherwise reflect on video from this decade of our nascence. Thus developed the idea of The Curatorial Incubator v.4.: That 80s Show. For this, the fourth version of our award-winning apprenticeship for emerging media arts curators, we put out an open call for exhibition proposals that focused on video art from the 1980s. The only catch was that the curators had to have been born in 1980 or later. This would, we assumed, result in a new look at video from this decade. After all, our curators were children when these videos were made. Removed from the first hand experience of the lived-in discourses present in the 80s, each has distilled a look back that is intense and unexpected. Here we see the familiar topics of that decade – censorship, AIDS, the dialogue around artist-as-performer, and the role of technology in video – take on new life and vitality.

As part of this unique apprenticeship, Vtape provides the emerging curators with workshops – this year taught by Philip Monk (Director/curator Art Gallery of York University) and Dot Tuer (writer and educator, OCAD), both of whom were active in curatorial and critical writing in the 1980s. Finally, each of the incubates received the benefit of editorial input from Susan Ditta (independent curator), Philip Monk, Ben Portis (Art Gallery of Ontario), and Tom Waugh (writer and educator, Concordia University) as they prepared their essays for publication.

Perhaps not unexpectedly, That 80s Show has an elegiac feel as we watch the work of three artists who have passed away. Michael Balser, Wendy Geller and Vtape founder Colin Campbell all grace the screen again, full of life still, if only in our electronic memory.

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## CANADA COUNCIL TURNS 50

Vtape is dedicating this year's Curatorial Incubator to The Canada Council for the Arts to mark the 50th anniversary of this country's premiere sponsor of the arts. For fifty years the Canada Council has nurtured growth, cultivated stability and deeply encouraged, visual and media artists, writers and poets, choreographers and dancers, playwrights and actors, filmmakers and musicians – and the organizations that help produce and disseminate the stunning artworks to audiences across Canada and around the world.

## TEST SIGNALS: SELECTED WORKS BY JOHN WATT, ALAN FOX AND ANDREW JAMES PATERSON.

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SARAH TODD

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Three hundred people are lined up around a block in SoHo waiting nervously for their chance to be an art star. They are auditioning for Geoffrey Dietch's latest project, an endeavor that has sent the art world following after pop stars, models, designers, chefs et.al. into the world of reality television. Entitled "ARTSTAR", the program will follow the now ubiquitous game show format and ultimately select Dietch Projects newest artist. According to Deitch, "In the 1970s, no self-respecting artist would have stood in line to try to get on a television show"; the queue outside his door suggests that times have changed, drastically. ARTSTAR is the art community's most recent foray into the world's most pervasive medium, television. ARTSTAR is the latest in a long line of work that redefines not only the high/low culture dichotomy but also the role of the cultural producer. The participants in ARTSTAR are jacks of all trades, operating in the spaces between artist and celebrity, curator and television producer, high brow spectacle and mass dissemination.

In the 1980s, before "interdisciplinary" was a buzzword, Toronto artist Andrew James Paterson was a multi-hyphenate: a prolific writer-musician-performer-video artist whose work exemplified inclusive and varied practice. As Paterson's peers General Idea attested in their videotape *Pilot* (1977), "More and more artists are turning to popular media in an effort to examine the effectiveness of their work. Not only in an attempt to reach a larger audience, but also to obtain access to the immediacy of newspapers, magazines, rock & roll and, of course, television itself." Paterson was at the forefront of this movement, making video art, writing for publications such as *FUSE* and acting as the front man for Toronto art punk luminaries The Government. The Government was the key element of Paterson's video and performance work, incorporating music videos and performances by his band into his art practice. The Government's "Electric Eye" album was one such performance recorded at the Music Gallery as the soundtrack to a full-length video production. The Government allowed Paterson to meld video, music and television. Most successful, perhaps, is the 1981 video *How Many Fingers?* by Paterson and collaborator Alan Fox, a video which allowed the boundaries between music video and video art to become fluid. The tape follows the escapades of one young man through a campy Orwellian rock & roll nightmare of media induced brainwashing (the title is from 1984). The herky-jerky soundtrack, vivid computer animation and unabashed over-acting investigate the dramatic and narrative potential within the music



video genre. Coming down from the exuberant media positivism of the 1970s, artists of the 80s began to see television as a darker and more problematic force than previously thought. At the same time, they pursued mass-media outlets more aggressively than ever before. *How Many Fingers?* cautions against succumbing to media manipulation and authority, packaged appropriately as the sexiest and most digestible form of television, the music video.

*How Many Fingers?* never completed the jump into television and onto the airwaves of MuchMusic or MTV. Another group of artists did manage to get their collective foot in the door of the CHUM CityTV building. It was not under the auspices of Much Music, however, but through a program entitled "*Television by Artists*" sponsored by A Space, one of Canada's best known artist run centers. A Space was a tenant at 299 Queen St. West (now the CHUM City TV building) until it was forced to move in 1984 to make way for private broadcasters City TV and Much Music. In 1980, artist, curator and writer John Watt produced, curated and contributed to *Television by Artists*, a series of video art that was aired on Rogers Cable TV between May and July 1980. As the audio announcement at the beginning of the program stated:

" Good Evening A Space and the Fine Art Broadcast Service now presents *Television by Artists*. This series was produced in Toronto in 1980 for your personal reception space...As these artists work within the limitations and potentials of television broadcast they present their forms and concerns for you, the television audience."<sup>i</sup>

This groundbreaking event aired works by an eclectic group of artists: Tom Sherman, Randy and Berenucci, Dara Birnbaum and Dan Graham, Ian Murray, Robin Collyer and Shirley Wiitasalo. These video artists were ready and willing to stake their claim in the world's most pervasive and powerful medium of communication. Engaging the malleable properties of television and the issues of access to its inherent audience were irresistible for artists working in video. The progression from video art to broadcast television highlights the common ground and tense differences between the approaches to electronic medium, critic Ann Sargent-Wooster observes, "Video art is more closely associated with broadcast television than a house painter is to Rembrandt. Not only do they share common tools and similar imagery and imaging systems, video art constantly compared itself to broadcast television and defined itself as being different from its jumbo elder relative while secretly yearning for a share in its power."<sup>ii</sup> It was fundamental for these artists to tap into television's massive audience, to make the medium self-critical and disseminate their work beyond the limited circuit of the gallery and museum system.

When discussing *Television by Artists* the debate whether these artists were in fact making "television" or if they were making "video" arises. While it can be argued either way, what is most fascinating is that the work in *Television by Artists* fell between both of these categories; it was both "video" and "television". *Television by Artists* and Paterson and Fox's *How Many Fingers?* made the always tenuous line between television and video invisible.

John Watt's contribution to *Television by Artists*, entitled *Two Way Mirror*, epitomizes the intrinsic reflexivity of making television about television. *Two Way Mirror* is essentially a television story of someone telling a story of a story on television. It begins with a middle-aged man, sitting on a couch staring out at the audience from a living room, looking into the camera he states, "This is the story of what happened to me." The protagonist then proceeds to detail an eight-year plot arc of the popular soap opera *The Young and the Restless*. A large mirror hangs above the sofa on which the narrator is seated; in the mirror still images of the television characters he speaks of flash slide-show style. As he continues to go deeper into the history of *Y&R*, the furniture around the room begins to change and shift, initially looking like rough edits. Knickknacks and photos move mysteriously and abruptly, distracting from the wonderfully convoluted story line. As our deadpan narrator goes deeper into the sordid and fantastical lives of the soap characters, it becomes apparent that he too is a construction. The very living room he appears in is nothing more than an ephemeral shifting set. He has become the fabrication he is so obsessed with. The parallel between the mirror and our television screen suggests that perhaps we reflect television more than television reflects us. *Two Way Mirror* is an engaging internal critique of television, as was the entire *Television by Artists* program - but did anyone actually go home, sit down, turn on the TV and watch it?

In the case of *Two Way Mirror*, apparently people were watching, and wanted more. The piece runs 28 minutes, 30 seconds in length, approximately the same time as your average daytime TV soap opera. Rogers Cable received 25 calls wanting more "episodes" of "Two Way Mirror".<sup>iii</sup> The press's response was favorable as well. On July 5, 1980, The Globe and Mail ran a particularly avid but perhaps overly enthusiastic review of *Television by Artists*:

"But with the wind-up last night of Rogers Cable 10's *Television by Artists* series - each of the six half-hour color tapes went over Rogers 300,000 home network twice, on Wednesday and Friday evenings at 8.30 - nobody in this town will ever be able to dismiss video-watching as the exclusive sport of the select and elite."<sup>iv</sup>



How Many Fingers:

ALAN FOX & ANDREW JAMES PATERSON 1981, 8:30



This is nicely stated, but perhaps it is naïve to think that video art could become so plainly and instantly egalitarian as a result of this event; it is too much to claim for *Television by Artists*. The 1980s were a time of vigilant activism in this area and many video artists fought long and hard to realize the potential of broadcast television and video art, to very little avail. This push towards televised video art still begged the question... does the general public really want to sit at home and watch video art on television? After all, on March 30, 1980, at 6pm, the featured artists and their peers crowded into Trinity Square Video, for the opening of *Television by Artists*, turned on Rogers Cable 10, had a glass of wine and watched the broadcast, just as if it was any other A Space opening.<sup>i</sup> Wasn't *Television by Artists* supposed to be about moving video art beyond the gallery space and into the homes of the television-watching public? While the concept of *Television by Artists* was brilliant and its intentions good, it was apparent that neither the artists nor the work was ready to go so directly into the living rooms of the Canadian public.

We may not go home, turn on the CBC, and settle in for a night of contemporary video art although how, where, when and why we see video art has transformed drastically since the 1980s. Today there are an ever-increasing number of outlets for alternative media. Alternative is no longer synonymous with *underground* or *avant-garde*. Artists today have countless methods of dissemination at their disposal. Satellite television and its innumerable channels has made television more specialized than ever before which allows for channels such as *Gallery HD* the first entirely visual art arts themed network which is available through satellite television provider Dish Network. *Gallery HD* is currently featuring ARTSTAR in its programming. Most recently, Internet disseminated video sharing programs such as YouTube have become the latest compelling mode of circulation of video art. Massive in its popularity, YouTube has provided an open forum for video art as well as sustaining a mindboggling accumulation of moving images. Couple this with the unprecedented distribution potential of the World Wide Web and in an extraordinarily short time YouTube has changed the way we experience video. *How Many Fingers?* and *Television by Artists* may not have pushed video art into the mainstream but they provided the crucial first steps of a long and circuitous journey in that direction.

<sup>i</sup> Fleming, Martha "Television by Artists" *The Canadian Forum*, vol.3 no.4, 1981 pg.14

<sup>ii</sup> Sargent -Wooster, Ann "Reach Out and Touch Someone: The Romance of Interactivity" pg283, *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*, ed. Hall, Doug, and Fifer, Sally Jo, 1990 Apourve Foundation Inc. New Jersey.

<sup>iii</sup> Mays, John Bentley "Cable TV experiment brings video art into the living room" *The Globe and Mail* July 5, 1980.

<sup>iv</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>v</sup> Steele, Lisa, conversation with author, August 13, 2006.

# REGULATING IMAGES: I DRAW THE LINE AT FEET... AND PICNICS

TARYN SIROVE

"Suzanne," one of the censor board screening panelists in Colin Campbell and Rodney Werden's video *Snip Snip* (1981), who represents the "anti-foot fetish league," declares that for her, the limit to tasteful imagery is crossed at feet. Her inscription of "acceptable limits" to sexual imagery perfectly denotes the absurd parameters of the widespread struggles around exhibiting explicit sexual imagery in Canada in the 1980s.

Not all tapes in this program address censorship directly as do such tapes as Vera Frenkel's *Censored: The Business of Frightened Desires* (1987), or Lisa Steele and Kim Tomczak's *See Evil* (1985), and taken out of context today, issues of censorship may not register in these tapes at all; my aim is to reinvigorate this issue for contemporary viewers, so that this perspective is not lost in historical tapes, and so that we may begin to think about potential manifestations of this transformed, yet persistent issue in present-day systems of image regulation.

After 20 years of freely exhibiting film and video in a variety of non-commercial venues in Ontario, artists, non-profit exhibitors, art galleries and film festivals were thrown into tumult when the Conservative government in Ontario appointed a new Chair of the Ontario Censor Board in 1980. Her name was Mary Brown.

Brown transformed what was once a bureaucratic regulatory body focused on the public exhibition of feature length, commercial films into a wily state watchdog, monitoring every last projector in the province, including screenings at small, non-profit arts organizations and events.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the federal Obscenities Act (s. 163 of Canada's Criminal Code), provincial law allowed government appointed regulatory agencies to exercise "prior restraint" whereby the censor board legally required the *prior* review and approval of any film being exhibited publicly. The Censor Board demanded cuts and various other restraints be imposed on some films with sexual content. The arts community began a complex campaign of resistance and protest.

The first time charges were ever laid for contravention of the 1911 Ontario Theatres Act, was in 1981. The culprits charged were British Columbia artist Al Razutis and organizers of the non-profit Canadian Images Festival in Peterborough Ontario, the first to willfully defy the law as an act of resistance.<sup>2</sup>

Shortly following those charges, the Toronto based lobby group the Ontario Film and Video Appreciation Society (OFVAS) successfully challenged the Ontario Board of Censors (OCB) in a judicial review, which resulted in both some real and some superficial changes to the Ontario Theatres Act.

According to OFVAS member David Poole, the society "was formed on the weekend that the Constitution was declared" in order to fight one of the first legal contests based on the guarantee of the freedom of speech.<sup>iii</sup> As a result of the case, the vague guidelines under which the OCB administered its operations were clarified and written into the Theatres Act and the OCB changed its name to the Ontario Film Review Board (OFRB). Unfortunately however, this only cloaked the powers it retained to cut and ban video and film, and the enabling legislation actually expanded the Board's reach to include the classification of all home video.<sup>iv</sup>

Faced with this new legislation - Bill 82 - artists, curators, and non-profit exhibitors across Ontario mobilized to organize Six Days of Resistance, a week-long event in April 1985. Dozens of groups and organizations screened videos and films in several locations across the province without pre-approval from the OFRB, in outright contravention of the Ontario Theatres Act.<sup>v</sup> This was referred to as the "largest group civil disobedience in Ontario history."<sup>vi</sup>

This tumultuous political history testifies to the level of tension and activity around censorship issues in Ontario.<sup>vii</sup> Artists engaged with these debates not just as cultural producers, but as street-level activists.

The potential to be censored was imbued into culture. This awareness led artists to use varying strategies to fight for freedom of sexual speech, sometimes head-on, and sometimes as a consequence of other imperatives. Such strategies included producing activist work with political analysis, maneuvering explicitness, and especially, engineering parody and humor.

Campbell and Werden deploy elements of parody in their work *Snip, Snip*. Campbell plays Censor Board Chair Mary Brown, who, in Bruce LaBruce's words, was the "shewolf of the Ontario Censor Board, a stuffy church lady."<sup>viii</sup> The group she has gathered to screen the film, *Lesbian Picnic*, are there to represent "community standards," which was a regular practice of the Ontario Censor Board. But when Gerry, another panelist, suggests that there is a context for this imagery "within particular

communities," the aforementioned Suzanne insists, "Well I don't represent *that* community," which begs the question, what community does she represent?

This biting parody manipulates power inequities that usually favor the censor board by making Mary Brown and the Board the butt of a joke. Butts of jokes, in this case Mary Brown, are "denied *discursive* potency" as they are stripped of their power to use language, language which would potentially disempower the joker.<sup>x</sup> According to humor theorist Susan Purdie, "laughter feels pleasurable and is associated with release from external and international restraints" because "joking invites a breach of the rules which usually constrain meaning."<sup>x</sup>

A breach of the rules of language, Purdie suggests, can happen in a pun for example. A pun plays on more than one sense of the same word so that there is an "excess of signification within a semantic space," or too many signifieds.<sup>xi</sup> Here, the power of any single meaning dissipates in the face of competing meanings. What the characters in *Snip Snip* are saying is simultaneously ridiculous and perfectly plausible; their discussion of the lesbian porn reveals the moral paradigms of these conservative community representatives that are exaggerated in some cases and in some cases not exaggerated at all, but are nonetheless interchangeable. For example, in this fictitious scenario, images of masturbation are on equal footing as images of feet on the chopping block.

Frequently, characters in a comedy or parody will exaggerate tone or emotion to signal an excess in signification. Here, however, the characters are played straight and remain quite calm (but not too calm), so that the same missignification is performed by resisting classic parody acting. For Campbell and Werden, instead of *making* a joke out of the censor board, the censor board is *already* a joke.

Gary Kibbins' tape, *Henry Kissinger Won the Nobel Peace Prize* (1986), addresses the question of limits. Kibbins critiques the Cartesian mind/body split, where the body is abject and the mind/spirit valorized, in a parodic display. A laugh track indicates what should be considered funny, or in other words, what should be considered a breach of the rules of language, triggered by seemingly benign factual descriptions of Cartesian thinking. Then, we are suddenly confronted by the vital symbol of abjection or death – shit. By screening this work, Kibbins makes the ultimate of private acts, shitting, a deliberate, unapologetic public articulation. Kibbins does not typically work with extreme footage and upon reflection, he admitted in an interview, that he was engaging in a "provocation, like a 'fuck you,'" to the censor board.<sup>xii</sup>

In Kikauka's, *Them Fucking Robots* (1988), two robots that she and new media artist Norman White built separately, come together to have sex. The gyrating movements and noises they make are enough to make any audience member blush. Is this explicit? What does it mean to *depict* a sexual act? The robots denote people, but they are obviously not real people fucking. Given that this society appears more threatened by images than by ideas (there is no parallel regulative body that pre-approves theatre or literature or any other form of cultural production), how does the representation of a representation of an explicit sexual act fit into this ideological framework of conservative morality?

These robots are heterosexual. What if they were queer?

As the legal regulation of film and video images was being enforced at the provincial level in Ontario, discursive battles over what constitutes degradation and undue harm were being played out at the federal level, around the Criminal Code's obscenity law. Anti-pornography feminists – the most well known representatives were Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon, in the United States, and Maude Barlow and Susan Cole in Canada – fought for a censorship imperative to legally regulate pornography.

Anti-pornography feminists, however, developed their arguments based on exclusively heterosexual pornography, viewing pornography as eroticizing women's sexual subordination, and thus, the cause of women's oppression.<sup>xiii</sup> Anti-censorship feminists like those represented in the anthologies, *Women Against Censorship*, and *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring female sexuality*, argue that the anti-pornography argument does not account for sexual difference and unfairly interprets queer representation using conventions of heterosexual pornography.<sup>xiv</sup>

Queer representation is also unfairly restrained on an economic level; it is the small, alternative, independent distributors and retailers that struggle with the licensing and screening costs imposed by the OFRB, costs that a larger, mainstream retailer can more easily absorb. Also, since mainstream distributors don't always carry marginal videos, it is the smaller alternative retailers who must pay for the prohibitive \$4.20 per minute screening costs for their prior classification.<sup>xv</sup> This often limits the importation of alternative videos depicting minority sexualities into this province.

In queer artists Andy Fabo and Michael Balser's enigmatic and playful *Pogo Stick Porno Romp* (1987), the black, transparent rectangular shapes that obscure some of the sex scenes allude to "censor bars," yet their trans-



parency undermines the function of the censor; they alert us to what is potentially "dangerous," but let us in.

For a contemporary viewing audience, this allusion to censor bars may reference a seemingly outdated, liberal (free speech) argument that any kind of censorship is wrong. The regulation of images is known more often now as mild and non-threatening in the form of classification, as reflected in the discursive strategy the censor board employed when it changed its name to the Ontario Film Review Board while maintaining its power to ban.

Outside of the realities of legal constraint and coercion, theoretical interpretations of censorship were being contested and interrogated during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Cultural studies theorist, Richard Burt argues against the liberal free speech position that censorship (defined as state power) can be eliminated, arguing instead that "less visible kinds of domination and control" (like the manufacture of consent, market censorship, or prohibitive distribution costs) will always inevitably pervade all aspects of the public sphere.<sup>xvi</sup> Burt troubles the belief that censorship can be eliminated by pointing out the problematic of monitoring its elimination—who draws the line?

An either/or argument that opposes diversity (the freedom of many voices) to censorship (the repression of certain voices) is misleading according to Burt because every discourse, even a discourse of diversity, works to marginalize, exclude or "deligitimatize" other discourses.<sup>xvii</sup> In this way, the argument to eliminate censorship is in itself a form of what Burt terms delegitimation, in this case, of censorship.<sup>xviii</sup> In other words, "opposition to censorship serves not to guarantee diversity free of censorship, but to regulate membership in the critical community by appealing to the notion of diversity as a criterion of inclusion and exclusion."<sup>xix</sup> Here, the censor is just one of many voices of legitimation.<sup>xx</sup> Burt's aim is to avoid the problem of, in the name of progressive politics, reproducing the pitfalls of censorship and simplifying modes of repression, so that we may open up discussion and debate of contemporary formulations of power and control.<sup>xxi</sup>

Now the old trappings of the censor like the black bar no longer "protect" us from danger but actually signal it. *Jimmy Kimmel Live* does a bit called "This Week in Unnecessary Censorship" in which bleeps and blurs are inserted over footage of talking politicians or celebrities where there actually was no profanity. The effect is that the figures appear to be swearing. Here, the censor actually creates the profanity or illicitness. Justin Timberlake exploits this effect with the advertising campaign for his latest album; Timberlake appears in a photograph with a black censor bar across his face, covering one of his eyes, the other squinting super-seduc

tively from above the black bar. He is conjuring up the idea of danger that comes with censorship to give him edge. With this in mind, the black censor bar-like graphics overlaying some images in *Pogo Stick* act simultaneously like signals of illicitness and as windows or frames that welcome a look. They are simultaneously cloaking and inviting.

On the tape jacket, Balser and Fabo have written a warning that reads in part, "Warning: if radical deconstruction techniques or graphic sexual depictions disturb you; this is not the tape for you." They put graphic sex and deconstruction in the same category of "things that might disturb" which, since the notion of deconstruction is not in itself "disturbing" (though its effects might be), either brings graphic sex down to the benign level of deconstruction, or gives deconstruction the power and potency of graphic sex. Either way, the sarcasm here implicates the reader/(viewer) insofar as he/she becomes the butt of a joke and is excluded from watching the tape, if one or both of these things disturbs him/her.

In this way, warnings at the beginning of films or television programs may work to include or exclude viewers in popular morality. Without the clear antagonism of the cutting and banning of the 1980s, ground has shifted to structurally underpinned and subtle delegitimations.

During *Six Days of Resistance*, (and perhaps anticipating this shift) critic Kerri Kwinter found herself "periodically wondering if the Board would find this part seditious, that part obscene or gratuitous," an activity that she describes as like "wearing someone else's morality...a sign of a truly colonized mind."<sup>xxi</sup>

For which parts should we heed warning? When "some scenes are not suitable for all audiences," which audiences are they talking about? Am I a part of this audience? Which parts in what scenes are offensive? Is it this breast? Or that fart?

As for Suzanne in *Snip, Snip*, after any hint of explicitness was cut from *Lesbian Picnic* and it was renamed, *Picnic*

<sup>i</sup> Brown began demanding that artist-run distributors such as the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre and the Funnel Experimental Film Theatre in Toronto submit work to the Board for review and classification.

<sup>ii</sup> Susan Ditta, Writer and Curator, Personal Interview, 6 November 2006. Charges were laid against AJ Razutis and others participating in the illegal screening of his film, *A Message from Our Sponsor*, at the Canadian Images Film Festival in Peterborough. Susan Ditta, David Bierk, and Ian McLachlan were also charged as directors and board members of Canadian Images and Artspace. Brenda Cassman, *Censorship and the Arts: Law, Controversy, Debate* (Toronto: Ontario Association of Art Galleries, 1995) 107. According to Ditta, Razutis was let out of the case because he could only be charged if someone could testify that he had indeed turned on the projector, which was



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HENRY KISSINGER WON THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE:  
GARY KIBBINS 1986, 12:00

done a totally private room with no witnesses. Personal Interview.

\* David Poole, Head of Media Arts, Canada Council of the Arts, Personal Interview, 8 November 2006. Although OFVAS is often pronounced "oh-lav-as," Poole pointed out that with a slight shift in emphasis, the acronym denotes, "off-of-us." Poole light heartedly reminisces that the name of the society was chosen hastily in order to quickly guarantee its availability for registration so that the group could move forward in their constitutional challenge as soon as the Constitution was declared.

\* Poole, Personal Interview; Cassman, *Censorship* 76.

\* Kerri Kwinler, "Ontario Open Screenings, Six Days of Resistance Against the Censor Board, April 21-27, 1985," in, *Issues of Censorship*, ed. A Space Exhibition Committee (Toronto: A Space, 1985): 47.

\* *Cassman, Censorship* 122.

\* Most provinces throughout the rest of Canada, some with similar censor boards and some without, looked to Ontario's classifications for their own regulation of video and film. In this way, Ontario was a crucial site for these debates. Ditto, Personal Interview.

\* Bruce LaBruce, "Feelings: About a Girl," *Eye Weekly*, 22 November 2001.

\* Susan Purdie, *Comedy: The Mastery of Discourse*, (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press Inc, 1993): 59.  
\* Purdie 34.

\* Purdie 3.

\* Gary Gibbins, Personal Interview. 11 May 2005, in Taryn Sirove, "Pro-Feminist Men, Sexuality and Video Censorship: Re-Visting Masculine "Habits"" (1986), MA Thesis, Queen's University, 2005, unpublished.

\* Vanda Burstyn, "Porn Again: Feeling the Heat of Censorship," *Fuse* (Spring 1987): 12.

\*\* Burstyn, "Porn Again" 12. Of course, this was only one the arguments put forward by the anti-censorship feminists. They also argued for the freedom of expression to allow for contests of sexualities rather than truth-claims, for the clear definition of "undue harm" in the Criminal Code; and that the fact of explicitness alone does not make representations of women any more problematic than, for example, a TV commercial for cleaning supplies.

\* Although "no fee is charged to screen films wholly produced in Canada;... for films produced outside Canada with English or French dialogue, the fee is \$4.20 per minute. For films produced outside Canada with dialogue in a language other than English or French, the fee is \$78.85 per film." *Glad Day Bookshop Inc, Factum*, 29 May 2001, 20 April 2005 <<http://www.gladday.com/ofrb/Charterfactum.pdf>>.

\*\* Richard Burt, ed. *The Administration of Aesthetics: Censorship, Political Criticism, and the Public Sphere* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1994): xii.

\*\* Burt xv. For Burt, "discourse of legitimation" is a lens that replaces "censorship."

\*\* Burt claims that he is not proposing to create some kind of solution that is more progressive than the left or the right, but that he is attempting to replace the binary of left and right, of for and against censorship with a more ambivalent position. Burt xxx.

\*\* Burt xvi. A good example of the use of diversity as criterion of inclusion and exclusion can be seen in a policy that the video distribution facility *Vtape* was implementing in Toronto in 1986. Steele and other members of *Vtape*, and members of the art community at large, were committed to equity initiatives that promoted diversity.

\* Of course there are different levels of enforcement and methods of de-legitimation and I don't want to minimize the moments when coercion is used: whether it is through outright banning of materials, or through instituting a tax on speech in the form of screening fees, information is regulated, legitimated and de-legitimated.

\*\* Burt xci.

\*\* Kerri Kwinler, "Ontario Open Screenings, Six Days of Resistance Against the Censor Board, April 21-27, 1985," in, *Issues of Censorship*, ed. A Space Exhibition Committee (Toronto: A Space, 1985): 28.

# IRONY RISING: THE BODY AND AIDS IN THE 1980S

JON DAVIES

"The simple physical law that no two bodies can occupy the same space at the same time translates into an ethical principle – each has the same value as the other." – Gregg Bordowitz, "Renew Our Days"<sup>ii</sup>

"Every human, Rolanda, is exactly interchangeable. By this I don't mean that everyone is born equal, born with the same human rights, or anything as confusing as that. I simply mean that we are all exactly interchangeable." – Steve Reinke, *Talk Show (#80)* (1996)

How do we measure the distance between these two statements? How can we be certain that any testimony is really believed by its author to be true, and does it matter? Is the second less ethical than the first?

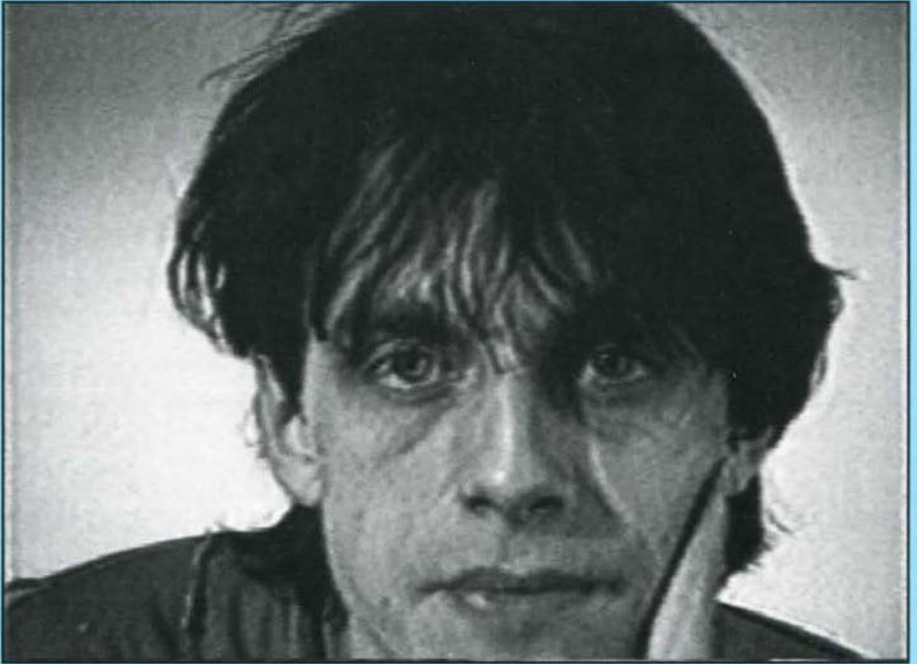
During the 1980s, video became the foremost medium for confronting the massive medical, political and social disaster that was the AIDS crisis. A weapon on the battlefield of representation, video was used by many artists and activists to create more truthful and complex images of People With AIDS (among other motives), distinct alternatives to the distorted and demonized depictions peddled by the mainstream media. However, as is apparent in "meta-AIDS video"<sup>iii</sup> like Gregg Bordowitz's extraordinary *Fast Trip, Long Drop* (1993) and various communiqués from and chronicles of the movement (notably John Greyson's crucial essay "Strategic Compromises"<sup>iv</sup>), there were both unspoken conflicts and outright debates over representation – and not just between effete aesthetes and alpha radicals (a false dichotomy cleverly torn asunder in Greyson's 1989 *The Pink Pimpernel*). One such tension was between the goal of mainstream accessibility (to reach the marginalized populations most affected by AIDS with urgent messages) and the then-politically incorrect desire (in some circles at least) for conceptual and aesthetic experimentalism. This went hand in hand with the need to provide a public service and the equally pressing need to express very personal feelings that didn't necessarily find a place in activist rhetoric, whether it be outright despair or exasperation with what Greyson has called the "culture of certainty," relied on as much by AIDS activism as by the dominant culture. There was also friction between the belief in the eye-opening politically progressive power of the indexical image – particularly those that gave voice to the voiceless, or revealed hitherto unrepresented oppressions – and a more self-conscious and ironic position suspicious of all of documentary's truth-claims, especially those bent on being corrective and virtuous.



This programme seeks to chart some of these productive stresses in 80s video, specifically with regard to the staging of the queer body, and the dawning realization that confessing bodies cannot always be trusted. Beginning in the mid-80s, the utter transformation that AIDS effected on the representation of the body ran parallel to the developing self-awareness of video artists about their medium, which meant that even their own alternative representations warranted deconstruction. What tensions can we discern between generations, between activists and ironists, and between artists and their subjects, who are always much more complex and messy than their directors plan for?

My programme runs backwards chronologically, beginning with Steve Reinke's *Excuse of the Real* (1989), a scathing critique of the supposed objectivity of documentary, especially the practice of taking "real" footage at face value in AIDS films and videos. At this point at the end of the decade, AIDS was so prevalent a subject of representation in his milieu that Reinke could announce, "Like everyone else, I wanted to do something on AIDS," in his case "[...] a close personal look at a guy dying." The "excuse of the real" of the title is the belief that artists are not personally responsible for the images they put out into the world; as long as the material is indexical and presented earnestly, it is somehow beyond contrivance – and critical scrutiny. As is typical, an unseen Reinke narrates the tape, this time verbally performing the role of a documentary filmmaker. However, thinking in terms of narrative storytelling (and keeping in mind the project's budget), Reinke can't help but invest his real subject's real fight with AIDS with all the pathos and eventfulness of a well-crafted fiction, and to carefully control the man's death – essential for its dramatic effectiveness, which Reinke equates with its viscerality – to make for maximum emotional impact. Reinke speaks dispassionately, fitting his subject's dying days into his production schedule with Teutonic efficiency. The filmmaker wants to emulate the conventions of the genre as faithfully as possible.

The visuals of Reinke's tape are in two parts: the first half is entirely composed of stuttering, repetitive, anonymous home movie footage of a party, while the second is a close-up formal interview – ostensibly with Reinke's PWA subject – which foils our desire for a conventional AIDS testimonial by instead focusing on a single illogical and narratively unsatisfying dream (the voice also does not match the subject's lips). There is no great self-revelation, no educational or emotional value, just an anemic story, the kind of oneiric anecdote only marginally interesting to its teller. Not only does this tape assert that documentary genres that were not self-reflexive were naïve and depleted – particularly the confessional mode, so sacrosanct for making queer and other disenfranchised voices heard



EXCUSE OF THE REAL

Steve Reinke 1988, 4:31

– but it arguably puts forward a post-identity stance as well: “Individual identity and the passions from which it arises are ultimately trivial and devoid of meaning, at best arbitrary and at worst fictions and fabrications [...] After truth and selfhood are stripped away, the mutely organic remains; the body and sexual compulsion.”<sup>iv</sup> The first of Reinke’s seminal *The Hundred Videos* (1989-1996), *Excuse of the Real* heralded a new talent on the video scene, one whose intelligent and funny work is steadfastly, impishly impossible to recuperate as politically progressive – a controversial position. Announcing the start of a new decade, Reinke’s motives, morals and “authentic” subjectivity are much harder to discern as he is intent on re-inscribing the possible meanings of every indexical image he comes across, transforming everything into fiction through a haze of ambiguities and ironies: “*Excuse of the Real* might be taken to mean that there can be no real insofar as its representation is concerned. Experience has been depleted by its endless textual and iconic duplication [...] Reinke creates a kind of shrine to a loss of the self in representation.”<sup>v</sup>

John Goss’s bare-bones 1989 documentation of a dumpster drag fashion show performance by a collective dubbed *Stiff Sheets* outside the County/USC Medical Center in Los Angeles offers a procession of boisterous, campy fags sauntering down a makeshift red carpet runway in fashions inspired by the murderous discourses and tired clichés around AIDS. They are like a procession of ghosts brought to life by Reinke’s caustic invocation: they do not stand out in their individual subjective identities, but instead personify emblems of oppression. A home movie of sorts, it shows a performance designed to entertain activists during a particularly grueling overnight demo, and as such is very rough and rowdy. With costumes ostensibly designed by the government bureaucrats responsible for the city’s lackluster medical response to AIDS, the “fabulous fascist fashion show” features a Christian vampire, campy concentration camp garb, activist and safe sex gear, and, most importantly, a slew of outfits designed to cope DIY-style with the crumbling American for-profit health care system, from sporty IV-drips and BYOB (bring your own bed) ensembles to a mummified safe-sex bride and clothes based on specific ailments like night sweats: “more than a fashion, it’s a condition, more than a style, it’s a symptom.” Faced with the prospect of quarantine centres for PWAs, the activists’ costumes and wry commentary seem to capture that provocative moment where camp activist theatrics leave the sour aftertaste of despondency rather than hope for a brighter future, where the negativity often strategically repressed from activism returns with a vengeance. Each costume is a glamorous vision of subjugation, an exaggerated, excessive and brassy imagining of how one’s imminent demise at the hands of the powerful –

who come down the pike in the "Homophobes on Parade" finale – might be sparkled up a touch. While smartly comic, the show develops an undeniable gravitas and sense of horror as the fashion victims pile up, and we metaphorically witness an entire generation of gay men wiped out.<sup>vi</sup>

Greyson's *The Perils of Pedagogy* (1984) is also about the question of how to make a spectacle out of a queer body, in this case, a young heartthrob whose strings are being pulled by an older gay director, who dolls him up in a suit, a toga and finally schoolboy dress for a drastically slowed-down and sideways-framed music video version of Lulu's hit song "To Sir With Love." As the older man comments on his protégé's performance, we hear the boy's inner thoughts, and Greyson in turn ironically critiques the gaudily-dressed mentor's pretensions through cut-ins of text – "whose fantasy?" – and oblique imagery. Without specific reference to AIDS – the first Canadian videos responding to the pandemic would come soon after, and Greyson would become perhaps the most formally inventive, playful and vital forces in AIDS media – Greyson here targets the condescending attitudes that an older generation of gay men can hold toward the community's young (drawing parallels to Ancient Greece). A manifesto for queer youth liberation, it includes footage from Lindsay Anderson's hot-headed film *If...* (1968) about an armed insurrection at a boy's boarding school, ending with the yummy Malcolm McDowell cutting down all the grown-ups with machine gun fire, which Greyson juxtaposes with the ecstatic, smiling face of a newly-liberated young heartthrob. Similarly, Greyson fiercely (yet playfully) liberated radical queer representation from realism.

Finally, Rodney Werden's *"I'll Bet You Ain't Seen Noth'n Like This Before"* (1980) is the unforgettable recording of an interview-cum-demonstration with a lanky, white-haired, bespectacled older man. Casually sitting naked in his easy chair in a cramped but tidy apartment, and with his body completely shaved, the man – called Tom in writings about the tape – boasts to Werden of a very special skill: he can penetrate his anus with his own flaccid penis. An instigator and documentarian of some of the most startling sexual confessions imaginable, ever-curious Werden naturally wants to see it: "I can't believe it...I can't imagine it...Could you do it for me? Could I see it?" Now the problem is figuring out the best way of showing off his sexual prowess to the camera, and we bear witness to the calm negotiations between Tom and Werden to exhibit his trick to the greatest effect – as viscerally as possible, *pace* Reinke. Discussing the logistics of the act and its representation in gritty detail, Tom and Werden share an easy rapport, and the subject talks candidly about his experimentation with his own body that has led him to this state of grace where fantasies are redundant and his own privates and their unexpected

capabilities are the all-consuming real. The tape is startlingly de-erotized, Tom's testimony largely clinical and unemotional; Jennifer Oille has commented about Werden's tapes, that, "The relationship between the voyeur and the narcissist, cognizant of each other's intentions, demonstrates a complicity more ethical than many inventions passed off on the public."<sup>vii</sup> Of course, Tom revealed even more than he is aware; in Werden's words, "He's a very anti-social person. I mean what you see there is the total of his life [...] he just eliminates the people. So now he's just left with himself. And the fact that he can fuck himself is pretty important. It's not just a trick. He is very self-sufficient [...] To me that's the most important thing about that tape – his advanced state of loneliness."<sup>viii</sup> In the second part (not shown here due to time constraints), Tom stimulates his penis with the varying vibrations of a shortwave radio speaker. Here Tom again takes a tool that was meant for two (a giver and a receiver) and "deposit[s] into his own bank,"<sup>x</sup> as Reinke put it, instead of using it to communicate interpersonally. In the context of the AIDS videos that had yet to be produced at this time in Canada – this programme straddles our pre-and post-AIDS video national landscape – I can't help but regard this piece as an instructional safe-sex tape.<sup>x</sup>

An unexpected through-line that surfaced, further uniting these four videos, is their diverse interpretations of the idea of "home movies," whether in terms of this most intimate of genre's conventions – the strange mix of confession and cliché, self-expression and convention – or simply the budgetary restraints. And in each, the subjects misbehave, they do not perform – whether this entails dying, crooning, sashaying or self-fucking – according to schedule, they don't fit the frame exactly as planned. And who is the central figure in these home movies? Well, the Father, of course: the adventurous senior diddling himself, the old queen who just wants to show his charge what life is all about, the paternalistic medical, political and religious establishments and those who believed in the indexical image's capacity to reveal the hidden truth of queer lives.



- <sup>1</sup> From the journal *Documents* c. 1996-2000. Gregg Bordowitz, *The AIDS Crisis Is Ridiculous and Other Writings, 1996-2003*, ed. James Meyer (Cambridge, MA & London: The MIT Press, 2004), 165-71.
- <sup>2</sup> Alexandra Juhasz, *AIDS TV: Identity, Community, and Alternative Video* (Durham, NC & London: Duke University Press, 1995), 240.
- <sup>3</sup> John Greyson, "Strategic Compromises: AIDS and Alternative Video Practices," in *Reimaging America: The Arts of Social Change*, ed. Mark O'Brien and Craig Little (Philadelphia & Santa Cruz: New Society Publishers, 1990), 60-74.
- <sup>4</sup> Robin Metcalfe, "Black Box: The Videos of Steve Reinke," *Parachute* 100 (2000): 94, 96.
- <sup>5</sup> Tom Folland, "My So-Called Life," *Fuse* 18.4 (1995): 34.
- <sup>6</sup> This tape was distributed through the seminal *Video Against AIDS* compilation of 22 international tapes curated by John Greyson and Bill Horrigan in 1989.
- <sup>7</sup> Jennifer Oille, "Peter Wronski / Rodney Werden," *Vanguard* (November 1983): page unknown.
- <sup>8</sup> Gene Youngblood, "The Lives of Rodney Werden," *Video 80 Magazine* (Winter 1983): 40.
- <sup>9</sup> Steve Reinke, "Economies of Desire: The Videos of Rodney Werden," (*My Rectum Is Not a Grave*, 2000), <http://www.myrectumisnotagrave.com/writing/werden.html> (accessed October 18, 2006).
- <sup>10</sup> For more on Canadian AIDS film and video see Thomas Waugh, "Anti-Retroviral: 'A Test of Who We Are,'" in *The Romance of Transgression in Canada: Queering Sexualities, Nations, Cinemas* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 277-326.

# REPRESENTATION: AN INVESTIGATION INTO NARCISSIM IN 1980S VIDEO ART

RANDY GRSKOVIC

Rosalind Krauss' statement, "the medium of video is narcissism (1976)," was the foundation for my exploration into video art of the early 1980s. Was a statement so encompassing as Krauss' the definitive answer to why video artists placed themselves in front of the camera? Krauss stated in the latter part of the 1970s, that the emerging art form of video was inherently narcissistic. Video technology allowed artists to place themselves in front of a camera and experience this recording re-projected through a monitor that Krauss likened to a mirror. There has always been a thin and somewhat fluctuating line between what is considered acceptable or not by the art world in terms of an artist using their own image in their work. To avoid misinterpretation, it is necessary for me to investigate certain works from this period to find out if the artists using themselves in their own video were on the path of self-distancing or was it intrinsically self-love.

From my outside perspective (I was only eight years old in 1989), it appears that the entire Western culture of the 1980s was narcissistic. With the advent of MTV and the rise of the "yuppie," in hindsight, much of the popular culture of the time seemed concerned with self-presentation. In this media-young culture, it is possible that the accessibility of the relatively new medium of video might flirt with a structure that became too self referential - possibly to the point of narcissism.

Video technology had become more accessible to artists as it became less expensive, easier to transport, ultimately making video easier to produce. Artists could now work alone with the equipment, recording themselves in intimate settings or directing small production crews to create low budget art tapes and films. But the decision of artists to position themselves in front of the camera was not a direct response to this technology because the camera and monitor do not have to be a mirror for the artists' image. In fact, many artists did not place themselves in front of the camera. But others did and this programme is a further investigation into two artists' intention.

Winnipeg artist Wendy Gellar in her videotape *Seven* and Toronto artist Colin Campbell in his narrative *Dangling by their Mouths*, both used traditional cinematic forms such as narrative and genre as a foundation for their work. Both employ conventions of traditional cinema such as scripted dialogue, shooting and editing styles and the use of lighting, albeit amateur. However, unlike traditional cinema, both artists have chosen to



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SEVEN

WENDY GELLER 1987, 11:41

be in front of the camera but not as themselves, choosing instead to create "characters" or "personae" outside of their own identities.

Gellar's work *Seven* is mimicry of classic cinema. She places herself in front of the camera, with no supporting cast. Within 21 brief scenes, she uses popular movie formulas and genres such as film noir and horror to draw the audience into identification with her characters' pathology. These clichés in form and content become very apparent as her characters stereotypical actions emerge and eclipse Gellar as the central actor. Her character, story, and setting constantly change. One minute her persona is that of a tragically wounded French soldier with nowhere to go; the next she is transformed into a strong willed Latino woman who would "fight for her man". These subjects are not chosen to complement Gellar's performance strengths. Her characters are more focused than that. All the roles Gellar has written fluctuate between being emancipated and victimized (a large portion arguably being the latter) to paint a much larger story.

By using herself as the central performer, she is able to investigate the stereotypes of cultural differences and toy with the typecast of femininity. The most redeeming quality to Gellar injecting herself into these conventions comes from the simple fact that she was commenting on the mirror (the media's ability to create "types" instead of individuals) rather than indulging in it. Despite being the only figure to appear in her work, Wendy Gellar displaces herself from the narcissistic pigeonhole that Krauss was describing.

Campbell surrounds his leading character with supporting roles. In *Dangling by their Mouths*, Campbell casts himself as the female lead named Anna. At first, the obvious image of the cross-dressing Campbell playing the part of Anna is quite displacing. However, by avoiding the "camp" aspects of gender bending (quite often found in videos from the 1980s), Campbell's performance allows the viewer to suspend their disbelief, until, midway through the tape, Campbell has successfully transformed into Anna.

Anna is an elegant, assured, slightly older woman who fits the stereotypically aware and sophisticated European. Her demeanor fluctuates between strength and insecurity when dealing with the other characters especially those she has intimate contact with such as her former lover, current lover and the young gay artist she relates to. Over the course of the narrative, Anna goes through severe emotional states when dealing with the death of her lover. Here Campbell is exploring the pathology of the other by putting himself in a role of a female bisexual European. His

intention to take the character of Anna seriously is noted in his stone-cold delivery of dialogue and what I would consider under acting; he does not attempt a female voice, his motions are not overly feminine. Campbell's role, despite playing the character that links all other characters together, does not detract from the other performances. In this compelling exploration of the pathology of another individual, Colin Campbell effectively denies Krauss' assertion of the narcissistic hold of artist-in-front-of-camera.

A dilemma can arise when artists choose to work in media closely linked to mass media. Admittedly, the medium of video can be problematic for artists who want to bypass the conventions of popular culture, especially when they are working in a medium closely linked to it. Television, movies and music videos all present a seemingly superior class of people who are worthy of being recorded. It can be a problem when it is assumed that in the mediums of re-presentation the person presented is significant. However, this does not mean, nor did it mean in the 1980s, that video or even the act of recording oneself was inherently narcissistic. There may have been cases of such narcissism but from the investigation into videos such as Gellar's and Campbell's, we can conclude that this quality of selflove was not inherent to the medium.

My personal interpretation of a self-absorbed 1980s does not assume that all videos produced in that time were so easily categorized. The underlying circumstance with such a young medium and a culture new to extensive recording and re-presentation is identity; artists searching for distinctiveness of form and craft as well as self-presentation. The result of this situation was exploration and investigation into others and not self-love.



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## BIOGRAPHIES

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The late **Michael Balser** was an artist, writer and curator working in a variety of media and publications. He has written for *Fuse*, *Point of View*, and *Lola* and has developed programs for *Vtape*, *A Space* and *Trinity Square Video*. A retrospective of twenty years of Balser's work was mounted as part of the 2003 *Inside/Out Festival* in Toronto.

**Colin Campbell** was born in Reston, Manitoba, 1942. He studied at the University of Manitoba (BFA) and Claremont Graduate School in California (MFA). Campbell then taught at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick, in the late 1960s and early 1970s where he made his first video works. He moved to Toronto in 1973 and taught first at the Ontario College of Art, now the Ontario College of Art and Design, and then, beginning in 1980, in the Department of Fine Art at University of Toronto. Campbell died of cancer in October 2001.

**Jon Davies** holds an MA in film and video, critical and historical studies, from York University. His writing has been or will be published in the periodicals *GLQ*, *Animation Journal*, *Canadian Art*, *Cinema Scope* and *Xtra!* and the anthology *The Cinema of Todd Haynes: All That Heaven Allows* (2006). He has curated programmes of film and video for *Pleasure Dome*, *Images Festival*, *Inside Out* and *Cinematheque Ontario*.

**Andy Fabo** is a visual artist, writer, curator and lecturer. He studied at the Alberta College of Art and at the University of Calgary before moving to Toronto in 1975. Fabo has shown work extensively locally, nationally and internationally and has received numerous grants from the federal, provincial and municipal arts councils.

**Wendy Geller** was born in Winnipeg, Canada in 1957. She received her BFA from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, and a MFA from the University of California, San Diego. Her work has been exhibited in the United States, Europe and Canada. In addition to her work as a video artist, she was an Assistant Professor at the Kansas City Art Institute from 1987-1990, during which time, she also curated a major show of international videotapes for the Charlotte Cross-Kemper Gallery. Wendy Geller passed away in 1996.

**John Goss** was born in Germany in 1958 and currently lives in Bangkok. An American artist, he has worked both collaboratively and

independently in performance, video, photography and special effects design including several tapes on gay sexuality and AIDS made between 1980 and 1993. He received his BFA from Northern Illinois University and his MFA from CalArts.

John Greyson was born in Nelson, British Columbia, in 1960 and is a prolific video and visual artist, filmmaker, writer and activist whose work has screened internationally since the early eighties. He is currently an assistant professor of film at York University. His feature *Lilies* won a Genie award for best picture in 1996 and he is President of the Board of Vtape.

Randy Grskovic was born in Edmonton, Alberta, 1981. He received his BFA in Advanced Media Communications from the University of British Columbia – Okanagan, in Kelowna B.C (2005). Grskovic is a founding member of the Duotone Arts Collective and perennial curator of the Duotone arts festival. Since 2006 he has been involved in directing an online emerging artists' resource at Balcone.org. Randy now lives in Vancouver working as an artist/curator.

Media artist and writer Gary Kibbins is associate professor in Film Studies at Queen's University. Kibbins has taught at the California Institute of the Arts and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design where he completed his own studies. A selection of his written work was compiled for a book, *Grammar & Not-Grammar: Selected Scripts and Essays*.

Laura Kikauka, born in Hamilton, Ontario, graduated from the Ontario College of Art and Design in 1984. She has received the Lieutenant Governor's Medal and the Joan Chalmers Scholarship and in 1992, she moved to Berlin where she continues to live. Kikauka has toured her new media, electronic, and performance work throughout North America and Europe.

Andrew James Paterson is an interdisciplinary artist and writer living and working in Toronto. Paterson is active in experimental music, theater, writing, performance and video. His performance art and video has been exhibited internationally.

Steve Reinke was born in Eganville, Ontario in 1963 and is an artist and writer best known for his videos. He received his MFA from Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and is currently an associate professor of art theory and practice at Northwestern University. His scripts are collected in *Steve Reinke: The Hundred Videos* (1997) and *Everybody Loves Nothing: Video 1996/2004* (2004).

**Taryn Sirove** is a PhD candidate in visual and material culture at Queen's University. Sirove received her undergraduate training at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and focuses her work on discursive histories of identity politics through the lens of video art in Canada as part of her broader interest in electronic and new media art.

Born in 1984, **Sarah Todd** was raised on the West Coast of Canada. Sarah is recent graduate from of the Ontario College of Art and Design's Criticism and Curatorial Practice BFA Program. For the moment she lives and works in Toronto.

**John Watt** is a Canadian video artist and curator. He received his BFA from Mt. Allison University in Sackville, NB and is known to be one of the early pioneers of Canadian video art. He currently lives and works in Toronto.

**Rodney Werden** was born in Toronto in 1946 and produced videotapes between 1973 and 1993. Originally a photographer, Werden is self-taught as a video artist and was a founding member of Charles Street Video. His work has been published and exhibited extensively in Canada, the United States and Europe and has won many awards.

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