



MAINSTREETERS: Taking Advantage, 1972–1982

January 9 – March 14, 2015 | Satellite Gallery



Josh Baer, Deborah Fong, Anastacia McDonald, Jeanette Reinhardt and Carol Hackett at White Columns, New York City, *tour de '4'*, 1980, Courtesy of Paul Wong

Cover: Mainstreeters: Anastacia McDonald, Deborah Fong, Paul Wong, Kenneth Fletcher at "The Complex" (26th and Main), c. 1974, Courtesy of Kazumi Tanaka

This exhibition surveys the activities of a group of artists and creative practitioners who lived along Vancouver's Main Street, the traditional dividing line between the city's working-class multicultural east side and its more affluent anglocentric west side. Based on a foundation of childhood friendships and shared residences, the "Mainstreeters," as they were known, took up art on their own terms and on their own turf, drawing the art world into their East Vancouver orbit as they explored and contributed to the city's larger cultural ecology.

The exhibition traces the evolution of a gang whose core formed at Vancouver's Charles Tupper Secondary in 1968, when Kenneth Fletcher, Deborah Fong, Jeanette Reinhardt and Paul Wong entered eighth grade. Meetings with older students Anastacia McDonald and Charles Rea soon followed, as did the arrival of Marlene MacGregor from Toronto and Carol Hackett, who attended high school in Vancouver's West End. The Mainstreeters eschewed formal art education for learn-as-you-go, hands-on experience. While still in high school, they participated in large-scale community arts events, taking advantage of exploratory workshops in video, both as students and as teachers. Like the "digital natives" of today, the Mainstreeters travelled the city with cameras, recording their findings, stagings, arguments and experiments. For this self-described "art gang," video was a means to rehearse, edit, duplicate and distribute their world – as art.

At the time of their graduation, half of the Mainstreeters were employed by the Vancouver Art Gallery's Extension Program (Stadium Gallery, later Satellite Gallery), where meetings with Michael Goldberg led to their involvement in the creation of Video Inn and accelerated their interest

in media. The gang also formed relationships with the Fluxus-influenced Western Front, an artist-run centre with an international reach whose “eternal network” included collectives like Toronto’s General Idea, whom the Mainstreeters collaborated with on a 1978 *Slow-Scan* performance, and Willoughby Sharp, who hosted the gang’s S.S. Girls during their 1980 *tour de 4* stop in New York City.

The Mainstreeters came of age at a time when abstracted landscape painting remained a dominant regional mode, and when internationally-oriented art-as-life manifestations and photo-based conceptual strategies had only just announced themselves. In the space between these stories, the group acts as a hinge, linking the interdisciplinary Vancouver salons of the early 1960s to the more participatory “social practices” of today.¹ At the same time, they developed an artmaking methodology as rigorous as those associated with the city’s more discursive research-based practices. As friends and roommates, the Mainstreeters excelled at creating social spaces, organizing events of an increasing scale that resulted in the first of five gender-busting “drag balls,” the last of which was formalized in 1980 as a ticketed event at a public hall. By then the gang had explored a downtown demimonde that included emergent artist collectives like PUMPS, as well as the nouveau riche art-collecting enclave of West Vancouver (through the Vancouver Art Gallery’s Karen McDiarmid). More importantly, the Mainstreeters had successfully challenged an art world whose notions of art were formed primarily by schools, studios, textbooks and museums.

Over the course of their ten post-high school years, the Mainstreeters’ videotapes (most of which exist as “sketches” of their lives and ideas) became less collective. The gang remained connected throughout the 1980s, and involved in one another’s lives and projects; but where there was active collaboration in works like ‘4’ (1980), or committed interventionist performance, such as *in ten sity* (1979), individually-motivated pieces like Paul Wong’s *Prime Cuts* (1981) utilized the Mainstreeters as a work force and an expert production crew. *Confused Sexual Views* (1984) follows *Prime Cuts* as a signature Paul Wong project, and the subsequent controversy surrounding its rejection by the Vancouver Art Gallery, and an ensuing legal battle, left Wong, the solo artist, taking a principled stand in the community. Not a break-up, per se, this moment marks an end to the productive era of the Mainstreeters’ collective artistic activities. Gang members by then had become more singular in their pursuits, no longer preoccupied by what danced in the cracks of their city, or Main Street itself, which became increasingly gentle and less familiar as the division of Vancouver began to shift from east-west to north-south.

Allison Collins and Michael Turner
Curators

¹ These conversations, held in the orbit of Roy Kiyooka, anticipated the formation of Intermedia in 1967. Intermedia, an early proto-artist-run centre founded as a collaborative event and production community space, marks an important development in the orientation of artistic experimentation in Vancouver, and its communication to a wider community.



Deborah Fong at Printed Matter, New York, *tour de '4'*, 1980

SMALL ROOM

1. Paul Wong
'4', 1981

single channel video, colour, sound, 42 min.

'4' originated as a collaborative performance by Deborah Fong, Carol Hackett, Anastacia McDonald and Jeanette Reinhardt as the S.S. Girls, following events and activities of the women's daily lives on Main Street. The performance was produced by Paul Wong and co-sponsored by the Video Inn. '4' explores the lives and personalities of four women as described by one another in the style of a feuding dysfunctional family. '4' was developed as a multimedia performance, first staged at Western Front in 1980, then followed by a tour across Canada and into the USA. The scripted multimedia presentations were later adapted to a video work.

2. From the Mainstreeters' Archives
c. 1972 - 1982

lightjet prints, documents

Courtesy of Marlene MacGregor, Mary Janeway, Charles Rea, Jeanette Reinhardt, Kazumi Tanaka and Paul Wong

3. Video Documents
c. 1972 - 1982

Excerpts of documentary footage shot by the Mainstreeters
single channel video, sound, 43:45 min.

Courtesy of Paul Wong

Heel Loop Piece, 1973, black and white

Planting a garden in the backyard at Anastacia McDonald and Charles Rea's rented house, 57th Avenue and Knight Street.

Zebra Skate, 1974, black and white

Roller skating event by Evelyn Roth attended by the Mainstreeters, Circus Minimus, New Era Social Club and others from Video Inn.

Satellite Gallery at Gilmore Elementary Tape 1, 1975
black and white

Art activities for kids with Kenneth Fletcher and Paul Wong as part of the Vancouver Art Gallery Extension Program.

Wavenrock series, 1975, black and white

Jeanette Models at Wavenrock, 1975, black and white

Kenneth Fletcher, Jeanette Reinhardt and Paul Wong at Karen McDiarmaid's house in West Vancouver. Footage shot by Paul Wong and Kenneth Fletcher.

Mainstreeter Stanley Park, 1973, black and white

Kenneth Fletcher, Deborah Fong, Paul Wong and others play checkers and blow bubbles in Stanley Park.

Halloween at Ann's, 1978, black and white

Deborah Fong, Carol Hackett, Marlene MacGregor and Anastacia McDonald answering the door on Hallowe'en, Paul arrives.

Unsupervised Evening at PUMPS, 1978, colour

Mary Janeway, Anastacia McDonald, Jeanette Reinhardt, Charles Rea and Paul Wong impersonate PUMPS artists John Anderson, Richard Hambleton, Sandra Janz, John Mitchell and Kim Tomczak, respectively. The night continues with an impromptu performance inspired by Hermann Nitsch.

Summer Fun Time Part A, 1979, colour

Anastacia McDonald, Charles Rea, Paul Wong and Cornelia Wyngaarden at Wreck Beach.

Summer Fun Time Part B, 1979, colour

Dishes in the tub.

4. *Ken's House Tape*, 1978, single channel video, colour, 28:40 min.
Courtesy of Paul Wong

Following the suicide of Kenneth Fletcher the Mainstreeters occupied and took care of his house, its contents and the cats. Paul Wong shot this video.

Ken's House, 1978, 15 lightjet prints
Courtesy of Paul Wong

Photographs of Kenneth Fletcher's house, shot by Paul Wong.

HALLWAY

5. *Vitrines: Mainstreeter Correspondence, Works & Ephemera*

Cameras and performance were the primary means by which the Mainstreeters negotiated their world. However, the gang partook in other mediums, such as writing, drawing, painting and sculpture. The work in these vitrines, and on the wall above, include correspondence art, business documents, preliminary sketches towards finished works, performance props and "found" multiples like *Plastic Amp*, a costume jewelry company started by Annastacia McDonald, Mary Ready and Paul Wong in the mid-1970s.

Wall:

Charles Rea, *Ark*, 1979
chalk and ink
Courtesy of Charles Rea and Mary Janeway

Charles Rea, *Stickier Fingers*, 1977
lithograph
Courtesy of Charles Rea and Mary Janeway

Kenneth Fletcher, *Untitled [coffee filters]*, c.1976
watercolour on paper
Courtesy of Deborah Fong

Monitor:

Deborah Fong, *Last Week*, 1977
single channel video, colour, sound, 2 min.
Courtesy of Deborah Fong

Charles Rea
Bachelor Prince, 1980

single channel video, colour, sound, 18:30 min., Courtesy of Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery Archive, The University of British Columbia, Gina Show fonds, purchased with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance program and the Morris and Helen Belkin Foundation

Kenneth Fletcher
Ken's Coffee Spill, 1976

single channel video, black and white, sound, 3:17 min.
Courtesy of Paul Wong

LARGE ROOM

6. Monitor 1:

William Fearn, Kenneth Fletcher, Charles Rea and
Stokely Seip

Mainstreet Drag Ball, 1980

single channel video, black and white, sound 17:45 min.

Monitor 2:

Mainstreet Tapes, 1976

single channel video compilation, 30 min.

Paul Wong, *Red Green Black*, colour, sound

Kenneth Fletcher, Deborah Fong and Paul Wong, *He She They*,
black and white

Kenneth Fletcher and Paul Wong, *K of P*, colour, sound

Kenneth Fletcher and Paul Wong, *Vice Versa*, colour, sound

Kenneth Fletcher and Paul Wong, *60 Unit; Bruise*, colour, sound

Monitor 3:

Paul Wong
On Becoming a Man, 1975

single channel video, black and white, sound, 19:54 min.

On the occasion of his 21st birthday, Paul Wong walks southwest from his mother's house at St Catherines Street to the Quebec Street home of Kenneth Fletcher. Most remarkable about this video is not its careful camera work (shot entirely from a moving vehicle), but the driving that allowed for it – a feat that brings to mind the complementary (and collaborative) relationship between the shooter and the driver. *On Becoming a Man* was also the title of Paul's 1995 solo exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada.

7. Kenneth Fletcher and Paul Wong
Murder Research, 1977

36 phototext panels with single channel video, colour, sound, 16 min.
Collection of Rick Erickson and Donna Partridge

Early in the morning of February 26, 1976, a young First Nations man named Eugene Lloyd Pelly was stabbed in an apartment at 4272 Watson Street. That same morning, Jeanette Reinhardt saw Pelly's body from her window. Paul Wong, whom she was living with at the time, shot a roll of 35mm film documenting the scene. The quiet violence of the scene captivated Paul, and together with Kenneth Fletcher the two embarked on a project to research the crime in detail. Using a press card obtained through the Satellite Video Exchange Society, Kenneth and Paul gained access to the coroner's office and the morgue, where they photographed the body, as well as the police report. Documentation of the crime, the body, news clippings and television reports related to Pelly and his accused murderer, Jeffery Alfred Gladeau, provided the basis of a script, a performance, a video and a book that recounts the event.

Murder Research Archive

Courtesy of Paul Wong

Although highly regarded as a documentary cine-poem, *Murder Research* (1977) is a total work of art that involved numerous hours spent at the city morgue, public archives and libraries; clippings from newspaper reports and television broadcasts; and endless speculative re-enactments by the Mainstreeters. Here we see evidence of the gang's near-obsessive commitment to the project and the archive it generated.

8. Paul Wong
in ten sity, 1978

single channel mix (2008), black and white, sound, 25 min.

in ten sity, contact sheet reproduction, 36 lightjet prints

The five-channel video installation by Paul Wong began as a performance at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Paul climbed into an 8' x 8' x 8' padded cube and, for what amounted to the duration of a punk rock concert set, slam danced to the music of Sex Pistols, Avengers and Patti Smith, while eight cameras (some of them embedded in the walls) recorded the action. Paul describes this work as "an endurance piece, a statement of emotional and physical intensity, a visual and vocal expression of a vein of thought and strain of energy." Aware as it is of a then-burgeoning punk rock culture, the piece could also be described as a dance floor catharsis born out of the loss of a friend and a collaborator, a performance so diverse in its emotional complexity that it incited audience members to toss objects into the cube (as an offering or a stoning?), before jumping in themselves. Some of those who jumped into the cube (to rescue Paul? to attack him?) were Mainstreeters.

9. *High Profile Slow-Scan*, 1978

single channel video, black and white, 28 min.

Vancouver event documentation

18 lightjet prints

On October 13, 1978 a live feed slow-scan transmission was made between the Mainstreeters in Vancouver and General Idea in Toronto, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the seminal Canadian art collective General Idea. Slow-scan was a transmission technology using television equipment with computerized memory to sample a televisual image every few seconds, "freeze" it and send it through a telephone line as an audio signal. Slow-scan transmissions unfolded as events where images were traded back and forth between locations. The Vancouver portion was held at the Video Inn and consisted primarily of Mainstreeters Carol Hackett, Anastacia McDonald, Charles Rea, Jeanette Reinhardt, Mary Janeway, Paul Wong and Marlene MacGregor, with Paul acting as director. The Toronto portion included performances by Carol Pope and Kevin Staples of Rough Trade, David Buchan as La Monte del Monte, and the Clichettes.

10. Paul Wong
Prime Cuts, 1981

single channel video, colour, sound, 20 min.

Prime Cuts, production photographs, 1981

This video follows a group of attractive, fit and well-dressed young

adults as they work out, make out, frolic in the sun and dance until dawn. (The work received many negative reviews upon its release, with commentators referring to it as "shallow" in its unabashed relay of fashion and consumer culture.) The Mainstreeters were fascinated with glamour, both as a subject of study and as a form to be remodelled, inverted or, in some cases, turned against itself. In imagining the lives of models (some of whom the Mainstreeters worked with through commercial projects), *Prime Cuts* does not so much "share the fantasy," as the makers of Chanel No. 5 once urged us to do, but extends it to uncomfortable ends.

HALLWAY

11. Paul Wong
Support Modelling, 1977
single channel video mix, colour, sound, 3:30 min.

The Mainstreeters initiated a number of commercial enterprises. *Support Modelling* was a modelling agency comprised of members of the local art and punk rock scene. To promote the project, Paul Wong made a three-channel video (later adapted to single channel) that featured certain Mainstreeters in various states of undress, accompanied by a disco soundtrack. *Support Modelling* also appears as a series of concept ads (weddings, funerals) in *Ennui* magazine.

12. Ennui

Ennui vol. 1 No. 1, 1980
Ennui vol. 1 No. 2, 1980
Ennui vol. 1 No. 3, 1980
Ennui vol. 1 No. 4, 1980
Ennui vol. 1 No. 5, 1980
Ennui vol. 2 No. 1, 1981
Ennui vol. 2 No. 2, 1981

An out-sized, black-and-white newsprint magazine that appeared seven times between 1980 and 1981. Each issue was between 16 and 24 pages, and featured articles, photographs and advertisements that both reflected and contributed to the consolidation of the local art, music and fashion scene. *Ennui* began as a conversation between Carol Hackett, Mary Janeway and Charles Rea at Kenneth Fletcher's wake. The first issue came out two years later, with Charles and Mary doing much of the production and design work, while Carol focused on writing and editing.

BOOKSTORE

13. Mainstreeters, 2014
single channel video, colour, sound, 53:34 min.

Curatorial research and interviews conducted by Allison Collins and Michael Turner
Video direction and editing by Krista Lomox
Produced by Glenn Alteen, grunt gallery

MAINSTREETERS PROJECT WEBSITE

takingadvantage.ca



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Kenneth Fletcher's House, 1978, Courtesy of Paul Wong

1200 N. 1st St., Suite 100
 Minneapolis, MN 55401
 Tel: 612.338.1111
 Fax: 612.338.1112
 www.kennethfletcher.com

EVENTS

Opening Reception: Thursday, January 8, 2015

During the exhibition, Main Street Tapes will be showing in storefronts along Main Street, including:

Eugene Choo, 3683 Main Street
Smoking Lily, 3634 Main Street
Lifetime Collective, 4386 Main Street

Performance of Kenneth Fletcher's *Camp Potlatch*

Directed by Paul Wong
Thursday, January 22 at 8pm

Exhibition Tour and Conversation with Allison Collins and Michael Turner

Saturday, January 31 at 2pm

Main Street Walking Tour with Paul Wong and Annastacia McDonald

Saturday, February 21 at 2pm
Meeting point: Helen's Grill, 4102 Main Street

Drag Ball

Saturday, March 7
Location: Fox Cabaret, 2321 Main Street

Countercultures Symposium

Sunday, March 15

This exhibition is a co-production of grunt gallery and Presentation House Gallery, curated by Allison Collins and Michael Turner.

Mainstreeters: Taking Advantage, 1972-1982 is generously supported by Rick Erickson and Donna Partridge.

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Presentation House Gallery
333 Chesterfield Avenue, North Vancouver, BC
presentationhousegallery.org

grunt gallery
116-350 East 2nd Ave, Vancouver, BC
grunt.ca

Satellite Gallery
2nd Floor, 560 Seymour Street, Vancouver
Wednesday—Saturday, 12:00PM—6:00PM
satellitegallery.ca

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