

# FUSE

MAGAZINE

## on funding the arts

### On Becoming a Household Name

by Catherine Osborne

### When Public Became Private

by Andrew J. Paterson

### Dire Straits in Korea

by Joan Kee

### CARFAC and the artists' union

by Karl Beveridge



### Plus...

Artist pages  
by Jim Miller

Visual art  
and book reviews

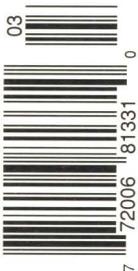
## Privatizing the Public with the Ontario Arts Council

by Barbara Godard

## Changing the Rules

## at the Canada Council

by Clive Robertson



Pleasure Dome presents

# BLUEPRINT

moving images in the 21st century

## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

*'The view of utopia is always a reflection on the retina while seeing the panorama of the end of the world'* — ALDOUS HUXLEY

According to historian Eric Hobsbawm the twentieth century came to a close in 1989 with the collapse of the Soviet Union. In view of Hobsbawm's claim, how should we as artists address the arbitrary celebration of the coming of the Y2K? Its formal nature begs many critical questions.

The year 2000 is for **Pleasure Dome\*** a marker for its own decade of existence, its first ten years of radical film and video programming. Inspired in ethos and in name by the work of Kenneth Anger, **Pleasure Dome** now bravely looks forward into the beams of the oncoming "new millennium." Parodying Lenin, we ask "What to do?" As we reach the end of our millennium and first decade we need to address the question of our millennial expectations in an aggressively ironic, critical manner and reflect on what role moving images will play in the future. **A Blueprint for Moving Images in the 21st Century** is a call to imaginative, incisive soothsayers, a challenge to media artists across the country to produce a future blueprint for moving images for the new century, however problematic and impossible this task may be. Let's furnish a much required edge to the inane euphoria about to hatch!

### THE CALL November 1, 1999 Deadline

**Pleasure Dome** is seeking proposals by Canadian artists for the creation and production of short (under 10 min.) experimental films and videos that speculate on what role moving images might play and look like in the 21st Century! Selected proposals will be funded to a maximum of \$5000 towards the production and completion of a film/video work. The completed program will be given an exclusive premiere with **Pleasure Dome** in the fall season 2000 and begin a national tour in January 2001.

Please send written description (1 page) of proposed film/video work outlining the conceptual and technical approach accompanied with a production schedule, budget and relevant support material (i.e. visual treatment of proposal, tape or slides of previous work and CV) by November 1, 1999. Please enclose self-addressed stamped envelope for return. Proposals by non-media artists, emerging film and videomakers (working in any format) and artists from diverse cultural and regional communities of Canada are encouraged.

#### Timetable for Blueprint:

Nov. 1, 1999 — Deadline for submissions  
Dec. 1, 1999 — Announcement of selected proposals  
Dec. 1, 1999 to Aug. 1, 2000 — Production of film/ video works  
Fall 2000 — Toronto Premiere of **Blueprint**  
Jan. to Dec. 2001 — National Tour of Program

Please send proposals to 6 Alcina Ave., Toronto, Ont. M6G 2E8 by November 1, 1999. For further information:

T 416.656.5577 E pdome@ican.net http://home.ican.net/~pdome

### \*Pleasure Dome

is a Toronto-based artist-run curatorial and exhibition group devoted to the presentation of cutting-edge experimental film and video. To view our programming history since 1989 please view our Website at: <http://home.ican.net/~pdome>  
Supported by The Canada Council for the Arts



# ARTISTS

The Ontario Arts Council supports Ontario-based, professional film, video and visual artists through the following programs:

### ARTISTS' FILM AND VIDEO

A production program to assist independent artists using film and video as a form of creative expression.

Deadline: October 1, 1999.

### FIRST PROJECTS: FILM & VIDEO

A production program to encourage and support first-time and emerging film and video artists undertaking an original project. Deadline: January 25, 2000.

### VISUAL ARTS - GRANTS FOR EMERGING ARTISTS

This \$3,000 grant program is for artists in the early stages of their professional careers.

New deadline: December 15, 1999.

### VISUAL ARTS - GRANTS FOR MID-CAREER ARTISTS

This \$5,000 grant is for artists past the early stages of their professional careers and established in their field.

New deadline: October 1, 1999.

*When applying to a specific program, always confirm the application deadline by calling OAC.*

*Ces renseignements existent également en français. Communiquez avec le Conseil des arts de l'Ontario.*

For more information, contact:

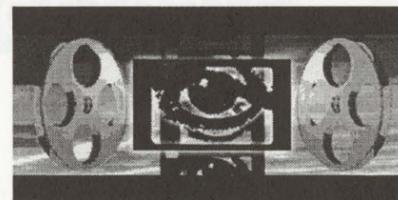
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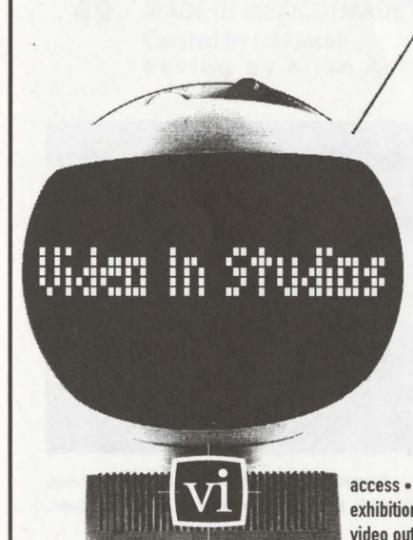
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~screening

curated by Nicole Gingras, featuring works by Clémence Boucher, Dan Oki, Éric Oriot, Bradley Eros & Jeanne Liotta, Péter Süly and Chris Marker  
September 22

~film jam

John Anderson and Friends

Wow!

September 25

~exhibition

Mireille Baril

The Tele-photos

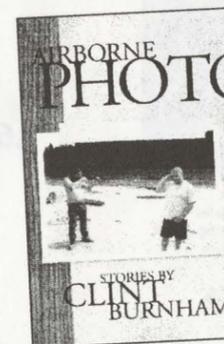
September 25 to October 29

~scope is a year-long project encompassing film-based installations, screenings, panel discussions, performances, and film jams.

For more information please contact:  
Western Front Exhibitions Program  
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phone (604) 876 9343 fax (604) 876 4099  
email: front@smarrt.com website: www.front.bc.ca

The Western Front is a member of PAARC (the Pacific Association of Artist-Run Centres)

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# FUSE

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VOLUME 22 NUMBER 3 SEPTEMBER 1999

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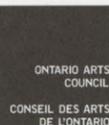
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The Canada Council



Centre de documentation  
ARTEXTÉ  
DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

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"Canada: making it together" billboard by Honda,  
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Cover image: from an artist postcard  
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Hello, it's me  
installation by  
**Elizabeth LeMoine**  
September 15 - October 16

**Promise**  
performance and video by  
**Tamami Asada**  
**Liz Baulch & Deb Strutt**  
**Lucy Gunning**  
**Louise Liliefeldt**  
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a 20th anniversary celebration  
October 27 - November 27

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in art at the end of the twentieth century

raki, Matthew Barney, Damien Hirst, rmer, Emma Kay, Steve McQueen, Mark orgina Starr, Rachel Whiteread, Sam ollection of the nvisible Museum, U.K.

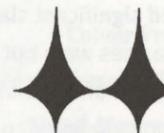
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Celebrating 20 Years of  
Artist-Run Culture 1979-1999

# The Multiple and Mutable Subject

International symposium  
exploring postmodern  
subjectivity & the internet

8 october - 10 october '99  
winnipeg. canada

PRESENTERS:

**BARBARA BECKER** (Bonn, Germany) Research Scientist, German National Research Centre of Computer Science.

**JANET LeVALLEY** (San Jose, California) World Manager and Community Director, WorldsAway Avatar Communities, Fujitsu; Ethnographic Researcher; Faculty, Greenwich University.

**AHASIW MASKEGON-ISKWEW** (Regina, Saskatchewan) Media Artist; Previous Manager, Soil Digital Media Production Suite.

**MARK POSTER** (Irvine, California) Writer; Professor of History and Film and Media Studies, University of California.

**ALLUQUÈRE ROSANNE STONE** (Austin, Texas) Writer; Performer; Assistant Professor and Director, Advanced Communication Technologies Laboratory, University of Texas.

**DOT TUER** (Toronto, Ontario) Writer; Cultural Historian; Professor, Ontario College of Art and Design.

MODERATOR:

**FAITH WILDING** (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania) Multi-disciplinary Artist; Performer; Writer; Lecturer; Research Fellow, Studio for Creative Inquiry, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh; Faculty, M.F.A. in Visual Art Program, Vermont College, Norwich University.

EVENT CO-CURATORS:

**VERA LEMECHA** and **REVA STONE** (Winnipeg MB, Canada)

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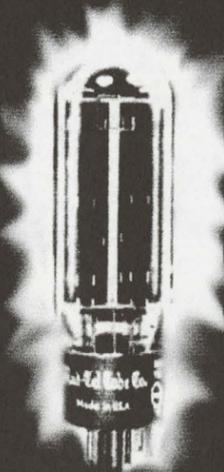
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## self portrait

the physical and the spiritual in art at the end of the twentieth century

Francis Alys, Nobuyoshi Araki, Matthew Barney, Damien Hirst,  
Zhang Huan, Brad Kahlhamer, Emma Kay, Steve McQueen, Mark  
Pimlott, Liisa Roberts, Georgina Starr, Rachel Whiteread, Sam  
Taylor-Wood - From the collection of the nvisible Museum, U.K.

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**AHASIW MASKEGON-ISKWEW**  
(Regina, Saskatchewan) Media Artist;  
Previous Manager, Soil Digital Media  
Production Suite.

**MARK POSTER** (Irvine, California)  
Writer; Professor of History and Film and  
Media Studies, University of California.

**ALLUQUÉRE ROSANNE STONE**  
(Austin, Texas) Writer; Performer;  
Assistant Professor and Director,  
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**DOT TUER** (Toronto, Ontario) Writer;  
Cultural Historian; Professor, Ontario  
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Faculty, M.F.A. in Visual Art Program,  
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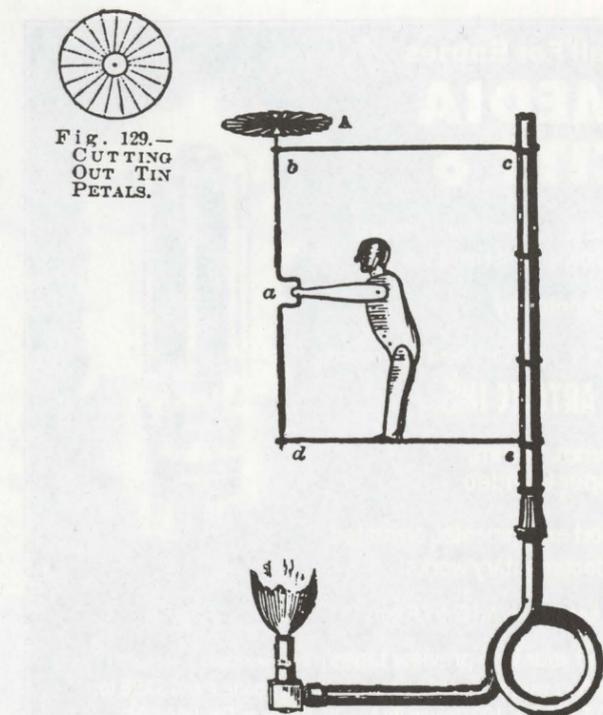
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Antonia Zerbisias' rant in the June 1998 issue of *Masthead* thrashed not only *FUSE*, but *Geist* and *Borderlines*, threatening the already tenuous position that alternative magazines hold in relation to government granting agencies. The decision by the OAC to limit funding to periodicals that only address and include poetry, fiction and visual art commentary, precariously and narrowly envision ways that art and culture are defined. Magazines that cover contemporary art issues, criticism, cultural studies and politics have experienced significant slashes to annual operating budgets. That magazines were not consulted about the then pending cuts, that lines of communications were rigid, that the granting structure seemed to be top-down, is a sign of bad faith that shows an irresponsible relationship to community building.

In the last issue of *Masthead*, talk of cuts to *FUSE*, and other mags like *This Magazine* and *Canadian Forum*, raised serious doubts about whether we would be eligible for future OAC funding. "Eligibility" here is really a code word for stricter rules meant to eliminate political critique. New guidelines developed by the OAC amend rules that executive director Donna Scott argues were previously "too open to interpretation." Limiting the interpretive field so as to establish criteria that make magazines "fall into line" is in keeping with slash-and-burn "Harris-ment" style of governing. Harris and the conservatives have shown disrespect for unions, teachers, hospitals and welfare recipients, and now magazines that maintain a close critical perspective on cul-

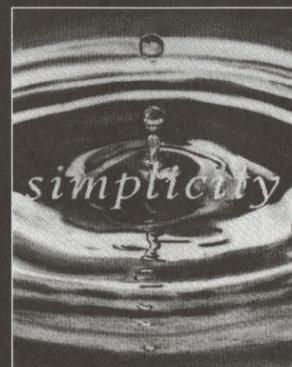


tural production join them on the Tory hit list. While *FUSE* was able to fend off, at least for now, cuts to its operating budget by securing its OAC grant last year, we realize that not every magazine is as fortunate.

With this in mind, we at *FUSE* feel that it is important to continue discussions on arts funding issues. We are committed to maintaining high standards in magazine publishing along with *This*, *Canadian Forum*, *Queens Quarterly* and *Borderlines*. In this issue, *FUSE* brings together various views and perspectives from artists, activists and academics who share our concerns on the future of local and national arts councils. Critiques of cultural policy will now lie firmly outside the Tory's conventional definitions of art and culture, but this issue's well-researched features and opinion pieces necessarily put the issues at stake.

This issue intends to unravel histories and policies—to illuminate and spawn new conversations and new directions for funding councils; it should not be read apart from the larger political picture drawn by the provincial Tory party. We encourage you to keep this issue alive by sending us your thoughts and responses.

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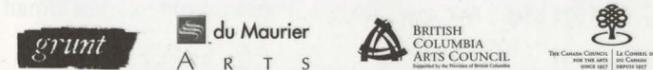
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# When Public Became Private

by Andrew James Paterson

**If capitalism is indeed an indisputable reality, then it is there to be strategically occupied, if not necessarily embraced.<sup>1</sup>**

As the public funding systems that seemed so relatively accessible in the late '70s and through the '80s are being down-sized, more and more artists and organizations are seriously questioning their position in public life and investigating other funding sources to create their work because they really don't have any other choice.

Many art practitioners—middle-aged, young, and old—in practically all disciplines are more than ever before feeling that they must decide whether or not being an artist is in fact their primary "identity." Who decides (and who indeed has any right to decide) who is and is not a viable artist? How are distinctions made between full- and part-time artists? Does one have to derive an overwhelming majority, if not all, of one's personal income from their art in order to qualify? While it can be argued that individuals who either teach, hold administrative positions or perform M<sup>c</sup>Functions for M<sup>c</sup>Money are just as much artists as those who sell their work nationally and internationally, there is no doubt that you can devote more time to making and displaying art if you don't have to work at other employment. A very small percentage of practicing artists make their living solely from their artistic practice and artists are forced to decide whether or not they can persevere in an increasingly market-determined climate. Many decide, for varying reasons, that their

chances of survival are somehow unlikely and thus they become individuals who do other things to make a living and then occasionally make art.

**DOES THIS MEAN IF YOU DON'T SELL YOUR ART, YOU ARE NOT AN ARTIST?**

This may sound like the calling of cold, hard capitalism, but it is indeed a real question that artists must face.

In October 1995, I was an exhibiting artist in Culture Slash Nation, an exhibition that took a critical look at culture in the context of funding cutbacks, held at Gallery TPW, an artist-run centre located in the same building as many varying-profile commercial galleries in Toronto.<sup>2</sup> One day during the exhibition, I found myself scanning the comments in the guest book. Included among familiar signatures were some wildly polarized reactions to the exhibition and one in particular has remained in my mind. "You have elected yourselves as a cultural elite who speak only to each other. Why is this superior to 'market value?'"<sup>3</sup> I, myself, am a strong believer that artists and their works should be evaluated by criteria beyond financial success or numbers of viewers, and I reject the reductive notion that the market is a level playing field. Yet I was quite pleased to see this bold comment in the guest book. It indicated that the exhibition was certainly not merely playing to the converted and that quite possibly other viewers unfamiliar with these artists and their work did not feel so negatively about both the nature and premise of the exhibition. Ironically, this particular gallery viewer's sentiment is one I have often heard expressed by artists critical of what they perceive as a hegemonic favoritism rampant within granting systems, and by people who wonder what indeed is so bloody special about artists.

This suspicion toward artists and "the art world" is hardly restricted to conservatives and



Public Water Closet, Adrian Blackwell, shown in "Off/Site," 1998.



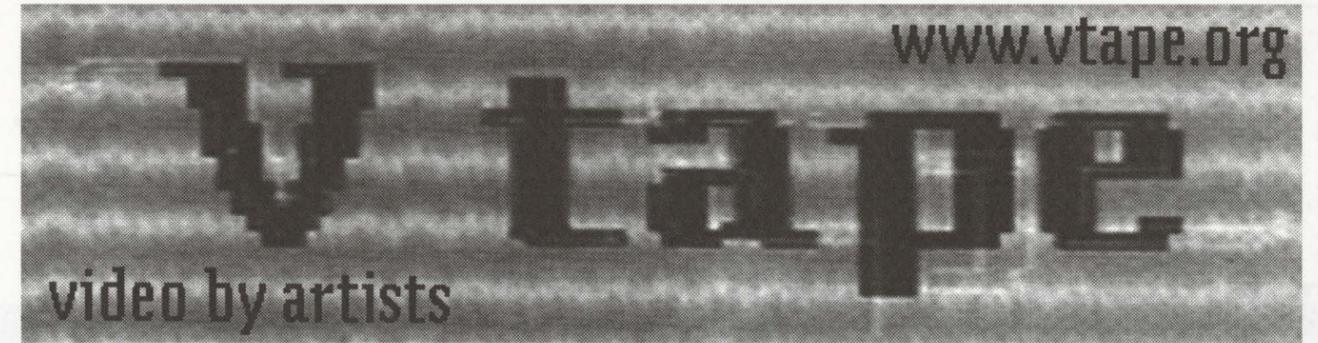
market-friendly versus state-protected, DIY-subversive versus bureaucratically conservative, or populist-capitalism versus elitist-socialism. There are so many creative reasons for individuals and organizations to play these stereotypes off one another while hopefully problematizing conventions. If you can function without the need to access funding agencies then by all means do so and leave the options open for those who might need that possible support. Serious, partially credible, arguments against arts council funding—that it is hegemonic; that it is out of touch with younger and emerging artists; that it hinders artist and consumer exchange possibilities—have themselves been cynically appropriated by cost-cutting conservative governments. The traditional leftist disdain for art and artists on the basis of class pretensions has long been deployed by the populist right in order to provoke anger at “special interest groups.” Appealing to protectionist or survivalist instincts within all those labeled special interest groups is elemental to Harris’ and Klein’s divide-and-conquer strategies. Artists and their advocates certainly need to examine the shortcomings of the granting systems, as well as the limitations of superficially-unregulated free market economies. But they should avoid playing into divide-and-conquer strategies. As the twentieth century speeds to its conclusion, individual artists, their exhibiting and service

organizations, and the grant dispensing agencies themselves all need to seriously negotiate all the existing available options, as well as do their damndest to invent fresh options and strategies.

**Notes**

1. Idea expressed in *Test Tube*, a videotape by General Idea, 1979, 28 min.
2. “Culture Slash Nation” was curated by Lorraine Johnson and Cheryl Sourkes at Gallery TPW, Toronto, 20 October–25 November 1995 (also shown at Definitely Superior artist-run centre, Thunder Bay, Ontario, 5–30 January 1999).
3. Mitzi Hamilton, Gallery TPW comment book, November 1995.
4. “Sophie Hackett Talks With Kelly McCray,” *Lola*, no. 3, winter 1998, pp. 26-27.
5. Sally McKay, “Money Trouble,” *Lola*, no. 2, summer 1998, p. 15.

Andy Paterson is currently editing a book with Sally McKay, *Money, Value, Art: State Funding, Free Market, Big Pictures*, to be published by YYZ Books.



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**On the feasibility of becoming  
a household name**

by Catherine Osborne

I recently conducted a rough survey asking friends who are not directly involved in the visual arts to name five famous Canadian contemporary artists. I asked six people and none could name more than three. Most weren't able to provide names but some could give descriptions—to paraphrase: that Vancouver guy who does those back-lit photographs, and that woman who made a dress out of meat. I also asked which exhibitions they recalled seeing or at least knowing about: Keith Haring (shown two years ago in Toronto at the Art Gallery of Ontario [AGO]) and the Barnes' exhibit (shown in 1994, also at the AGO) were cited. The third exhibition mentioned more than once was "that show that was like the Barnes but wasn't the Barnes." I took that to mean the AGO's more recent blockbuster "The Courtland Collection."

It is easy to guess why these exhibitions remain imprinted on those who like art but only occasionally make a trip to a gallery. They were all heavily promoted to the point that not going to see them was either an admission of cultural indifference or a statement against the commodification of art. Either way, these were not ignored exhibitions, and many people who forked out \$10 to \$20 for a ticket were more than happy to review their impressions among themselves with a certain amount of entitled authority.

Big art attracts big money and so marketing, right down to multicoloured Keith Haring key chains, is just part of the whole blockbuster presentation. Generous amounts of time, energy and money spent on exposure and distribution of art can do a lot to move the insularity of the art world to the realm of public dialogue. I wouldn't pretend that visual art is anything but marginal and perhaps

always will be, but it can have a larger profile if it is exposed to the public more often and with a sense of importance—and I'm not talking about cultural staples like the Group of Seven (important in its own right), but the art produced in our times. What's missing, in Canada at least, is an ability and a fearlessness to promote contemporary art openly and unabashedly to a public beyond those already familiar with it. My friends, I'd like to think, should be able to discuss the latest Stan Douglas installation as well as they can an episode of "South Park."

The literary world holds awards such as the prestigious Governor General's Award and its relatively new private foundation counterpart, the Giller Prize, which help sell books. In the visual arts we have the Gershon Iskowitz Award and the Jack Shadbolt Award in British Columbia; both impressive and prestigious but they are much less recognized and they are received with little public attention. Can you recall who has won over the years?

In the UK, the Turner Prize is a coveted, and always controversial, award given out each year since 1985 to a British artist, under the age of 50, who has exhibited exceptional merit in a given year. Past winners include Damien Hirst and Rachel Whiteread (artists whose names or works were known to some of the people I asked in the rough survey). Each year, when the prize is announced the short-listed artists immediately enter mainstream culture in Britain and much of Europe through the sharp and savvy public relations offices of the award organizers, and they stay in the spotlight for weeks before the final winner is announced. Works by the nominees are shown at the Tate Gallery and public votes are submitted as a sort of people's

choice challenge to the official jury, posted at the BBC's Web site. On the big night, live feeds via Channel 4 (one of the award's sponsors) cover the announcement of the winner, and videographers trail around critics and dealers at the event in search of cultural crash course soundbites and acerbic comments while a swank party carries on in the background. All of this happens after Channel 4 has kept the public engaged for weeks by airing profiles on each short-listed artist. At the same time, the media, appealing to militant viewers, sensationalizes this new art that has included, over the years, formaldehyde-soaked mammals (Hirst) and a portrait of local serial killer Myra Hinley (Marcus Harvey). Everyone gets in on it, including protesters like the anarchist art group K Foundation, which, in 1993, jokingly announced it would award £40,000 to Britain's "worst artist," with a list of nominees matching that of the Turner short list.

The hype around this award, named after J.M.W. Turner who also ably shocked the public in his day with his abstract landscapes, turns the fall season in London into an art circus. Love or hate the

looniness of it all, but the artists are treated, briefly, like rock stars and their recognition registers high on the scale of public significance, while distinctions between "art" and "life" are destabilized by the co-mingling of cultural elitism and mediated hoopla. But, when the UK's *Sun* writes headlines like, "Have they gone shark, raving mad?" (in reference to Hirst's win in 1995) to enliven readership and sell papers, does the work of young British artists lose its critical edge? Is it reduced to mere schlock art stardom that is empty of everything but hype because of the spotlights? Not necessarily—I don't think the work loses anything, including its integrity. It simply gains the attention of a larger public made up of well-versed and ordinary people conversing in a way that is rarely seen in Canada. This public, with varying takes on the matter, gets in on contemporary art discourse, not after the artist has attained a high stature, but while his or her work is still evolving. The prestige of the award gives the artist international impact much like a Booker Prize winning author.

The circus around the prize, including the press hyperbole and its what's-the-world-coming-to



Historic Set for *Der Sandmann* at DOKFILM Studios, Stan Douglas, 1995, colour photograph. Stan Douglas was the recipient of The 1999 Gershon Iskowitz Prize.



*Self-Portrait Accepting a Cheque for the Commission of This Painting*, Chris Cran, 1988, oil on canvas, 183 x 244 cm.

fatalism, is not detrimental, even if the awards are sometimes handed out to frat-boy/sorority-girl art makers out to challenge the established mores and goad the press and public. I can't see it as being anything but good—good for sales and good for conversation and discourse. It's darn exciting to see so much action exploding around art.

Recently, the Canada Council announced plans for the first Governor General's Awards for Visual and Media Arts. This long-overdue initiative is sixty-three years younger than the GG's literary equivalent, which has traditionally improved the sale of books and heightened the profile of authors nationally and internationally. The first of these awards—\$10,000 each—will be given out next spring to artists in eight different disciplines including painting and drawing, photography and printmaking, architecture, fine crafts, sculpture, film, video, audio and new media. One will also be handed out to an exceptional volunteer or philan-

thropist in the visual arts. According to the Council's endowment office, there will be no television stations sponsoring the event, no exhibition of works by the nominees and, because eight artists will get awards and a number more will receive nominations, there will be no "Artist of the Year" to spark public attention, and no website will accept public nominations as part of the jury process. The laureates will be warmly congratulated by the Governor General of Canada and their wins will be dutifully announced and profiled in the press. But will we remember them next year? Not likely, if the prize remains within the inner circles of the art communities that nominate, vote and manage the public relations. These awards could include a wider public, and so they should, by opening the doors of the visual arts club.

*Catherine Osborne is a freelance art writer and co-editor of Lola. She lives in Toronto.*

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**Dire Straits:**  
The situation of contemporary visual arts funding in Korea

by Joan Kee

The recent verdict of the Karen Finley case and the dissolution of individual artist grants from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) have had a chilling effect on arts funding in North America concurrent with increasingly conservative legislatures less tolerant of diverse artistic expressions.<sup>1</sup> This has been the status quo in Asia. One particular example is Korea, in which contemporary visual artists have been producing art without substantial help from the government or the private sector. Such a lack of sustained, accessible funding for the contemporary visual arts has had an adverse impact in denying numerous artists the means to create and exhibit the works. It has also aggravated a pre-existing socioeconomic and cultural hierarchy that deems anything "modern" or "contemporary" as inferior to traditional media.

The context for Korean art as defined by the government and the private sector is not particularly hospitable, although the definition of "hospitable" I use here is admittedly grounded in Western notions of art and its market value. The concept of arts funding itself suggests a degree of commercialization alien to traditional Korean ideas of what constitutes "high" art. This inherent incompatibility is one possible reason for the lax enforcement of copyright and other artist-relevant laws protecting reproductions and permissions, especially in the context of living artists. Traditionally, a student would honor his teacher by copying his (necessarily "his," given the fact that most women were historically barred from becoming artists or teachers other than those trained as professional entertainers, or *kisang*) works.<sup>2</sup> To sell copyright, or to purchase permission to borrow or copy the original work would be

sacrilegious from both the student's and teacher's perspective. While contemporary art might not appear to be a high priority for the government in terms of actual monetary funding, this may stem from its traditional notion of art as distinct from commercial craft.

Whatever the reason for low funding, contemporary art remains at the bottom of the government's priorities. It is somewhat comprehensible in light of the current economic crisis, but puzzling and even contradictory in light of the Korean government's desire to establish Korea as an international cultural force. By declaring each year a "year of photography," or "the year for painting," the government tries to depict itself as a patron of the arts. Yet with the same hand it attempts to dismantle the livelihood of contemporary artists: a law enacted in the late 1980s requiring all large-scale public buildings to commission art works is currently being considered for repeal, the consequences of which would eliminate a large chunk of income for practicing artists. Although the 1999 budget for the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, which oversees official funding, has increased by 17 percent in contrast to the declining percentages allotted to other ministries, the budget for culture and cultural programs is a meager 0.68 percent of the overall government budget.

Moreover, in terms of actual funding provided to contemporary art, it is practically non-existent because of a flurry of restrictions. For Lee Bul, the Korean delegate to the 1999 Venice Biennale, lack of government support coincides with a gross lack of knowledge and awareness concerning contemporary art in general. Recalling her quest to secure government support for the 1997 "Projects" show at

the Museum of Modern Art in New York: "I called around to all the governmental arts bodies, including the Korea Foundation, the Korean Culture & Arts Foundation and the Ministry of Culture and Sports, all to no avail. At the Korea Foundation, the woman in charge of the arts section didn't even know what MoMA was." Indeed, a cursory survey of the Ministry confirms Lee's recollection regarding the general lack of arts expertise or even basic knowledge; not a single staff member possesses an arts background, the vast majority being career bureaucrats. Yi Joo-heon, director of Artspace Seoul and a former arts reporter for the progressive *Hankyoreh Shinmun* newspaper, observes that curators for the large, government-owned museums are marginalized administrators while the museums and cultural events-related positions are considered powerless backwater jobs for inept civil servants. Staffing such arts-related events and institutions with bureaucrats is typical practice for most East Asian countries and implies a degree of institutionalization without regard to efficiency or efficacy.

The lack of expertise has led to the disillusionment of some artists who refuse to participate in what they believe to be a charade. 1995 Kwangju Biennale participant Bahc Yi-so (formerly known as Bahc Mo) comments that he never tried to find out about arts funding because "I do not have any faith in the fairness and intention of those who judge." This connotes a vicious cycle in which the government de-prioritizes contemporary art through the lack of sustained investment in terms of qualified, knowledgeable staff. This lack of real support, despite nominal rhetoric, undermines the belief of artists in the system, subsequently causing the government to further withdraw from providing active support.

Government funding in the form of small grants does exist, but it's a tricky affair, as government committees are notoriously subject to the whims of important political officials. Kim Tai-soo, chief architect of the National Museum of Contemporary Art, remarks that official whims actually played in his favor when then-president Chun Doo-hwan approved Kim's understated design for the new museum despite complaints that the design was "too plain"<sup>3</sup> by lesser officials. Kim adds, however, that his case was the rare exception, possibly due to the high profile nature of the project and that he had been specifically commissioned to oversee the design process. In relation to contemporary visual art, government whims commonly materialize in the form of preferences for certain kinds of arts, namely that which appears "Korean," such as traditional calligraphy.

This preference coincides with the change in name of what used to be known as the Ministry of Culture and Sports to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. This change implies that "culture," as defined in this context as the visual, literary and the performing arts, is a commodity intended for foreign consumption in much the same manner as tourism. Rather than an active endeavor suggested by the juxtaposition with "sports" (which in Romanized Korean also denotes "leisure"), culture is considered merely as an additional attraction to draw in tourist yen or dollars. The idea that traditional brush-and-ink painting or calligraphy is somehow more "Korean" than art produced in more contemporary media is disturbing because it appears that the government is attempting to capitalize on the fetishization of the "different," or that which is "exotic."

In addition, not providing contemporary art with the level of funding afforded to traditional art is a debilitating gesture for Korean art in general; in essence, the government limits the scope of art to that which was created in the past. Even private foundations such as the Samsung Foundation provide support exclusively for traditional kinds of arts and such one-track attention suggests that fine art, or so-called "high" culture is strictly limited to traditional forms. This division contributes to the polarization of culture, already inherent in Korean society, in which art has historically been divided between art practiced by the *yangban* (landed gentry) as a hobby, as delineated by the calligraphy and landscape paintings, and the folk art known as *minbwa*, practiced as a cottage industry by commoners and those of the lower classes. Perhaps an ingenuous distinction, it is nevertheless odd that a professed democracy would contribute to this polarization by making funding inaccessible to the vast majority of emerging artists.

Artists who engage in overtly political themes have an even more difficult time securing funding, particularly in light of a government and society afraid of subversive influences. In some extreme examples, this deprioritization has manifested itself in legal ramifications: Article 12 of the Movie Promotion Law states that all films be approved by the Korea Council for Performing Arts Promotion before public screening, a thinly veiled device by which the government may ban films it finds "inappropriate." More specifically, in March 1998, a

painting by leading *Minjoong*<sup>4</sup> artist Shin Hak-chol was found by the Korean Supreme Court to have "problematic, pro-North Korean elements" that violated the National Security Law, a vaguely worded law frequently used by past regimes as a guaranteed means of unlimited power. Censorship through the law, or by lack of funding has thus served as an additional obstacle in the development of a democratic culture.

There is some hope for artists who choose to address political themes, however, as politically-themed artists like Lee Bul, Yook Keun-byung with his all-seeing video "eye" installations and Choi Jeong-hwa with his Claes Oldenburg-like blowup images of policemen, gain recognition in the "West" by participating in high-profile exhibitions like Documenta and the "Traditions/Tensions: Contemporary Art in Asia" traveling exhibition initially shown in 1996 at the Asia Society. To some extent, these artists promote Korean culture by establishing their reputation abroad. Yet these artists might not have been compelled to go abroad had it not been for the state of funding in Korea, as well as the regressive notion held by the Korean art establishment that media such as photography, installation and performance are somehow inferior to more traditional media like painting. For artists whose works are politically motivated, this necessity of having to establish one's reputation in the "West" before gaining acknowledgment in their home country is problematic, for it contributes to the ongoing worship of the "West" by the current arts establishment in Korea.

In general, contemporary visual artists in Korea have relied almost exclusively on their own personal resources for funding and many of the artists that do exhibit have affluent backgrounds or university teaching posts. In order to attain the latter, considered as a Holy Grail of sorts, employment often depends on a combination of wealth and connections. Most, if not all, of Korea's fine arts professors hail from either Hongik or Seoul National universities, Korea's two most selective art schools. Drawing faculty from these schools ensures the monopoly of power held by these two schools and its professors. Winning a major art show or competition is absolutely crucial in securing a professorship, but judging standards are often based on the extent to which entries resemble other prize-winning works.

This socioeconomic polarization as denoted by the necessity of personal affluence or an important academic position in securing adequate funding is further embedded in Korea's tiered exhibition system. First, there are the invitational exhibitions, in which the gallery or museum assumes the entire cost of the show, including all advertising and catalog printing costs. A step below is the curated exhibition, in which the gallery might pay for brochures, but not catalogs. The artist must pay rent for gallery space. Finally, there are the regular exhibi-



Happy Relief, detail, Kang Ik-joong, 1996, wood, paint.

tions in which the artist pays the gallery for all costs involved. Many commercial galleries, even prominent ones like the Seoul Arts Center in Kangnam and the National Museum of Contemporary Art, have rental galleries that fall into this last category. Anyone, whether he or she is a hobby painter or a wealthy homemaker who happened to major in art in college, can purchase an exhibition for him/herself regardless of the works' actual quality. With some of Korea's more prestigious galleries in the Sagan-dong area in downtown Seoul charging prices that hover in the 10-million-won range (approximately \$12,864 CDN) for a one-week show, perhaps the negative consequence is that many young artists who cannot afford these "vanity" exhibitions must turn to graphic or commercial design for subsistence. In other words the gallery system potentially weeds out viable talent.

The climate has been gradually improving as some of Korea's most affluent families have taken an interest in contemporary art and in the works of

*The Sound of Landscape + Eye for Field = Survival is History,*  
Yook Keun-byung, 1995.



emerging artists. In 1997 the government staged the first annual Kwangju Biennial, featuring the works of contemporary Korea and non-Korean artists. Bahc argues, however, that the Biennial is not demonstrative of a lasting commitment:

Government officials are ready to spend the equivalent of 1.29 million dollars on the Biennial because it is visible, giving the appearance of "achievement." However, they have no intention to spend even 1 percent of that to cultivate seeds, to invest in content (good artists, good works, good programs). What they care about is the fruit, but often, these are fake, plastic fruits.

Many of Korea's richest *chaebol* (conglomerates) operate museums, usually run by the chairman's wife or daughter or other female relations. Bahc, however, criticizes the conglomerates and the government, asserting that "only form matters, not content." He points out that neither the *chaebol* nor the government will spend money on good programming, preferring to concentrate on "showing off their wealth through luxurious museum buildings." Some conservative intellectuals who favour so-called "community consciousness" (*kongdongch'e uisik*) over individualism might justify this emphasis on the external in terms of festival budgets and museum buildings as symbols of national or corporate pride.<sup>5</sup> The individual artist is denied funding, according to conservative thought, because individualism is necessarily selfish. Aside for the cultural roots of this emphasis on the immediately visible, the sudden influx into

certain projects belies a lack of consistent, continual funding, something that is eminently necessary to sustain development over the long term.

A potential exception to the otherwise starve-acre nature of contemporary visual arts funding is Ssamzie, a leather-goods corporation that sponsors a program aimed at supporting approximately nine to ten young (late twenties to early forties) artists each year. The kind of support offered includes direct funding to artists, free studio space and the opportunity to be included in Ssamzie's collection of contemporary art. Ssamzie president Chun Ho-gyun notes that this sponsorship is a kind of investment in the sense that the artists contribute to the design process of the company's products.<sup>6</sup> In relation to the Korean art world, Lee Bul, whose MoMA show was ultimately funded in part by Ssamzie, observes that even commercial galleries have been influenced by Ssamzie's collection since the program began over a year ago. Even the art market, once reserved only for the established minimalist painters like Lee U-fan, has become more receptive to the works of these younger artists.

Given the generally bleak situation it is even more remarkable that Korean artists have been able to produce the kind and range of work they have. This is not to say that the United States and Canada are necessarily on a higher plane in terms of arts funding given the near-dissolution of the NEA and the overall decrease of funding for contemporary arts projects. 1997 Venice Biennale Special Citation recipient Kang Ik-joong notes that "the lack of arts funding is not necessarily a bad thing, since it forces some artists to find enough motivation to produce their works in spite of the tremendous difficulties." In contrast, 1998 Sao Paulo Biennial participant Kim Soo-ja stated that "it is very difficult to work in Korea because of the lack of funding. Sure, there are some small grants here and there, but it's not enough. That's why I decided to pursue my art making in the U.S."

The biggest hope to improve the current situation, particularly with regard to more efficient and permanent programming, lies with the younger generation of curators and administrators. In order to construct a more hospitable environment for funding, however, it is crucial that the younger generation recognize both why and how the lack of arts funding has impacted contemporary artists as individual cultural agents and Korean contemporary arts as a whole. Robert J. Fouser, a critic of contemporary Korean art, notes that funding for arts professionals who will control the means by which art is presented is as necessary as funding for the actual creation of

art.<sup>7</sup> Yi Joo-heon argues that "large corporations should let go of their hold on the museums and allow individuals with specialized training to assume top administrative and curatorial posts instead of filling them with relatives of the corporation owners."

Two recommendations that would be both compatible with the unique societal context of Korea and would effectively encourage the production of contemporary art of diverse viewpoints and media are:

1. Establishing a studio residency program in which corporations or the government provide funds for materials, travel opportunities to learn from other artists, scholarships and much-needed studio space. The latter would be especially helpful in a country where rent for a small studio can be as much as \$2,000 per month.

2. Grants for artists to take on experimental projects. As of late, installation has become an increasingly unpopular medium due to its high costs, both in production and exhibition. A grant would potentially offset artists' costs and enable a wider array of art production. The committee providing these grants would be comprised of arts administrators and artists, although this may prove problematic if there is no supervisory body to enforce anti-corruption measures.

Before condemning the lack of arts funding in Korea, however, it is important to remember that a "Western" model of arts funding cannot be immediately imposed on a nation predicated on significantly different traditions from those of the West. The potential consumer of contemporary visual art, the middle class, has not yet been in existence long enough to embrace a true populist culture. Less than twenty years have passed since Korea started on its rapid ascent of industrialization and the ensuing gap between materialistic pragmatism and traditional values has yet to be resolved. As Yi remarks, however, the museums must acknowledge their position as both cultural centre and as a means to educate the public. "We're still in a state where we're mired in the 'money can do all' mentality." The need to provide adequate arts funding for both artists and arts-related professions is an urgent one and in order to establish true cultural "presence" in an international context, such funding must not only exist but be reasonably accessible. Otherwise, it will be impossible to establish a truly active and ultimately democratic society where the right to create art of whatever belief or aesthetic is extended to all classes, rather than restricted to a privileged few.

#### Notes

1. This case refers to *Finley v. NEA*, which came before the U.S. Supreme Court in 1998. The question at trial was to determine whether a law that required the NEA to consider "general standards of decency and respect for the diverse beliefs and values of the American public" was constitutional. The Supreme Court upheld the law by an overwhelming majority of 8 to 1, stating that the law did not preclude speech itself; rather, it only required the NEA to "consider" decency in its arts funding decisions. Despite claims of censorship raised by the four artists (Karen Finley, John Fleck, Holly Hughes and Tim Miller), the Court's decision thus appeared to rule that some content-based discrimination would be constitutional.

2. Sang Hyun Song, dean of Seoul National University School of Law, notes that the idea of "commercializing" art by linking it with permissions and copyright fees was a primary reason against the government's reluctance to adopt copyright laws in the first place. Conversation with the author, 2 February 1999.

3. I extend my appreciation to architect Kim Tai-soo, artists Lee Bul, Bahc Yi-so, Kim Soo-ja, Kang Ik-joong, Ho-Am Museum senior curator Lee Joon, and Artspace director Yi Joo-heon for their kind cooperation. All Korean names cited follow the tradition of surname first, followed by given name.

4. "*Minjoong*" as applied to the visual arts, refers to a style of art distinctive for its use of historical and political iconography. The movement was especially active during the mid-1980s and early 1990s.

5. For a detailed discussion of the conflict between individualism and collective consciousness as it relates to culture and nationalism, see Seungsook Moon, "Begetting the Nation: The Androcentric Discourse of National History and Tradition in South Korea," in *Dangerous Women: Gender & Korean Nationalism*, eds. Elaine H. Kim and Changmoo Choi (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 33-66.

6. Chun Ho-gyun in "*Hank'uk misool munbwa ui jibyeong gwa bijun*," [The Terrain and Vision of Korean Art World Culture], *Wolgan Misool*, January 1999, p. 44.

7. See Robert J. Fouser's articles "Basquiat and the Korean Art market," *Korea Herald*, 23 July 1997 and "Presenting Korean Art Overseas," *Korea Herald*, 5 February 1997, for a brief overview of the current art market in Korea.

*Joan Kee is a freelance critic who received her training in art history at Yale University. A J.D. candidate at Harvard Law School, her research interests include arts-related legislation.*

# Almost a Union

CARFAC is certified under federal Status of the Artist legislation

by Karl Beveridge

Graham Coughtry died on January 13, 1999. He died in poverty. A month before he had asked CARFAC Ontario for a loan to pay for heat. Friends in the arts community had to raise money to pay for the funeral expenses and leave some money for his partner Larissa Pavlychenko-Coughtry. Coughtry was a romantic and his death certainly fit the romantic myth of the artist. But in this day and age, in a country like Canada, the circumstances of his death are not only tragic but point to a cultural and social negligence bordering on the criminal.

It was contemporaries of Coughtry's who started Canadian Artists Representation Ontario (CARO). Jack Chambers, Tony Urquhart, Kim Ondaatje and later Greg Curnoe, John Boyle and a host of others had the novel idea that artists should be paid for the use of their work. They also believed that the survival of Canadian art depended on recognition and economic support for living artists. With contemporary politics dominated by Harris and other golfers of the free market, it is all the more urgent to create and maintain economic supports for artists that acknowledge more than their ability to hit a hole in one.

Canada was the first country and still one of the few, if not the only one, to pay artists' fees for the exhibition, reproduction and other public uses of their work. Nine years ago, this was enshrined in law. Under copyright legislation, artists must be paid for the public use of their work. While no one will get rich on fees alone, the payment of various fees does accumulate and contributes to a living. If fees became a central focus of artists'

politics, they could be even more substantial and long term.

There is a peculiar irony at work, however. While visual artists are one of the lowest paid workforces in the country, the collection of fees is often taken for granted and there are large amounts left unclaimed or voluntarily surrendered by artists themselves. So, if fees are a basic economic factor and there is a potential to increase them to more substantive levels, why is so little attention being paid to them by artists?

Why do artists still think the market is going to answer their economic needs? After several centuries, with the millennium finally upon us, you'd think artists would have finally learned. Isn't it about time that we should be able to make a living without taking somebody else's job—like sales clerks, teachers or administrators? And isn't it about time that we take the work we do seriously, not simply as an economic engine for the tourist industry, but as integral to the well-being of the society and communities within which we live, and recognise that it deserves basic social and economic support?

In the early 1980s, a number of artists in Ontario organized the Independent Artists Union (IAU). It was organized on two basic concepts. First, equality of access to cultural resources and funding for all artists and communities. Second, culture, like education, should be recognized as an essential social sector and that artists should have a paid, contractual relation to the state as the redistributor of social (and cultural) wealth or to particular

communities who would then have the means to support artists. The IAU was set up as both an alternative and a challenge to CARO, which many felt had failed in its mandate to advance artists' economic and social interests. I was involved in the IAU. I am now on the board of CARFAC Ontario.

Between the days of the IAU and now, two factors have changed. First, copyright legislation and the establishment of the CARFAC Copyright Collective. Second, CARFAC has been certified as the representative for visual artists across Canada under federal Status of the Artist legislation. Interestingly, this brings CARFAC the closest to being a trade union in its history. Unfortunately, few artists seem to know or consider the implications of these changes.

The level at which fees are now set must be determined and ratified by artists. Under law, these levels of fees must be paid by the relevant national institutions in Canada. Stop for a minute and think about those last two sentences.

Like most others, I simply assumed that public spaces will pay proper fees. It's much easier to just get the cheque without going through the paperwork involved with going through the Copyright Collective (even though there's not a lot of it and it's relatively easy). The problem is that if, someday, a serious challenge is made against the payment of fees, the Collective may not be there to defend them. It may have died from under-use, not being able to keep someone employed to maintain it. And, of course, if the Collective disappeared, all sorts of abuse would suddenly begin to surface—it's one of the basic tenets of the free-enterprise system.

## ARTISTS WORKING FOR ARTISTS

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Jack Chambers, Canadian Artists' Representation Founder



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Despite ourselves, there are now mechanisms that could actually improve the economic lot of most visual artists. Copyright is one of those mechanisms. Copyright means we have the right to be paid for the use of our work whether its for exhibitions, being Xeroxed, copied for slides at art schools, being reproduced on the net, or published in books. The CARFAC Copyright Collective administers and negotiates copyright. Membership is voluntary. When you join, the Collective acts as your representative. You do not sign over your copyright as was originally the case. At present, there are only about 300 members in the collective, which is a terrible state of affairs.

Status of the Artist is the other mechanism. Unfortunately, federal Status of the Artist legislation only applies to federal institutions. In the visual arts

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this means the National Gallery, the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography and any other federal institution that may, from time to time, exhibit or purchase art. It is, then, very limited. Most institutions and commercial relations (such as private dealers) come under provincial jurisdiction. Status of the Artist will only be really effective once it's achieved provincially. Another reason to get active. But even under the federal legislation, it gives the right for artists to set the national level for exhibition and other fees (that then can be negotiated with the National Gallery, for example) and which could set a precedent for other jurisdictional levels. The point is, that artists can set and negotiate the level of payment. If Status were to be gained on the provincial level, visual artists would be in the position to legally negotiate most of their contractual relationships.

Canadian newspapers are tripping over themselves to extol the benefits of the free market as the best arbiter of cultural value. *The National Post* ran a full-page article in February by George Jonas trashing the Canada Council and promoting the Roman, Caius Maecenas, as a model of cultural support. While the patronage of Maecenas led to the creation of some of the great works of Augustan imperial propaganda, any artists who might have questioned the status quo were probably fed to the lions. A thought, no doubt, that had passed Jonas' astute mind. In March the *Toronto Star* ran a full page article by Christopher Hume reviewing the book, *In Praise of Commercial Culture*, by Tyler Cowan,

which argues that laissez-faire capitalism is the best thing that ever happened to cultural production. While Hume remained shrewdly ambivalent in his opinion of Cowan, the argument was given credibility by the very lack of serious critical comment and the splash of full-page coverage.

With the possible exception of Jeff Wall and Alex Colville, Canadian artists should know better than most that the market system guarantees little in the way of economic benefits for artists. It has little other benefit as well. Unless you seriously believe that Canada only needs two artists and the rest should go on workfare. But that aside, if we are slipping into the New Jersey swamp, then we need as much protection as possible.

While many artists have various gripes with CARFAC and many simply dismiss it as ineffectual or irrelevant or the domain of the wannabes, it is the only game in town and it now has the means to do something. Another thought. Given the right-wing, anti-cultural climate we are now living in, we need to make it work. Our survival as independent, viable and producing artists may depend on it.

I have not written on the details of Copyright, Status of the Artist and other contractual issues. Copyright, itself, is highly complex and beyond the scope of this short piece. Suffice it to say that detailed material is available if you join CARFAC. And when you join CARFAC, join the CARFAC Copyright Collective and use it. For information and to join, contact CARFAC at: Suite 442 (or Suite 440—CARFAC Ontario office), 401 Richmond St. W., Toronto, ON, M5V 3A8; phone: (416) 595-0045 (or 340-8850—Ontario office); e-mail: carfac@carfac.ca.

(Note: While Karl Beveridge is on the board of CARFAC Ontario, the opinions expressed here are his own and not necessarily those of CARFAC.)

Karl Beveridge is a photographer/artist who works in Toronto. A former editor of *FUSE Magazine*, he has written various articles on labour and community art.

## Privatizing the Public

### Notes from the Ontario culture wars

by Barbara Godard

Public culture is at risk of disappearing in Ontario. Government policy and structural economic changes have had devastating effects on the lives of Ontarians since the provincial Tories and their Common Sense Revolution came to power in June 1995. Radical cuts and sweeping changes have crippled every aspect of the body politic.

Funding to the arts has been included in these drastic cuts—more than 40 percent of the Ontario Arts Council's budget was slashed in the first two years under the Tory government with additional decreases of 59.2 percent in funding for the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation in 1996.<sup>1</sup> The flourishing cultural life established with the seed money of the Ontario Arts Council (OAC), the vibrant and diverse cultural opportunities made available by talented and energetic arts organizations who have used OAC funds to entertain and inform Ontario citizens—all have made Ontario the dynamic centre of artistic activity in Canada in the last forty years—seem now on the verge of vanishing. Withdrawal of government intervention in support of culture would constitute a radical transformation in the role and function of the state, which since the 1940s in Canada, whether in the name of humanist values of self-development or of nationalist values of self-determination, has worked through the representational practices of culture to make citizens. Transformations currently underway at OAC reconfigure citizens as consumers while contradictorily disembedding culture from the economy by reframing its long-standing discourse of socio-economic relations as one of individualized aesthetic excellence.

Since June 1998, the predicament of culture in Ontario has focused on more than protesting cutbacks. A culture war has been underway over the policies of the Ontario Arts Council. At stake is what's happening to the Council itself. Has it abandoned its function of stimulating and supporting cultural initiatives? Do its policies constitute a radical transformation or just a refinement of tradition? On the one hand, sensing change, the arts community protests against the necessity for "crisis management" in adjustments during a "chaotic period." It also contests the lack of consultation by OAC in making radical alterations in funding criteria. Fearing this signals the OAC is losing its long-standing arm's-length relationship with government, artists upset by such changes have formed a Coalition to Save the Ontario Arts Council to strategize on how to reach audiences in a time of diminished funding and to challenge the OAC's abrogation of long-standing policies: institutional autonomy, peer assessment and community consultation.

At the OAC, on the contrary, everything's business-as-usual, contended Gwen Setterfield, executive director, and Henry N.R. Jackman, chair of the OAC board, in an unprecedented flurry of pamphleteering. There's been "no major shift," Setterfield asserts: "It's not as if we turned everything upside down. It's a broadening of something we were already doing."<sup>2</sup> Jackman, not content with being interviewed, took up the pen himself in *The Globe and Mail* to justify the inclusion of non-artists on OAC's advisory panels determining annual grants to arts organizations. "Volunteers" from the corporate sector introduced into this decision-making process will not change or compromise it, he claims, for they

## ISN'T IT ABOUT TIME

have long served as directors on the boards of many arts organizations "with no apparent adverse effect."<sup>3</sup> "This initiative," Jackman argues with a twist on the meaning of inclusivity, "is the very opposite of the elitism" decried by the arts community. Moreover, it fosters "diversity" since volunteers have different tastes and preferences in contrast to government, of which there is "only one, or at best two." The "private sector" with "its many individuals, companies and charitable foundations" should have "a more important role," Jackman contends, since "diversity" is the "hall-mark of artistic expression." Substituting numerical difference of individuals for the representational processes of democratic government, Jackman refigures diversity to equate the arts with the corporate sector.

The rhetoric of continuity is prominent also in "Meet the OAC Board," the lead article in the *OAC Notepad*, an occasional publication that has become forum for policy pronouncements in another departure from tradition. Here the newly appointed members of the board that sets priorities and policy for OAC are deemed "no different" from the members of the last thirty-five years: "artists, arts administrators, community leaders—all staunch arts supporters with the community and public profile needed for the job." Moreover, the *Notepad* reminds us that Jackman, the chair of the new board, was previously Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario just like the first chair in 1963, the Honourable J. Keiller Mackay.

Such comparisons attempt to create consensus by presenting rupture as continuity and so manage what is in fact a radical resignifying of "culture" produced by public policy and institutional structural changes. Not only is the vocal presence of Jackman and Setterfield in the media out of sync with traditional OAC practices downplaying individuals behind an institutional voice, but the policies they have been so actively defending rearticulate "culture" as high art in a forceful social distinction between the cultural and specialized economic relations decoupled from the polity. This represents a complete reversal of the OAC policy of 1963.

The new discourse emanating from the OAC marks a continuity not with OAC's history but with the processes of the modern capitalist economy to separate art and culture from non-economic institutions and social purposes. In a related process, "culture" is disentangled from pre-capitalist traditional life-ways and positioned as a countervailing force within a social whole subordinate to "economic" ends. As such, the OAC's discourse now forcefully advances a capitalist

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agenda where "culture" as an autonomous and self-regulating field of social reproduction and domain of human "value" is positioned asymmetrically in relation to the economy, whose rationalizing operations increasingly model society in its image and every domain of life becomes subject to calculation, measurement and control. Tellingly, the same issue of *Notepad* announces the availability of a new handbook, *Measuring the Economic Impact of Arts Organizations*, developed by Informetrica for OAC, complete with a model on computer disk and workbook to help arts organizations generate "impact numbers" and use them "in credible arguments for the arts" in order to stand up "to challenges from a budget committee or local business association." Without apparent cynicism, the handbook even offers a model for calculating "the economic value of volunteers." The tentacles of "managerial culture" have invaded artistic practices, foisting its technocratic solutions on artists and so diverting their

focus away from their ostensible creative mandate.

The resignification of the social value of the arts follows upon several years of financial chaos for the non-profit arts community. Following an initial period of active growth during a deep recession of the economy, the non-profit arts community failed to benefit from economic recovery, experiencing instead a sharp downturn after deep cuts by the Tory government of Ontario, which reduced the OAC's 1998-99 budget to what it was in 1974 after inflation is taken into account.<sup>4</sup> Reductions in staff and other internal costs to preserve what was possible of grant monies resulted in swift and frequent restructuring, overhauling of operations, adoption of new strategic priorities and elimination of programmes. Not only is this happening in the public-sector funding bodies, but more dramatically in arts organizations. The overload is occurring, moreover, just when changing policies are placing rising demands on staff. As grants have declined, more paperwork is required to justify them. New sources of funding must be sought both by establishing strategic alliances within the community to attract private sector funding and by responding to a shift in public sector funding from grants subsidizing core operations to project-based grants. Not only does this heavily tax the financial and human resources of an organization with the need to make frequent applications for grants, it turns artists into grant-writing machines. Implicitly, it transfers direction of the arts creative agenda to the public sector funding bodies and now, more frequently, to the private sector bodies who provide sponsorships. Corporations are increasingly describing their contributions to the arts as "strategic

community investments," not as "donations," and targeting them to specific activities—performances, exhibitions, outreach activities, job creation—with measurable results. What counts as art is being determined by fewer and fewer individuals.

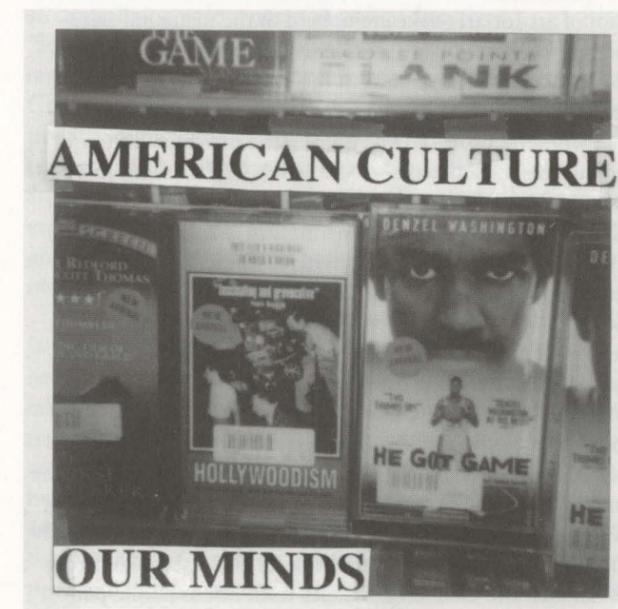
Already in 1996 the effect of cutbacks was considerable. *The Cost of Cutting*, a survey of the Toronto Arts Council, tells a disturbing story of shrinking opportunities in the not-for-profit cultural sector that are bound to accelerate, since it is necessary "to spend dollars to earn them." Always undercapitalized and underfinanced, the arts community lost a significant amount of working capital and hence the potential for generating more. With fewer performances or exhibitions scheduled, any improvement in the balance sheet was at the expense of the number and variety of arts and cultural activities and overall level of revenue. Reduced productions from domestic cutbacks resulted in fewer applications to Foreign Affairs for international tours, exchanges and exhibitions. Less foreign exposure, in turn, negatively affects revenue and so survival at home, accelerating the downward spiral. With a consequent shrinkage in opportunities for emerging artists from diverse cultural communities, "expatriate" may once again become a synonym for artist, as it was in the 1950s. Paradoxically, it was just the lack of creative opportunities produced by unpredictable funding that the OAC was founded to overcome.

The political dimensions of the current restructuring of the field of cultural production in Ontario, to make it more market-driven and less troubled by concerns of equity or identity, are adumbrated in Jackman's apologia. He frames the incommensurability of his position and that of artists as a distinction between American market models and European welfare models where citizens have a claim on the equitable distribution of the resources of the state. In the United States, he contends, "private-sector support of the arts is proportionately more than three times as great as in Canada, while government support is proportionately less." Artists though, as he acknowledges, "prefer the European model, where government support, at least for the largest organizations, is extremely high and private-sector support was almost non-existent, at least until recently." In the best of all worlds, he would combine both an increased level of government funding and the generous support to the arts of the American private sector. Such "a careful balance of public and private investment" is indeed a goal the arts community would embrace.<sup>5</sup> In 1999, however, "balance" can be invoked only in the past tense, as something lost or fast vanishing. The "mixed public/private sector model," which the Canadian Conference of the Arts calls "the Canadian model," widely supported by Canadians, is highly successful, responsible as it has been "for the extraordinary diversity and range of cultural opportunities now available to Canadians."<sup>6</sup> "Balance" for Jackman means something quite different, despite his wish for a high involvement of both public and private sectors in funding the arts. When

he invokes "balance," it relates not to equilibrium of a heteronomy or equity of access to cultural production but to transformation and consolidation in a singular framing of the cultural: "The balance of arts funding is changing, away from governments and toward the private sector." Exemplified here is his rhetorical manoeuvre for managing consent by reworking the commonly used signifiers of cultural value to make them articulate something quite different from what they have historically. Change is presented as continuity, in that "balance" has been a key trope in the discursive struggle over culture.

\* \* \*

Contradiction has long marked the discourses on culture in Canada as nationalist, welfare and market models have contended for preeminence. In the present conjuncture, these forces are undergoing realignment as intimated in Jackman's inflection of "balance" as transformation and "partnership," in the language of corporate mergers. The implications of this articulation may be read in the shifting metaphors for cultural intervention as recorded in the OAC Annual Reports, which provide some measure of the change in discourses of value over the last thirty-five years. Critical here is the reworking of the notion of "balance" in regard to the activity of the state. In the report on its inaugural year, 1963-64, a detailed description of the scope of the OAC's particular sphere of action and declaration of its mandate is configured in a medical or juridical metaphor of balance where the state will intervene to guard against the "deformity" of "one-sided development" in a heteronomous field of values by "strengthening and deepening in the minds of



From an artist postcard series by Barbara Sternberg, part of a set of 15, Polaroid, 1999.

Summer 1999: After a six-month suspension of grants to writers, publishers and literature organizations to allow for an independent consultant's review of the programs, the grant programs are reinstated and grant applications are once again available.

Grants to periodicals are reinstated with a 90 percent arts content threshold for magazines receiving operating grants.



Photos: Pete Dako

our people a richer and fuller appreciation of the quality, character and majesty of intellectual and cultural pursuits." While knowledge of the arts is considered good in and of itself—"a noble, vital, permanent element of human life and happiness"—it is also a necessary complement to avoid specialization that would impede "real progress" which requires the development of "all the faculties belonging to our nature." Variety or diversity is important along with justice and equity.

Both the artist's social responsibilities and the aestheticism of art-for-art's-sake are upheld in the inaugural statement of the OAC chair, J. Keiller Mackay. The same contradictions are manifest in the first executive director's sense of his mission to develop a "Peace Corps of the arts" that will send professionals touring the province "to train and inspire the amateurs"—the arts as welfare work in a cultural backwater or colonial state of underdevelopment. The contradictions are also manifest in the report's utopian vision of the results of this initiative, where "the present renaissance going on in the arts would blossom into a truly Golden Age"—idealism, where, extending beyond the deformed present, culture prefigures a future in which the values and activities it categorizes would hold sway. As a non-alienated praxis, culture holds forth the promise of social transformation in its transcendence of material necessity. Nonetheless, the arts are not necessarily opposed to the marketplace. Culture and economy are understood to work in a complementary fashion as the expression of an integral social formation. With no tradition of cultural philanthropy in Canada, the Council envisages itself not as public patron commissioning art, but as "catalyst" operating at arms' length to facilitate interactions between separate spheres by convening meetings of businessmen and industrialists in

order to induce them to place the arts higher in their priorities for corporate donations. So the OAC would make "strong pleas to them for the artistic spirit of man."

The 1992–93 report is bilingual, in French and English, and underlines the autonomy of the Franco-Ontario Office. A page of visual images, the only one in the 1992–93 report, features the poster from *True Colours*, a festival organized by Full Screen in Toronto to present new works by filmmakers of colour. Adjacent on the page, the heading "From Oshweken to Muskrat Dam" announces an onomastic remapping of provincial topography by First Nations communities involved in the First Nations Artists in the Classroom Program. In this democratic approach to cultures the question has been reframed from "Which Culture?" (high or low) to "Whose Culture?" Fictions of identity are no longer thought within the frame of nation or province, or even region, but of language and ethnicity, culture versus nation. The report of 1992–93 operates under the sign of difference stressing a heteroglossic struggle among cultures. Everyone will become involved in the web of culture spun by the OAC through a constant rotation of grants and a mixing or blurring of differences within a dynamic field that contrasts with the earlier balance among discrete differences. One text, "Mirror, mirror, on the wall," figures identity as resemblance only to reconceptualize it as diversity and mobility: "Ontario reflects a world of difference that touches every aspect of the arts.... Ontario isn't what it used to be." Now, there are not only "more of us" but there are "more kinds of us too." Immigration has brought a richer diversity of people from the world to Ontario. There is an ambiguity of address in this document in the shifting "we" that continually realigns the boundaries between inside and outside, between speaking subject and addressee. Who is this "we"?

Women or "lesbians"? Old Anglo-Ontario? Or newcomer? Or conquered other? Ontario has the renaissance promised thirty years earlier, though not at a site which its culture as absolute could have conceptualized, and in the image of a "Bronze" rather than "Golden Age."

Constants in the reports of the OAC for 1963 and 1993 are the triumvirate of state, education and business through whose interaction culture is articulated and managed. This power/knowledge nexus orders specific practices affecting what and who gets funded to constitute symbolic capital, so mobilizing desire for cultural recognition in the work of subject constitution and class differentiation. If knowledge gleamed brightest in the 1963–64 report, where the arts create new forms of understanding, technology speaks loudest in that of 1992–93, where the arts engage with new media in a morphing of the social. That business has long been the hesitant partner reluctant to recognize communal ties of art or polity is indicated in the contradictory discourse on culture of the first report. That business has become the dominant force to be courted is indicated in the discourse of the 1992–93 report, which is framed in the truth claims of the balance sheet. In the interval "balance" has been reconfigured so that instead of being a figure of mediation among competing claims or even continuous heterogeneity, it has become the restrictive figure of a single framing of the social: the bottom line.

By 1996–97, the language of "balance" and diversity has been replaced by praise for innovative "partnerships" linking individual arts organizations with specific "private" enterprises or wealthy benefactors. In a complete reversal, private is resignified as public interest. The annual report of OAC for 1996–97, reduced to a balance sheet, includes only a brief prefatory "message" from the executive director, Gwen Setterfield, that enumerates how the Ontario arts community over the year was "Adapting to Change, Creatively." In the face of massive financial cutbacks, a downsizing in the staff of OAC and reductions in grants for the arts, "creativity" was directed toward "survival" where it has been "an essential tool" sparking such lauded "partnership" initiatives as the "fundraising" of the Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery in Owen Sound through community film nights, auctions and other events to build new gallery space, the pooling of resources in the marketing of small theatre group productions initiated by the Go-7 group in Toronto, or the "private sector partnership" of the Ottawa Council for the Arts with a local software company to establish the Corel Endowment for the Arts. Fewer resources have forced the arts community to find "creative" ways to continue supporting the arts, while maintaining "an appropriate level of service." Dominant in that service for Setterfield is "the financial management of our funding programmes" whose considerable impact on the Ontario economy has been demonstrated in the 1996 research study undertaken by Informetrica, *The Economic Impact of OAC-funded Arts Organizations*, which revealed "compelling

evidence about the value of public funding of the arts"—economic value, that is, in terms of jobs, direct expenditures and "tax revenues."

Such economic imperatives are paramount for Jackman in 1998, no longer couched, though, in the language of prudent husbanding of the resources of the state to fulfill its mandate of good government used by Setterfield, but those of "job creation, skills training, visitor attraction, urban renewal, economic development, corporate marketing and consumer attractiveness" that make them "one of the soundest investments" for government. "The arts are partnerships," he declares, not a strategy for survival, as Setterfield put it, but the mode of institutional structure appropriate for business. Creativity manifests itself in "creating partnerships, alliances, and other *imaginative* ways of earning revenue that companies the world over are fashioning every day." For Jackman, the imagination is most productively engaged in developing corporate structures for artistic practices. Instead of intervening to persuade business to donate to the arts and so yoke together these heteronomous spheres, the OAC now restricts itself to providing tools for arts organizations so that they can individually, and in competition with each other, beg for corporate funding. The emphasis on corporate institutionalization is, however, in alignment with the new managerial structures set in place at OAC in the course of downsizing. Whereas previously officers with multiple fields of expertise worked in a collegium as intermediaries between the arts communities and state funders, generating policy through consultation with both, coordinating juries' assessments of artists, reorganization of the OAC along the hierarchical lines of a corporate bureaucracy has established a top down structure whereby officers report to executives, so centralizing enforcement of policy directives. "Soundings" to consult with the arts community have been replaced by letters signed by the OAC Executive Director or Chair announcing policies to grant recipients. Such institutional administrative changes make it easier for policy initiatives of the OAC Board, all Tory appointees, to affect all aspects of the operation of the OAC. The OAC is being re-established along the lines of a ministry as an agent of government administrative authority where the heavy hand of cabinet touches every decision.

The change is palpable in the pro-active role taken by Jackman as Chair of the Board both in initiating policies, as he claims in regards to the Arts Endowment Fund, and in taking to the hustings to have his say in the struggle over the resignification of culture as a business corporation. Signing his name as Hal in *The Globe and Mail*, rather than Henry N.R. as he appears in the official publications of OAC, Jackman assumes the guise of ordinary citizen. Nonetheless, this move to articulate OAC policy in opinion pieces in the daily newspaper has affinities with the Tory's recourse to government-paid advertising through which to engage Ontarians directly as consumers, not as citizens through elected representatives in the Legislative Assembly, and interpellate them as subjects of

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the official discourse—all the while neutralizing its political agenda by presenting values as naturalized facts. This opinion piece is in keeping with changes at OAC, when policy statements are no longer made in the Annual Report but emerge as publicity, issued as press releases, elaborated in occasional publications like *Noteпад*, conveyed in letters to organizations and individuals from the arts community receiving grants where they announce radical changes in grant criteria.

The "careful balance" of public and private sector support of the arts has been fundamentally altered, warns the Toronto Arts Council,<sup>7</sup> which conceptualizes culture as a "complex combination" whose dynamism is related to the mediation of social relations to which it contributes even as it depends upon them. Maintaining a balance between different cultural communities both large and small sustains the "arts ecology" of the city, the province. Publicly funded art contributes to "collective well-being" within a network of interactive processes. Subscribing to this vision of arts' dynamism in the constitution of civil society, the Canadian Conference of the Arts configures the "Canadian model, with a balance of public and private sector support" in a metaphor of "ecology" instead of justice or metamorphosis: "Any funder's actions can impact on individual organizations and the whole ecology of cultural communities. This interdependency of public programs is inadequately recognized."<sup>8</sup>

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A series of initiatives launched in 1998 should be considered within this context of the long reach of Tory neo-liberalism extending throughout the OAC to resignify "culture." Since the new Board took over, changes have proceeded on the double fronts of institutional restructuring of arts funding and of reworking the criteria of eligibility to change what counts as art—literature, in particular.

Book publishing was affected first when, in the spring of 1998, the Council announced that it would no longer fund non-fiction books but only novels and poetry. Faced with historical evidence submitted by the Writers' Union in the form of Donne's sermons and Milton's essays which showed the impossibility of separating a culture's non-fiction from its literature, the Board backed down in May. This should have brought an end to the matter. In an age when "creative non-fiction" is taught in writing programmes, when courses in life-writing are on the curriculum of literature departments in universities, not to speak of the rising critical profile of docudrama in film, this retreat would have seemed an appropriate acknowledgment of the OAC's obligation to support significant currents of contemporary aesthetics. In June,

however, the OAC Board revised guidelines for grants to periodicals according to the same logic. Only those "magazines substantially devoted to publishing original works of fiction and poetry or magazines substantially devoted to critical coverage of the contemporary arts (literary, visual, performing)" would be eligible for annual funding. "Substantially" was later glossed to mean 80 percent, but fixed at 90 percent in July 1999. Despite an outcry in the national press denouncing the arbitrariness of the OAC's decision, which considered an article

expanded into a book to be art, but not so when in a magazine, and a presentation to the OAC by the Canadian Magazine Publishers Association stressing the important role of periodicals in the reception and circulation of Canadian culture through reviews of new work and analyses of emerging styles and aesthetics—particularly important for marginalized voices—the decision was only implemented gradually, not withdrawn. None of these appeals in the name of patriotism or democratic citizenship that would acknowledge the poet as legislator struck a chord with OAC. At the same time, it announced a new funding category for any non-funded periodical wanting to publish a special issue on the arts, a policy implemented in July 1999. This move to project-based funding increases the labour for periodical staffs at precisely the time when the funds to hire them are being withdrawn. Art is fast becoming a labour of love! At least the process, when the artist's labour is removed from the realm of exchange, though not the outcome, which is paradoxically expected to generate profit.

These abrupt changes were fraught with implications for a number of periodicals that could broadly be classified under the category of cultural studies, as is the case with the ideas-oriented *THIS*, *Borderlines*, *Public* and *FUSE*. Periodicals that review and analyze contemporary cultural production in a number of media, situating works of art within socio-ideological contexts or under the heading of general interest (as is the case with *Queen's Quarterly* and the *Canadian Forum*, the leading publishers of innovative poetry and fiction throughout the '30s and '40s), represent a venerable tradition in Canadian periodical publishing stretching back into the nineteenth century. These publications have advanced a broad definition of literature, including essays on history, geography and the economy, as well as the high literary genres, a practice continued in *The Literary History of Canada*. *Aboriginal Voices*, in keeping with First Nations' understanding of culture as non-differentiated, does not mark a boundary between elite cultural forms and socio-ritual events in the quotidian. Nor are distinctions between genres demarcated in the same way as in Euro-Canadian culture. Together with unannounced cuts to the professional development programmes of Equity Showcase and Theatre Ontario and withdrawal of support to training institutions, the OAC's

reluctance to entertain arguments for the proactive role of little magazines in fostering culture highlights a radical shift in orientation from its initial mandate under the Ministry of Education. Art is being redefined in terms of the excellence of the artistic product rather than as a process in which all members of a democratic society are involved for their personal and collective development as students or amateurs or professionals. This move helps increase the symbolic capital of consecrated works.

Reconfiguration of value is aided by the \$25 million Arts Endowment Fund announced in the May 1998 provincial budget to "match and invest money for participating arts organizations," an initiative for which Jackman has claimed responsibility. "[M]ore private support for the arts," Jackman avows, has been "my policy, my prejudice and that affects my role as Chair of the council."<sup>9</sup> Though the OAC was quick to make guidelines for withdrawing funding from arts organizations, it has been less speedy in setting up endowment funds. Arts organizations feared they might have to cut back on programming in order to build an endowment fund from private and corporate donations, which would compound the contradictions by shifting their mandate away from creative processes and the non-profit sector. Administration of the fund by the OAC Foundation was also a matter of concern for its 1997 rift with the Chalmers Foundation, which indicated a shift to a more interventionist role on the part of wealthy benefactors to control the outcome of their donations by targeting recipients rather than making funding available through a juried system of peer assessment. That such a foundation might also be more easily open to direct interference by government as well as by donors was suggested by the example of the Ontario Trillium Foundation, a charity organization set up by the Tory government to disburse the revenue from provincial lotteries, casinos and video slot machines. The Trillium Foundation's chief executive officer was fired amid allegations of political interference in the operations of the organization, which were corroborated by a long-serving member of the board of directors who resigned declaring she had lost confidence in the new chair's respect for the rules of due process in allocating funds. Like the OAC board, the Trillium board had been packed with Tory sympathizers, while hundreds of volunteers had been appointed, without public scrutiny, to grant-review teams. Ironically, a new stronger role for government is being established in the name of less government.

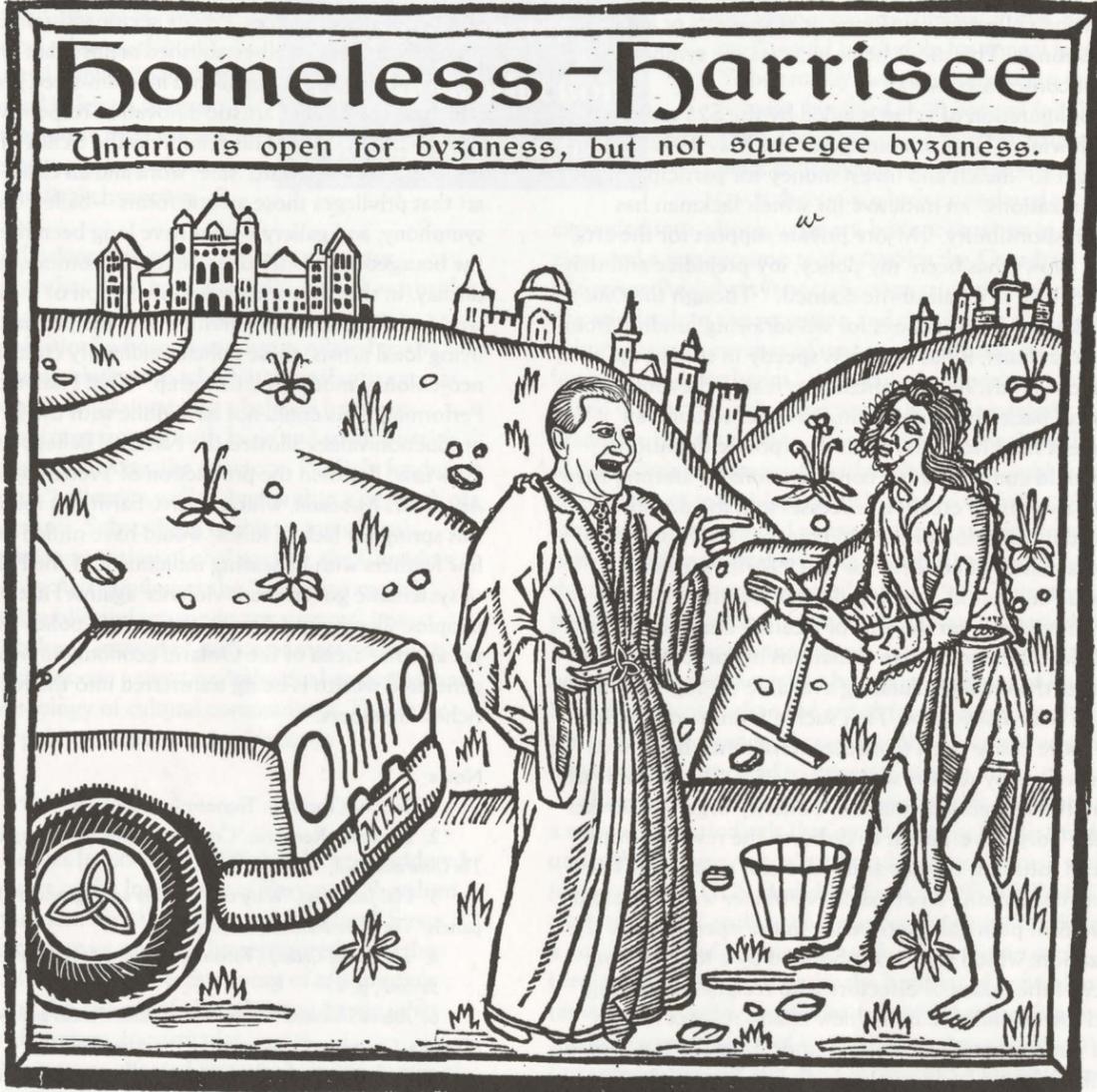
Though the modalities of the Arts Endowment Fund's operation may still be uncertain, its effects are predictable from evidence gathered by the Toronto Arts Council. Small groups already disadvantaged in the competition for corporate sponsorship are likely to be increasingly excluded from access to working capital, with grave consequences for the creation and exhibition of productions by Canadian artists which speak to the present moment and local struggles. The countervailing claims of nationalist and welfare models of

culture are diminished in this extension of the market model. Already in 1995, according to the Toronto Arts Council, the Canadian arts and culture industry raised more funds from charitable organizations than their American counterparts, since they had both a better professional fundraising infrastructure and larger audience bases generated by a greater number of performances. Private sector assistance went primarily to large, well-established mainstream organizations, not to the developing small and medium-sized groups in which a great deal of artistic innovation responsive to local communities occurs. This reinforces the trends of the for-profit arts sector toward "safe" work and an elitist ideology of art that privileges those artistic forms—ballet, opera, symphony, and gallery—that have long been the haunts of the bourgeoisie as sites of conspicuous consumption and display. In that they increase consecration of the canonized works of dead European masters over the productions of living local artists, these policies mummify culture and offer a neo-colonial model of citizenship. What Native Earth Performing Arts could not have done with the \$1 million in production values allotted the National Ballet's new version of *Swan Lake!* But then the production of Yvette Nolan's powerful *Anna Mae's Movement*, which Native Earth was forced to cancel this spring for lack of funds, would have ruffled more than a few feathers with its searing indictment of the FBI's direction of systematic government violence against First Nations' peoples. Containing dissent, the current policy of the OAC is yet another arena of the Ontario economy in which publicly generated wealth is being transferred into the hands of its richest members.

#### Notes

1. To 2001 (Toronto: Toronto Arts Council, 1997), p. 23.
2. Elizabeth Renzetti, "Coalition fights arts group changes," *The Globe and Mail*, 30 July 1998, C1.
3. Hal Jackman, "Why the OAC is adding non-artists to its panels," *The Globe and Mail*, 31 July 1998, A15.
4. *The Cost of Cutting* (Toronto: Toronto Arts Council, 1999), p. 6.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
6. *Arts in Transition 2: Harmonizing Public Policies with the New Realities* (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of the Arts, 1996), p. 4.
7. *Renovating for the Future* (Toronto: Toronto Arts Council, 1998), p. 9.
8. *Arts in Transition 2*, op. cit., p. 9, 10.
9. Susan Walker, "Calming the waves," *Toronto Star*, 14 August 1998, D12.

Barbara Godard teaches at York University where she writes on Canadian and Quebec cultures and on feminist and literary theory. Her recent publications include "Representation and Exchange: Feminist Periodicals and the Production of Cultural Value" (Tessera, 1997) and "Theatres of Perception: The Filmworks of Barbara Sternberg and the Paperworks of Rae Davis" (image/movement, 1999). Currently she is translating Nicole Brossard's *Journal intime* and editing Translation Studies in Canada: Institutions, Discoveries Texts.



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# Custody Battles

Changing the rules at the Canada Council

by Clive Robertson

After decades of trying, the federal government finally found a way to bring the Canada Council to heel. Beginning with an imposed agency merger, Tory and Liberal governments successfully appointed directors and chairs who, in pushing aside senior arts professionals as Council administrators, declared it was "their house or the outhouse." Downsizing the Council's "administration" (and closing off policy deliberations with the arts community) the new regime cut the Council's workforce by 53 percent and was rewarded for adopting a "market efficient" restructuring with temporary new government monies. Has this funding agency now "normalized" its collaborative relationships with the arts community by hiring new senior arts professionals?



Members of the Board, senior management, and section heads of the Arts Division of the Canada Council, 1997.

Illustrations and collages by Lucy Drumonde.

To question key assumptions made by or about the Canada Council is to question the extent to which the Council currently maintains its differences from a ministry of culture by operating at a distance from both the civil service and legislative branches of government. This essay re-examines what governs the restrictions and opportunities for arts producers to make arts policy at the Canada Council by interrogating two of its defining characteristics or status claims:

1. The Canada Council Act is protection from government interference and policy ambitions; and
2. Policy decisions affecting grants are made by peer assessment.

It has been persuasively argued by Kevin Dowler<sup>1</sup> that the Canadian state became involved in cultural production for the purposes of sovereignty and security, after earlier investments in bi-directional communications technologies (including transportation) had only exacerbated Canada's foreign dependencies. The needs to give "content to the spatial abstraction of technological nationalism" and to increase cultural output lead to the creation of cultural agencies including the Canada Council. At a time when links were drawn between state-produced culture and totalitarianism, these agencies "administer(ing) culture on behalf of, and at a

distance from, the federal government" were meant as "sensitive insertions" between the formal structures of the state and its citizens. The net result of this intervention, Dowler writes, has been to create a "simulated civil society" with agencies "simultaneously acting as instruments of government policy and lobbying agents for the cultural communities they serve."<sup>2</sup>

Seen against this backdrop, the fortunes of arts community participation in federal arts policy are largely dependent on the Canada Council's oscillations between being a "simulated" or "genuine" civic interface: how it chooses to or is made to function through administrative models of professional management, co-management with arts producers as primary clients and self-management by these clients.

Arts councils in Canada have linked their survival to the perception of arm's-length status both from government and the arts community. However, to effect policy changes, arts councils have strategically relinquished different aspects of their legislated autonomy to the government and to various emerging and residual constituencies within the arts community. While I am writing against the self-congratulations of a now-departed seven-year rule where the Canada Council was more or less run as a federal ministry of the arts, their modus operandi, once documented,

draws useful attention to the ebb and flow of "custody battles" surrounding all arts councils. At the very moment when the Canada Council took sweeping executive actions to "improve the costs of program delivery," it undermined the legitimacy of its decisions by quashing the immediate possibilities for addressing the unfinished and socially complex negotiations around formalizing arts community-approved policies of program instigation, retirement, budgeting and delivery.

Bobbing along in the political swift currents as politicians ridicule the democratic value of public cultural subsidy, the Canada Council has clearly signalled its transitional status. Mobilizing the "intrinsic" value of its grants into a brokerage for the more-symbolic-than-substantive capital of private partnerships in the arts, the Council has also been paying homage to the significant public patrons of its past. And the transition is not just about attracting private sources of arts patronage or "creating new publics" but about re-ranking who among the Council's different "stakeholders" deserves what kinds of attentions.

We habitually speak about "the Canada Council" as if it were a homogeneous entity known or knowable to all in the same way. In reality, a contemporary arts council funds a wide spectrum of primary cultural producers and arts

organizations (both profit-making and non-profit) across a range of contemporary disciplinary histories and employment practices. We should remind ourselves that an arts council exists as a policy accretion and functions as a shelter for a barely compatible mix of arts and cultural industry-related and foreign affairs programs that have been seized or off-loaded or that cannot be entrusted to the short-term policy objectives of other government bodies.

Together, we made the hard decisions in the most effective collaboration with the Director and a professional staff of the highest calibre. As in the past, production of a comprehensive exercise, the Board advocated the interests of all our stakeholders, particularly the public of Canada, the taxpayers whose interests we should not have been excluded. We know the public had to be told more about the Council's activities and the value of its work.

The Director, and I, both bring to the job a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to the arts with an appreciation for the realities of institutional administration. He also became one of the most effective speakers the Council has ever had.

The Council staff brought us their unparalleled knowledge of the arts in Canada in all its facets. They have demonstrated a willingness to make changes that are difficult but necessary in order to improve procedures and thousands of grant recipients, the artists and arts organizations across Canada.

We have made great progress in achieving the objectives of this Board's first major initiative — our March 1995 Strategic Plan. A major objective of the Council is to improve its management and to ensure the implementation of its programs and to ensure its grants programs.

The Canada Council Act is written in pencil

Some of these ridiculous grants are enough to make me bring up. Whether or not the arm's-length policy is considered sacrosanct or not, we're going to tamper with it.

—Otto Jelinek, revenue minister, Globe and Mail, 2 December 1989

I would very much like to shorten the arm's-length relationship of government arts subsidy.

—Sheila Copps, heritage minister, National Post, 13 May 1999

Why after seven years of the Canada Council's bonding with the "politics of the moment" would Heritage Minister

Copps like more control over the Canada Council? Admittedly ambushed by a media-seeking Reform Party on the federal funding contributions to the film *Bubbles Galore*, nonetheless, right on cue, Minister Copps flashes the not-easily-sated frustrations of governments with a Canada Council it views as an over-insulated instrument of federal cultural policy.

Despite the fact that the government appoints the chair, the director and the board members, governing politicians throughout the Council's history have been stymied by a management parade of ex-intelligence officers and diplomats, prime-ministerial pals, fauntleroy and divas and most of all by the "custodial arrogance" of the Council's senior arts professionals who have seen the Council as existing first and foremost to serve the artistic community.

Cultural historians writing on the history of the patron state, arts policy and the Canada Council have all pointed to the conditional nature of the Canada Council's arm-length status and its ability to maintain its special jurisdictional claims. Most frequently noticed has been the federal government's desire to compete with the Canada Council through arts spending in the departments of the Secretary of State, Communications/Heritage, or Foreign Affairs. In the mid-seventies to the mid-eighties when the Council budget was increased by 176 percent, the Department of Communications arts spending increases were 551 percent.<sup>3</sup> Throughout, the Council's annual appropriation has amounted to only 5 percent of total government cultural spending. Given the endless search for multiple sources of funding coupled with a desire to bypass the financial limitations of the Council, arts organizations of all stripes have easily been wooed to access direct temporary political monies.

Various governments have earmarked increases and deposited new programs within the Council. When the Council has properly resisted the less compatible or more invasive add-ons,

the government of the day has frequently retaliated by attempting to erase the protections of the Canada Council Act by changing the agency status of the Canada Council. This occurred in 1979, 1984 and 1992. In 1984 it was on the insistence of Trudeau ministers Jean Chrétien, Lloyd Axworthy and then Treasury Board president Herb Gray that the Canada Council (and many other Crown corporations) be brought under closer governmental and parliamentary supervision. The nature of this "supervision" essentially has meant attempts to control the executive aspects of the Council's management.

Given the history of government-Council relationships it made sense for the Mulroney government—wishing to eliminate or merge forty-six agencies—to appoint SSHRC President Paule Leduc to become the director of a merged SSHRC-Canada Council henceforth to be known as CCARSSHRC (The Canada Council for the Arts and for Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities). While the Canada Council was presumed to be the senior partner in the merger, the transitional organigram showed the Canada Council becoming the "Arts Division" of one of five divisions answering to Leduc. The omnibus Bill C-93 that included the SSHRC-Canada Council merger was passed in the House of Commons.

As the merger progressed, the Canadian Conference for the Arts (CCA) was notably sanguine, suggesting in a press release that the re-writing of the Canada Council Act could "service our [the arts community] needs more effectively."<sup>4</sup> CARFAC's national office took a different tack. Along with academics who opposed the merger CARFAC's national office helped encourage the defeat of the legislation by Tory senators and in a tied-vote finally by the Speaker in the Senate, whose spouse was an artist.

The failed and costly merger did not deter Paule Leduc who proceeded with a technocratic vision of the Council that included (according to then-senior staff members): all juries meeting once a year,

Chairman's Report: T



In 1995, there was an intense debate. We welcomed that debate here as it is a responsibility to speak out more fully to Canadians about the past and to continue to support them.

The Board, the Director and I have interviewed, meetings with editorial before Parliamentary Committees. So in the same spirit of openness a Annual Report, as an opportunity to arguments to the widest possible public.

Table with 2 columns: Category and Amount. Includes items like Glenn Gould Prize (triennial), Governor General Literary Awards (annual), Victor Martin Lync Staunton Awards (annual), Virginia Parker Award (annual), Sylvia Gelber Award (annual), Petro-Canada Award in Media Arts (biennial), Bell-Canada Award Video Art (annual), Canada-Japan Book Award (annual), and Grand Totals: over \$45.00.

officers-as-clerks, top-heavy program evaluation by bureaucrats, less program officer travel with officers barred from attending Council board meetings, less money spent on advisory committees and grants programs identical from discipline-to-discipline. As a result of Leduc's impositions or their aftermath the Head of Visual Arts Section, the Head of the Media Arts Section, the Treasurer and the Head of the Arts Division variously resigned, were forced out or were fired. These departures in effect fully opened the door for the

THE CANADA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS 1ST ANNUAL REPORT 1997-1998. Includes a table of funding by program and a list of grants.

more drastic changes that would follow. The position of Head of the Arts Division—essentially in control of all the disciplinary sections—was given to Joanne Morrow (formerly head of the Opera/Music Section) who expedited Leduc's re-organization and its intensification under Roch Carrier and Donna Scott's Strategic Plan. Over and above the ambitions of particular actors, it is clear that the ongoing centralising power now residing in the head of the arts division deforms the Council's ability to maintain a collective decision-making structure.

To head off 2 percent of a promised 10 percent cut in the Council's annual appropriation, Scott and Carrier chose to meet Treasury Board demands for departmental and agency "economies and efficiencies" by promising in their 1995 Strategic Plan to cut administration costs from \$22 million in 1993-94 to \$12 million in 1998-99. This resulted in the firings, layoff and early retirements of 53 percent of its specialized and loyal staff (from 285 to 150). The costs of "retirements and layoffs" for Council's "reducing the salary envelope" exercise came to \$2.6 million. It was promptly paid back by a supplementary parliamentary appropriation of \$2 million. In his portion of the 1995-96 Annual Report, Director Roch Carrier cavalierly wrote: "I would like to make note of the exceptionally generous participation of our staff.... In this exercise, a number of staff discovered the pleasures and challenges of increased responsibility for the future of their organization."

Leduc, Scott and Carrier accomplished a top-down corporatization of public administration in a very familiar series of moves. The attempted merger was followed by a cosmetic set of cross-country consultative meetings with the arts community<sup>5</sup> followed by a downsizing of personnel resulting in firings and layoffs. Having made the necessary "improvements to their service" the Council was rewarded by an injection of "new capital" (an extra \$25 million for each of five years) from the Government of Canada.

ARMS AND THE MAN Some stick-carrot-stick effects of federal cultural policy upon the Canada Council's arm's-length status

The autonomous "arm-length" status of this agency is essential to its role in making artistic decisions free from outside pressures.

—Canada Council Strategic Plan, March 1995

1957-63 Canada Council Act (1957). CC exists on endowment fund income from industrialists Dunn and Killiam's estate taxes (\$53 million, 50 percent of which is capital monies for universities)

1963-64 Reorganization of Secretary of State to include cultural agencies like CC.

1965 CC benefits by gaining annual government appropriations (won more for academic than arts subsidies) but puts in doubt the practical validity of crucial CC Act clause, "the Council is not an Agent of Her Majesty."

1968 Secretary of State, Gérard Pelletier stated that he was the federal Minister of Cultural Affairs.

1969 Official Languages Law

1970-71 Federal OFY (Opportunities for Youth) and LIP (Local Initiatives Programme) programs aimed at youth unemployment and (non-profit) community youth-authored services. New arts organizations developed from these program projects (including artist-run centres) are picked up by CC.

1971 Under pressure from Secretary of State, CC initiated Canadian Horizons Program (later Explorations, 1973) as a modification of its emphasis on professionalism.

1971 Multiculturalism program established (Sec. of State Citizenship Branch)

Official rejection of Laurendeau-Dunton thesis of biculturalism.

1972 Pelletier's infamous speech extending the principles of "democratization and decentralization" to culture. Pelletier's cultural decentralization came from Malraux via Paris, 1968. Also called for by Canadian artists in 1941. (According to Woodcock, Trudeau's view was that the control of a nation's life, and especially of its arts, is essential for the consolidation of political power, and cultural policies

It is hard to imagine how the Council's past government ministry foes and public detractors could have done any better. Having authored these precedents it is going to be interesting to see what other self-imposed future concessions the Council is willing to make to the government in upcoming recessions.

The public reassurances (generally accepted by the arts community) were that Council was only cutting administrative costs to protect program spending. Part of the administrative cuts included dismantling the Arts Award Section, the Art Bank (now restored), the Explorations program (the only ongoing community arts-like program the Council has ever entertained) and the loss of funding to arts service organizations. Throughout the seven-year turmoil, remaining staff morale plummeted and internal-external communications diminished.

In 1998-99 there was a further change of management<sup>6</sup> with a new director, Shirley Thompson; a new chair, Jean Louis Roux; a new head of the research section, Keith Kelly; a new head of the visual arts section, Francois Lachapelle and a new head of the media arts section, David Poole, collectively promising a normalizing of Council-to-arts community relationships.

The rules allowing the Canada Council to remain at arm's-length from government and from the arts community have been seriously and in a sense usefully discredited. The "problem" for the arts community is to find the ways and means to debate and find consensus upon the most important functions that a fully accessible and flexible federal arts council can undertake that no other government or corporate entity can deliver. To what extent can it "foster and promote the enjoyment" of the arts while directing itself to the "production of works" of art? What emphasis will be placed on what aspects of the "production of works?" Have the recent changes at the Canada Council set these different goals on a collision course?



**"Peer assessment" and "collective noun" models of arts council administration**

*Genuine management is a continuous and complex process of information and negotiation which goes on until some general and always negotiable agreement is reached. The supposed "right of management" to ignore, abort or override the difficult process is false to the core.*

—Raymond Williams, 1989<sup>7</sup>

*...[P]rofessionalism adds a form of horizontal accountability apart from the hierarchical chain of rules and controls.*

—Gregory Albo<sup>8</sup>

The Canada Council's promise to "return to management by arts professionals"<sup>9</sup> is generally applauded within the arts community. However we must ascertain where the limits of "peer assessment" (as one component of arts community-arts council co-management) have been drawn across Council's disciplinary sections at different moments of their histories.<sup>10</sup>

To understand the Council's recognition of horizontal accountability beyond the mere utilization of peer juries it is useful to revisit the "collective noun" model of co-management practiced by the Canada Council and theorized by past Visual Arts Head Edythe

Goodridge. Goodridge's commitment to the Council was grounded in the belief of a "collective intelligence" to be harvested from within the Council's "originating" structure:

The founders/architects put into place three delegated authorities, three distinct forms of decision-making. These were i) what is now called the Board—originally public members as trustees; ii) the professionals hired by the public members as senior advisors; iii) the peer assessors as arts officers and artist jury or assessment committee members.

The real conviction was that the Council was a collective noun: it was not a bureaucracy...its decision-making rested in three different places providing the "checks and balances," to ensure all considerations were properly weighed. If you weighted the scale too much on one side or the other it became obvious that the decision-making was out of wack. That visibility was the brilliance of the structure.<sup>11</sup>

This model of the Council assumes that the government-appointed director, chair, assistant director, trustees and other senior non-arts specialists would always defer to the priorities of an arts council in its official capacity to conceptualize and to identify the arts and the artistic.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the intellectual and administrative power within the Council would more or less remain in the hands of the arts professionals (the section heads). Goodridge's interpretation of the arm's-length principle was that :

The directors of Council were in fact the professionals. They ran the business of Council. They were accountable to the public members, they were accountable to the community and they were closer in structure not to the corporate or the academy but to what I call the "judicial." The closest analogy would be a judge. They made judgments. They had to call the positions for Council. They had

to position Council all the time *vis-à-vis* the artistic practices.<sup>13</sup>

This sense of the judicial is an accepted key component of the arm's-length principle in public policy implied in the constitutional separation of powers between the judiciary, the executive and the legislative branches of government; arts professionals acted as if there were a "separation of powers" with the trustees (as the legislature), the appointed managers (as the executive) and the arts professionals (as the judiciary).

More exacting and now more contested was the "first principle" of the Canada Council in this model—that it funded artists. All funded organizations had essentially to demonstrably act as support structures of that work. Arts Awards grants were to buy time, they were not production grants. Theoretically they gave artists the freedom to decide when, where and how their work was to be made public; practically, they provided income relief from non-art production work.

The logic of funding arts organizations on the merits of their support of artists work, while clear-minded, always runs into the mediation of art practices by arts organizations whose functions are located around many other interests beside supporting artists work. It is not too difficult to see how the Canada Council's "first principle" could become fractured between creation-production grants seen as subsidies for artists, while dissemination and distribution grants to arts organizations were rationalized as "subsidies for audiences" under the guise of "marketing" or "education."

The ultimate weakness of the "collective noun" model was that it was more a prescription of consciousness than a formal component of the Council's public structure.<sup>14</sup> Once arts and other like-minded professionals at the Council who subscribed to the "collective noun" model were taken out of the equation, the arts community was exposed to a more formalized organizational hierarchy.

**Changes in visual arts organizational funding priorities?**

*Audiences everywhere discovered that the Canada Council for the Arts was on their team.*

—Donna Scott, 41st Annual Report, The Canada Council for the Arts, 1997:5.

*The Council is once again making policy in a hurry, citing the need to act promptly to restore credibility. They keep losing credibility by acting quickly without proper consultation, and they put the cart before the horse by formulating policy and then asking for feedback instead of consulting first.*

—Robin Metcalfe, independent curator, Halifax, 3 May 1999, on ECHO

The Canada Council's relations with funding for galleries and museums was compromised in the seventies by the presence of the National Museums Corporation and thereafter the Museum Assistance Program (Department of Heritage). As a consequence of this "policy appropriation" by government of the Visual Arts as a disciplinary section within Council consequently received substantially less funds than theatre, dance, music and writing and publishing. By 1984-85, the Council's "strategic intervention" (its decisions to legitimate certain practices by apportioning limited funds) was to take away the regular operating funding for the nineteen galleries/museums and open an Exhibition Assistance Program (1985) and Programming Assistance Program (1987) to all art galleries and museums engaged in activities critical to the contemporary arts. By 1990 the artist-run centres were put through a similar review process. In the mid-'80s artist-run centres received special funding recognition (it was a cheaper option) primarily because their role in constructing artist communities acted as extensions of artists chosen work (as artist-curators, artist-critics, artist-administrators) different from the scholarship or public service function of larger art galleries or museums.

should be directed toward supporting a government's principal aims, the most important of which was "national unity.")

In the same speech, Pelletier announces formation of National Museums of Canada corporation with a budget of \$9.1 million. This and formation of Art Bank begins competitive federal funding paths between art museums and CC.

**1972** Cultural statistics established (Secretary of State Arts and Culture Branch)

**1972** Capital assistance program (Sec. of State Arts and Culture Branch)

**1972** Minister exerts influence on Treasury Board for spending priorities which the arm's-length agencies formerly had negotiated directly.

CC requests a special allocation for Art Bank.

CC requests a special allocation for Publishing Assistance Program.

**1973** CC and National Arts Centre propose Touring Office to Secretary of State (set up under Canada Council)

**1973** CC requests new government monies for Performing Arts to increase budget from \$11.6 million to \$41.8 million in five years.

**1975** Federal government gives extra \$5 million for performing arts.

**1976** Incoming CC Director Charles Lussier warns performing arts groups that in exchange for continued funding they must make their programs accessible to "wider publics." (George Woodcock saw this as a moment of radical change in Council policy toward directing rather supporting artists.)

**1977** Fed. government sets up SSHRC (without arm's-length status) depriving CC of its former role in academic life.

**1977** Standing Committee questioned grants to Quebec artists who supported independence.

**1977** Sec. of State gives CC \$1.7 million in earmarked funds for National Unity.

**1978** Sec. of State gives CC \$900,000 in earmarked funds for National Book Festival.

**1978** Appropriation budget for Art Bank cut for a year. Council decides to spend some the national unity money on Art Bank; seen by Sec. of State Minister John Roberts as an act of "gratuitous defiance."

While the Canadian Art Museums Directors Organization (CAMDO) accepted the mid-'80s policy change it worked in the 1990s to regain operational funding for public galleries and museums. This included private meetings with Council and a much confirmed lobbying effort made with the Minister of Heritage. Though the Council denies that any of the \$25 million five-year increase was earmarked, the visual arts budget was dramatically increased to allow for new funding for public galleries and art museums. The new program with a budget of \$6.3 million has annual funding ceilings of \$300,000 for galleries with collections and \$200,000 for public and university galleries that can be no more than 25 percent of an organization's operating budget. The artist-run centre ceiling has been \$65,000 and the centres are angered that the new monies are all being spent on new programmes. Institutional and independent curators are also concerned that portions of the new monies allocated for curatorial purposes will in effect be "taxed" by museum administrators for overhead costs.

Director Shirley Thompson (formerly director of The National Gallery) responded to the artist-run centres' complaints by saying that the new monies were

to create a new flagship program of grants for public galleries and museums [who]... strongly address many of the strategic directions of the Canada Council for the Arts, including [the] display of contemporary artworks to a broad and diverse public. (Letter, 20 May 1998)

This type of "strategic direction" towards supposedly "high-status" institutions overrides the conceptual links between Council's funding of visual arts organizations as support of contemporary artistic and curatorial practices. It is argued that public galleries and art museums need new operational support because "comparable" publishing and performing arts organizations have

continuously received operational monies from Council. The need for "flagship" protection of "high-status" arts institutions is a form of cultural thinking whose time is past. In Britain, historic arts institutions with bottomless funding appetites were known as "power-houses" providing the Arts Council of Great Britain with the Churchillian defence that it was the bastion against dark forces:

If the power-houses were to fail there would be a black-out of the living arts in Britain.<sup>15</sup>

While public galleries were certainly penalized by the lack of visual arts operational funding in the mid-80's, my guess is that, acting in haste, the Canada Council does not have in hand sufficient if any studies to demonstrate in detail what larger survey art museums contribute financially or intellectually to the contemporary art field. Such studies on artist-run centres and to some extent public galleries were made by the Council in the mid-80's.<sup>16</sup>

There were members of CAMDO (including those who have worked at or interacted with Council over time) who saw the inherent dangers in this re-orientation of the Visual Arts monies. For example, instead of using the increased allocation to reset the artist-run centre operational funding ceiling at \$100,000, the Council defensively and clumsily chose to re-infantilize artist-run centre network contributions as places servicing professional artist entry or as curatorial-training facilities.

#### Arts officers: to serve and protect?

Arts program officers are in the difficult position of being the Council's front-line workers who are expected to read and represent changing arts community needs. Production communities (who see many arts officers come and go) can easily sense how well officers know the terrain and the degree of support they receive from Section Heads or upper management of the Council. When Paule Leduc disallowed arts officers from attending Council board meetings

and administrative cuts disallowed them from travelling to meet with and sample the programs presented by their "clients," the Council eradicated one avenue of peer assessment.

Because of the significance given to "peer status" by all parties captured within an arts council apparatus and to match extensive and regular performance reviews of the client base, clients should be given access to a performance review of arts officers every three years and Section Heads every five years. To minimize the possibility for upper management manipulation of employee reviews, this review process should be conducted from the arts community reporting directly to the Council's board. (Further up the chain, the arts community, as it has in the past, can—in exceptional circumstances—demand the resignation of the director, the chair or the head of the arts division). The intention behind such proposed performance reviews is as much to strengthen the officer's (and when necessary the section head's) ability to perform their jobs of primarily serving the community rather than putting the Council's interests above the arts community. A somewhat similarly intentioned alternative proposal, is simply to limit the terms of officer and section head appointments.

#### Peer juries and peer assessment committees

*The peer evaluation system lies at the heart of arm's-length arts councils. The system has its origins in English law. It rests on the premise that justice imposed by the lords on commoners is unjust because the circumstances of lords and commoners are radically different.*

—Harry Hillmand-Chartrand,  
director, Research Section,  
Canada Council, 1989

Peer jury decisions on grants to individual artists are at the core of what makes an arts council different from a ministry of culture. With rare exceptions the decisions and monies approved are final. Unfortunately only 20–30 percent of the monies the Canada Council distributes are strictly decided by peer jury. (In comparison, 98 percent of SSHRC monies are decided by final peer assessment,

although other forms of assessment are on the increase)

The Canada Council's Arts Award Section responsible for administering grants to individuals was abolished in the recent cuts without community consultation. The responsibility for programmes funding individuals was given over to the disciplinary sections. The Arts Award Section was purposively set up "so that artists from a particular discipline or field would not be subject to the strategies or dictates of the disciplinary sections."<sup>17</sup> The awards juries have been the most effective and consistent vehicle for cultural change to enter arts councils with jurists knowing what additional criteria besides "artistic merit" are valued at any one moment by the production communities themselves. Aside from representative jury composition (which was aided by cultural equity changes) the quality of the decisions are based upon how much time juries are given to adjudicate and how many applications/competitions are compressed into one jury. On occasion jurists have walked away from a competition when the workload has over-compromised their abilities to make fair decisions.

The peer-assessment committees that adjudicate grants to arts organizations act an advisory capacity. They make recommendations as to who should receive funding in what order of priority but the amounts and adjustments are left to the arts officer. Within the visual and media arts the shift from officer-only assessment to peer assessment came about through a program review. Assessment committees in effect shelter officers from taking political flak for their final decisions with the committee members themselves unanswerable to the production communities. The arts officers only allow aspects of organizational files into the process. An assessor residing in one part of the country does not know the inter-organizational regional or municipal politics of all applicants or the levels of accountability and satisfaction within their targeted communities. What the assessors bring to the process is an ability to ascertain

the value of the contribution being made by each organization and, this is less guaranteed, a sensitivity to the specific difficulties of operating in different locations in the country with uneven access to other sources of funding.

My experience (echoed by others) of this tiered level of "checks and balances" assessment is that it is insufficiently transparent. One role of the arts officer or, if present, section head, is to protect the organizations from a committee of assessors who, against the clock, are being encouraged to make ever-severe abstract rankings. The arts officer provides "knowledgeable facilitation of the deliberations, alleviating bias, prejudice, etc."<sup>18</sup> and can protect organizations deemed "historically important" from potential defunding. Other organizations with a similar lacklustre performance are in effect "punished" to allow for the funding of new organizational clients.

The visual arts section is currently considering adding to the confusion inherent within peer assessment committees by having officers responsible for regions, with the Section taking on more aspects of the decision-making process. The Canada Council should decide whether it wants peer-assessment of arts organizations, and if so, build in the necessary safeguards of time and resources enabling assessors to produce community-accountable results. The Council's preferred choice of two-tiered levels of advisory and final assessment leads in effect to "unauthored" collective decisions made in the last instance on claims of the Council's preferred internal "expertise." Diluting the peer responsibility process produces no net gain for the Council or the arts community.

#### Power-sharing?

##### Disciplinary advisory committees and representative organizations

Disciplinary advisory committees have long been misused at the Council. In the corporate makeover (the Council claims this was just in the Visual Arts) these committees were simply suspended. The Advisory Committee on Racial Equality did memo the Council's "transition

1979 C-27 Bill on Crown corporations.

1982 Applebaum-Hébert Committee Report recommends new legislation to clarify degree of political autonomy for CC, SSHRC, NFB, CBC, etc.

1980 Transfer of cultural affairs from Secretary of State to Ministry of Communications.

1982 C-123 Bill on crown corporations.

CC and National Museums Corporation meet to settle jurisdictions for funding contemporary and historic or heritage exhibitions.

1983 DOC Strategic Overview: "examine the need for Cabinet to be given the power to issue broad policy direction to cultural agencies."

1984 C-24. Because cultural agencies had shown themselves reluctant to accept political directives, then senior government ministers Chrétien, Axworthy and Roberts wanted the CC, CBC, CFDMC and National Arts Centre reined in. Federal government wanted control of corporate plan and operating budget, power to impose directives, control of by-laws, and power of dismissal. Deputy Minister of Communications told Director of CC that public criticism of bill would not be tolerated. Govt. bureaucratic zeal made public leads to exemption of four agencies from C-24.

1986 Federal government give CC an extra \$9 million but DOC wants representations made to Minister by certain arts organizations to be taken into account. CC refuses, joint consultations between arts community, CC and federal government proceed.

PLRC (Public Lending Rights Commission) funded by DOC, administered by Canada Council, managed by writers (in the majority), publishers and librarians.

By 1986 Cultural Affairs (DOC) and External Affairs are by-passing the CC spending about \$60 million on arts funding versus the CC allocation of \$72 million.

1987 Advisory Committee on the Status of the Artist

1988 Federal Multiculturalism Act leads CC to rethink its relationship to cultural diversity.

1990 Under CC Director Joyce Zemans, first meetings of Native (First Peoples) Advisory Committee and Advisory

team" following the controversial Roch and Donna Strategic Plan information tour: "we want to re-emphasize (as mentioned in our first memo to you) the importance of having artist/arts administrators involved in this process.... "[C]ommunity testing" is critically important as well, but we are concerned that informed consultation with "External Advisory(s)" should take place at a more critical point."<sup>19</sup>

The regular disciplinary advisory committees were already limited by servicing internal Council functions of assisting in questions of internal administration. Advisory committees have been used to endorse policy paths already well-mapped and they have been used politically to support inter-sectional disputes over budgetary allocations and responsibilities. Because of the "focus-group" nature of their selection by the Council instead of the community it has (from repeated accounts) been difficult for committees to engage in issues and priorities deemed important for production community improvement.

The rare special advisory committees that have exerted substantial reforms illustrate exactly how a process of shared power necessarily proceeds. The Advisory Committee of Racial Equality and the First Peoples Advisory Committee were set up in September 1990 as a response to grassroots lobbying from artists of colour<sup>20</sup> and Council's need to comply with the federal government's Employment Equity Act and the Multiculturalism Act (1998). Then council director Joyce Zemans contracted artist-administrator Chris Chreighton-Kelly to co-ordinate the Council's "cultural diversity" efforts. Chreighton-Kelly in turn compiled the committees based upon recommendations from various communities to be represented. His work continued (without the same degree of independence) through the appointment of an equity coordinator. From 1991-96 these committees were successfully responsible for introducing internships, changing the hiring and jury practices of the Council, introducing special programmes across most disci-

plines and broadening the Council's definition of professionalism. To overcome the Council's temptation to make minimal reforms to its structure the Committees insisted that their recommendations be responded to by the Council's board of directors. Allowing for transparent negotiations both recommendations and responses were then made public. This in turn allowed cultural critics<sup>21</sup> to evaluate and publicly report on the quality of initiatives being proposed and adopted across various arts councils.



**Self-management:  
artists' representation organizations**

*The Council recognizes the danger of such (national service) organizations, because of their dependence on Council funding, becoming more responsive to Council than to its members. It expects such organizations to serve the interests of its members even when these appear to conflict with those of Council.*

—Tim Porteus, Director,  
The Canada Council, 1977<sup>22</sup>

One of the most political cuts in the strategic plan was the suspension of funding for artist representation organizations within the National Arts Service Organization disciplinary programs. Organizations like the Writers Union and CARFAC were defunded. Many of these organizations had come into being in the late seventies, often at the behest of the Canada Council, as a way of establishing

communications with and improving surveillance of art production communities. Such organizations had been funded to "provide informational services, engage in annual and other conferences, and provide advocacy and representation of communities of artists in public media (and to the government)."

It is not yet clear whether disallowing Council funding for advocacy, lobbying or "other representational activity" was a direct injunction from Treasury Board to The Canada Council, or was a delayed response to the 1986 Neilsen Report on government re-organization that had already made this recommendation. A more problematic aspect of this decision is the Council's tactical reading of the "popularity" of representative organizations among art producers and the shared lowered expectations of a "post-representational politics" where arts council clients pragmatically must adapt to "new rules" rather than collectively insisting on alternative reforms. While the cutting of funding to artist representative organizations has seriously impeded artist communities' ongoing ability to scrutinize, study and hold face-to-face conferences on shifts in federal arts policy, the recent increase in collective organizing (through electronic means) contradicts deployed memories of past "superfluous functions" of artist representative organizations. The more "divisive" issue of inadequate art producer payment, as unfair labour practices endorsed by the employment standards of arts organization that arts councils fund, can only be resolved through organizations like CARFAC, using provisions within Status of the Artist legislation.

What was advertised in the 1995 Strategic Plan was that "The Council will immediately develop a specific program of advocacy which involves the Board, staff members and the arts community on an ongoing basis." Such attempts to centralize advocacy and arts-related civic speech wrongly assumes that the Council's self-preservation goals are synonymous

with, or should take precedence over, the need for a regulatory transformation of arts councils by further developing shared decision-making powers and arts community self-management.

**Notes**

1. Kevin Dowler, "The Cultural Industries Policy Apparatus," in *The Cultural Industries in Canada: Problems, Policies and Prospects*, Michael Dorland, ed. (Toronto: J. Lorimer & Co., 1996).
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 328-46.
3. John Meisel and Jean Van Loon, "Cultivating the Bushgarden: Cultural Policy in Canada" in M.C. Cummings and R.S. Katz, eds., *The Patron State*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 291.
4. Monika Gagnon "Canada Council to merge with SSHRC," *Parallélogramme* 18, no. 1, 1992, p. 10.
5. Jocelyn Harvey, "Closed Council," *Canadian Forum*, January/February 1995, pp.18-22.
6. In 1996 "senior management" included the secretary-treasurer, the head of the arts division, the head of the strategic initiatives unit and the head of communication. Ironically given the re-modeling process, one of their two primary functions was "corporate memory." "The Report and Recommendations of the Second Advisory Committee for Racial Equality in the Arts at The Canada Council," The Canada Council, 1996, p. 25.
7. Raymond Williams, "Mining the Meaning: Key Words in the Miners' Strike," *Resources of Hope*, (London: Verso, 1989) p. 122. (Cited in Albo, *op. cit.*)
8. Gregory Albo, "Democratic citizenship and the future of public management," in *A Different Kind of State? Popular Power and Democratic Administration*, G. Albo, D. Langille and L. Panitch eds. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 26.
9. An earlier critique of art practices trapped within a professional model is in Robert Labossière's, "A Newer Laocoön: Towards a Defence of Artists' Self-determination Through Public Arts Funding," *FUSE Magazine* 18, no. 5, 1995, pp. 15-19.
10. At different moments both the Writing and Publishing and Media Arts sections have encouraged applications of community-driven Council policy co-authorship.
11. Author interview about the "collective noun" model of the Canada Council with

Edythe Goodriche following her resignation from the Canada Council, 1994.

12. The definition of an arts council's "profoundest source of power" is taken from Robert Hutchinson's excellent book on the Arts Council of Great Britain: *The Politics of the Arts Council* (London: Sinclair Browne, 1982), p. 18.
13. *Ibid.*
14. This is dangerously true of much that we value about arts councils. The status of Council motions contributing to policy decisions—including peer assessment—is simply not known. How over time are existent policy motions re-circulated?
15. Robert Hutchinson, *The Politics of the Arts Council* (London: Sinclair Browne, 1982), p. 62.
16. See "Review of The Canada Council's Programming Assistance to Public Art Galleries and Museums," CAMDO-Canada Council, 1992; "Artists' Centres—A Twenty Year Perspective 1972-1992," Visual Arts Section, The Canada Council, September, 1993.
17. Author interview with Edythe Goodridge, 1994.
18. "Report and Recommendations of the Second Advisory Committee for Racial Equality in the Arts at The Canada Council," July 1986, p. 31.
19. Canada Council Memo (22 June 1995) to the Transition Team from The Second Advisory Committee for Racial Equality in the Arts. The "Report and Recommendations of the Second Advisory Committee for Racial Equality in the Arts at The Canada Council," The Canada Council, 1996, p. IV-2.
20. M. Nourbese Philip, "Cut Issues in Babylon: Racism and Anti-Racism in the Arts," *FUSE Magazine* 12, no. 5, 1989, pp. 13-26.
21. See Cameron Bailey, "Fright the Power: Arts Council & the Spectre of Racial Equality," *FUSE Magazine* 15, no. 6, 1992, pp. 22-27.
22. Memorandum to Council, The Canada Council, 12-13 December 1977.

*I would like to thank those who are working or have worked at or with the Canada Council for assisting me in my research and Su Ditta and others who gave critical feedback or made editorial suggestions.*

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Committee on Racial Equality in the Arts. Council changes hiring practices, jury composition and revises its definition of professionalism.

**1992** C-93 Introduced in the budget. Bill to amalgamate or eliminate 46 agencies and/or commissions. CC to be merged with SSHRC and certain cultural functions from External Affairs to be known as The Canada Council for the Arts and for Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities.

**1992** SSHRC Director Paule Leduc appointed as CC Director.

**1993** C-93 was defeated in the Senate by the Speaker's tie-breaking vote. (The first time a government budget implementation bill was defeated in the Senate since 1939.)

**1993** Transfer of cultural affairs from Ministry of Communications to Ministry of Heritage.

**1993** CC receives a government cut of \$8.5 million.

**1992-94** Without public or community consultation Leduc proceeds to "unify" the Council (and cause senior resignations and early retirements) through an imposed corporate model of public administration.

**1994** Donna Scott appointed chair and Roch Carrier appointed director. Embark on inept and cosmetic national consultation tour.

**1995** CC announces Strategic Plan. Includes 54 percent cuts to administration resulting in closing of Art Bank, moving the independent Arts Awards Section into disciplinary hands, jury and advisory committee cuts and termination of funding for arts service and advocacy organizations. Ignoring its own conflict of interest, the CC announces a re-enforced role for itself as an advocate for artists and arts organizations.

**1996-97** CC cut \$2.5 million

**1997-98** Following CC's substantial makeover, government allocation increases by \$25 million for five years.

*Compiled from: McConathy, 1975; Ostry, 1978; Woodcock, 1985; Meisel and Van Loon, 1987; Shafer and Fortier, 1989; Robertson, 1993; Graham, 1993; Aquin, 1996; Canada Council, 1991-98.*

# MÉMOIRE ET ANTIMÉMOIRE

ARTEFACTS BALINAIS ET DOCUMENTS DE MARGARET MEAD ET GREGORY BATESON (TERRAIN BALI) ET DES ŒUVRES DE  
[BALINESE ARTIFACTS AND DOCUMENTS OF MARGARET MEAD AND GREGORY BATESON (BALI FIELDWORK) AND WORKS BY]  
GHISLAINE CHAREST, CHANTAL DU PONT, NICOLE JOLICŒUR, MARIE-CHRISTIANE MATHIEU

CURATED BY FRANÇOISE LE GRIS  
GALERIE DE L'UQAM, MONTREAL, JANUARY 15–FEBRUARY 20, 1999

REVIEW BY MARILYN BURGESS

As one of the seminal texts feeding Western fantasies of Bali, the archival documents produced by Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson during their visit to that island between 1936 and 1938 are a fertile territory of investigation. Comprised of a large number of films and thousands of photographs, the archive is rich with materials for artistic appropriation. For this exhibition, curator Françoise Le Gris invited four artists—Ghislaine Charest, Chantal du Pont, Nicole Jolicœur and Marie-Christiane Mathieu—to create new work engaging with the Mead-and-Bateson ethnographic legacy. The “memories” elicited by their collected documents are investigated by the artists in a manner that questions the scientificity of the discourse of ethnography. The results are uneven, divided between the artists who concerned themselves only with archival materials, and those who travelled back to the Balinese field.

Ethnographic representation has been shown to, in some senses, always produce a fiction. As Mary Louise Pratt has demonstrated, ethnographic representation deploys the same tropes as early travel and adventure writing: the hardship on the voyage, first contact with the “natives,” the exoticism of the new place and its people, etc. Furthermore, fueled by the colonial hubris that believed that exotic cultures could be scientifically circumscribed, ethnographic representations were eagerly taken up in Western academic institutions and later by commercial and popular culture (tourism, pop music). They reflect one culture's appro-

priation of another in the service of its own self-image. If “Bali” is a fiction for the dominant cultural institutions of the West, a nostalgic echo of the Dutch-Indonesian past, it was produced at very real costs. During the colonial period, numerous invasions by the Dutch culminated in the massacre of 3,600 people defending Denpasar in 1906. It was to this Dutch Indonesia that Mead and Bateson ventured in 1936. The memory of any such abuse of power is nowhere evoked in this exhibition, which prefers to deal with the archives strictly as “discourse.”

Mead and Bateson collected films, small objects and 25,000 photographs, not for museums (they did not collect rare “trophy”), but as emblems of the everyday. How ironic, then, to enter an exhibition that returns this collection to the space of the (high) art gallery. The show opens with a presentation of Balinese artifacts borrowed from the American Museum of Natural History in New York: carved wood figurines, shadow puppets and masks. A sampling of the 25,000 photographs deposited at the Library of Congress in Washington adds a historical dimension to the collecting of these materials. A film by Mead and Bateson, *Trance and Dance in Bali*, completes this portion of the exhibition. These are the elements to which the contemporary work relates, the “memory” of the exhibition's title.

Of the four artists in the larger, contemporary section of the show, Nicole Jolicœur and Marie-Christiane Mathieu chose to draw inspiration from artifacts found in

the archive. By restricting their interrogations to the effects of the archive, the artists avoid the romantic traps and tropes associated with representations of travel to exotic places.

The holographic installation, *Margaret Gregory and Me, une rencontre anachronique* (1998) by Marie-Christiane Mathieu, is a moving play of light and shadow that questions the idea of “storing” a culture in boxes. Centred on five 180 cm x 60 cm sheets of plate glass leaning against the wall are grey rectangular surfaces on which are etched a series of texts: perfunctory lists of contents used to identify archived materials. For example, “Quantité de notes prises pendant l'expédition, aussi huit rouleaux de film Leica dans des boîtes rondes au fer blanc.” [Quantity of notes taken during the expedition, also eight rolls of Leica film in round, white, metal boxes.] The original title identifying the twenty-one boxes donated by Mead and Bateson runs across the top of the work. The language is scientific, meticulous in its recording of facts, and suggests the many layers of description that mediate between objects and our knowledge of them.

The text also serves to draw the viewer in closer to the work. Approaching it, fleeting holographic film segments appear and disappear, reflecting brilliant flashes of reddish gold. Each panel is graced with a different fragment: people sitting together, people dancing, etc. These communal scenes, obviously taken from the archive, are hard to make out,



Bayung Gedé: fouiller la mémoire, Chantal du Pont, detail, photo-video installation, 1998–99. Courtesy Galerie de l'UQAM.

though the characters appear to be moving. As they can only be seen from certain distances and certain vantage points, they appear like ghosts refusing to be fixed by the viewer's gaze, flickering in and out of visibility.

In her video installation, *Les langues* (1998), Nicole Jolicœur also uses a section of film produced by Mead and Bateson. After years of working with photographs of hysterics studied by Freud and Charcot, Jolicœur's new piece revisits some of the archetypal attitudes of female madness, as suggested by a witch theatre filmed by Mead and Bateson in the late 1930s (*Trance and Dance in Bali*). In a three-minute segment of the film, the Balinese witch Rangda appears in her supernatural form (wearing a large wooden mask) at the gates of a temple where she is unsuccessfully attacked by an emissary of the king. Afterwards she dances alone, “a figure both frightening and representative of fear itself” (Margaret Mead).

Jolicœur's video, projected in large format onto one of the gallery's walls, intercuts the archival film with an image of the artist herself, donning a similar mask. The high-contrast image of the witch dissolves into the artist's own mimicking and exaggeration of the former's movements, returning them as stylized attitudes. These recall the hysteric's “dance” of her earlier work, as when a veil worn over the witch's head echoes the silk veils used to cover the hysteric's body. At one point Jolicœur looks straight into the camera and at the viewer, challenging our passive reception of the film. Her appropriation of the Balinese witch does not ultimately attempt to circumscribe her, but rather interrogates various stagings of a dangerous femininity. In the digital photograph that accompanies the video projection, the dual profiles of decrepit mask and of Jolicœur, a middle-aged woman, have pointed tongues stuck out, a gesture of defiance belonging in our culture to the hysteric and the crone, ritually permitted

to speak the unspeakable, but always in a special “tongue.”

Mathieu's sensitive treatment of the erasures of ethnographic and archival knowledge and Jolicœur's eloquent evocation of the fearful danger represented by women are both powerful and memorable. Given the show's concerns, the artists who travelled back to Bali risked a lot and their work suffers for the lack of clarity such close exposure brings. To produce their installations, Chantal du Pont and Ghislaine Charest chose to go to Bali to revisit the initial site of the famous ethnographic investigation, a strategy that gives rise to interesting problems. Their work comprises images taken in Bali, recontextualized in various forms in order to disrupt their powerful transparency. Mead and Bateson's belief in the transparency of photography as well as its poetic potential, while ostensibly put in the service of science, already belied a relation to culture collecting and display. In reproducing



*Les langues*, Nicole Jolicœur, video installation, 1998. Courtesy Galerie de l'UQAM.

some of the gestures of collecting practiced by Mead and Bateson, Chantal du Pont and Ghislaine Charest have sought different ways to intervene in the process, questioning its production of Western-coded forms of knowledge.

The impetus for the installation *Bayung Gédé: fouillé la mémoire* (1998–99) by Chantal du Pont began from an interesting reversal, in which the artist returned objects from the Mead and Bateson archive to their place of origin. Travelling to the village of Bayung Gédé with photographs of villagers taken by the famous anthropologists, duPont built her installation around the villagers' confrontation with the images and on her own experience of travel. Capturing this recapturing on video, where Balinese hands handle the prints, the work suggests an infinite regression of referred meanings, like an object seen reflected in two opposing mirrors. However, the installation as a whole suffers from an overloading of information and of sensorial experiences. The beautiful and suggestive execution of this one videotape distributed over four video

monitors, by far the piece's most interesting moment of engagement with the Mead and Bateson archive, is easy to miss, so busy is the installation with large and small video projections, sound sources and constructed objects—all relating the artist's travel experience—and the whole overwhelmingly framed in copper tubing.

Ghislaine Charest's installation *Petit soleil doré* (1998) also incorporates images and sounds captured on the voyage. Photographs of children posed with Charest's signature teddy bears, mounted in Balinese-style wooden altars, together with recorded voices, children's drawings and booklets containing Balinese stories, attempt perhaps to capture a sense of Balinese childhood while breaking up the authority of Western codes of representation. The elegant forms of the family altars used to frame the photographs are the strongest element of the installation. Although the teddy bears do effect a certain distancing in the work, they look artificial, decidedly Western, and one wonders why the artist has imposed them

on her subjects. Can the stuffed animal stand as a universal sign of childhood? These photographs suggest an imposition of Western will on the Balinese, forcing a relation to our culture of childhood, and of course, its teddy bear. If childhood is universal, must it be made to speak in the terms of Western childhood?

"Mémoire et Anti-mémoire" is about appropriation: taking what is there, either in the archive, or in the field, and creating something new with it. All of the artists have engaged sincerely with the problematic of confronting the archive of another culture and to the extent that the works concern themselves with questioning representation, they succeed. If "Bali" is a fiction in the West's imagination, then these works problematize the usual telling of the story.

*At the time of writing this review, Marilyn Burgess was a writer and curator living and working in Montreal. She has since joined The Canada Council for the Arts as a Media Arts Officer responsible for Film and First Productions in Media Arts.*

## MADE IN MEXICO/MADE IN VENEZUELA

IÑAKI BONILLAS, STEFAN BRÜGGEMANN, ALEXANDER GERDEL, ALÍ GONZÁLES, YOLANDA LEAL, DIANA LÓPEZ, JUAN NASCIMENTO, SANTIAGO SIERRA  
CURATED BY LUIS JACOB  
ART METROPOLE, TORONTO, NOVEMBER 26–JANUARY 23, 1999

REVIEW BY ALLAN ANTLIFF

"Made In Mexico/Made In Venezuela" is a conceptual exploration of how to break down barriers among contemporary cultures in the Americas. It brings to the fore the limitations on artistic exchange while revealing conceptual art's uniquely communicative intimacy. The most striking aspects of "Made In Mexico/Made In Venezuela" turn on Art Metropole's facilitating role in realizing the pieces at little or no expense to the artists themselves. The exhibits were assembled according to instructions faxed or e-mailed by the artists to the gallery, enabling cross-border communication with none of the usual impediments of shipping, insurance, and the like. This show effects an egalitarian economy in which artists and gallery staff engage in a shared conspiracy to thwart the capitalism of art—no mean achievement in the contemporary international environment of profit and bottom lines.

Curator Luis Jacob has put together a catalogue documenting his exchanges with the artists, including discussion of instructions and plans. Augmenting the art on display, those faxes and e-mails invite us to consider the process of making entailed in each work's creation and presentation in Canada. Uniting documentation with the objects themselves, the exhibit is a terrain where communication is the prevailing credo.

Mexican artist Santiago Sierra, for example, presents a real-time video of the dismantling and subsequent repair of a sink in his Mexico City studio. The video itself is a

product of circumstances documented in the catalogue, where we learn that Art Metropole was unable, due to financial constraints, to enact Sierra's original instructions to have the sink dismantled and repaired in Canada. This labour-intensive process of repair would be the same whether in Mexico or Canada—plumbing is universal—yet capitalist economics determined that Mexico was the site of the enactment. The ease with which the sink is dismantled makes for a telling contrast to its involved and time-consuming reassembly. Here, the passage of time reflects the real value of the labour that goes into

making, a value that capitalism displaces in favour of a money equation.

Sierra considers the economic commonalities of work. A humorous transcendence of the rigours of capitalist exchange is the centrepiece of Venezuelan Alí Gonzáles' exhibit. Gonzáles' provided Jacob with minute instructions for wrapping the interior of cardboard boxes like presents, complete with bows. The boxes were then left open and strewn casually at the entrance to the exhibit. A multitude of inverses ensue: wrapped interiors of "opened" presents containing nothing



*Made in Mexico/Made in Venezuela*, installation view, Alí Gonzáles, 1998–99. Courtesy of Art Metropole.



Made in Mexico/Made in Venezuela, installation view, Brüggemann, Gerdel, Bonillas, Leal, 1998–99. Courtesy Art Metropole.

negate Gonzáles' role as a gift-giver and our own roles as grateful recipients. The promise of physical gifts from afar is displaced by conceptual art's covert and intangible function as a gift to be experienced rather than owned.

Experience, in fact, is the empathic feature binding pieces by Mexican artists Stefan Brüggemann, Yolanda Leal and Venezuelan Alexander Gerdel, with the work of Sierra and Gonzales. Brüggemann's installation, a text blazed across the wall in capital letters—"THE EVENT OF WRITING MAY BE THE UNEVENT OF READING"—points to the artist's unproductive complicity with us in our equally unproductive role as readers. Leal's piece records the response—both written and photographed—to an intimate

question posed by Leal to a close friend of Jacob's. Again, neither artist nor viewers are present for the act of production that the question generates. Similarly, an invitation to produce is the subject of Gerdel's work in which power tools have been laid across a table, unused by the artist and ready for use by us.

Contributions by Venezuelans Juan Nascimento and Diana López, and Mexican Iñaki Bonillas were interesting, but less focused. López exhibited a bottle of Canadian Club whiskey on a carpet and had the opening night reception filmed; Nascimento instructed Jacob to create a small self-supporting toothpick sculpture; and Bonillas presented two series of photographs: one of a clock and the second of a blank white board. Certainly

these pieces contained complex meanings, but each in its own way neglected the experiential element linking artist and viewer that enriched the other works.

In the final analysis the appeal to experiential empathy was the most satisfying feature of "Made In Mexico/Made in Venezuela." Here, perhaps, lie the seeds of a more egalitarian conceptualism, one capable of integrating into itself the creative potential of both artist and audience.

Allan Antliff is an art critic and assistant professor of twentieth-century art history at the University of Alberta. His book, *Anarchist Modernism: The Making of the First American Avant-Garde*, is forthcoming from the University of Chicago Press.

# BROKEN ENTRIES: RACE. SUBJECTIVITY. WRITING

Essays by Roy Miki

TORONTO: THE MERCURY PRESS, 1998

REVIEW BY RICHARD ALMONTE

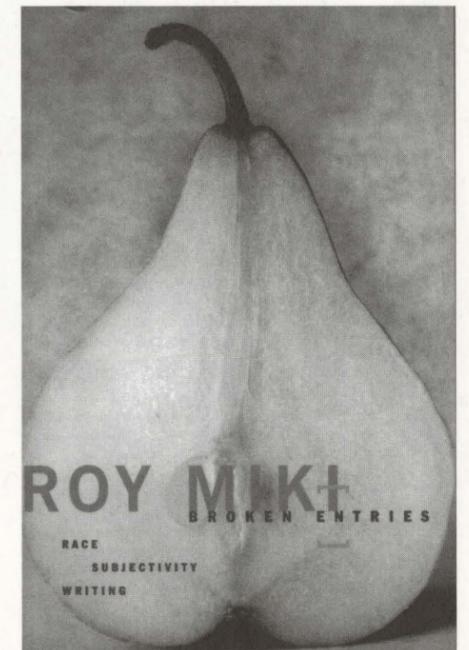
Roy Miki takes the title of this important collection of essays from Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*, the most insistently poetic and political Canadian novel of the past quarter century. Kogawa's narrator, Naomi, in describing how she feels upon reading documents related to the internment of Japanese Canadians during the World War II, says it is like "breaking into a private house" and discovering it is in fact your "childhood home." Miki, who shares with Kogawa a background as a poet, borrows Kogawa's simile and uses it to name his own critical enterprise. For Miki, Asian-Canadian criticism is a process of "reading as an act of breaking and entering" (p. 184). The transgressiveness of Miki's criticism—he takes on the academy and systemic racism, for instance—is one of the strong qualities of these essays.

The ten essays in the book can be divided into three groups. Three of the essays deal with the experience of being Japanese Canadian in the fifty years since the internment. This first group of essays meditates on the historical transformations of Japanese Canadian identity and subjectivity. A further four of the essays are more explicitly literary. Here, Miki, who teaches in the English department at Simon Fraser University, is in his element. Miki's literary essays perform a tightrope act. They grapple with the politics of editing, propose a theory of Asian Canadian literature, dissect some prevalent schools of Canadian criticism, and question the recent popularity of previously neglected "racialized texts" (p. 161). The last group of essays is the shortest. Miki provides

close readings of two poets, Roy Kiyooka and bp Nichol, who have been left out of the Canadian canon.

Miki's personal involvement in the redress movement of the 1980s and his emerging sense of a Japanese Canadian subjectivity, which he calls "JC" in these essays, is most clearly articulated in "Redress: A Community Imagined," "Shikata Ga Nai: A Note On Seeing/Japanese Canadian" and "Unclassified Subjects: Question Marking 'Japanese Canadian' Identity." What these essays have in common is the deployment of an argumentative structure I will provisionally term "dialectical." Miki posits a series of opposed pairings, for example a valorized "historic movement" (p. 15) towards redress, set against a distrust of the "details from history" that "say nothing of... the interior place, the ravaged heart" (p. 16) of the lived experience of internment. Another opposed pairing is apparent in Miki's unresolved definition of subjectivity. Miki argues that a possible Japanese Canadian subjectivity is one that "interrupts... by inhabiting" (p. 183) the dominant representation of itself; at the same time, he realizes that any attempt to create a new "racialized subject" (p. 194) is bound to include, to some degree, a subjection to the very label "race," which itself stigmatizes.

This dialectic is provisional in Miki's essays on subjectivity because there is no synthesis. Instead, the oppositions are entrenched, both stylistically and rhetorically. Miki's ambivalent attitude toward history is mirrored in his non-traditional and



highly effective essay style. "Redress: A Community Imagined" is really two essays running concurrently on the page, one above the other, separated by a line. This visual prompt is a concretization of Miki's desire to bring together two important kinds of history, the personal and the communal. The essay above the line is a linear narrative describing the process by which Miki comes to terms with his own birth: his mother is issued a one-week pass to enter Winnipeg, alone. The essay below the line deals with the difficult "birth" of the redress settlement, which is, in contrast, a communal effort. "Unclassified Subjects: Question Marking 'Japanese Canadian' Identity" uses a similar strategy. The essay

is written almost as if it were a debate between different epistemologies, in which specific moments in Japanese Canadian history (p. 185-86) vie for legitimacy using imported literary and cultural theory by writers like Michel Foucault and Judith Butler (p. 194).

Miki's desire to balance in these essays an academic discourse and a less formal discourse of personal history, ultimately proves risky. From the academic standpoint, this collection (published, notably, by a non-university literary press) is a breakthrough: it dares to cross-pollinate academic argument with personal history, with poetry, with stylistic innovation. But from the standpoint of a general readership, this collection, in a handful of key passages, is simply too full of jargon to be of much use. Miki's assertion, for example, that the "loss, or demise, of any given subject formation ensures that identity not become a residence but a performance of multiple and often contradictory positionings" (p. 198) assumes a readership schooled in theories of performativity and subjectivity. Furthermore, the passage could be translated into more descriptive, concrete language, and still hold its own theoretically.

The group of four essays that deals specifically with literary-critical issues is, on the whole, very effective. For example "The Future's Tense: Editing, Canadian Style" purports to be about the "decisions" Miki makes "as a practicing editor" (p. 34) (Miki edits the journal *West Coast Line*). But this essay sidesteps this issue and becomes instead a trenchantly argued polemic against what Miki sees as the mainstream of English Canadian literature and literary criticism. In Miki's opinion, Canadian criticism has been caught in a time warp where "conservative poetic forms and values belonging to the ideology of positivist humanism" (p. 36) still hold sway. Miki would like to see this type of criticism, which he identifies as

emanating from central Canada (read Toronto and Montreal) replaced by a "materialist or textualist poetics" that recognizes the late twentieth-century's "breakdown of belief in rationality and formal closure" (p. 36). In other words, Miki wants non-realist fiction, non-lyric poetry, and non-white writing to have a larger audience in this country.

In a literary landscape still dominated by Atwood, Findley, Munro, Richler, and where even new influential voices like Anne Marie MacDonald, Anne Michaels, and Shyam Selvadurai fit the old realist model, Miki raises a vital issue. In "Asiarcy: Making Space For Asian Canadian Writing," Miki questions the lack of a suitably progressive criticism that would parallel progressive fiction and poetry. His target of choice is Linda Hutcheon, the University of Toronto professor whose influential theories of post-modernism have gained a wide audience. Miki shows how Hutcheon, who claims that "in this age of the post modernism many feel that the margins are indeed where the action is" (p. 105), may be opportunistic. He warns that Hutcheon's gesture is in fact a colonization of the marginal. Miki's criticism is extremely well-aimed. Unfortunately, the validity of his critique is undermined by his earlier positive citing of Robert Kroetsch, who argues, a few years before Hutcheon, that the "margin, the periphery, the edge, now, is the exciting and dangerous boundary.... It is where the action is" (p. 48).

If Miki is inconsistent about who can and who cannot furnish authentic critical interpretations—at one point he implies that white critics cannot understand the real significance of the events of *Obasan* (p. 115)—he makes up for it with his consistently incisive and vibrant readings of Roy Kiyooka and bp Nichol. The essay on Kiyooka, "Inter-Face: Roy Kiyooka's Writing, A Commentary/Interview" is the most subtly textured essay in the

collection. Beginning with an arresting metaphor, "On the road map of designated sites along the trans-Canada canonical way, there won't (likely) be a sign" for Roy Kiyooka (p. 54), Miki goes on to argue persuasively that the Canadian literature canon is guilty of ignoring Kiyooka. While Miki's personal stake in this is obvious (he edited Kiyooka's collected poems), the general reader would have profited by the inclusion of more examples of Kiyooka's work than we get in this essay. Miki's elegiac essay for bp Nichol, "'Turn This Page': Journaling bp Nichol's *The Martyrology & The Returns*" is an astonishingly clever, almost breathtaking display of how creative critical writing can be.

Two things stand out about *Broken Entries*. The first is its consistently paradoxical articulation of the need to establish an Asian Canadian subjectivity in its rightful place on the one hand, and, on the other hand, a distrust of the very notion of subjectivity. Miki's post-structuralist poetics clash with his equally strong need to claim an identity. No critic has been able to get beyond this paradox successfully, so this is not a strike against Miki. The second thing this book accomplishes is to demonstrate just how very vital is the essay format. Even though Miki criticizes Northrop Frye (p. 45), he in fact follows and improves upon a tradition that has been dying a slow death in Canada for a number of years, the tradition of the intellectual who speaks out publicly on important issues, eschewing formal academic writing in the process. This book is essential reading for everyone interested in Canadian literature and the politics behind that enterprise.

*Richard Almonte is a former employee of the Mercury Press and currently works for the Literary Press Group of Canada. He is a graduate student at McMaster University in the Department of English, where he is working on nineteenth-century Black Canadian literature.*

## BECLOUDED VISIONS: HIROSHIMA-NAGASAKI AND THE ART OF WITNESS

By Kyo Maclear

ALBANY: SUNY PRESS, 1999

REVIEW BY LANG BAKER

*In the ten years since his retirement, this man has been searching on his own for what he calls "the atomic bomb claw marks" (tsumeato), that is, the relics of the bomb, and compiling their photographs and his detailed hand written explanations into a booklet. He takes with him almost everywhere a hefty high tech camera, splendidly equipped with automatic focus and zoom and wide angle lenses. It is as though in the tenacious search for "clawmarks" he is reconfirming his own life. "I feel as though I must continue to take pictures of the ruins so that I can protect the human rights of the dead."*

— Lisa Yoneyama  
as cited in *Visions*, p. 32.

Kyo Maclear's book contemplates art that addresses the atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The book deserves praise for its courageous and careful treatment of this difficult topic. Maclear sets out to methodically engage the paradoxes involved in confronting the horrors that human culture and history inflict.

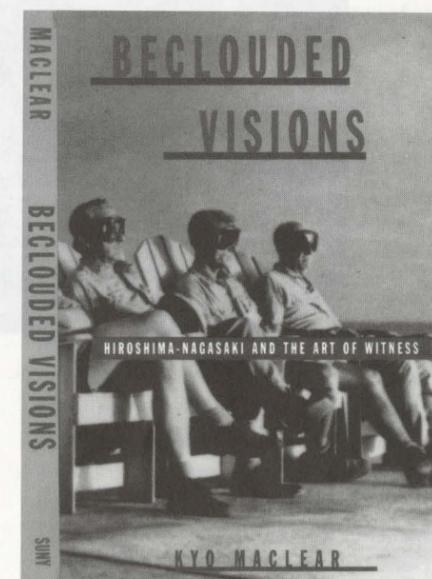
Maclear's book is part art history. The introductory chapter surveys the artists and works that have confronted the atomic attacks and their consequences. She notes that early Japanese artists seemed to avoid abstraction in part out of concern to answer a "demand for evidence" (p. 23) The meaning of this evidence, in Japan and elsewhere, changes as censorship eases

and the cultural and political climates of reception shift. Over time the "documentary" aspect of the image risks becoming empty and numbed repetition of representations made all-too-familiar: the image of the mushroom cloud may cease to evoke horror or serious reflection. *Visions* offers some detailed history of the dissemination of these events as cultural images and throughout the book Maclear draws on hibakusha (survivor) testimonies from a wide range of sources.

The book then focuses its discussion on visual art, including that of Shomei Tomatsu, who photographed "deformed angels" from the destroyed Urakami Cathedral, as well as works by Tokihiro Sato, Shusaku Arakawa, Takako Araki, Nancy Spero, Yamahata Yosuke and other forms of "witness art" including Stephen Andrews' and Felix Gonzales-Torres' work on AIDS.

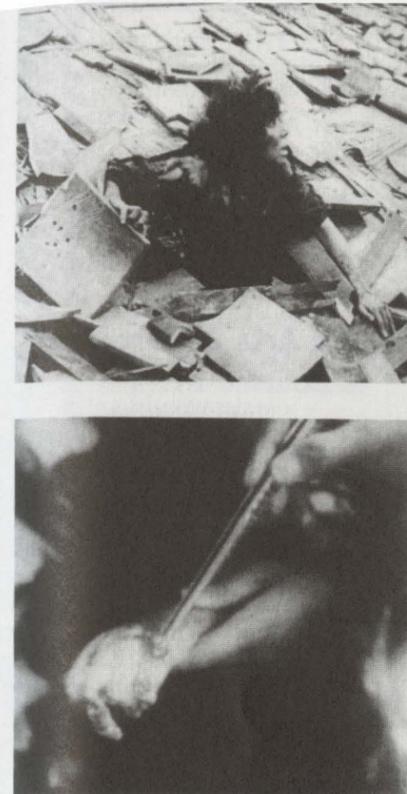
Maclear draws on a contemporary tradition of theorists who inform literary and cultural discussions of power, repression, death and mourning: Benjamin, Adorno, Freud, Derrida, Bataille. While using these thinkers for clarification of her ideas and questions, the work of artistic reflection is never sacrificed to theoretical abstraction and generalization. At all points, theories are turned to the task of being as open as possible to the work of witnessing and of taking up the ethical and political responsibility this witnessing involves.<sup>1</sup>

Beyond its art-historical content, this book is a profound ethical and political



meditation based on art practice and criticism. Maclear suggests that abstraction and non-documentary (in this sense, non-representational) art can help us think through what we would be most resistant to thinking. For Maclear, we are obliged to move beyond the aghast, numbed and pacified suspension that such violence imposes on us. Such art reflects upon and engages how we form an image of power, and how this image is itself inherited, inhabited, and passed on.

Maclear's writing also seeks to inform that element of our experience that is communal and open to injustices of all kinds, and to clarify the forms of difficulty inherent in thinking and imagining those injustices. The book is indeed a history of how the atomic attacks were



Stills from the opening sequence of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, dir. Alain Resnais, 1959.

imagined by artists and propagandists and how such reflection might assist or obscure our collective predicaments and responsibilities. The notion that art can momentarily step beyond or outside the given, recognizes art as a most serious collective task.

**Heeding the call to witness requires that I answer for passivity, that I answer to practices that deny the possibility of being responsible, or capable of response.**

—Maclear, *Visions*, p. 40.

A late chapter in *Visions* gives a moving treatment of the work of Iri and Taki Maruki, work that offers an apt allegory for the book's movement as an ethical and political meditation on the atomic attacks. As the book moves from Takako Araki's sculpture of charred books to the more "traditional" paintings of the Marukis, there is the insistence that art can exist "after Hiroshima" against Adorno's well-known claim that poetry cannot exist after the Holocaust, even if

art here imagines its own impossibility as Adorno demands it must.

In the Marukis' painting *Floating Lanterns* I find a vast contrast between the material delicacy of the world taking on its material forms, and the fact that we are frozen at the portal of horrors of war and hatred. The Maruki lanterns bring to appearance such transformations and the wonder of such floating eternities and worlds. However, I also find resignation, disappointment, shame at power's resorts to violence, implying time and history that cannot be undone. Here is a limit as certain as a wall. Still, possibilities continue to unfold on either side of this wall, possibilities lost and possibilities that remain seem to merge and separate.

Maclear affirms that the utopian element in art allows co-existence of the possible and impossible. Artists allow us to witness, but also demand our action, our assumption of the possible within this dyad. Here human responsibility can only converge with the demands of art

even as art may supply a distance that allows the political and social predicaments of our responsibility to appear. Perhaps it gives, or returns time, offering a delay that is the simple difference between life and annihilation.

This book thus asserts that it is possible, and morally necessary, to move from the irrevocability of the disasters of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to responsibility and action against other forms of suffering and repression, war and hatred. This is the necessary path of an ethical address that does not shirk the redemptive and utopian moment when confronted by the victims, unthinkable forsaken as a consequence of collective acts and experience.

**He: You saw nothing of Hiroshima.**

**She: I've always wept over the fate of Hiroshima. Always.**

**He: No. What would you have cried about.**

avoid the documentary danger of "making familiar." Art can be conceived as the work of reflection and the work of mourning in the face of the annihilation, by making the strange real, by being able to think it.

It is also a predicament of power and lack of power, of the impossibility of measuring the powerlessness of the civilian reduced to shadow, or the hibakusha who is blinded, against the forces of military technology and its use. No doubt the global political imaginary of the late twentieth century remains caught within this bizarre non-relation of power and helplessness or non-power.

The book closes with a detailed treatment of Alain Resnais' film *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*. Maclear suggests the film insists on the inevitable mutual incomprehension of the events at Hiroshima. Yet the characters are most intimate at this point of incomprehension. In a way this film is about nothing other than the awful atomic light that inhabits the boundaries of the characters' and the audiences' lives. Indeed, fear and comfort bring us together in our weakness.

"You have seen nothing if you imagine this trauma self-transparent, or so the narrative seems to insist," writes Maclear of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*. She ends with the assertion of the necessity of being open to a moment of "newness" or difference in the task of witnessing, a turn to other, even future injustices.

**She: I saw the news reels. On the second day, history tells, I'm not making it up, on the second day certain species of animals rose again from the depths of the earth and from the ashes. Dogs were photographed. For all eternity, I saw them. I saw the newsreels. I saw them. On the first day. On the second day. On the third day.**

**He (interrupting her): You saw nothing. Nothing.**

— *Dialogue from Hiroshima, Mon Amour* (dir. Alain Resnais, 1959, screenplay by Marguerite Duras), cited in *Visions*, p. 146.

Maclear strongly defends non-representational witness art. Its very abstractness is strangely adequate to, or indiscernible from, the unrealism that such violence involves. For this violence includes the idea of annihilation itself, of non-being. Abstraction in its strangeness may help

one who is also present while it stands in the place of that individual's actual presence. However the witness also calls upon a different silence: the silence of one who will allow themselves to hear, an active silence.

What delicacy and balance such a hearing would have to achieve to do justice to the worlds and possibilities that had been and those that remain—the delicacy of the Maruki lanterns, perhaps.

The thought of the atomic blasts to me always appears at the conjunction of the most abstract confusion and the most banal reality (as a child I dreamed great dirigibles like the exploding Hindenberg, shaped like an enormous exploding bomb—an atomic bomb). The production and use of such weapons seemed a surreal error pressing at the edge of the most immediate, the most everyday, the most commonly present of any life, the glowing harbinger of its annihilation.

Finally, this book gives the lie to those who imagine one might separate issues in politics and ethics from art and writing on art. This separation is most often made in the name of purifying art or ethics of the vulgarity of politics. Such a cleansed ethics or aesthetics does not live up to the true challenge of social existence: having to continually recreate our ethical engagement with the world. This is the responsible labour of cultural workers of all kinds.

**Note**

1. In this respect, this book brings to mind Alphonso Lingis' *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common*, who Maclear indeed draws upon. Both works lucidly bring to bear on contemporary culture, ethics and politics an often difficult and obscure tradition of continental theory.

*Lang Baker is a Toronto-based writer and musician. He is a member of the Public Access Collective.*

## BEGINNING THE CONVERSATION

by Sandra Tulloch, Ontario Arts Report

"And now comes the hard part" is the unspoken but real challenge facing the Ontario Arts Report's Steering Committee since tabling the report, *Beginning the Conversation*, at the Ontario Legislature on April 12, 1999. This report is a response to significant changes in policy and principles made by the province and Ontario Arts Council (OAC) during the past two years, and it underlines the essential role the province of Ontario has played and must continue to play in order to realize the full potential of its artists and arts organizations.

There is no resting on our laurels for having accomplished our immediate objectives to establish communication with over 1,000 professional and community-based artists, arts organizations, arts educators, arts bureaucrats, politicians and interested members of the public on the future of the arts in Ontario, and to publish questionnaire responses and recommendations resulting from seven consultations held in January and February this year.

Now we must begin those conversations with the new minister of citizenship, culture and recreation, Helen Johns and the executive director of the Ontario Arts Council, Donna Scott.

The consultations focused solely on the province's role in arts development, and the subsequent report maintains that the province's leadership is vital for leveraging investment from other supporters for the arts. *Beginning the Conversation* captures insights and makes recommendations for development in areas of education, funding, appointments to cultural agency boards, training and professional development, facilities and the Ontario Arts Endowment Fund. The key recommendations to the Ontario Arts Council are that it reaffirm its three guiding principles: arm's length relationship to the provincial government; commitment to community consultation; and reliance on peer assessment.

*Beginning the Conversation* also recommends that the government of Ontario acknowledge the key priorities identified by the arts community and that it provide funding to the OAC and other valuable ministry programs before establishing new organizations and bureaucracies to disperse arts funding; and that it launch an in-depth public consultation process regarding the future of the arts in Ontario toward developing a comprehensive broad-

based provincial cultural policy. This was presented to the Ontario Liberal, NDP and PC parties for comment before the June 3 election. The Liberals and NDP responded, but the PCs did not. The Liberals' response was the most comprehensive and supported the vast majority of our recommendations, including the need for a provincial cultural policy. The NDP responded more generally and did not address all the issues, but they do support a provincial cultural policy as well.

However, the party that did not respond has returned to power at Queen's Park. So indeed, now comes the hard part. *Beginning the Conversation* has been forwarded to Minister Johns with a request to hold a meeting at her earliest convenience, and we met recently with newly appointed OAC executive director Donna Scott to hear her initial responses to *Beginning the Conversation*. She is committed to improved access and continued consultation with artists and the public, and she is proceeding with this over the next few months. Regarding the issue of volunteers on OAC advisory panels: the OAC is pleased with the quality of participation from outside volunteers and plans to

continue this policy. Payment to advisory panel members for their work will be reconsidered in a year. Scott hopes that improved communications with the arts community, the public and within government will bring, in time, increased funding for OAC programs. This was a cordial beginning with some acknowledgment of concerns from the arts communities. We will monitor developments as OAC's new leadership takes shape.

Stay tuned. The Ontario Arts Report is committed to moving forward and rallying all new champions and colleagues who met across Ontario during our winter consultations. We hope to seize the openings provided by new leadership at the Ministry and OAC to engage in a creative and dynamic revisioning process for our incredible arts sector.

For the complete report, *Beginning the Conversation* and other Ontario Arts Report info, visit our website at <http://www.caesa.com/oar>.

*Sandra Tulloch recently retired as Executive Director of Theatre Ontario. She was the provincial coordinator for the Ontario Arts Report consultations, is a member of the steering committee of Toronto's Arts Vote and represents Ontario on the Board of Directors of the Canadian Conference of the Arts.*

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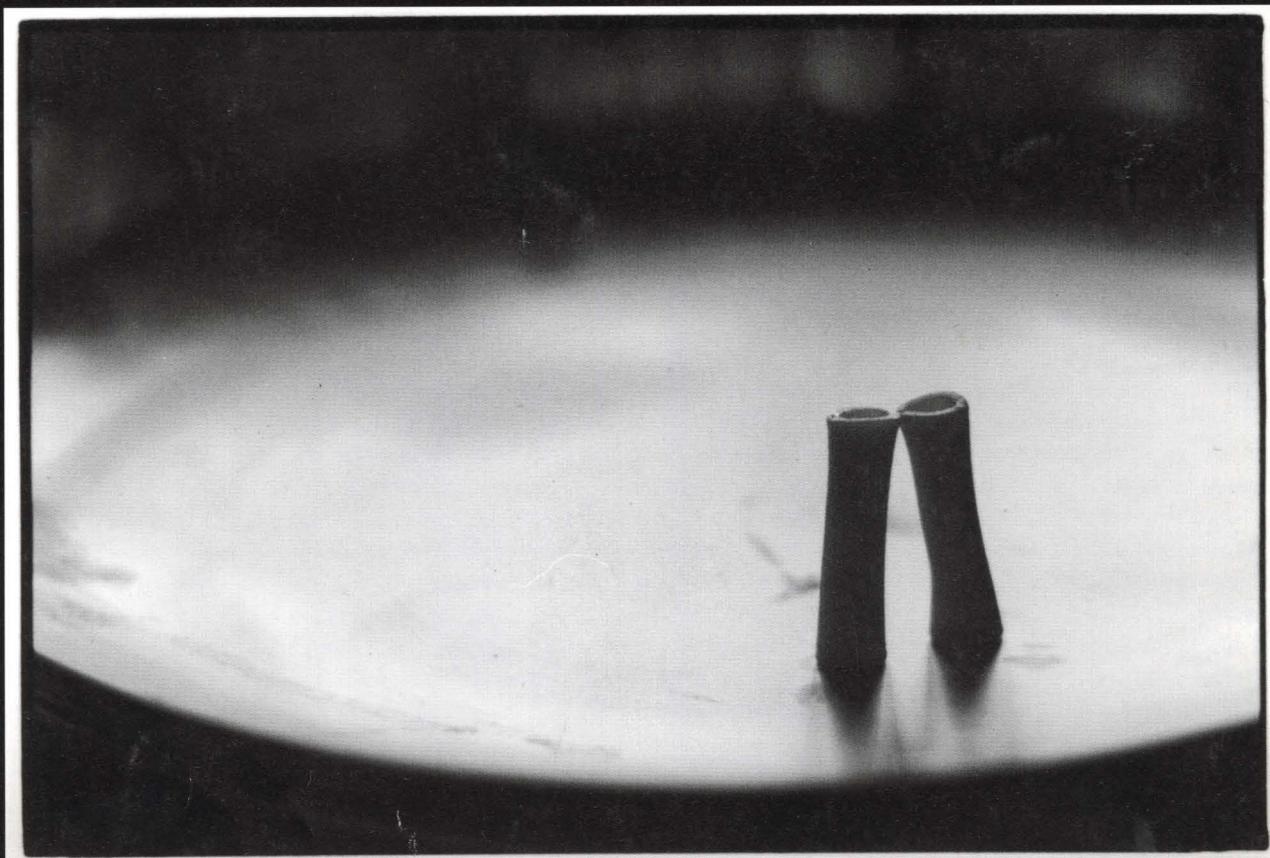
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