

Volume 21 Number 3 \$5.50

A magazine about issues of art and culture



FUSE

MAGAZINE

Interviews!

Jimmie Durham Colonizes Europe

Paul Wong: the West Coast "Whiz Kid" speaks out

Sheree Rose: tied up with Bob Flanigan

Nelson Henricks chats with Quebec video artists

Peter Hudson:
Diary of a
Queen Street
Negro



...and just when you thought you were safe

"Lesbian National Parks and Services WANTS YOU!"

by Shawna Dempsy and Lorri Millan



Rekindle & Claim

8th Annual Intra-National
Festival/Conference July 22-26 1998
desh pardesh

Buddies In Bad Times Theatre 12 Alexander St.

Naach n'Lime

Desh Dance, Saturday July 25th; \$10 cover; Club Shanghai, 247 Spadina Ave. (4th floor); (licenced event)

Festival Passes: \$50 (does not include July 25th dance)

Available at The Toronto Women's Bookstore, Pages Bookstore
This Ain't the Rosedale Library, Buddies in Bad Times Theatre and Desh Pardesh

Individual Shows: \$12 - \$8 (sliding scale)

Available at the Buddies in Bad Times Box Office the day of the show only

Workshops and Panels by donation

To buy your pass send \$50 cheque or money order to:

Desh Pardesh 401 Richmond St., Suite 450, Toronto, ON, Canada, M5V 3A8
tel: (416) 340-0485 ; fax: (416) 340-1418. ; email: desh@ican.net

Supported by: City of Toronto through the Toronto Arts Council, Metro Toronto Cultural Affairs, Ontario Arts Council, Ministry of Culture, Citizenship and Recreation, Canada Council, Lesbian and Gay Community Appeal and the Trillium Foundation ; Media Sponsors: Xtra!, Now, CKLN, CHRY, CIUT, CFMT

ACE ART INC. 2nd Floor 290 McDermot Ave. Winnipeg MB Canada
R3B 0T2 (204)944-9763 aceart@escape.ca http://www.aceart.mb.ca

1998 SUMMER PROGRAM

A FEROCIOUS LONGING installation by Connie Cohen
29 May - 27 June, 1998

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST performance by Sharon Alward
20 July to 25 July 1998

SHUDDER performance by Rita McKeough
7 August, 1998

PROJECT ROOM 10 - 22 August 1998

ARTIST'S BOOKS by Susan Mills
28 August - 25 September 1998
Co-sponsored with Mentoring Artists for Women's Art

VISITS FROM AWAY 02/98 -
1 footnotes, a web project by Marian Butler/curator in residence
http: www.ace art.mb.ca/marian/index.html

AUDIO ARTIST(S) IN RESIDENCE - PROJECT ROOM
by Tom Elliott and Michael Dumontier
August 97 - July 98

ACE ART gratefully acknowledges the generous support of Associate
Members and Donors, the Manitoba Arts Council, the Canada Council
for the Arts and the City of Winnipeg.

photo: Susan Mills, bookwork "right; oh"

MONUMENT

William Eakin

Until Sept 6

THE WORD
IN CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN ART

Sept 10 to Nov 1

ART GALLERY OF NORTH YORK

5040 Yonge Street, North York, Ontario M2N 6R8

Tuesday - Sunday, 12:00 - 5:00 pm (416) 395-0067

ARINA AILINCAI

JOHN IKEDA

LES MANNING

1-23 AUGUST, 1998

TORONTO

EDWARD DAY GALLERY

253 ONTARIO STREET
KINGSTON, ONTARIO K7L 2Z4
(613)547-0774 FAX:(613)547-2757

33 HAZELTON AVENUE
TORONTO, ONTARIO M5R 2E3
(416)921-6540 FAX:(416)921-6624

eddaygal@fox.nstn.ca

eight COMMISSIONED INQUIRIES
INTO ABORIGINAL IDENTITY

reservation X

Eight Aboriginal contemporary
artists from Canada and the
United States explore personal
and powerful themes of
community and identity in this
original exhibition of works
commissioned by the
Canadian Museum of Civilization.
On display in the Museum's
First Peoples Hall until

March 7, 1999



CANADIAN MUSEUM OF CIVILIZATION
MUSÉE CANADIEN DES CIVILISATIONS
100 Laurier St., Hull, Quebec
www.civilization.ca • 1 (800) 555-5621
Canada

FUSE

MAGAZINE

VOLUME 21 NUMBER 3 SUMMER 1998

Board of Directors

Millie Chen, Sarindar Dhaliwal, Judith Doyle, Richard Fung,
R. William Hill, Marilyn Jung, Francine Périnet, Deborah Root,
Renuka Sooknanan, Darien Taylor, Nell Tenhaaf,
Rinaldo Walcott, Kathryn Walter

Contributing Editors

Joane Cardinal-Schubert (Calgary), Robin Curtis (Berlin),
Allan deSouza (Los Angeles), Cliff Eyland (Winnipeg),
Andrea Fatona (Peterborough), Sylvie Fortin (Ottawa),
Anne Golden (Montreal), Jorge Luis Marzo and Tere Badia
(De Calor Magazine, Barcelona), Ashok Mathur (Calgary),
Ian Rashid (London), Clive Robertson (Montreal),
Reggie Woolery (New York)

Staff

Sarah Abbott (Advertising and Development Coordinator)
Petra Chevrier (Managing Editor and Designer)
Daniela Snepkova (Advertising Sales)
Samantha Yaffe (Circulation Coordinator)

Thanks to Richard Hill and Kathryn Walter for issue coordination.
Special thanks to Judith Doyle, Richard Hill, Richard Fung,
Deborah Root, Nell Tenhaaf, Rinaldo Walcott and Kathryn Walter
for issue editing. Thanks also to interns Kristy Green and Peter
Kingstone for editorial and circulation assistance, and
freelancers John Maxwell and Shawn Syms for proofreading.

FUSE is published four times a year by Artons Cultural Affairs Society and
Publishing Inc., a non-profit artist's organization. Our offices are located at
401 Richmond Street West, Suite 454, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5V 3A8.
E-mail: fuse@interlog.com, tel: (416) 340-8026, fax: (416) 340-0494. All newsstand
inquiries should be sent to this address. Publication mail registration No. 4455.

Copyright © 1998 Artons Publishing Inc. All rights reserved under International
Copyright Union. Any reproduction without permission is prohibited. Artons
Publishing purchases First North American Serial Rights and copyright reverts to the
writer after publication. Artons Publishing assumes no responsibility for unsolicited
manuscripts. Manuscripts not accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope
will not be returned. A copy of our Writers' Guidelines is available on request.
Publication of an advertisement in FUSE does not include endorsement of the
advertiser by the magazine. Opinions expressed outside of specifically marked
editorials are not necessarily held by members of the editorial board.

FUSE acknowledges financial assistance from the Canada Council and the Ontario
Arts Council and the many hours of volunteer and partially paid labour that are
provided by everyone listed on our masthead.

Subscription rates: \$20 per year; Institutions \$32 per year (in Canada only).
Outside Canada \$24 U.S. per year; Institutions \$38 U.S. Decisions regarding who
qualifies as an individual subscriber remain the right of the publisher.
Printed in Canada on recycled, acid-free paper by Hayes Printing Services.

ISSN 0838-603X

FUSE is indexed in the Alternative Press Index and is distributed by, and a
member of, the Canadian Magazine Publisher's Association, 130 Spadina Ave.,
Suite 202, Toronto, Ontario M5V 2L4, tel: (416) 504-0274, fax: (416) 504-0437.
FUSE is distributed exclusively throughout Quebec by ABC Art Books Canada:
372 Ste.-Catherine Ouest, Suite 230, Montreal, Quebec H3B 1A2.



Conseil des Arts du Canada
The Canada Council

ONTARIO ARTS
COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS
DE L'ONTARIO

4 Editorial

6 Letters

11 Obituaries: Tim Guest and Denis Tourbin

Column

13 DIARY OF A QUEEN STREET NEGRO by Peter Hudson

Artists' Project

34 LORRI MILLAN AND SHAWNA DEMPSEY



Jimmie Durham posing with *Public Monument for the Anniversary of Rome*,
from the exhibition *Città Natura*, Rome, 1997.

Cover: maquette for the same piece, height 60 cm.

contents

VOLUME 21 NUMBER 3 Summer 1998

CENTRE DE DOCUMENTATION
ARTEXTE
DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

Interviews

17 CIGARETTES, COFFEE AND DEP WINE Luc Bourdon, Anne Golden, Robert Morin, and Cathy Sisler chat about video in Montreal with Nelson Henricks

24 JIMMIE DURHAM The Centre of the World is Several Places (Part I) with Beverly Koski & Richard William Hill

36 WHEN YOU LOSE THAT PERSON, THEN WHO ARE YOU? Sheree Rose, from an interview with Cathy Busby

41 MISFITS TOGETHER Paul Wong on Art, Community and Vancouver in the 1970s and '80s with Richard Fung



Bob and Sheree Rose at Home, 1995
Photo by Sheree Rose.

Reviews

47 FUN CRITIQUE IN ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDS "Half Nelson": paintings by Brian Jungen Review by Jeff Derksen

49 ARCHITECTURAL RE-ENACTMENTS Steve McQueen: *Deadpan* & Barry Isenor: *XXX Video* Review by Kenneth Hayes

51 OUT OF THE FRAME a collective show of new lesbian photography Review by Michael Balser

54 SUGGESTIVE POSES *Artists and Critics Respond to Censorship* Edited by Lorraine Johnson, preface by John Greyson Toronto Photographers Workshop and Riverbank Press, Toronto, 1997 Review by Andy Fabo

THE INTERVIEW ISSUE

It seems appropriate to preface any given interview with a caveat in the spirit of Magritte: This is not a spoken conversation. An interview is a translation from spoken to written word and ultimately must succeed in the latter form. As in any good translation, literalness is subordinate to conveying the intent of the original. Also, as in translation, something is lost along the way. As yet no system of notation has been devised to convey the telling pauses, false starts, differing tones of voice, smiles and all the other non-linguistic signs that are the property of spoken conversations.

An interview then is potentially a bit of a fiction, and, like any fiction, is especially dangerous if we either rush to believe it or dismiss it out of hand. As Jimmie Durham says about the conventions of architecture, the trick is to not be reconciled to how they work to structure our ideas—to keep a critical eye wide open. The special problem of interviews is the illusion of verité they are disposed to create. Anyone who has ever worked on an interview is aware that the dialogue often continues well beyond the initial conversation as interviewer, interviewee and editor cut, move and add things to develop a coherent written text. Word-for-word transcriptions die on the page. It is no surprise that when a person's statements are printed word for word it is usually out of malice (Richard Nixon is quite eloquent on this point).

Our concern here, however, isn't prosecution but dialogue, and it is a credit to the interviews collected here that this quality, above all, has survived translation. Read together, these texts also create a dialogue amongst themselves, offering a number of different (at times opposing) perspectives on how to be political and make art in an intellectually and morally satisfying way. It is, of course, always your prerogative as a reader to extend this dialogue further as you evaluate and critique what you read in Fuse. Don't hesitate to share your comments and criticisms with us. Our letters column exists for exactly that purpose and has, over the years, contained some of the most current and engaging writing Fuse has published. After all, Fuse is at its best serving as space for the lively dialogue and debate that is the engine of criticism, and the stuff of life (and art).

Apparently dialogue and consultation are the furthest things from the minds of the Ontario Arts Council's board of directors. As we go to press FUSE has learned that the OAC's Board has unilaterally decided to eliminate grants to all periodicals that are not "substantially devoted to publishing original works of fiction and poetry" or "substantially devoted to criticism of the contemporary arts." This imposed distinction between politically engaged cultural critique and the arts runs against current critical and artistic practice. Worse still, it threatens the intellectual and political autonomy that gives life and relevance to magazines like FUSE.



You are what you read.

What you're reading right now is 100% Canadian. Distinctly different from foreign magazines, Canadian magazines can tell you everything you want to know—from news to arts to sports to fashion. Anything that's important to you. To find out what's going on in your own backyard, check out any one of over 380 magazines. Look for them at your favourite bookstore or newsstand.

**WHAT'S RELEVANT
TO YOU
IS RELEVANT TO US.**

The assistance of the Government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, is acknowledged.



EXHIBITION

The British/Canadian Xchange

Enam Huque
Jin-Me Yoon
Simon Tegalla
Tanya Mahboob Syed

SEPTEMBER 5 - OCTOBER 17



110-401 Richmond St W
Toronto Ontario M5V 3A8
Tel 416 979 9633 Fax 416 979 9683
www.interlog.com/~aspace/

event

AUGUST 21

Annual summer fun(d)raiser invites
designers performers
spectators

FOTO FETISH FASHION

call Andrew for info

DIGITAL IMAGING & PRINTING

Century Graphics 306 Adelaide St. W., Toronto, Ont.
Tel: (416) 593-2528 Fax: 599-2712

BOTH PC & MAC FILES: ALL programs, WIN95, Microsoft, Publisher
IMAGING FILM, PLATES: 2400dpi and higher at **NO** extra charge
COLOUR PROOFS: 3M Dye Sublimation, Colour Keys & Chromaline
HIGH RES. SCANNING: Slides, Negatives, Photos
DESIGN, LAYOUT: LOGOS, Flyers, Publishings, Brochures, Stationaries
2-4 COLOUR PRINTING: Posters, Brochures, Magazines, Flyers, Stationaries
EXCELLENT PRICES: Fast turnaround at **NO** rush charge
HIGH QUALITY: Satisfaction Guaranteed

G l a d D a y



Lesbian & Gay
literature

416-961-4161
598 Yonge St., Toronto Ont. M4Y 1Z3

617-267-3010
673 Boylston St., Boston Ma. 02116
www.tiac.net/users/gladday
gladday@tiac.net

Bookshop
founded in 1970

the FLOATING GALLERY

CENTRE for PHOTOGRAPHY

218-100 Arthur Street, Winnipeg, MB, R3B 1H3

june 26 - july 25

Gail Geltner *The Other Family Album: A Chronicle*

july 25 - august 22

Shari Hatt *Breast Wishes*

The Floating Gallery gratefully acknowledges the support of Brown Communications Group, The Winnipeg Arts Advisory Council, The Manitoba Arts Council, The Canada Council, Canadian Heritage, The Cultural Human Resources Council, as well as all our members & volunteers

David Burkes, B. Com, C.A.
Chartered Accountant

Auditing for not-for-profits, personal taxes, accounting. Specializing in art and cultural organizations, artists and cultural workers.

Tel (905) 882-0497
Fax (905) 882-0499

30 Wertheim Court, Unit 14
Richmond Hill, Ontario L4B 1B9

ACCESSORY

UTILITIES

FASHION

SOLUTIONS

URBANE CYCLIST
A WORKERS' CO-OP

Art lovers special!
MENTION AD — \$5 OFF TUNE-UP

REPAIRS
BOOKS

WEB: WWW.UCYCLE.COM

PARTS
FRIVOLITIES

180 JOHN ST • 979-9733
North of Queen & City TV in TORONTO

To: ALL PARTIES CONCERNED
Dis means you! yeah...YOU!

DOMINADELLA would NOT Defuse. Dis time she Re Coiled Her hair + called FUSE regarding the DO IT YOURSELF SPECIAL ISSUE...I take— Actually My friend Allison (Ali MONEY - How I Luv ya!) purchased two copies of FUSE @ 52INC while mentioning that she was unaware of my "appearance." I was clueless. She turned to page 8 of Volume 21 Number 1 I'LL SHOW YOU MINE IF YOU SHOW ME YOURS. I was unable to show mine because I had lost my voice since ESTROJAM Furthermore I was conscious of perpetuating the stereotype of the Belligerent BLACK. THE ANGRY Nigga! ANYWAYzzz The Current exceeded a safe level. I broke DA circuit. Fit TO BE CAGED! SNAP! SHOT A photo GRAPHED speaking volumes of the race Phucking ISM continuously played YO! WAY...OUT. White Gyal takes MUCH MORE THAN PHOTOS. Is she aware?! That I AM WEARY + WARY OF FRIENDS bearing CAMERAS --- of making you AWARE when you WON'T HEAR ME. I Await... Expecting your lame excuses + DA DEFENSE knowing that it's Phucking HARD to admit to being SO RIGHT (1/2 PRICE WINGZZZ) You make decisions + DA NIGGA remains left OVAH + OUCH! That HURTS!! BLACK FACE, FREAKY LOCKS, menacing white teeth. A Monster and A victim?! I'm sticking to the ISSUE. Its so DAMN SPECIAL! Will the scary monster bite the poor lil innocent white GRL VICTIM WHO IS CAGED?!? Was that EVE I VENT --- STAGED?!?

I was NOT a model by conSENT. Through her lens she saw a Monster Victim Monster + SHOT. Do you see what I see (sung) Someone said Trust noone but your dog. SAME ISSUE. I trust ONLY that my Dog's been runnin ROUND licking each N every available ass. Its so easy to find a hole for the bones! There is an UNAUTHORIZED photo of DOMINADELLA IN FUSE magazine. I am depicted ---- Playing the Race Card. Ha! --- NO, I am depicted as a Supa Freak terrifying A caged white gyal. What is that photo conveying + why is there a bone in yo! pants ---- the size of the Explosion IN MY SOUL?!?

I WONDER --- That I am FACELESS in your photo..... BLACK FACE. ALL TEETH. NEARLY Invisible but OH SO sary Is that a Reason to SHOOT me PAPA RATT ZZZ (!?) My life IS NOT an episode of our Phucking GANG. Queen OF SPADES shovellin' racist shit I am Buck the Phuck WHEAT NOT SCARY SPICE HOT scotch bonnet peppa burns when pierced Releasing with a generosity + intensity unsurpassed.

I've been TAKEN FOR GRANT ED was socked. I've been Taken For a minor minority for the Majority of my Nigga teefin' Dignity. I've been Taken for a CRACKHEAD by the Head Craker AT the JOE JOB I've been taken for a BURN VICTIM. A SPOOK. A CROOK. LOOK! A WORM IN AN OLD EDITION! I've been Taken for a fool relishing thoughts of you Embellishing The WHAT NAUGHTS of you. I've been Taken for rides by MS DAISY. Duchess of Yuck! I've been taken for a fag + left smokin like HER-RING surrounded by Hags Endearing. I've been Taken for RIDES with you I'M GOIN NOWHERE FAST - That Photo opt was your last Hurrah for HOLLY WOULD YOU EVER SELL ANOTHA Nigga in the twenty? you're still FIRST! DOLLARS + common century/SENTRY. Am I Yo! Discovery? You came. SAW. SHOT Me NO Questions asked. Court the BLACK you win. My SIN? Necessary Dosages of humour to RE ENFORCE MY LAWSUITS OF ARMOUR. My court of law is DA PEN + PAGE. Dis ere's MA Nigga RAGE. WHY DO YOU FEAR ME!?! WORD! ONLY My tongue LASHED

DOMINADELLA Peace + Love!

Thanx to Tonia Bryan + Elysa Martinez Crowther For revealing that I AINT DA LONE AVENGER traversing tiresome Avenues. Hooked on Chronic Phonics? There are "ALTERNATIVES". Many Thanks to the Most Beautiful Allyson Mitchell cause Dykes need REMINDIN And You always make me laugh when I NEED to. I am a skinny Gyal BUTT NO DIETER. A genuine Starvin Artist working towards Expanding My postERIOR

Adella Pierre
ON RACE GUARD PUSSY SCAT FIGHTIN'
MEOW

Browsing command metaphors

Re: Caterina Pizanias, "Ceci n'est pas une archive," FUSE 21, no. 2, pp. 38-40.

While Andrew Renton and Kitty Scott's curatorial project "Browser" sounds like a multidimensional intervention full of critical insight and humorous mediation, it surprises me that reviewer Caterina Pizanias cannot appreciate why Vancouver artists might be pissed off when having their works go straight into the archive box or CD-ROM without first hitting the exhibition wall, outdoor site or video monitor.

The framing controversies surrounding "Browser" and the "countercultural" or art-fair aspirations of Artropolis '97 are reviewed as being "romantically imbued notions of avant-garde/rebellious/reforms." (If the VAG had organized a "Browser" type survey would the response have been more or less volatile?)

To drive home her point, Pizanias unfortunately chooses to cite Tony Bennett quoting Foucault's general critique of reform mentalities. There has been much debate about a described "neo-Foucaultian" move within the "school of" Australian cultural policy studies. In particular, Bennett's colleague Stuart Cunningham's call for a "shift in 'command metaphors' away from rhetorics of resistance, oppositionalism and anti-commercialism on the one hand, and populism on the other, towards those of access, equity, and empowerment and the divination of opportunities to exercise appropriate cultural leadership." (Meajin 50 [2/3], 1991, pp. 423-34) Translated directly into arts policy considerations and non-profit formations, such a call mirrors the existing surfeit of unresolved pluralisms while reinforcing the already-present custodial claims—particularly within arts funding agencies and art museums—of cultural leadership.

Furthermore our own literature of art-practice histories shows that attacking local forms of "countercultural viability" has long been a popular pastime. From as early as the late-'70s "professional curators" (and yes, even management consultants) were invited in or were sent in to routinize artists spaces and their silly "progressive" ideas about artist self-determination.

I do share Pizanias' interest in the "restrictive sub-texts of modernity." There has been a particular type of fickleness among certain critics, curators, historians and arts bureaucrats (and some artists better served elsewhere) who, having benefited from the artist-run centre movement and its related initiatives, proceeded to critique the challenge as a necessary but temporary fix until public and private galleries and art museums gained expertise or interest, first in the demands of changing contemporary art forms and theory, and then—with decreased enthusiasm—in policies of equity and representation.

Recently the more curatorially unproductive Canadian art museums and public galleries have successfully lobbied the federal government and the Canada Council to make changes that will result in their having increased access to operational funding. So in addition to the entertainment of watching an artist community "circle its wagons," we could also be asking who among the critical mass of art-authenticating institutions is nominally responsible for what services, and how effectively are they or have they ever been at both quantitatively and qualitatively delivering artist, curator or historian-relevant projects of contemporary cultural production?

Sincerely,
Clive Robertson, Montreal

Order These Books by Mail

SUGGESTIVE POSES Artists and Critics Respond to Censorship

Edited by Lorraine Johnson

Preface by John Greyson

Essays by Robin Metcalfe, Mary Louise Adams, Hamish Buchanan, Su Ditta, Brenda Crossman, Thomas Waugh, Elaine Carol, Richard Fung, Andrew J. Paterson, John Marriott, Thelma McCormack and Lorraine Johnson

Artists works by Ho Tam, Kiss & Tell, and Shonagh Adelman
193 pages, Co-published by The Riverbank Press

\$ 24.99

New Release POLITICAL LANDSCAPES Carol Condé & Karl Beveridge

Introduction by Catherine Macleod

Essay by Clive Robertson

Published to accompany the exhibition *Recent Histories*
at Gallery TPW, April 30 to May 30, 1998
32 pages, with colour reproductions

\$14.99

add \$3.00 per book for
shipping & handling
send cheque or money order to

GALLERY TPW

TORONTO PHOTOGRAPHERS WORKSHOP
80 Spadina Avenue, Suite 310
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5V 2J3
Vox (416) 504-4242 Fax 504-6510
e.mail gllyrtpw@interlog.com

WALTER PHILLIPS GALLERY
at the Banff Centre for the Arts

Cyber Heart

May 29 - July 26, 1998

Curator: Sara Diamond

Installation, sculpture and new media exploring
love, sex and technology

WALTER PHILLIPS GALLERY

Box 1020-14 Banff Alberta Canada T0L 0C0
tel 403-762-6281 fax 403-762-6659
http://www-nmr.banffcentre.ab.ca/WPG/

Cornelia Hesse-Honegger

August 6 - September 20, 1998

Organized by Locus +

Watercolours studies documenting the impact of
radiation on insects

The Walter Phillips Gallery is supported in part by the Canada
Council for the Arts and Alberta Foundation for the Arts



The Banff Centre

A National
Inspiration 65

DARCI MALLON - OUR RED SCARF

June 13 - August 2, Centennial Gallery

RESIDING IN THE FLOATING WORLD:

The Recent Work of Stephen Andrews and Philippe Laleu
June 13 - August 9, Gairloch Gallery

THE BLOOD RECORDS: WRITTEN AND ANNOTATED

A videotape by Kim Tomczak and Lisa Steele
June 13 - August 9, Gairloch Gallery Video Salon

TRAMES DE MÉMOIRES/ MATERIALIZING MEMORY

August 8 - October 4, Centennial Gallery

Organized by Expression, centre d'exposition de Saint-Hyacinthe

DRESSING DOWN

August 15 - October 4, Gairloch Gallery

Guest Curated by Robin Metcalfe

CENTENNIAL GALLERY
120 Navy Street

GAIRLOCH GALLERY
1306 Lakeshore Road East

oakville galleries

OFFICES
1306 Lakeshore Road East
Oakville, Ontario
Canada L6J 1L6
Tel (905) 844-4402
Fax (905) 844-7968

For a good time, call:

Jean Chrétien
(613) 992-4211
Preston Manning
(613) 992-3602

Alexa McDonough
(613) 236-3613
Jean Charest
(613) 943-1106

Gilles Duceppe
(613) 996-6740

For more hot numbers: Parliamentary Names & Numbers

Your authoritative and inexpensive guide
to governments in Canada.

In print or online, only \$45/year.

c/o Sources, 4 Phipps St., Ste. 109,
Toronto, ON M4Y 1J5
Phone: (416) 964-7799 Fax: (416) 964-8763
E-mail: subs@sources.com WWW: <http://www.sources.com>

FUSE

We have a new address and special
subscription offer on the Internet!

find us at...

<http://hypershopper.com/fuse.htm>

...& receive one FREE issue of FUSE!

exclusively from our
Global Newsstand site on the Internet!

hypershopper.com

Hypershopper
SM

July 20 - August 15

Macy Awad

SLEEPWALKING
new paintings and drawings

opening reception July 20, 7pm

August 19 to September 5, 1998

GIANT Special

Jason Dunda / Fred Galang / Jeremy Todd

opening reception August 21, 7pm

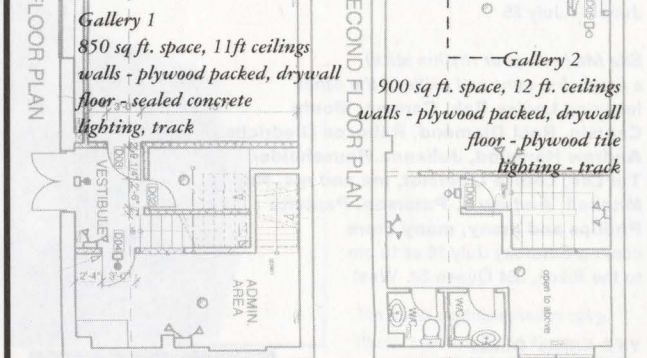
96 SPADINA AVENUE - 8TH FLOOR
TORONTO ONTARIO M5V 2J6
PHONE (416) 504-5654
FAX: (416) 504-2421

GALLERY HOURS:
WEDNESDAY TO FRIDAY
12:00 TO 5:00 PM
SATURDAY 12:00 TO 6:00 PM

THE RED HEAD GALLERY

Call for Submissions

Gallery 101, a multidisciplinary artist-run
centre in Ottawa is currently accepting
exhibition proposals for 1999-2000

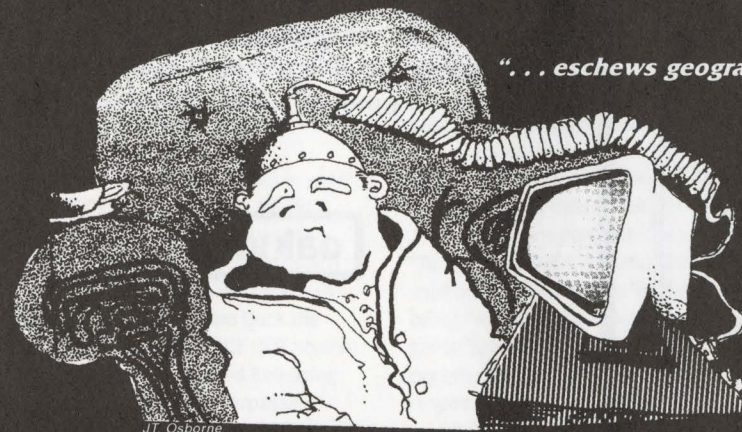


gallery
galerie
101

236 Nepean st. Ottawa ON K2P 0B8
t: 613.230.2799 f: 613.230.3253
www.gallery101.org oneone@web.net

Remember Reading?

Remember? Words and letters, sentences and things all combining to *convey*, enlighten,
expand those dusty horizons? Now in a new larger format, **sub-TERRAIN** features the work
of writers and artists from **Canada**, the **U.S.** and select **foreign locations**. One of Canada's
hottest independent literary quarterlies, **sub-TERRAIN** combines a stimulating mixture of
art, poetry and fiction in every issue. We have **garnered substantial kudos** for our some-
times unusual material and contentious commentary. **Be afraid. Or subscribe.**



"...eschews geography in favour of a borderless world..."
— Vancouver Magazine

"...among Canada's front-line
independent literati..."
— Factsheet Five, San Francisco

Subscribe to:
sub-TERRAIN Magazine
#204-A, 175 East Broadway, Vancouver, B.C.,
V5T 1W2 Canada
TEL: (604) 876-8710 FAX: (604) 879-2667
e-mail: subter@pinc.com

4 issues/\$15 8 issues/\$27 (U.S. or CDN. FUNDS) Sample copy \$5.00 postpaid

main gallery

John Dickson June 25 - August 1
George Bures Miller September 10 - October 31

project room

Spidersense series:
Penelope Stewart June 25 - August 1

window

John Marriott June 25 - August 1

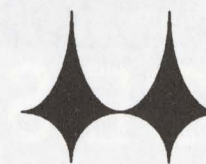
special projects

off/site@toronto

off/site@toronto will respond to the identity of Toronto as an urban
centre through public site-specific interventions, performance pieces,
and time-based works. The project has been made possible through a
Project Grant from the Visual Art Section of the Canada Council.
Please contact Mercer Union for more details.

439 King St.W.
Toronto, ON.
Canada M5V1K4
tel 416-977-1412
fax 416-977-8622
merc@interlog.com
www.interlog.com/~merc

Mercer Union



A GENEALOGY OF RESISTANCE

ESSAYS BY
**MARLENE
NOURBESE
PHILIP**

A Genealogy of Resistance is a brilliant, compelling
exploration in cultural history. Elegant, by turns
fiercely questioning, magically lyrical, and gently
probing, Philip's examination of issues of race and
culture is always eloquent and commanding.

ISBN 1-55128-047-7 • \$18.95 Trade Paper • 192 pages

THE MERCURY PRESS

de la place du marché
(out of a market place)
Alain Païement
June 3 - July 25

Pop Off:
The Regular 8 Faction
films by
David Anderson, Robert Cowan,
Linda Feesey, John Kneller, Keith Lock,
David Barker Maltby, Marnie Parrel,
Joyce Wieland
curated by **Milada Kovacova**
June 3 - July 25

Bite Me (with your rhythm stick)
a lipsynch-o-rama and battle of the bands
featuring **Louise Bak, Carmen, Monty**
Cantsin, Reid Diamond, Rebecca Diedrichs,
Andrew Harwood, Johanna Householder,
Tai Lee, Louise Liliefeldt, me and me, Roy
Mitchell, Andrew J. Paterson, Paulette
Phillips and many, many more
coming Saturday July 18 at 10 pm
to the Rivoli, 334 Queen St. West

YYZ Artists' Outlet
401 Richmond St. West
Suite 140
Toronto ON
M5V 3A8

tel: (416) 598-4546
fax: (416) 598-2282
e-mail: YYZ@interlog.com
web: www.interlog.com/~yyz/

YYZ

YYZ acknowledges the support of the Canada Council, the Ontario Arts Council, and the City of Toronto, through the Toronto Arts Council.

North by South The Art of Peleg Franklin Brownell (1857-1946)

16.07.98-13.09.98

Guest curators: Jim Burant and Robert Stacey

LUCA BUVOLI, COLIN CAMPBELL, THIRZA CUTHAND,
GEOFFREY FARMER & JONATHAN WELLS, SYLVIE FLEURY,
MARIA LASSNIG, NINA LEVITT, LYNNE MARSH, MARIKO MORI,
TYLER STALLINGS, SHEILA URBANOSKI, LAUREL WOODCOCK

Close Encounters

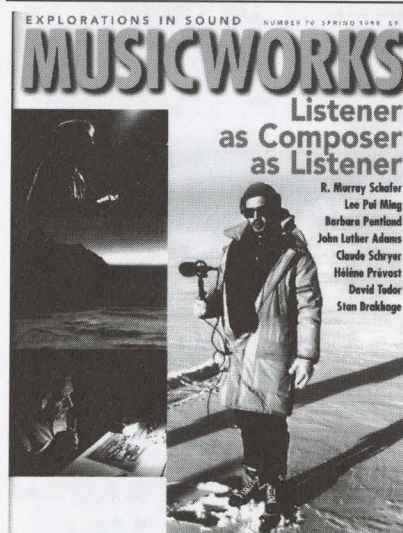
24.09.98-22.11.98

Curator: Sylvie Fortin

The Ottawa Art Gallery | La Galerie d'art d'Ottawa
2 Daly, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6E2 (613) 233-8699
fax (613) 569-7660 www.cyberus.ca/~oag

oagAO

MUSICWORKS EXPLORATIONS IN SOUND MAGAZINE & COMPACT DISC



John L. Adams
Pauline Oliveros
R. Murray Schafer
Claude Schryer
David Tudor

The role of
listening in the
creation and
perception of
music.

\$12
SAMPLE
MAGAZINE & CD
Subscription 3/year

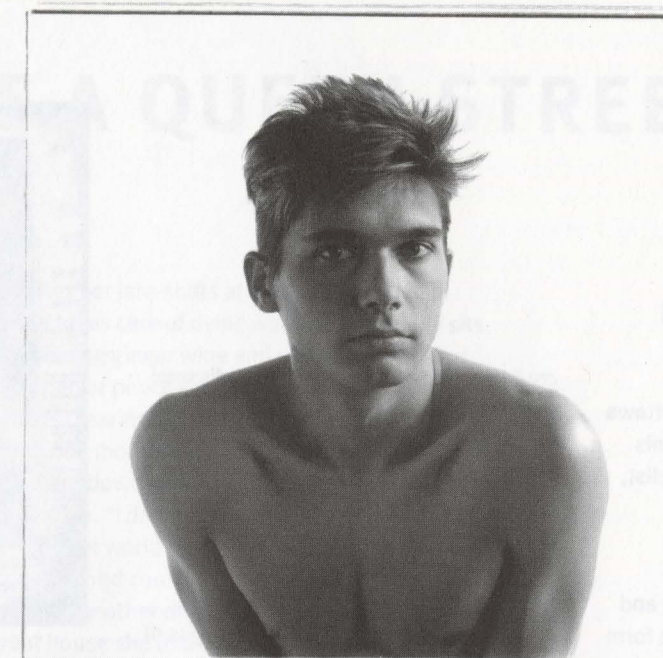
179 RICHMOND STREET WEST TORONTO ON M5V 1V3 CANADA
t:416 977-3546 f:416 208-1084 e:sound@musicworks.web.net
www.musicworks-mag.com

Comb through it

one year \$15 plus
two years \$25 gst

GEIST
THE CANADIAN MAGAZINE
OF IDEAS AND CULTURE

Call 1-888-434-7834
fax 604-669-8250
email: geist@geist.com
sample copies \$5
photo by Christina Baxter



Tim Guest photographed in 1985.
Photo: courtesy David Rasmus.

TIM GUEST 1956 - 1998

Back in the 1970s, Tim Guest was a member of the first expanded FUSE editorial collective—in those early days when we were still called *Centrefold* (1976-79). He contributed to eleven issues, from December '78 to December '80. In the company of Karl Beveridge and Carole Condé, Martha Fleming, John Greyson, Clive Robertson, the late Kenneth Court-Smith and myself, Tim would participate in the long editorial meetings, which at this point were as likely to wind through the Quebec referendum (the first one, that is), accurate definitions of "lumpen," discussions of how involved the artist should get in determining cultural policy and what organization we should "take over" next. Through all, Tim was an active, feisty participant, never forgetting his "dialectic" in the face of warring contradictions. (An example: he remains, I believe, the only member of a FUSE editorial board who wrote a critical review of another editorial board member's art for publication in the magazine; the review was published.)

Originally from Winnipeg, Tim had been active in the Trotskyist group, the RWL

(Revolutionary Workers League). Arriving in Toronto in the late 1970s, he gravitated towards the burgeoning "new downtown" art scene which was igniting along Queen Street West, with Art Metropole, General Idea, *Centrefold* and then A Space capturing most of his attention. His interests in video and performance—and his charming on-camera persona—led to a number of appearances in the artists' projects made in Toronto at that time.

His activism led him to *The Body Politic*, where he contributed important coverage of gay and gay-positive art and artists to the publication's mix of local, national and international gay politics. It was a time when the BP was in the throes of the series of court cases launched by the police and the Province of Ontario which would eventually lead to both a growing sense of militancy within the gay community and the demise of the magazine itself. In January 1979, Tim Guest organized the "entertainment" for the Body Politic Benefit set up to fund one of these court cases. It was a series of performance art pieces that ricocheted from "high" art slide shows (General Idea) to the deliberate kitsch of lip-synch (The Clichettes).

Books, however, were his major curatorial pursuit. Attracted by what he referred to as "...this tendency towards cross-disciplines [which] also allows an artist to belong to no explicit discipline while referring to many," he worked in and around unique books for over a decade. In 1980, he was one of the editors of *A Book Working*, a bound series of six artists books published by A Space. And in 1981, his major exhibition, "Books By Artists" began a tour which included the Winnipeg Art Gallery, the National Gallery, the Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, the Musée d'art Contemporain, Dalhousie Art Gallery and the Emily Carr College of Art, with a catalogue published by Art Metropole containing an additional essay by Italian critic and curator Germano Celant.

When Tim left Toronto for New York in the late 1980s, he worked (not surprisingly) at Printed Matter, an internationally respected showcase and distributor for bookworks and books by artists.

Tim Guest returned to Canada earlier this year and died on April 1, on a farm in rural Quebec.

—Lisa Steele
(for the Editors of FUSE)

DENNIS TOURBIN 1946 – 1998

Dennis Tourbin died of a stroke in Ottawa on May 7, 1998, aged fifty-one. Dennis was a poet, painter, performer, novelist, poetry-magazine publisher, artist-administrator, angler and above all, incessant diarist/chronicler. Dennis explored the area between painting and literature, developing a multi-media form he called the "painted play" and the painted (visual) poem, always mediated by his readings of popular Canadian histories and discourses of news. His five commissioned painted plays (featuring his solo performances) included *The Writing of the Painting of Mariba* (Theatre Passe Muraille, Toronto 1976) and *Eliot Paisley's Dilemma, A Visual Novel* (Arts Court, Ottawa, 1990).

Dennis was a persistent artist-rights activist, serving as a spokesperson for CARO and later as a special community advisor to the Mayor of Ottawa. (A fund set up in his name for emerging artists was created with the Community Foundation, Ottawa.) His infectious optimism and tireless encouragement made him a social catalyst within the artist-run centre movement. As an artist who made thirteen applications before receiving his first Canada Council grant, Dennis administered Gallery 101, habitually simplifying and "dignifying" the ways that artists

could expedite financial support disseminated from arts agency or artist-run centre programmes. His skills in publicly communicating the diverse practices of contemporary art was demonstrated in *Mirror, Mirror* (1992–93) a Rogers Cable TV series of twenty-two one-hour programmes he hosted and co-produced.

He produced ten published books of poetry and fiction with another seven unpublished manuscripts at the time of his death. Dennis' public reputation as a writer-performer took off with *The Port Dalhousie Stories* (1977), a humorous chronicle of growing up in a small Southern Ontario border town. A live recording by the CBC in Port Dalhousie was broadcast and subsequently banned by the CBC because of its explicit everyday speech. *The Port Dalhousie Stories* performances were released on audio cassette by ABCDEVISION (1977, 1984) and Coach House Press (1989) and published as a novel by Coach House in 1987.

Dennis met his wife, communications scholar and federal cultural policy specialist Nadia Laham, in Paris in 1982 while a resident at the Canada Council's Paris Studio. Nadia was Dennis' collaborator, mentor and translator of his written works.

An exhibiting painter since 1970, Dennis' fifteen-year painting project about the media and the FLQ crisis



received recognition in 1995 at the Ottawa Art Gallery and the National Gallery. The National Gallery, who had purchased his work *La crise d'octobre* in 1991, cancelled their exhibition fearing political controversy during the Quebec referendum. The Gallery then carelessly instigated a media event (by leaving a speaker phone remark: "We owe him, in this particular instance, absolutely dick, Shirley..." on Tourbin's voice mail) that lasted a month longer than the "Voice of Fire" controversy. With the help of non-arts journalists, Dennis became a public intellectual within the popular history of his passions. This led to a 1997 exhibition, *October Crisis/Mémoires* at the Peterborough Art Gallery and the Niagara Artists Centre with an award-winning education kit that finally versioned Dennis' project as an artist's contribution to social and media studies and Canadian historiography.

On May 11, Dennis received a tribute at the National Gallery attended by 400 of his friends and colleagues from Ontario and Quebec, including artists, poets, curators, bureaucrats, broadcasters and politicians. Gallery 101 held a simultaneous two-day wake with an instant exhibition of Dennis' paintings, publications and clips of his many TV news and public affairs appearances.

—Clive Robertson

DIARY OF A QUEEN STREET NEGRO

by Peter Hudson

My Aunt Sheila is a visionary artist. After her late-shifts at the nursing home in Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn, where she takes care of dying whites, she usually sits for a few hours before going to bed, sipping ginger wine and reading her psalms. When the spirit moves her, she grabs pen or pencil and sketches rapidly on the back of the NYNEX bill or the Publisher's Clearing House "You Are a Winner!" notice or whatever scrap of paper is at hand. She mounts her work under plastic black and orange akee magnets and pulls them down whenever I visit.

"You see this?" Aunt Sheila asks me. "I drew this. You recognize it?"

Whether I do or not, she explains her work. The images appeared in her dreams. One is of a long-dead second or third cousin in Florida whom I have never met. Another a great uncle born in Cuba. Another depicts an old family friend, standing in front of a plantation great house she thinks may have been on our ancestral property in Jamaica.

"Maybe you'll publish them," she suggests upon learning I have gotten a job as an editor of an art magazine.

I like Aunt Sheila's work. Its collapsed perspective and busy, imperfect lines place me firmly within the places she imagines and her explanations always provide me with a revealing history of my family and the Caribbean. When it comes down to it, I don't think Aunt Sheila's that interested in exhibiting her drawings. She has no sublimated desire to break from her circle of friends in Brooklyn and elsewhere in the Caribbean diaspora so she can hook up with a downtown niggerati and a bunch of flaky white bohemians (wicked people who don't listen to soca and don't believe in God) in places where West Indian etiquette makes you feel like the Hottentot Venus in Paris.

Even if Aunt Sheila did want to be a part of that world, she doesn't know the theoretical cant that acts as passwords to the mysterious inner sanctums of knowledge of Art. In conversation, however, she creates rhizomatic patois narratives whose meanings deepen through subtle inflections. She's a master of rhetoric who has an appreciation of sign systems that would put anyone's signifying monkey ass to shame, but there's a conceptual gulf between her homespun cultural theory and the legitimated languages of criticism. She's an exegetical cryptographer of the King James Bible and purveyor of hard-lived wisdom. Her artspeak consists of psalms, myths, Jamaican proverbs and open-ended interpretations of dreams and family history. Her discursive practices aren't necessarily "radical" in the way academics and cultural theorists like to imagine their work. She doesn't operate with a conceit of social change, but on a survivalist pragmatism that is infused with a Garveyite cultural nationalism born of the de-facto segregation of West Indians on Flatbush Avenue.

She's a master of rhetoric who has an appreciation of sign systems that would put anyone's signifying monkey ass to shame...

Boat, Michael Chambers, 1993, black & white silver print on fibre-based paper, 33 x 43 cm. Courtesy of CAN:BAIA and the artist.



When Aunt Sheila and I sit and talk in her kitchen at 3AM, my own academically validated languages feel completely useless. It doesn't seem to matter that my critical practice is ostensibly rooted in black liberation and uplift, or that my speech is so well-refined that a white dean of a Toronto art college offered me the condescending praise that I was "so articulate" after my invited talk to her students. Every time I visit her, I have to discard much of what I've learned in lecture halls and over-priced cafés and relearn to speak.

Her queries about her drawings always throw me for a loop. I pause slightly before responding, second-guessing her underlying motivations for asking. It seems like a test of my loyalty to my roots more than the kind of off-the-cuff inquiry that could be expected from any relative; a test of the indelible intimacy we share, sitting in her kitchen, repeating family stories, or a veiled warning to prevent me from getting lost in some white people's art world.

Such is the vexed condition of the handful of black people working as writers, editors, critics and curators in Canada. We slip between worlds and speak out of both sides of our mouth, improvising a contradictory situational creole. Our minds play tricks on us here; we're always in danger of claiming foreign territories and sounding like Malcolm X's house negro in his "Message to the Grassroots." "Whenever the master said 'we,'" Malcolm X wrote of the house negro, "he said 'we.'... If the master's house caught on fire, the house Negro would fight harder to put the blaze out than the master would. If the master got sick, the house Negro would say, 'What's the matter, boss, *we* sick?'"¹

* * *

The busiest art opening I attended this spring was "Urban Primitives and Biomorphs Landscapes: Recent Paintings from Shawn Skeir," held in the basement of the Queen Street clothing store, Chateauworks. The small gallery space was ram-jammed with the beautiful and alternative black ones, gorging themselves on enough free food and booze to supply a decade's worth of artist-run centre openings and cooing with studied appreciation over the show. A soundtrack of dub and house struggled with the poor acoustics while a City-TV crew floated around, lending the room the air of an Event and coaxing the easily coax-able Skeir to sing a few bars of some soul standard.

"What's with the African influence in his work?" I asked a sister appraising Skeir's paintings.

"That's where we're from," she hissed in reply before walking off.

While a press release claims that Skeir "re-establishes the primitive and redefines notions of Western appropriation," it doesn't explain why, in 1998, any black artist would take it upon themselves to do either. His paintings, not unpleasing to the eye, employ an africanist motif in a way that could only be described as Afrocentricity-lite—lots of general references to spirituality and ancestors, little historical analysis. After the opening, Skeir revealed that though he was conversant with *Artforum*, *Flash Art* and *Art in America*, he had no interest in applying whatever debates go on in those journals to his work. He wants to make affordable and beautiful black art that the average person can hang in their home. He paints out of an irrepressible urge to create, not from any kind of theoretical engagement. When I asked the same sister what she thought of Skeir's images,



The Clock Tower, Lorna Simpson, 1995.
Photo courtesy of the artist.

she replied that they were "colourful, just like Shawn's personality." Similarly, a short essay accompanying the exhibition emphasized, to the point of absurdity, the importance of colour in his work. Skeir's paintings are "bursting with form and colour," he "creates unique images revolving around colour and movement in space," and "often [uses] vibrant colours" to produce "an embracing [sic] ballet of form, texture and striking colour."²

While I'm a sucker for a pure aesthetic experience and appreciate his democratic impulse, Skeir's work didn't do much for me. Its make-believe africanity is a little old, and it lacks the obsessive inward edge and manic logic of the most interesting manifestations of outsider art. It seemed, however, that more important than the art itself, or any discussion of its function in a culture characterized by a trashy excess of images, was the idea of the artist as one among a number of lifestyle choices, and the fabrication of a space of blown kisses and hybrid hors d'oeuvres as part of an earnest attempt to replicate an imagined ideal of the art opening. It's fitting that the show was held among the gaudy costume jewelry and throw-away fashions of Chateauworks, for it effectively functions as another accessory. I almost expected *Fashion File's* Tim Blanks to pop up in the midst of the opening, offering a punchy commentary on the summer 1998 *prêt à porter* art collections for the modern Queen Street Negro. Indeed, Blanks, Canada's most underrated public intellectual, presents a form of cultural criticism—high-brow without being literate and populist without a connection to the grassroots—that is possibly more tuned in to the condition of Gen-Xer's, to invoke an over-used label, than anything else in the country.

In the basement of Chateauworks on this spring night, however, the "X" of Generation X referred more to Malcolm and the cultural nationalism and marketing wizardry of Spike Lee, circa 1992, than to any Douglas Coupland invention. Regardless of race (if we need him in blackface, we can always substitute *Vogue's* Andre Leon Talley), Blanks articulates the ethos of a Canadian demographic that suffered the perverse fate of growing up through the Mulroney 1980s. But black people of this generation were doubly fucked: not only was there the constant threat of nuclear annihilation looming over our shoulders, but this was also the era of the hegemony of the white-bread synth pop of the New Romantics and the jheri curl. It's a generation that is the unexpected byproduct of a national experiment in assimilation performed on the West Indian immigrants of the 1950s and 1960s. Betrayed by the bankruptcy of official multiculturalism and the devolution of the welfare state, we feel entitled to this country but are reluctant to call it home. We embrace the free market, both by default and because of capitalism's apparent success at erasing class and race by posing questions of difference as matters of style. Casually conversant with everything and deeply committed to nothing, we are truly, to borrow from Frantz Fanon, a generation "without an anchor, without a horizon, colorless, stateless, rootless—a race of angels."³

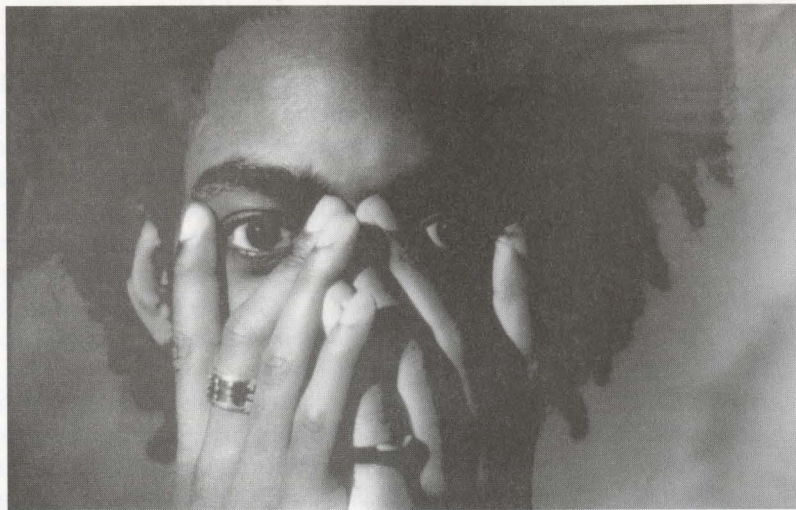
* * *

After photographer Lorna Simpson's recent Power Plant lecture, I rode the TTC up to Queen Street with two white painters who were also in attendance. When I asked them their opinion of Simpson's work, they told me they both loved it, especially her images produced since the start of the 1990s. They preferred photographs such as *The Park* (1995) and *The Clock Tower* (1995) to *Waterbearer* (1986) or *Stereo Styles* (1988). These earlier images, they told me, looking at each other and nodding vigorously in agreement, were "too much about identity."

*I ALMOST
EXPECTED
FASHION FILE'S
TIM BLANKS TO POP
UP IN THE MIDST OF
THE OPENING, OFFERING
A PUNCHY COMMENTARY ON
THE SUMMER 1998 PRÊT-
À-PORTER ART
COLLECTIONS FOR
THE MODERN
QUEEN STREET
NEGRO.*

Untitled, Michael Chambers, 1993, black & white silver print
on fibre-based paper, 33 x 43 cm.
Courtesy of CAN:BAIA and the artist.





Katt 1, Rose-Anne Bailey,
photo stain glass.
Courtesy of CAN:BAIA
and the artist.

In *The Park* and *The Clock Tower*, Simpson has evacuated the body, creating urban landscapes where a human presence is only alluded to; the body is featured prominently in the images from the 1980s. I wasn't exactly sure what the white painters meant by "identity" or where they found it in Simpson's art—Simpson herself didn't actually mention the word when she discussed the work; she spoke of it in terms of spectatorship and witnessing—but it appeared as if it was the mere presence of the black body that triggered their negative reaction to the earlier pieces.⁴

The response of these two white painters is a testament to the effectiveness of Simpson's images, but it's a little disturbing if you consider the obvious importance of the body in the work of black Canadian visual artists. When the body is used, black artists are always faced with the possibility that their work will be reduced to a one-dimensional production of a raced identity—in the same way that Simpson's early work was reduced—yet to stop using the body is to risk losing those politics altogether.

Toronto photographers Michael Chambers and Roseanne Bailey are, amongst others, emblematic of this, but they are also forging. Chambers has shown in a variety of artist-run centres over the past decade, and is currently the subject of a retrospective at the Thames Art Gallery in Chatham, but he is probably best known for producing the covers of Toronto's *Word* magazine. Bailey's most recent exhibition was held at 52 Inc., a bar on Toronto's College Street, and she has also produced work for the Montreal-based Caribbean woman's magazine *Panache*. Though neither receive much attention from white institutions, their work occupies an important place within a black Canadian public sphere. Indeed, when the *Word* published one of Chambers' untitled images, of a slice of watermelon poised on a black woman's ass, it generated a storm of controversy within the black community and spurred heated debates of "race" and representation amongst a community that doesn't make a habit of visiting the downtown galleries and are rarely hooked in to the usual critical channels.

Chambers' and Bailey's photographs are more Jodeci than DJ Spooky. They are accessible to an audience whose visual literacy is shaped through the commercial forms of black popular culture. They contain the elements of the highly stylized good-life and the valorized representations of the body depicted in hip-hop and R&B videos, though this is often undermined by a decidedly unironic redemptive passion that is often earnestly romantic. I like their work for its intuitive understanding of a popular audience, its engagement with a variety of black aesthetic practices and its attempt to create alternative art-historical contexts. Furthermore, it implicitly rejects a return to a metaphysical space that invokes Hegel before he received a critical beatdown from Marx, and remains committed to the material conditions of black people.

Notes

1. Malcolm X, "Message to the Grassroots" in *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements*, ed. George Breitman (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1965), p. 10.
2. L. Fisher, *Artist: Shawn Skeir* (photocopy), Toronto, np, nd. Emphasis added.
3. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1963), p. 218.
4. For more on this, see New York writer and curator Okwui Enwezor's essay "Social Grace: The Work of Lorna Simpson," *Third Text: Third World Perspectives on Contemporary Art and Culture* 35, Summer 1996, pp. 43-57.

Respect: Newell Hudson, Allen Forbes, Clifton Joseph, Buseje Bailey, Kyo Maclear, Frank Francis, Warren Crichtlow, Rinaldo Walcott and Aunt Sheila for their insights at various stages of writing this joint.

Peter Hudson is a freelance writer and editor currently co-editing Mix: the magazine of artist-run culture.

Cigarettes, Coffee & Dep Wine

NELSON HENRICKS CHATS WITH LUC BOURDON, ANNE GOLDEN, ROBERT MORIN
AND CATHY SISLER ABOUT VIDEO IN MONTREAL

In January and February of this year, I quizzed Luc Bourdon, Robert Morin, Cathy Sisler and Anne Golden about their work while simultaneously interrogating them on their notion of the Montreal video community. "Community" of course, is a slippery idea. Who are we talking about when we say "community"? What do we demand from a community? Is it just a myth we cling to in an increasingly fragmented postmodern world?

I have never been interested in thinking of video as a medium with essential characteristics. With the arrival of digital culture, the urge to create stable and impermeable divisions between film, video, television (and ultimately "new" media) seems backward, wrong-headed even. Video then, is perhaps best thought of as an ideological or methodological approach to image production, regardless of the support used. If this is so, these criteria are surely founded in some notion of a community based on shared practices, resources and audience. We are no longer thinking of video as a residue, but as a group of artists/directors who constitute a distinct—but not strictly delimited—ecology. "Video" isn't a noun, it's a verb: a dynamic process that defies easy categorization.



LUC BOURDON

NELSON HENRICKS: You've been working in this community for a long time and have seen it from many different perspectives: as a member of various groups, as an instructor at Concordia University, as a programmer for the Montreal Festival of Cinema and New Media [FCMM] and as a director in your own right. How would you explain the Montreal video community to an outsider?

LUC BOURDON: It's hard to define. The first word that pops into my mind is "fragmented." If I could make an analogy, the community is like the medium itself. Making art was politically engaged in the '70s. The community was tightly woven and a lot of collectives and co-ops were formed, all with political agendas. Many people from that first generation of videomakers in Quebec didn't continue to produce. So, at the beginning of the '80s, the young wolves emerged: myself, Daniel Dion, Marc Paradis, François Girard, Bernar Hebert. Our political position was different. The medium became a tool to "personalize" ourselves... Is it clear what I am saying?

NELSON: Sure.

LUC: I have to translate everything from French to English in my head before I say it. What I want to say is that we used the medium in an individualistic manner. We gave each other the freedom to be individuals, to be artists.

By the beginning of the '90s, a lot of the groups formed in the '70s were practically dead or had lost sight of their original mandates. Their memberships were now viewed as customers; the centres suddenly had to turn a profit. This was largely because of funding cuts and the new emerging philosophy of "cultural industries." Artists didn't want to be involved in the access centres on a day-to-day level anymore, so the centres fell into the hands of professional

people who weren't artists and who didn't understand what it was to make art. For many it was just a job, a stepping stone in their careers. What we see over time is a denaturation of the video community. Suddenly, we are far from the idea of developing access centres, far from favouring experimentation, far from political engagement. Everyone is running after money. So naturally it becomes hard to understand what video is, and what a video community is. It's difficult to talk about. I'm making generalizations, and there are of course many exceptions...

NELSON: The access centres are no longer the hub of the video community.

LUC: But they never were—not in Montreal anyway! I try to be positive when I hear people complaining about the community. In many ways, things are better now than they were ten years ago. There wasn't a video room at Cinéma Parallèle, there were none at the Goethe Institute, at the NFB or the Cinémathèque Québécoise. This festival (FCMM) was only starting to show video, and there was no festival devoted exclusively to video like *Les Manifestations* of Champ Libre. The real problem is that artists need to be more aggressive and affirmative of showing their work.

NELSON: The prize winners in the video competition at the last two editions of FCMM were Herman Weeb, Cathy Sisler and Donnigan Cumming—all Montrealers. What's interesting is that these people, though they all have established practices in other mediums, did not come from the artist-run access centres.

LUC: The most interesting artists are not concerned with making beautiful things. They want to express themselves and are curious about the medium. You see their point of view through their work; they challenge something. Video is very connected to what they see. There's this notion of "I see" in video that's not present in film; you can feel the point

Les Amants du Pont-Neuf, Leos Carax, France, 1991, 125 min.



of view of the author. A good example is Robert Morin's *Yes Sir, Madame*: it's probably the strongest "film" to come out of Montreal in the last decade. We can see Robert's personal vision—his perversion—and it's incredible to witness that: it's subversive.

NELSON: When I look at work at festivals, it's almost as if there is a codification of the avant-garde: a recipe for experimental work.

LUC: For me, that's a real problem. I try to destroy the "chapel of video." People treat watching video like work; it's necessary, but not very pleasant. We never talk about what bores us or discuss why it doesn't move us. That's not right. If we don't like what we see, we have to say it! We're missing that in the video community. We have to criticize, analyze and discuss what we see; give feedback to artists. We need more directors who write as well: it's hard to find critical writing on video.

NELSON: Let's talk a bit about your work. I always think of you as someone who really loves video. Do you feel a real passion for the medium?

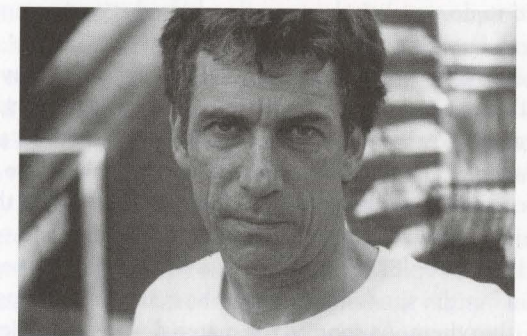
LUC: What I really want to do in my work is play. For me, "play" means finding a subject and understanding something from the subject. I am working on a documentary about the history of theatre in Quebec. Before that, I did two documentaries on the National Theatre School, one of the last truly Canadian institutions. I was there from September to December of last year, following courses, roaming around like a spy, like a ghost. When I finished the video on the English side of the school and showed it to the board of governors, they couldn't believe it was directed by a *Québécois*: it looks so Canadian and conservative! [laughs] By the end of the project I was one of the few people who knew the two sides of the institution. For me, it was sad to see those two solitudes. It's so easy to see that we are totally complementary. But imagine: to understand, in small theatre school, the dynamic of an entire country! My god! Shakespeare and Molière are two different things!

NELSON: I like the image of you creeping around the corridors of the theatre school like a spy. Video allows you to disappear, to become a voyeur.

LUC: Video's a mix of surveillance and collage. With a video camera, you can be very subtle. I collect data each day and then remove myself from it. And when you're alone—and more and more I'm alone—the work comes together in the editing room, through collage. The new digital editing systems rekindled my interest in the medium. In about '92 I was really discouraged and wasn't having fun with video anymore. Then I touched the first non-linear editing

system and it gave me the impulse that will last maybe another ten years. It is suddenly fun again.

As videomakers, I think we need goals and challenges—and an audience to communicate with. For me, the perfect screening is one to one: you watching my tape. That's why video is interesting: there is still the possibility of communication that works with seduction and poetry. I don't think I could produce something for a million people. Or maybe I could: it's another challenge.



ROBERT MORIN

NELSON: I heard a rumour that you sold your tape *Yes Sir, Madame* to Radio Canada, but they refused to broadcast it. Is that true?

ROBERT MORIN: They bought it, programmed it, and then at the last moment they pulled it. Twice. The third time they asked me to do an interview/introduction to contextualize the piece. They felt it needed an explanation. I think they were afraid of the response from the federal government; they thought I was trying to make Jean Chrétien look ridiculous. He had complained about the CBC during the referendum, accusing them of not being "federalist" enough. An intro was tagged on the tape, basically to say that any editorial comment was mine, not that of Radio Canada.

NELSON: It baffles me that you can turn on the TV and see hour after hour of figure skating, but you can't see any independent productions.

ROBERT: TV plays to the audience. Video work will probably never be broadcast, because it doesn't have a broad enough appeal. TV is the Bastille of the twentieth century. That's where the revolution will occur. Politically, that's where it has to happen. But there are so many barricades. How can you get in and change things? My strategy has been to do feature-length work. The new tape, *Quiconque meurt, meurt à douleurs*, is a good example of what I'm talking

about. I went to TV with the project and they completely freaked out. In a week, I had been rejected by all the TV stations. So then I decided, "Well, OK. We'll do a feature and get a film distributor approved by the institution and we'll get theatrical release somewhere." And that's what we did. After it's been in the theatre for a month and it's got some press, a television sale will be feasible. Distributors have strategies to deal with television.

NELSON: *Quiconque...* was developed collaboratively with ex-drug addicts...

ROBERT: It's a fiction that doesn't look like a fiction. I wanted to do a reality show on the skids. A TV cameraman follows a bunch of cops into a shooting gallery full of junkies. Then you hear gun shots. Things go bad. They are stuck there. The gunman catches two cops and take the cameraman hostage. The man with the gun is a dealer and he has dope. They start shooting up all the junk before they release the cops so they don't get busted. They spend thirty hours in the house, surrounded by cops. The idea was to show these people's reality. There's a documentary aspect to it. I laid out the situations, but left the actors free to improvise within them. As soon as the material was shot, Michel Giroux would edit the best takes together to make sure we weren't missing anything. *Quiconque...* is a very black, depressing work. [laughs] But it looks real: I have never done anything that looks so real in my life.

NELSON: You worked in video for about fifteen years and then did two feature films which were well-received. Then you returned to video. Does video allow you more freedom?

ROBERT: That's part of it. Certain subjects work better for me on video than on film. Video gives you a bit more space for improvisation. Film is more like classical music: it's extremely structured. Video is more like jazz: you start with a structure but you can improvise within it.

NELSON: But you couldn't have walked into Téléfilm with the idea for *Quiconque...*

ROBERT: Well, I did. I got money from Téléfilm and SODEC. *Quiconque...* is the first video I made with a good budget. We had \$300,000. I finally got them to give me money for a videotape that was not completely scripted before going into production.

NELSON: That's amazing! So you must feel that there has been some progress over the past twenty-five years.

ROBERT: They trusted me. I don't think you could have gone in there with the same script and got some money. The project had to be done in video: it was necessary for the narrative. The whole point of the piece was a video

cameraman with a gun held to his head. It had to be that. Still, I had trouble with them. One guy was saying to me, "Aren't you tired of doing your *huis clos*? All your films are the same." And said, "Not all of my work is *huis clos*, but I agree that I like the idea of people trapped in a certain situation. It's not because it's convenient or because it's cheaper to have one location, but because I like that." I think of myself as an author, and all authors only have one thing to say. We spend our whole lives exploring one subject.

Still from *The Better Me*, 1995, 20 min.



CATHY SISLER

NELSON: An overview of your video work is being presented at the "Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois" this year as well, but the works presented in this show are just a fraction of your production. In addition to many performances and installations, from 1992 to 1997 you produced—how many tapes?

CATHY: Twelve.

NELSON: ...and all of these videotapes were made on Hi-8 editing equipment and with very limited technical resources. I remember Nikki Forrest told me once that you had done the image processing on *Violent Entries* by running the video signal through a guitar pedal. Is that true?

CATHY: Yes. It was a delay pedal. I tried a chorus pedal too, but it didn't work.

NELSON: I love that story. It seems so emblematic of your attitude toward technology. It's not something to be intimidated by, but something malleable. Something to be played with or tortured. What's your take on technology: is it our friend or our enemy?

CATHY: I love working with technology, but it's the approach that's terribly important. I had the good fortune of being able to learn Hi-8 editing and the video toaster by

myself at the old Avista Lab at Concordia University. I could experiment on my own without having a technician teaching me. It was a hands-on approach. Before that, I invented my own methods of editing at home from camera to VCR. I always search for ways of working that allow me to work as independently as possible. Even with my most recent tape, *Lullaby for the Almost Falling Woman*, I did a complete edit with two VCRs and added the soundtrack with my home portastudio before going into the studio to make the final master. My home equipment collection is very bargain basement, but it works. This way I get the independence I need in production. Technology can be a friend, but you have to get to know a friend first hand, without a third party intervening and controlling the relationship.

NELSON: The last time we spoke, you had talked about giving it up. Do you still feel that way?

CATHY: When I said that, I felt really saturated with the whole videomaking process, and I wanted to do something else. So I started painting again, and got really drawn into it. What I like about painting—compared to video—is that it is more of a solo encounter with the image, and a more direct encounter with the imagination. But the thing I miss about video is being able to add music. I'd love to figure out a way to add musical soundtracks to my paintings. But I don't think I'll give up video forever, just for a while.

NELSON: Are you still planning on staying in Montreal?

CATHY: I have a feeling I'm going to be moving to Toronto soon. I've been saying this for about two years now, but then things arise that keep me here. But my reason for thinking of moving is to find some kind of job: I am really tired of being perpetually poor.

NELSON: Do you think that Montreal is an interesting place to be working right now?

CATHY: Montreal is an interesting place to shoot video because of its empty spaces, vacant buildings, vacant lots, old crumbling architecture and the weather. The recent ice storm evoked the idea of phantom limbs: do the trees feel connections with their amputated limbs lying broken off on the ground beside them?

I've also come to know some great people to work with here over the years but basically I tend to work alone, so I can't really talk about a community thing in terms of my own work. There is, however, a great video community here, which comes together for screenings and events. I've always found a lot of support and opportunities here for getting work screened and distributed. There are also a lot of great video artists who happen to be working in Montreal.

NELSON: Your work is powerful and intimate, but within that, there are very strange, funny moments—you have a good sense of humour. I'm curious about your influences...

CATHY: I've been influenced by everything I've seen, I suppose. My sense of humour is something I grew up with, a kind of survival mechanism that my siblings and I developed together. Back then, our sense of sarcasm was a lot sharper than the kind of humour I use today. Now I'm more interested in moments that are sort of sad, but funny at the same time. It keeps the work from becoming self-indulgent. I can talk about subjects like loneliness and social isolation without becoming maudlin or morose. Social deviation, stigma and public embarrassment are the main topics from which my work arises. Embarrassment can be both horrible and very funny, and I like working with this kind of double-faced phenomenon. You can't help laughing, yet you know there's something sad about it. I think all of the characters in my videos have something of this quality. They are seriously trying to be present and be a part of a highly controlled society, and yet their bodies trip them up, make them stand out, or fall out of the norm. They should be embarrassed, but there is always something slightly intentional about their slipping and spinning out.



ANNE GOLDEN

NELSON: So Anne: I've been talking with Cathy, Robert and Luc about what it's like to work in Montreal. What's your take on the community here?

ANNE: I feel there's a community here, but I can't really say that I belong to a video community. I worked at *Groupe Intervention Vidéo* (GIV) a women's video centre, for nine years. I met many people through my association with GIV. But that community is not one that necessarily intersects with all the other ones: there's a *Vidéographe* group, a PRIM group. Not that they're insular, it's just that videos that come out of

PRIM or *Vidéographe* have a distinct quality. I think the three centres are very complementary.

A lot of women I've met through GIV were happy there was a centre that offered low-tech production equipment, we have a camera and a Hi-8 editing system and a VHS off-line. This is important when you are just starting out: you need to figure out real basic stuff. Anyway, to get back to this thing about community. I've always felt supported for work I've done, whether its documentary or personal art tapes. That I guess is a roundabout way of saying, "Yes, I think these communities exist but I'm not in touch with all aspects of them."

NELSON: So what we're talking about is not necessarily singular, but plural. Do you feel the English and French communities are exclusive from one another?

ANNE: No. I've never felt that. At GIV I worked in French, but I was always in contact with anglos in Canada or living here in Montreal. I had a perspective on both worlds. If you make a tape and it happens to be in English, it will still be seen and shown in Quebec. Likewise, when I have curated packages of *québécois* work for English Canada, I've always shown French-language work that has no English version. It's interesting to see people's reactions.

It's not just about language though. There's a whole debate about Quebec being generally more "poetic": it has a very different sensibility from English Canadian work. There is a lyrical quality that marks *québécois* work. And it's not exclusive to *québécois* work either. Nikki Forrest told me that she felt Montreal was the ideal place for her to make video work because what she does is more lyrical and poetic, she feels supported here. That English and French work both exist in Montreal is great. A lot of ground is covered.

NELSON: The "*Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois*" is showing English version work for the first time this year. You were on the jury this year, and you were able to see a broad panorama of work. Were your preconceptions about Quebec work confirmed?

ANNE: The poetic preconception was confirmed, but confirmed in a good way. I also noticed a lot of works that foreground the physical qualities of the medium and remind us that video is a tape: "OK, this is about a tape being jammed forward or backward through these machines..." These tapes have other content, too, but they are also about the form itself: playing with time.

NELSON: There seems to be a lot more women represented at the "*Rendez-vous*" this year. When I think of video production from Quebec, during the '80s, it seems very male-dominated...

ANNE: In the '80s there were a lot of women directing, but they weren't as visible. There were fewer venues, too: the "*Rendez-vous*" only recently started showing video. This year, people like Cathy, Nikki, Manon Labreque, Sylvie Laliberté, Monique Moumblow, Deb Vanslet, Sarah Williams are all represented and they're in these really eclectic programmes.

NELSON: It's really thanks to people like Marie-Michèle Cron [coordinator of the video section of the "*Rendez-vous*"] who really like video and are aggressive about showing it...

ANNE: Not just like video, but *love* it! Love it so much that they make people see all the things it can be. Video's not just the poor cousin of film. I'm tired of that old discourse: "It's not as pretty as film..." "Well, yeah, it's not, but it has got all these other qualities." With one medium you can do so much: documentary, fiction, art tapes, dance, journal works, funny animation—like Diane Obomsawin. We have to get away from this kind of discrimination.

NELSON: You were a programmer at the "Women's Film and Video Festival" for three years in the '80s. Following this, you played a significant role in programming the women's section for "*Image et Nation*" [Montreal's gay and lesbian festival] for about seven years. You've also done a lot of programming outside Quebec: this spring, you'll be presenting a programme of *québécois* video work at V Tape in Toronto. I guess what I am trying to underscore is that you are this kind of free agent that circulates around in the community programming video work. One event you were involved in that I love is the "*Vidéos de femmes dans le parc*" screenings that GIV has been doing for seven summers now. Did you initiate that idea?

ANNE: Chris Martin came up with the idea when she was working at GIV, but by the time we got access to Théâtre du Verger in Parc Lafontaine, she was gone. The very first one was rained out—we had to cancel! The next year we reproduced the same programme because we felt it was important to support the work. Five hundred people turned out that year, and the crowds have gotten bigger ever since.

NELSON: So: two years ago you stopped working with "*Image et Nation*." Then last year you decided to leave your post at GIV and, uh, you left both of them on good terms...

ANNE: [laughs] Oh, yes! I needed time to think about what I wanted to do next. As luck would have it, I got a grant from the Canada Council, and that—at least temporarily—solved that problem of "what am I was going to do next?": "I'm going to make *Big Girl Town*. And that's what I've been doing since July 1997, more or less full time.

NELSON: Do you want to tell me about *Big Girl Town*?

ANNE: [affecting a Tennessee accent] Shor. What d'ya wanna know?

NELSON: Well, what's it about?

ANNE: I've always loved westerns and I had the idea of taking the classic western formula and inserting lesbians into it. A few years ago I made a tape called *Fat Chance* which is about issues of the body and lesbian identity. I wanted to take a much more carefree look at that. So, I made up these two towns: Big Girl Town and Thin Girl Town. It started out as a joke at a cocktail party, but the more I thought about it, the more I couldn't get certain people out of my head as those characters, especially Deb Vanslet, who plays "The Traveler." She's this person who is an outsider to the two towns.

When I found out I had the grant, I started watching *tons* of westerns, rewrote the script, and the possibilities just flourished. I decided to make the tape into a parody of coming attractions trailers—it's a teaser. I called up Winnipeg performance artist Lorri Millan and asked her to play the lead Big Girl. Cathy Sisler was a Big Girl from the beginning. She's in it and she's great. The script wasn't completely finalized when we started shooting. I always hoped my friends would bring something to it and they did. It was a fun process. All of my videos have been very different, but there is always some notion of community-based production. I called people on a lot of favours for *Big Girl Town*...

Still from *Fat Chance*, Anne Golden, 1994, 7 min.



NELSON: "Remember when I helped you move last year?"

ANNE: [laughs] Exactly.

* * *

The idea of one single community, though it is an attractive idea, is most certainly a fiction. Like identity or feminism, "community" is perhaps best conceived as plural. What would be the minimum number of people it takes to make a community? Ten? Five? Two? I recently had a vision of what our community looks like: not a sphere or a circle, but a long, skinny line. This line shifts and slides on the frontiers of art, cinema and television, creating crossovers or bleed-throughs, but not possessing a real centre itself. Perhaps this is the best place for communities in the late-'90s, shifting about in not one, but many margins. Video as hyper-margin. For any guerrilla, any subversive or chameleon, this is the best place to be.

Nelson Henricks is actively working in installation, performance, video and film, and teaches Video Production at Concordia. Henricks recently co-edited the book *By the Skin of Their Tongues*, an anthology of artists' film and video scripts, with Steve Reinke. He is currently working on two new videos entitled *Handy Man* and *Time Passes*.

Jimmie Durham

THE CENTRE OF THE WORLD IS SEVERAL PLACES (PART I)

INTERVIEW WITH BEVERLY KOSKI AND RICHARD WILLIAM HILL



Jimmie Durham with *A Pole to Mark the Centre of the World* at Brussels, 1995.

Beverly Koski and Richard William Hill met with Jimmie Durham in Berlin in February 1998. They discussed some of the many projects he has worked on since moving to Europe, almost all of which have been previously unavailable to North American audiences. Durham is known both for his activism with the American Indian Movement in the 1970s and for his witty and challenging visual art and writing. He is presently spending the year in Berlin courtesy of a live/work grant from the German government.

RICHARD HILL: Can you talk about the way you've been working since you've been here in Europe?

JIMMIE DURHAM: I've actually been working non-stop. I think I moved here in '94. At that moment I was in a show in Dublin, then a private show at Micheline Szwajcer Gallery in Antwerp, and then I suppose I've been doing some sort of show every month since then. I've been ridiculously busy and quite often go into a place and do new work on site.

I did two shows in France back to back, one in Calais and one in Rheims. [These exhibitions were documented in a single catalogue as *"The Eurasian Project, Part I"*.] The main piece in the show in Calais was an *Arc de Triomphe For Personal Use*. It's made of wood, so it's light-weight and you can fold it up and take it away with you and set it up again, each time you need it. Whenever you felt like you had a triumph you could set it up and walk through it. The wood was painted bright red, yellow and blue—the art colours. I still like the piece, no one else has really liked it. I liked it so much that I even copied it for the Istanbul Biennial, last year, but I did it out of iron so it wouldn't look so cute, and it was painted turquoise, because the show was in Turkey. It was a way of making iron look very light, like a drawing in air. It also folds up nicely and has wheels like a wheelbarrow.

RH: Working against the associations of the weight of stone?

JD: Yeah.

RH: You've been concerned about monuments in general lately.

JD: Because Europe is so strange. It's not as old as it likes to pretend, but it has more things that it should respect than it does respect. They're willing to tear down things all over Europe, things that they should save, and at the same time they are willing to save too much. The more serious problem for us I think is a belief in monuments and a belief in architecture, as though it gives a very unarguable state statement.

I'm working on a piece here in Berlin, bringing over some stones that Hitler had carved in Sweden. It's a funny thing that he did, because the drawings look like the *Arc de Triomphe*, only bigger and better, but he didn't call it an *Arc de Triomphe*. He called it an *Arch of Peace*. Hitler himself did the original drawings, back in the '20s. That's quite strange. He wanted the piece to be in cement. It would be a giant, giant cement thing and only Albert Speer, ten years later, said no, that's not nice, let's do it in granite so a thousand years from now it will be a beautiful ruin. Hitler loved the idea after Speer told him about it. It would have been marvelous if he had made it of cement

because it would already be crumbling by now. That would be quite nice.

RH: I remember reading a quote from Speer saying he was glad the Nazis hadn't won the war because some of his monumental buildings were already starting to disintegrate and he would have been in trouble with Hitler. [everyone laughs]

JD: So, the stones are there in Sweden, they're carved, they're beautiful. Each one is a monument, they're so grandiose. I want to free them. I want to take them away from architecture and to take them from the evil metaphor of heavy, monumental stone. I want to free them from Hitler and Speer and I want to free them from puny human history. Because they're granite they shouldn't have to serve us that way. I want to be in the process of taking them to Berlin—we'll put them on a barge, as though we were going to Berlin, and sink them in the middle of the Baltic Sea. Well, it's actually the south corner of it, but it will look like the middle of the sea. We'll do this as a movie, with a script about these stones, about the quarries, and so on. If we make a good movie we can eternalize the stones because they become art and art is eternal, everyone says. It is also eternal because there is no more wear and tear on the stones. It's only the celluloid or whatever films are made of now. You can make copies eternally. The stones themselves will have sunk but it doesn't mean that the human labour or the history is wasted. I think that it would be freed. But architecture will not be served. Something moving will be served. A movie, not architecture.

RH: The idea of going into water gives a sense of weightlessness again, like with your portable arch. It reminds me of those strange old Etruscan tombs where they painted the ceiling to look like the sky.

JD: I was talking about Calais—but that was a nice intervention about architecture, because it's my main concern in Europe at this moment, it's such a narrative.

Calais has been a lace-making town, they've had an industry of making lace by machines and they built their entire city around that and were quite rich. Then the lace-making business went away and at the same time the machines went to Korea and to all sorts of places. The city kind of fell apart and hasn't done anything since, and hasn't wanted to do anything since. Except be Calais. It wants the lace business back. So I went to visit all the lace machines, they're a fantastic bunch of machines. I knew a little bit about the lace machines from European history, they're the precursor to computers. They're the first machines to have detailed instructions by punch cards, great big punch cards, that tell them what rows to make. It's those punch cards that then became computer instructions. So, I found in the garbage a silly hat-rack that was broken and I carved a little

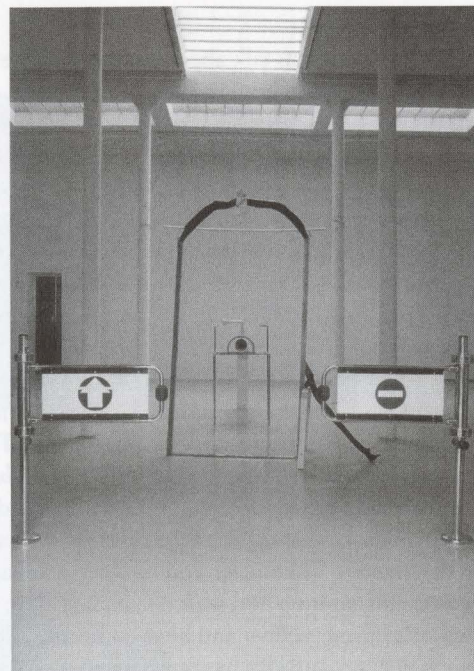
propeller on one broken part and it looks like two insects. I made the other just as is, except I put some cotton thread around both of them as though they were part of a machine that had broken and I put a text: "A machine desires instruction as a garden desires discipline." I like the piece very much but no one else has liked it.

I also did a show in Rheims. Rheims is the French city where all the kings are crowned. I did something completely different there. The show was called "An Anatomy Lesson" and it was about the breaking up of narrative, my own narratives, but European history narratives at the same time. I wanted to begin talking about a whole bunch of different things and then as usual interrupt myself and not talk about them. I wanted to do that deliberately in some historic way. The French don't trust art, they only trust narrative, so I wanted especially to disrupt narratives and break them, to make similar narratives and fake narratives.

I had been in Lisbon and I found some branches of a linden tree. It's a tree that we use for a lot of things and I know enough European history to know that Europeans use it for a lot of things also. I take it as tea for sleeping, it works very well for me. Traditionally at home we would make shoes and cloth and all sorts of things from the bark and the wood. It's a tree that I know very well and like very much, and I was pleased to find it in Lisbon, just at the time that I was already thinking about this show in Rheims. The Europeans used it first to make artist's charcoal for drawing and then for making woodcuts.

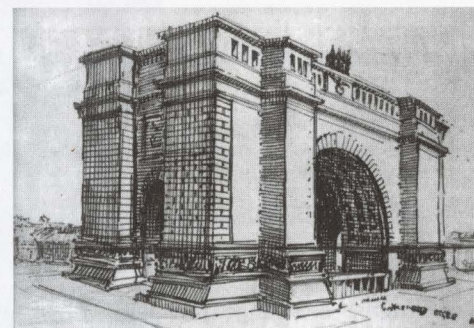
This Belgian doctor/artist, whose name was Vesalius, was the first medical doctor in Europe to come out of the stupidity of European history... It's important for anyone to look at European history and see that there's a layer of stupidity there; it's not genetically there, it was put there politically. They weren't so stupid before, maybe they were stupid in a thousand other ways, like anyone else might be, just like most Indians in Mexico City are made stupid by Spanish colonization. But before the Spanish colonization they had the fucking Aztecs to deal with, so there's no pure situation. But at least you can say that this specific stupidity that we witness has a history, it's not natural. You can always be unreconciled to any stupidity and be willing to be free.

Before Vesalius, doctors were reading Galen, the stupid old doctor who had theories about things but didn't look at anything. Doctors until Vesalius also didn't look at anything. They would have a scalpel and they knew what Galen said. They wouldn't examine the body, they would cut where the theory said to cut, they would give the medicine that the theory said to give. It comes from a specific overlay of political strangeness. So Vesalius had a piece of linden made into a charcoal and he had some paper and he would cut open a body and he would draw what he saw. It's kind of like the beginning of science and the beginning of art used for observation in some funny human service way. From that developed a little bit better science of slicing



Arc de Triomphe For Personal Use, Calais, 1996.
Foreground: *The Gates of Europe*.

Below: Adolf Hitler's sketch of the Arch of Peace, 1925, later used by Albert Speer in his plans for the redesign of Berlin.



people open. Actually, quite a bit better, but not entirely better because they had deliberately forgotten germ theory. It was known before. Everyone knows that, to wash your hands, but Europeans had forgot it for a long time.

With Vesalius' drawings they could cut somebody open and say "yeah, that's there." Instead of just brain work it was eye and hand and drawing work, it was intellectuality tied to physicality. Europe always has the craziness of wanting to divorce these two things and go to heaven. Every time it tries to it fucks up half of humanity. So it seemed like an important little piece of history to bring to Rheims and I thought: how might I do it? I just happened to be in the forest to make a centre of the world in Bohemia, so I took some of the two linden trees and photos about them to Rheims and made that as one beginning narrative without ever telling enough of the narrative so anyone could catch it. They could catch a few things because the show's called "The Anatomy Lesson," or

"A Progress Report." I didn't give any specifics like Vesalius and linden trees and all of that. I gave a few phrases, I took some linden bark, some rolled up and some stretched out, and two different photos: one photo of me cutting linden bark off a linden tree and one of me being eaten by two stone lions. Then there was the text "this should explain everything." I use that text and the text "I hope this does not give you the wrong idea" a lot. The French audience thought that that piece should explain everything because the text said it should. No matter how many times I would say "no it's just that piece of paper that says 'this should explain everything,' you can see it doesn't," but they kept looking for a secret key where it would explain everything. It was a mistake to play with the French I suppose.

RH: Is there anything else we should talk about regarding the show in Rheims?

JD: The Pope has been decommissioning a lot of saints, which I think is a nice idea. His problem is that he's making new saints. All the fascists in the world are now saints. I took two baskets of clothes, white shirts and things—they were all white—that I made dirty with a little bit of mud and hair and froze them with white glue so that they were hard. The piece is called *Shrouds and Swaddling Clothes of Decommissioned Saints*. The French said, "they're not really decommissioned"—no one could see the piece beyond that. I am making a generalization I know, but the generalization works all the same. That show in Rheims was reviewed in the Paris magazine, *Art Press*, as though it were work about Indian identity, my own Indian identity. There was no way that anyone could think that—except by not

thinking. The reviewer didn't look at any specifics and she didn't write about any specifics. She only wrote about the show as if it was about Jimmie Durham's "Indian identity" and the "Indian struggle" and this sort of thing.

RH: I was thinking when I was preparing to talk to you that even if you approach the subject "as here's an Indian artist not doing Indian art," you're still doing an Indian story. It's a vicious circle.

JD: I never mind that—in a certain way. This woman I met just before I met you, she's doing her doctoral thesis on multiculturalism as it began to happen in the '80s, except she starts with all of the people who are already riding a dead horse, I think. She said it really is something to be the first American Indian to have a solo show in the Munich Kunstbau and of course I had to agree. It really is quite something. But not in the way she might think, not in the Jim Thorpe way—he was the first Indian to win a gold medal in the Olympics. Not that way at all. You can't remove your politics and history from the fact, you can't take the fact as they would have it taken in any sense. If she writes that it's something that there is an Indian showing in the Kunstbau, her duty is to write about what's wrong with the Munich Kunstbau, that's her duty. Her duty is not to write about what I've done to get to that position. And my duty is to try to make intellectually engaging art, wherever I might be.

RH: It seems so funny that saying "I'm an Indian artist who doesn't do the 'Indian art'" is a radical thing and yet it is. To acknowledge the insanity of it is something you can do

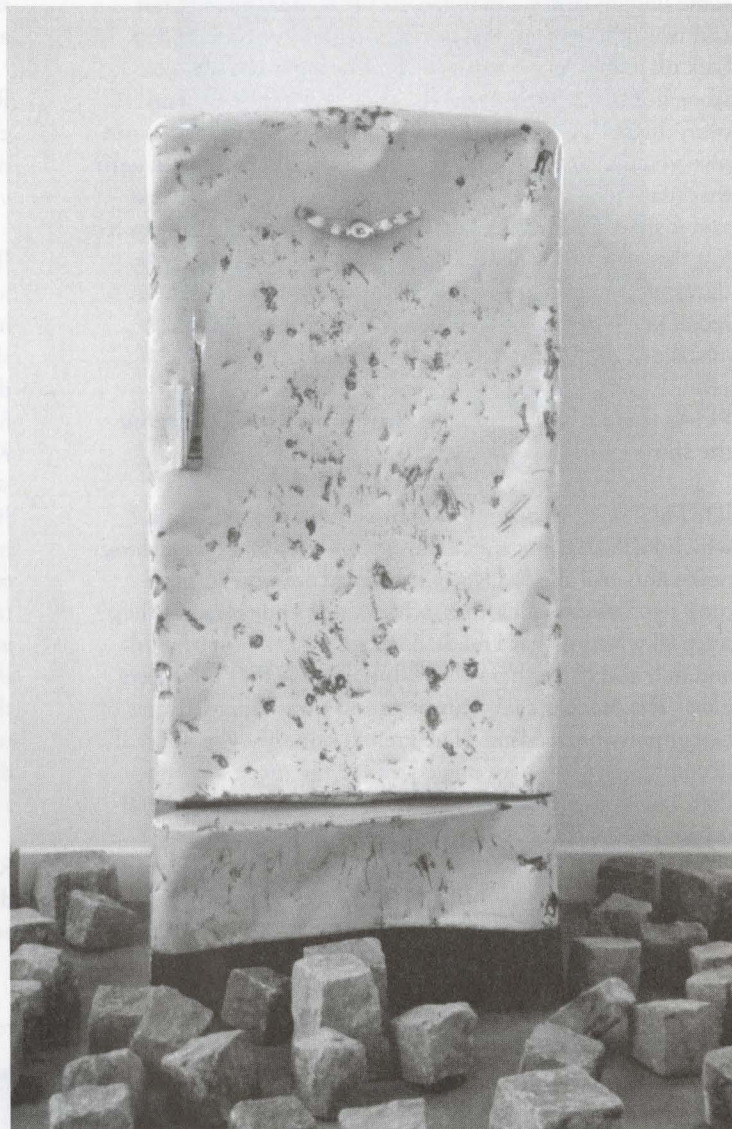


Shrouds and Swaddling Clothes of Ex-Saints, from the exhibition "The Anatomy Lesson (A Progress Report)," Rheims, 1996.

That show in Rheims was reviewed in the Paris magazine, *Art Press*, as though it were work about Indian identity, my own Indian identity. There was no way that anyone could think that —except by not thinking.



St. Frigo, from the exhibition
"The Anatomy Lesson
(A Progress Report)," Rheims, 1996.



I guess, but I imagine it's not what you want to be talking about all the time either.

JD: I think it's a set up for us, as it is for Black artists. As it once almost was for women artists, not quite so strong but almost the same. If you make the wrong thing of it you end up parroting what they want you to parrot. I don't feel that there's any way for me not to be in the Munich Kunstbau. I'm an artist who decided to be a part of the art world that the Munich Kunstbau is part of. They couldn't keep me out.

RH: It seems to me so different from the situation of, say, Black videomakers in Britain or Germany where people there are saying we want to be able to be part of things,

whereas in North America it seems to be the opposite, at least when you think of how a lot of Native people are trying not to be part of it all.

JD: For good reason. Except that it's set up for us from the beginning; we're in a no-win situation in the Americas—completely. If you're a Black American you're not in such a no-win situation because there's already a kind of forwardness to your project. Not like a Black who voluntarily comes to London from an English colony, it's not quite the same. But still there is no acceptable romantic history of American Blacks. Their project is necessarily forwardness in a certain way. Jazz music is about the future, it's about making something to get out, something to escape, to dance your way

out of the stupidity. Blues is the same. We invented the blues, Cherokees invented the blues, our old spells are where it comes from and they are spells about turning people blue. Blue rocks are going to fall on you. All these blue things in these songs make people sick and they would get sick and they would get blue.

We only get to protect our culture, we don't get to make a new thing. We get only to tell about the past, to tell about traditions, or to protect our traditions, we don't get to move forward, the way jazz moves forward, the way the blues moves forward. So we have blue spells and they're kind of useless to us. The Blacks took them and they were useful to them so I'm perfectly willing to let the southern Blacks have the blues, it helps all of humanity.

I feel always potentially smarter in Europe because I am potentially a homeless orphan. I can be ready to intellectually engage with whatever situation is there tomorrow morning. I've not experienced it yet because, of course, the romanticism is still there, but I feel that I might have that potential. Every review of my work in Europe reads, "Cherokee artist..." Every single one. In France it's worse. In Calais my show happened just as a stupid French movie called *An Indian in the City* came out. It's about an Amazon Indian who comes to Paris, so the headline of the big full page review of my show in Calais was "An Indian in the City."

RH: I know artists in Toronto who are trying to justify being in the city, to be an Indian in the city. But that you even have to say that...

JD: It's strange, huh? It's a set-up, it's a complete set-up. Whatever you do in the Americas is a set-up.

RH: I've been thinking about this story about my grandmother since I got here. My grandmother got kind of obsessed with Europe. She wanted to go visit Europe and she did, she went by herself on a tour. When she got back she told me that her grandmother had said to her that whenever you are somewhere or you're looking at something it belongs to you. She said "the whole time I was in Europe I just thought that." She went around Europe claiming everything for herself.

JD: Nice. When I got back from Siberia, I called my older sister and bragged to her that I'd been in Siberia, she said "oh yeah, my friend went and she found a husband there."

Beverly Koski: Speaking of Siberia, can you talk about *The Poles for the Center of the World*?

JD: It's an ongoing project—it hasn't finished yet. I don't feel that I live in Europe, I feel that I live in the continent called Eurasia, which is an unknowably large continent. That's what I like about it, but it's a heavy art history at the same time. And it has a history of Joseph Beuys deciding that he was a

personal bridge between the East and the West, between Siberia and Europe for example. A romantic old idea of the artist as hero, that the artist could solve the problems by heroic gesture. But I like Joseph Beuys all the same, he did some good stuff. I want not to attack Beuys but to make a group of things that are: "and furthermore," "and also," "besides that," "and what about this," and that kind of thing.

I decided that every continent had seven centres. This is an arbitrary decision because I decided there were seven continents—maybe there are eight, maybe there are nine—it doesn't matter. And every village also has seven centres, and everything has seven centres. For every continent I would make a staff of the seven centres. Eurasia gets probably eight staffs because besides the seven centres, there's Brussels that tries to be the economic centre, tries to be a political centre. That's the first staff I made. They're just stupid little poles, each one has a mirror attached to it in a different way. I made one in the city of Yakutsk in Siberia. I went out to the forest and cut down a tree, a little birch tree sapling and put a mirror on it and left in front of what they call their shopping centre, a two-storey wooden building. I just leaned it up there and left it and took some photos of it. I made one in the forest of Bohemia. I also cut down a little sapling and stripped it down and put a little mirror on it. I made one in Rheims. They look a little bit like Joseph Beuys' *Eurasian Staffs*. They look as though I misunderstood. They look badly made and too literal and have mirrors where you can comb your hair in case you need to look nice.

RH: I can't help but speculate about where the centre of Canada is...

BK: How about North America?

JD: The centre of North America is several places. It's right there in the Pipestone Quarry, Minnesota, but it's also in Chalma, in Mexico. I just did a show in Pori, Finland. I put stones everywhere inside and outside the gallery, just little, kickable stones, anti-architecture. The building is a separate building and you could play with all of the outsideness of it, great big glass windows that you could see inside. I filled it completely with round stones, all the way out to the street, and all the offices and every place. I put on the wall a map of the world and an explanation about this tree in Chalma, Mexico that all the local Indians have to make a pilgrimage to. Local is within a thousand-mile radius. So people walk there, and it really is a magic tree, it's an ahuahuate, which is the biggest tree in the world. It's big around but it's not tall. It's a great, great giant ahuahuate and it has a spring coming from the bottom of it. That's magic isn't it? Everyone goes there, and they put little carvings of their children there to connect themselves with the centre. If your parents remembered to do that, you are always connected to that centre. You have to walk there and as you're walking you should

kick a stone toward the tree because people who chicken out are turned to stone and maybe that stone you kick is a chicken-shit Indian, whose life you might save. He might come back to life as he gets to the tree. So, I told that story and I made a suggested route from Pori, Finland, to Mexico, to the tree in Chalma. I liked the piece because the politics were very light and not didactic.

BK: Last year you were making a maquette for a public art piece in Rome. How did that go?

JD: It was a trash heap, a dump. It was the anniversary of Rome, which was 3,000 years old. They invited a lot of artists. Outside I made my monumental dump. It was marvelous doing it. We ultimately had to have security guards for the dump, because during the day people would come and they would try to take it. I helped them, I tried to say, "this is art, would you please not touch the art." [every-one laughs]

BK: Did anybody add to it?

JD: No one added to it. No. But the catalogue was quite nice, it's got all these famous dead artists. And I had to do a model, but I never make models. I wanted the piece to be shown in the catalogue, so I made a twenty inch high model, that I spent almost a thousand dollars on. I had to buy little doll furniture and make things and put things together and break and glue.

BK: So it was a temporary public piece, or is it still there?

JD: I couldn't get them to listen to me. I wanted it to be a permanent public piece, but the permanency is shorter than other permanencies. If you had left Michelangelo's *David* out all these years, it would have gone away by now. When you see a marble gravestone they disappear after 200 years. After a thousand years it's like a salt lick or something. I thought if my piece could last, in one state or another, all of 1997, it would be permanent for these days. It was outdoors and somebody had thrown away a plant and I put that in the garbage too. And I knew that some insects and some mice and rats and birds, and maybe cats and maybe dogs, maybe a ferret, who knows, would make use of the piece. I could see it also as a piece that was changing because it was constantly in use, but no one ever went back and took a single photo.

RH: One thing I enjoyed talking about the other day was the idea of the Eurasian mall.

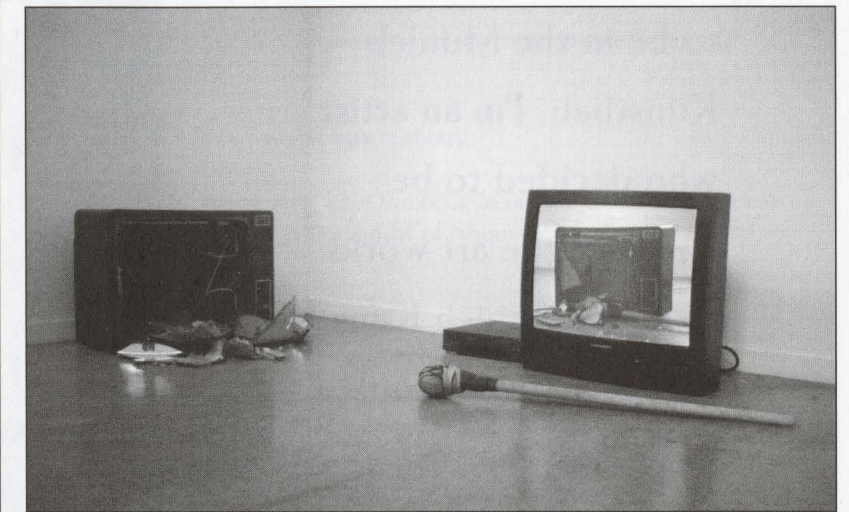
JD: Yeah, I must certainly do that. I had the idea, well, for several reasons. One is that I was in Lisbon, a few times, because I like Lisbon. The second time I was there I went to the big new shopping mall. They're still a very poor country

who really can't afford to be in Europe. They're in because they are Portugal and Europe would be embarrassed to say that Portugal is not Europe. So they have to let them in. They got European money to build this giant shopping mall. At the same moment they have a great problem with poverty. They've got all the colonials back, the crazy Portuguese who lived in Africa as rich people, they're all back in Lisbon as poor people. They also have a lot of Africans from those colonies because Portugal made those colonies poor and so they come to where they think the money is, but the money's not there. Everyone goes to the shopping mall and they walk around and eat an ice cream. Nothing happens. No one can buy anything, there's nothing to buy, just silly clothes, silly Adidas. It looks like the future to everyone because it's what Lisbon never was before. Everyone thinks, oh boy, we're almost in the future. We are almost out of Portugal and into Europe.

So that's where I got the idea from but also from several places. I was in Northern and Central Siberia and they're still a part of Russia. It's an area, let's say the size of half of Canada, with no railroad and no highway, no telephones, no electricity. The city of Yakutsk has electricity and telephones, no place else, and they're trying to be free of Russia. They're nice people and they hate the Russians. They say, let's see, we can sell our timber but we can't get it out. It's not so easy to helicopter it out, maybe we will do tourism, that's what we'll do. And that's what they're trying to do. If they could attract tourists they think it would be sportsmen who would want to come and shoot a bear, or stab a bear, or go fishing on the ice. They don't realize that Canada already has these things, and Norway, even Scotland has these things.

So, it seems logical that you could make a real shopping mall that's fitting for Eurasia, an almost infinitely large shopping mall. You can have a pavilion for every country and you can have trips, you can have martial trips where you can actually go help fight somebody's enemy. If you're on the side of—there's a few details that have to be worked out—I was about to say if you were on the side of the Kurds you could go and fight the Turks, but that's too dangerous. You could go and fight with the Turks against the Kurds, if you like. Or with the Iraqis against the Kurds, or even the U.S. against the Kurds, because they've been in that fight too. All from the shopping mall. You could have camel rides and eagle hunts. You could go to China and you could go to Belgium. We could make railroads from Vladivostok, from Beijing, from Singapore, from Amsterdam, from Paris, all to our shopping mall—and airports, we could cover all bases. We could sell little ceramic toys of every country in the universe.

It's also a way, I think, of saving the lives of indigenous peoples. All these people starving in Tibet, the nomads in the north of Tibet, they can easily get to our shopping mall. We'll make them a special theme park because there's not many of them and by the time we get the theme park built



Left: *Shirtograph* Above: *HTV*
Both from the exhibition "The Anatomy Lesson (A Progress Report)," Rheims, 1996.

they'll be even less of them. Yeah, this might work well. We can do great things.

BK: I guess I should ask you about the project that you're working on here.

JD: I'm going to show it to you. [brings out a small wooden crate] My first idea was to try to respect this little piece of work, this fruit box, by looking at it completely. Looking at all the material, and looking at how all the material had been put together. Thinking "how the hell did they make a staple gun that goes around corners," and "who makes the steel, who makes the wire," thinking about everything I could about this box and doing a report on what I saw. I started doing that a year ago when I moved to Marseilles where I got the box and I carried it with me all the time. There's something I didn't notice and only Magnus Ottertun noticed it.

RH: Okay, now I feel obliged to notice it as well.

JD: Yeah, it's a test, an art student test.

RH: [looks at the crate] No, I can't figure it out.

JD: It's these little dots in the corner [points to coloured dots that are printed at the corners of the box]. They're instructions. I didn't even see them but these dots are the instructions from before the staple gun, that said [in effect] put nail here. Isn't that nice? So it's left over very simple instructions that now have no more use.

BK: Those? [points to the dots] Those are registration marks for printing all the colours of the box's logo.

JD: Shit. Too bad. They were so pleased that they had figured out something that I never noticed. You need educated people to figure those things out. I see where we went wrong now.

BK: I think they serve a dual purpose.

JD: There's no such thing as a happy compromise.

BK: I'm trying.

JD: That's something that we didn't even think about: how do you print three colours on a piece of wood. The name of my essay about this box is "An Unemployed Essay on Work." So it's really just guessing everything.

I don't feel that there's any way for me not to be in the Munich Kunstbau. I'm an artist who decided to be a part of the art world that the Munich Kunstbau is part of. They couldn't keep me out.



Jimmie Durham cutting a tree in Siberia to make *A Pole to Mark the Center of the World*, 1996.

My father's first job was a job where you'd go to work and they'd give you some money at the end of the week. The crew of guys, they went into the forest, cut down a white oak tree and with hand tools they sliced it up and made apple crates. That's quite a business to go from tree to apple crate just there. He tried to teach us how to do it in case we ever needed to make them, because he was so pleased with the knowledge. I'm comparing myself and my knowledge about work and architecture. If you're there too long you get something. If a building stands too long on the street it gets a layer of knowledge about traffic. If I'm an apprentice as a young man I stand around helping the older men, then supposedly their knowledge comes to me the same way. I have this layer of supposed knowledge which is actually a trap, just like soot is a trap. It's all the knowledge of the past, it's no knowledge of the future, it's against the future. So I'm comparing my own first experiences of jobs and comparing them to a building that gets dirty.

RH: It's an inevitable process though.

JD: But if we can find a way, a bunch of ways, to think about it instead of accepting it... I'm working now on architecture. Architecture makes you believe that it is the city when in fact our intellectuality and our desire for freedom is the city. Architecture says no, you're not the city, the state's project

is the city. The state owns the city and you can build in that architectural space. And what I want—as a deliberate foreigner—I want to challenge that, to say no, we are the city, the architecture is something that we just have to move around—no matter how good or how old it is. It's like the French philosophers have already said about language: it's a dirty trap. It makes you say what it says. But if I say that language is a dirty trap, it's just that we should all intellectually know that and not reconcile ourselves to language. Maybe then more poetry would happen.

There's a monstrosity in the U.S. that the Europeans admire and that's the willingness to keep moving west and burning down what you left in the east. The Europeans are still in love with that. I can see why, because they are trapped in Notre Dame, they're trapped in Chartres Cathedral.

There's something so strange about European history. They feel that it's too heavy for them. They usually say to me, "I like to go to the U.S. because it's so free and open and here in Europe history is heavy on us." [laughs] I say, "Yeah, it's a matter of perspective."

RH: North American architecture is quite a horror too.

JD: It's really a horror, it's really a horror, but it's such a horror you can't even really address the issue.

RH: You can't really pretend it's anything either.

JD: Yeah. If in Paris or Berlin—especially in Berlin, because they're now trying to be the city of the future, and trying to maintain some tradition—if they save a lot of old buildings they have left and then they build some new buildings, everyone agrees that they've done more than they've actually done. Everyone says that they've preserved history, instead of that they've preserved a building. So then if you're a Gypsy from the Czech Republic or from Slovakia you say "I'll try Berlin." You come to Berlin and you have to say either I'm not part of this or I must buy into this, I must agree that it is history, that Berlin is history and I am not.

RH: Of course their histories are connected in a really horrifying way.

JD: They still can't say that though. They still can't do anything with Gypsies in Berlin. They're still the trouble-makers. But even if you weren't Gypsy, even if you were... To put it a different way: I was really depressed in Istanbul. It's a giant city that's been famously falling apart for 2,000 years. You want some things to be preserved, why would you not preserve some great old Byzantine cathedral? But if you preserve all of the mosques in Istanbul, which they do, and someone comes from Kurdistan who is really not Muslim, or not very Muslim, or wishes he wasn't Muslim, or just wants to dance and party in Istanbul, their only choice is to buy that history.

What I think is interesting about being an artist is to not be reconciled. You can always try to lose yourself in and investigate something, to challenge something constantly. Not just society but everything, yourself, your work, everything that you do.

RH: In the town in northwestern Ontario, where Bev's from, there really are only two alternatives. There are white people and Indians, that's virtually it, the roles are well defined.

BK: Not like Toronto, you can get comfortably lost in Toronto.

JD: That's what's good about cities, that's why people come to cities. They don't have to be who they once have been, they can be something new. I tried in New York, because I lived in an area in which about twenty languages were spoken just in our block. I thought everyday I will go out on the street dressed differently so that no one will become accustomed to what I do and I can be perfectly free and everyday somebody would say "I never saw you in those clothes before." [laughs] Some version of that: "Oh, you're going to a party" or "Oh, you've been working."

I have a friend in Paris who's in school to be an art historian. She works for a gallery and she's one of those very good French people that makes France worthwhile. I said "I

wish I didn't have to work so much," and she said "stop working." I said "I have to sell fifty pieces a year to pay my rent, get my groceries, my wine," and she said "Oh, what a difficult translation: art to money." It's an impossible translation. To think of it as a translation...

RH: I can't even understand the translation of labour to money.

JD: It's what this box is about.

RH: It's bizarre, I get the occasional grant, I know somehow that I am buying months of labour or I am being excused from it...

JD: Some Korean women making Adidas paid for it.

RH: Yeah, I know. It's horrible, it seems so distanced from anything that I can compute or that I can viscerally understand. If you put a thousand dollars into my hand, I can't understand it as hours of labour.

JD: There's no danger of that confusion happening here. [everyone laughs]

RH: Well it sort of happened because I can put the name Jimmie Durham down on a grant application and it does turn into a thousand dollars.

JD: I'm going to try it. I need thirty-five thousand to buy these stones.

RH: You're still trying to buy them?

JD: If I start working on the movie, without having control of the stones, I have no control of the movie. Someone else can make it and ace me out. If someone likes the idea, they can say "It's good, but the leading actor, Durham, he's not quite right. We need De Niro." The stones are my script...

(to be continued next issue)

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Agnes Heyd for introducing us to Hans Crauel, who was kind enough to provide us with a place to stay in Berlin (not to mention good conversation and breakfasts). Thanks also to Kate Stevens and Eileen McConnell for help with transcription and, of course, to Jimmie Durham and Maria-Therese Alves for their enormous kindness and generosity during our visit.

Beverly Koski is a visual artist.

Richard Hill is a writer and artist.

LESBIAN NATIONAL PARKS AND SERVICES

WANTS YOU!

Lesbian National Parks and Services was founded in 1997 to increase awareness and sensitivity to our complex, varied, and sometimes fragile lesbian ecosystem. With the formation of L.N.P.S. arose the need for a visible presence, an official force entrusted with the tasks of education, resource management, and recruitment. Hence the Lesbian Ranger Corps was born. These concerned professionals identify regions in which lesbianism, through no fault of its own, has not taken root and flourished. The Rangers demonstrate daily their commitment to the creation of a positive environment in which lesbians of all genus and species can flourish. But they can't do it alone. There are many ways you can become involved with Lesbian National Parks and Services, so join us.

Who is allowed to wear the world-famous khaki and green Lesbian Ranger uniform?

Only those who have passed the rigors of our extensive screening and training process are inducted into the much respected Lesbian Ranger force. Our education process (encompassing ecology, survival techniques, and lifestyle) is not for the faint of heart, but can be oh so rewarding. If you are considering a career in lesbianism, we welcome you. Contact Lesbian National Parks and Services today.

Is there a place for men in the Lesbian Rangers?

Male members find the induction process particularly challenging. However, with true commitment becoming a Lesbian Ranger is within everyone's grasp.

I believe in the Ranger ethic and want to be involved, but can't make a full-time commitment. Is there a place for me in the Corps?

Serve in the Lesbian Ranger Corps Reserve! Designed to meet the needs of your busy, fast-paced schedule, the Corps Reserve offers you the flexibility you need, and still allows you to make a commitment to serve in times on crisis. Enjoy the camaraderie of monthly meetings, educational retreats and seasonal cook-outs.

Is there a way for my kids to become involved?

Yes! The Junior Rangers is designed to introduce your child to the wondrous experience of lesbian wildlife and wilderness fun. Watch your child's eyes light up as she earns merit badges, makes friends and learns leadership skills. And she'll love her pint-sized uniform! Start a Pack in your neighbourhood today.

How can I take the Lesbian Ranger spirit back to my neighbourhood?

Wherever you go, whatever you do, ask not what lesbianism can do for you, but what you can do for lesbianism.

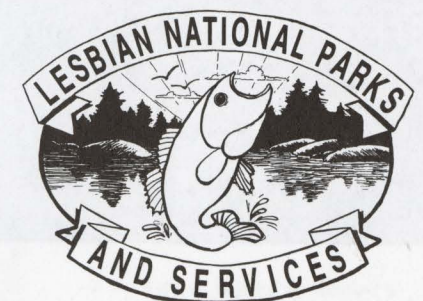
Remember, whether you live in a large urban centre or a small rural community, on a mountainside or the vast, open prairie: Lesbian National Parks and Services depends on the commitment of all citizens to create an ecosystem better suited to the diversity of lesbian wildlife. Lesbian National Parks and Services wants you. We need you. Together we can make a difference.

Join Lesbian National Parks and Services Today!

For more information write to:

Lesbian National Parks and Services Headquarters
485 Wardlaw Avenue
Winnipeg, MB Canada
R3L 0L9

Or e-mail the Rangers at:
finger@escape.ca





In a bizarro, alternative universe kind of way, I sort of resemble Superman. Look, up in the sky, suspended by his wrists and sporting a huge erection – it's me. Yes, it's me, and most of the time I feel as though I come from another solar system. And despite my skinny physique and frail sensitivities, I possess certain powers and abilities far beyond those of so-called normal human beings. I was born with a genetic illness that I was supposed to succumb to at two, then ten, then twenty, and so on, but I didn't. And, in a never-ending battle not just to survive but to subdue my stubborn disease, I've learned to fight sickness with sickness.

Sick Superman, photo by Sheree Rose, 1992.

When you lose that person, then who are you?

FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH SHEREE ROSE BY CATHY BUSBY

Introduction

Sheree Rose is the surviving partner and collaborator of performance artist Bob Flanagan. Bob, who died in 1995, suffered from cystic fibrosis, which he managed with SM treatments directed by his mistress Sheree. Recently, a highly acclaimed film about him, Sick: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist (Sheree Rose, Kirby Dick) has been screening in cinemas internationally. As a curator and researcher into pain narratives and survivor identities, Cathy Busby interviewed Sheree about her role as Bob's director and dominatrix. Cathy wanted to take Sheree's emotional pulse and talk about the process of re-inventing herself in the aftermath of losing Bob. This interview took place in Sheree's home in Culver City, L.A. on January 23, 1998.

A lot of people would say you had something that was so rare. Most people never have a relationship like that. The other side of that is: when you lose that person, then who are you?

Bob and I meeting, it was... fated. I was going to school [1977–80] getting my degree in psychology, and I had presumed a life of becoming a therapist. And then Bob came along and all those ideas just left. I had been studying abnormal psychology and I was studying different kinds of body therapies, where you go beyond talk therapy and you actually engage the body in the therapeutic process. When I met Bob, he was a man who had a disease and who wanted me to beat him. And so it clicked—here is a case study I could have.

I saw right away, I intuited right away that the way he got around the physical pain was through SM, by not only controlling the pain he received, but deciding what kind of pain. It was specific things he wanted done. It wasn't just

having his head hit or something like that. It was a ritualized means to achieve this goal to transcend the body.

tied up with Bob

I liked [SM] because it turned around the idea that all men are on top and all woman are submissive. I was able to act out what I thought was a better form of relating—a dominant woman. Basically I was always sort of a bossy person, liking to get my own way. I don't want to dominate others so much as I don't want them to dominate me. I like my autonomy. I do what I want. I go at my own pace.

But Bob became so fascinating to me that I sort of lost myself in him. What I try to think now is, how was I when I first met him? What were my interests then? I was married at twenty, I was Mrs. Levin, I was Dan's wife. Those were the days that women didn't really have much of an existence outside of their husbands. When I left him, and started life out on my own, I had a whole new group of friends, I became sexually active, and I was finding out who I was, what music I liked, what movies I liked, what art I liked... And then with Bob, we found out a lot of those things together, but it was always tied up with Bob. I'm used to being with somebody, or part of somebody. But on the other hand I think it's something of a gift to be able to have it [my autonomy] back this young. I'm not ready to give it all up. I'm not ready to retire.

mean mommy

A lot of Bob's art came out of our relationship. He used our relationship as the matrix from which everything else came,

and a lot of that was because I wanted it to be that way. He had always written autobiographically, but veiled, and I thought: let's have it out in the open. So, a lot of the early work that dealt with his pain and SM was under my direction.

It was very much like a mother seeing her child as very talented and precocious, and then putting all the energy into that child, and getting the pleasure from seeing that child succeed. And because of the SM relationship where Bob obviously wanted an older woman, and he liked the idea of a mean mommy, one who gave him rules, and punished him if he didn't do right... So that was already there as something we both wanted.

I don't know if he would have gone on to the kind of art that he did if I hadn't been there pushing him. At the time I didn't feel that what I added to it was as much as Bob was bringing to it. I felt that he was smarter than me, more creative than I was. Over the years I became more sure of myself, but it was always in the service of Bob and his career, and making sure that Bob was going to be well-known. And as a woman, that was something I had been raised to do. You know, it was easy for me to fall into that role of being the one behind the scenes. And in the art world it's no different than anywhere else. Everybody needs a wife to get a lot of those details done. I took on that role, willingly, because it was the most comfortable for me. But I think I was wanting to do other things. But with someone dying, and especially as it becomes more critical, you really don't have time. I knew I had to take care of Bob, however long that took.

...like a mother hen

In the SM world I feel sort of like a mother hen, because there really wasn't much of a social world until Bob and I got it started here. There was something in San Francisco but it was much more gay-oriented. Bob and I started the club [Society of Janus] down here in 1980 and it was more heterosexually oriented. When I got into SM there were virtually no women in it who were not professional. So we sort of created this sub-culture, which now includes gays and lesbians. I still have many friends in the community.

Last year Bob and I (Bob posthumously) were given a lifetime achievement award from the National Leather Association. I have a medallion; it's very beautiful. I gave the keynote speech at their convention. I'm very well thought of in that community. I give lectures and I go to their conventions. I usually give a couple of workshops. I still feel—as a civil rights group—it's really important.

I'm very interested in sex education, in teaching more about [SM] rather than actually doing it myself. As far as practising it myself, I really don't anymore. It was very focused on Bob, on who he was, and who I was with him. It's a lot of work to be somebody's mistress. It's like being their mother. I've sort of done that bit. But, again, it's something that I've done for so long, I'm one of the elders of the

community now. Which is nice. I get a lot more respect in the SM community than I do in the art community. But I think they sort of realize more what the contribution was.

Bob and I, together, had our vision

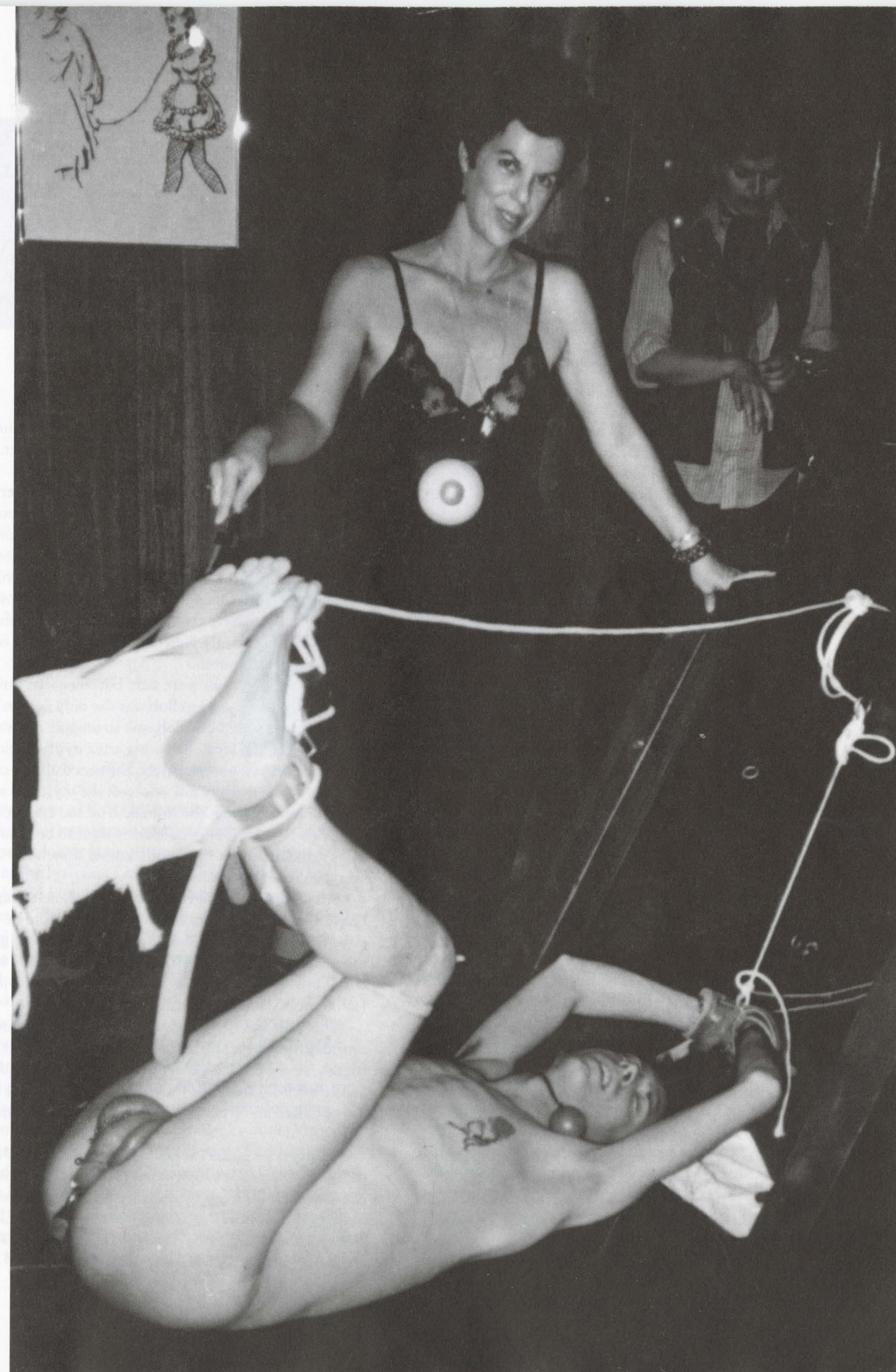
I had been doing the documentation of his work since 1980, and videoing, making sure everything was videoed, with the knowledge that at some point this was going to be presented to the public. Bob and I, together, had our vision of how this was supposed to be. The biggest tragedy was that Bob died in the making of [the] film *Sick: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist* (1997). Because if he hadn't died, this would be a very different film. I didn't feel I would be able to complete the work that I had been doing, because Bob needed more of my attention. That's when we brought Kirby [Dick] in, and he sort of took over in a way that I never imagined he would.

I gave him incredible stuff to work on, [yet] he didn't want to list me as co-producer. In fact, there was a website he had, and he had his name, all my images, and it said "images copyright 1997, Kirby Dick." I mean, he did do the editing for the most part, though even there he brought in another woman [Dody Dorn] and she was the one who really did the editing. He formed it into the film, but it was not his idea. He took away something that was mine, that I had been nurturing. I had saved every bit of footage, video, everything. And I actually counted the minutes of the film, and Kirby actually shot about fifteen, mostly the interviews. Just about everything else was shot by me. For example, he was not there for the last few weeks of Bob's life. So I was left to photograph all of that myself. I was losing this person that I love, and yet I had to remember to have a tape and turn the camera on. And then after he died, I went into the special room there. I washed his body, cleaned him and shaved him, and then photographed him.

if I never take another photograph...

I used to bring my camera with me everywhere. I used to photograph and document a lot of things. I don't do that anymore. Maybe it's because Bob was my muse. As much as I was his. I don't have my muse. I don't have that person who sparks my creativity. So I have been thinking about writing, because people have been asking me about writing my memoirs. And of course, memoirs are hot now. But I don't work quite that way. Even though my work is very controversial, and shocking, and all that, I don't set out to do that. So I don't want to write a shocking story, a lurid story, of me and Bob. I want to write about my transformation, from meeting Bob into the person I am now.

I still have thousands of photographs that have never been published. A lot of them are of Bob, a lot of them are black and white that have been very personal to me, that I have resisted turning into a commodity. My feeling now is



Opposite: Bob and Sheree at SM play party, Los Angeles, photo by Sheree Rose, 1983.

that even if I never take another photograph, I have an incredible archive of material. Maybe in a hundred years from now, or fifty years from now, there might be some interest, like after I am dead. That would be OK with me.

**feeling this ache and pain in my body,
I felt so close to Bob**

I had such intimacy with Bob that I no longer want that kind of intimacy with anyone else. I'm very interested in ritual and the healing that comes through ritual. So on the anniversary of his death, the first year [December 1996], I went to Nepal. This was a lifelong dream I had. In fact, in one of Bob's works he says something like: when Sheree first saw me in the hospital hooked up to all the tubes, she says, "oh god, now I'll never get to the Himalayas."

I did some small rituals there to commemorate his death and I brought some symbolic things of his, which I burned. In Katmandu there is a river that goes right to the Ganges, so I scattered some of the ashes into that river... And I was doing this very hard hiking, the trekking was harder than anything I've ever done. Every step was painful and I had to stop every ten feet or so and just breathe. And I remembered so many times how Bob had to do that just walking. He had to stop and get his breath, and I was so impatient with him because I could never understand how it felt. But here I was fifteen thousand feet high, trudging and feeling this ache and this pain in my body. I felt so close to Bob. I finally understood what he had to deal with every day of his life, how physically hard it was for him. And I cried a lot. Every day on the trek I was the last one. I literally just cried and cried. It was very cathartic. Being there, it meant to me that I was able to go on now. I wasn't going to kill myself.

I wasn't depressed in Nepal. Things like quietness, calmness and centredness are really valued there. My interests [are] not so much in producing art as they are in experiencing a different quality of life. Maybe one where I don't have my camera, where I'm not, where I don't have to express it in any other way than just living it, and then writing about it.

this hole that is inside of me

I'm not afraid to die. I think that's the biggest thing that's changed. I think I was very fearful, especially of Bob's death. Let me make it clear—I have no interest in dying tomorrow. But if I did, I would accept it totally. I've seen a lot of changes. I think I helped some of those changes come about. And now, it's more reflecting, it's going inward and figuring it all out. Because I lived life so intensely, I recorded it through photographs which I'm going to use to help me, because I look at them and they do evoke memories, a lot of them. And so that's how I'm going to approach it, through images. But, I think that sense of this hole that is inside of me, it doesn't go away. It will always be there. He was too

much a part of me to ever forget, or move past him. And I don't miss Bob the way he was the last two or three years. I miss Bob how he was in the early '80s.

And I realized that was something, because he got so ill, and the illness became everything, that it sort of blotted out how delightful and funny and wonderful he was when we first met. I mean, those years are way in the distant past. But those were the best years, just he and I relating to one another, before we were doing art, and doing things in museums and all that. And he was the healthiest. Everything was new, everything was exciting, it was the wonderment of it all for me. It was great.

most people don't see their loved ones die

I was always interested in the memento mori paintings that included things like the skull, an hourglass, a flower. All these symbols. And also I was very taken with the Victorians taking funeral photographs. And in other cultures as well, where they photographed the person in the coffin, and how this was very elaborate, and was done very matter-of-factly. In our culture most people don't see their loved ones die, or they don't want to see it... or think about it until it happens. Of course, because of Bob's illness, he was forced to not have that attitude. And the macabre sense of humour, he certainly didn't invent it. It was sort of dusted off from other centuries.

None of our friends were sick, but since that time many of them have died. And so Bob was the only person we knew who was sick. Now Bob isn't so unique. He was when I met him. But the idea of a young artist dying tragically way too soon has, unfortunately, happened all too often. I think what AIDS really did was took the mystique and romance out of dying, and it made it all too common. I think now, it's not that people don't want to be reminded of it, it's just that almost everybody knows somebody who has been taken away too soon.

I have ideas, but I haven't really felt whole enough yet. I have a lot of supporters and people who would be interested in things that I do. So it's just a matter of me getting it together to actually do it. It's like getting the wind knocked out of you. It takes a little while to recover. But I will. And I'm not nearly as depressed as I was two years ago.

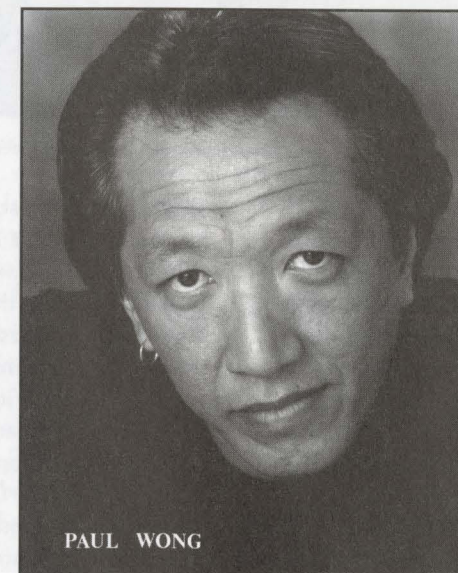
This year was harder because I was here in town for his birthday, the day after Christmas. I did some rituals with friends. And we got together to remember Bob, and we had a little birthday party for him. Which is something I like to do, because I still feel his energy. It's not gone completely.

Cathy Busby is a researcher and curator completing her doctoral studies in the Communications program at Concordia University, and is currently a National Gallery of Canada Contemporary Art Fellow researching the Art Metropole Collection. She is co-editor of When Pain Strikes, University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming August, 1998. She has archived and documented understandings of pain in both self-help books and artists' books.

Misfits Together

PAUL WONG ON ART, COMMUNITY AND VANCOUVER IN THE 1970S AND '80S

INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD FUNG



PAUL WONG

Paul Wong is one of Canada's premier artists, working principally in video, installation and performance. His work has been honoured with many distinctions, including a retrospective at the National Gallery of Canada and the Bell Canada Award for outstanding contribution to video art. Like Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Yoko Ono and Nam June Paik, Paul Wong was one of those few Asian artists who thrived in the North American avant-garde before the "multicultural" breakthrough of the 1980s. Paul Wong is also a controversial artist. In 1984, his multi-channel installation *Confused: Sexual Views* was cancelled from the Vancouver Art Gallery before it opened, sparking one of Canada's most dramatic anti-censorship battles.

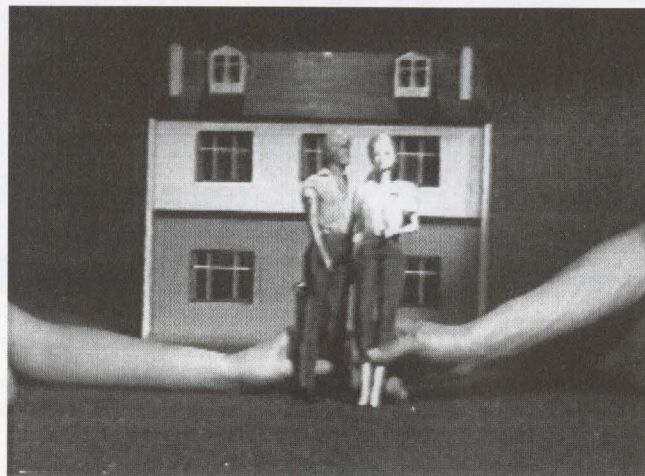
Within the art community, Paul Wong is known as an intrepid advocate for art and artists. He was a founding director of the Satellite Video Exchange Society (Video In), was a member of the ANNPAC's Minquon Panchayat, and he helped jump-start the exhibition of Asian Canadian art with two landmark group shows: "New World Asians" in 1987 and "Yellow Peril: Reconsidered," 1990–92. Wong's career continues to flourish and in 1998 he realized projects in Hong Kong and Singapore. In this telephone and e-mail

interview, videomaker and FUSE editor Richard Fung revisits Paul Wong's early career as an artist and organizer.

RICHARD FUNG: You started making video in the early '70s at a very young age. How were you introduced to the medium?

PAUL WONG: I picked up my first video camera in grade eleven. That was over twenty-five years ago during the heyday of the Trudeau Liberals. As the baby boom generation was coming of age, there was high unemployment and they instituted massive grant programs to appease the youth rebellion. These included LIP and OFY grants (Local Initiative Projects and Opportunities For Youth). In the early 1970s, the Vancouver Art Gallery had progressive educational programs out in the community. One was the Stadium Gallery, transforming an inactive baseball park into an experimental art centre. This was in my neighbourhood. I was put in charge of the OFY program and hired my arty friends from school. This was 1972. It was the summer job that turned into my artistic journey.

THIS WAS THE UTOPIAN PERIOD AT THE START OF THE ELECTRONIC REVOLUTION.



Confused: Sexual Views, 1984, video, 50 min.

At the Stadium, I met video guru Michael Goldberg who became my mentor. He was a member of EAT, the avant-garde international electronic art and technology movement in the late 1960s. He was a pioneer of video art: he started video access centres in Canada, he authored the *Accessible Portapak Manual*, and in 1975, he became the first Canada Council video officer. He has lived in Tokyo for the past eighteen years.

I had my eye on his video Portapak; he had an eye for talent and ambition. I became his apprentice and his shadow. He introduced me to electronic art, alternative politics, social activism and community television. I followed him on his travels to New York, Montreal, Toronto, Quebec, San Francisco and Tokyo.

RF: You have a reputation for helping young artists. Did your experience with Michael Goldberg foster this concern?

PW: Absolutely! I know that it ignited something in me when someone gave me the respect and the trust to succeed at something. I have no formal training in art; I learned directly by working with professionals. Both the Video In and I have created various types of mentoring, training and apprenticeship programs, not just in video production but also in activism, criticism and curating.

RF: Was your interest in infrastructure also rooted in your early experience?

PW: Video production is not an individual studio practice; it is expensive and requires working with many people. The Video In was premised on self-determination. We viewed our work as anti-establishment and oppositional to corporate culture. We wanted to create infrastructures that would support our alternative lifestyles, working co-operatively to

share skills and resources. It was important politically and artistically that we had control over our own means of production, distribution and exhibition. This was the utopian period at the start of the electronic revolution. We viewed ourselves as a guerrilla television group. For years we discussed getting our own broadcast license.

In 1975, the Video Inn bus tour trucked across the country. [Video Inn changed its name to Video In when it moved from its original Japantown home in 1986.] Affiliations included A Space, General Idea, 15 Dance Lab, Trinity Video, The Hummer Sisters/Videocabaret, Lisa Steele/Tom Sherman in Toronto, Vidéographe, Véhicule Art, NFB, Pierre Falardeau in Montreal. I was considered the West Coast whiz-kid and after the tour I returned to Toronto and set up A Space Video, which was the first artist access editing facility. Rodney Werden took over and eventually developed it into Charles Street Video.

In 1978, we started publishing the bi-monthly *Video Guide Magazine*, which continued until 1993. I learned to write and edit publications. I had an (anonymous) regular gossip column called "Tattletapes," which appeared on the inside front cover—it was my forum to adulate or write poison pen. The Vancouver Art Gallery curator Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker threatened us with a libel suit. It was the column everyone loved to hate.

RF: How did your curating get started?

PW: Video In was set up as a resource for community groups, programmers, video makers and artists. The largest area was the screening room: a funky living room setting with overstuffed couches and coffee tables. From the very beginning I was involved in developing public programming. Locally we initiated exchange shows with other artist groups, and through the International Video Exchange Directory we hosted video artists and curators.

...WE VIEWED OURSELVES AS A GUERRILLA TELEVISION GROUP.

Curating was a necessity. Very few were doing it, and even fewer were doing it well or often enough. I curate projects that are directly related to my own work. It's completely self-serving; I am developing audiences eventually for myself. For me this is much more honest than, say, those who are curating to earn a living, impress other curators, or as a career move to bigger and better projects.

RF: With "New World Asians" and "Yellow Peril" you organized two of the first Canadian exhibitions of art by Asian North Americans. How did these come about?

PW: My first visit to China in 1982 with my mother was pure "culture shock." Meeting all my relatives, seeing my past, all the tradition (and communism) was too much. It was a never-ending Chinatown with no escape. I went equipped to shoot the China in my mind, which of course did not exist. Unable to find what I came looking for, I was unable to appreciate what was in front of me. I came back with useless fragmented recordings that paralleled my sense of cultural displacement and isolation—who I was and how I had become was so separate from my heritage. I had no one to talk to and to share this state of confusion. There was no information, books, art or media works. I sought what little contemporary work was available through Asian American artists and organizations in San Francisco and New York. This research for what was to become my tape *Ordinary Shadows, Chinese Shade* (1988) evolved into the show "New World Asians" in 1987. The success of the "New World Asians" series led to producing a second show for the Chisenhale Gallery in London, and that led to "Yellow Peril: Reconsidered."

RF: These curatorial efforts were organized through the organization On Edge. How did that develop?

PW: In 1984, when the Vancouver Art Gallery banned my installation *Confused: Sexual Views*, that really sent me into a period of reassessment. I was thankful I had a well-developed artist-run community that had always supported me; I wasn't reliant on the public institutions and the establishment. But I also realized that institutions like the Video In and the Western Front were not able to respond quickly enough toward major new initiatives. I needed an entity that would allow me to organize projects quickly and efficiently. On Edge developed out of the Paul Wong versus Vancouver Art Gallery Defense Fund Committee. Elspeth Sage and I are the co-founders, and still the artistic directors.

RF: Why were Video In and Western Front not able to give you the kind of speed you wanted?

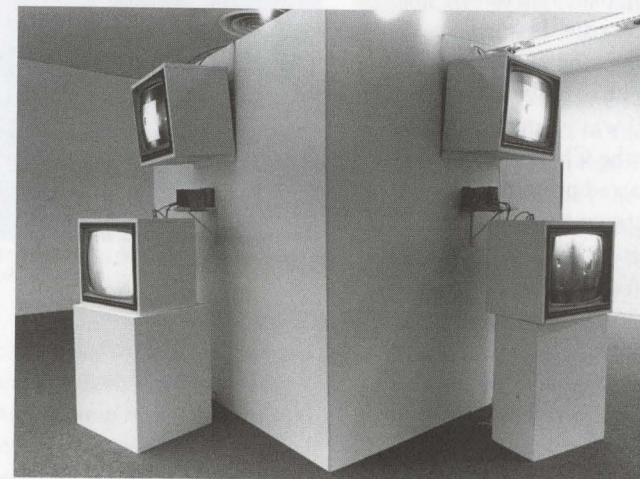
PW: By the mid-1980s they had become institutions. Budgets went toward supporting salaries, equipment, rent and programs planned well in advance. They were not able or willing to support major new initiatives, or artists that they were not familiar with. It was frustrating to have to persuade uninterested and bureaucratic committees. On Edge is a simple model. We operate on a project-by-project basis. Our monies go towards programming and not towards maintenance of facilities and staff. We are two partners, not a committee.

RF: Was On Edge conceptualized as a race-specific project?

PW: We produce and promote work from the "margins," and that often means work that is difficult in form, content and origin. As it turns out, most of that has been by artists of colour and/or by artists working from various sites of struggle.

In 1986, we invited Hanif Kureishi from Britain. His Vancouver readings and workshops attracted a diverse

in ten sity, 1978, performance/installation. Photo: Jim Gorman.



audience and, for us, South Asians for the first time. During the residency, he wrote *The Buddha of Suburbia*, which I published in *Video Guide*. It developed into his first novel and was made into a television mini-series. Another artist was JOOLZ, who came in 1985. She was a tough punk poetess covered in tattoos, piercings and flaming scarlet hair. She was a cult figure in Britain. She spoke out against poverty and the right wing, but she could also tell poignant stories and switch into a stand-up comic. We had sold out concerts which we held in a warehouse converted into an illegal club. During this visit we collaborated on a videotape, *Homelands*, a response to race riots in her home town of Bradford. Both projects—Kureishi and JOOLZ—were co-produced with Video In and Western Front. Both of these artists inspired me and encouraged me as an artist and a programmer to speak out about racism.

We also work by request. In 1991, I curated "Kikyo: Coming Home to Powell Street," about the rebirth of the Japanese Canadian community in Vancouver. Recent projects include a video and a CD, *Jazz Slave Witness I Burn*, comprised of documents from the 1996 site-specific projects we did in Northern England. And Elspeth Sage is curating a project with First Nations artist David Neel. They want to take his thirty-foot dug-out cedar canoe to Venice and Stockholm, in full regalia with masks, songs and drums. Finally, we are doing a website that will be a retrospective of all the projects we have produced in the last twelve years.

RF: When *Ordinary Shadows, Chinese Shade* came out in 1988, it was often discussed as a kind of new work for you, one that dealt for the first time with your identity in racial-ethnic terms. But when you visited OCA [now the Ontario College of Art and Design] when I was a student there in the mid-'70s, among the tapes you showed was one about Chinese New Year. It was in a series of short black and white tapes and it included shots of the dragon dance.

PW: It is amazing that you know about this tape. It's not listed anywhere. I do not even have a copy. It was produced on 1/2" open reel, the classic Sony Portapak, The Rover. *Chinese New Year* (1974) was an in-camera edited tape. I recorded the parade and then played the tape in a storefront, a makeshift Chinese Cultural Centre. It was an exercise in shooting and instant playback. I was young and was not involved in Chinatown politics or the Chinese community. How I ended up shooting a video and presenting it there is a mystery. At that time, Chinatown was polarized between the old established guard who had Koumintang loyalties to Taiwan, and the so-called Young Maoists who supported the Peoples Republic of China, which had recently been recognized as the legitimate China. The Young Maoists were trying to democratize the Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA) which had been the one official voice of the Vancouver Chinese. They were two competing groups trying to develop a Chinese Cultural



60 Unit: Bruise, Ken Fletcher/Paul Wong, 1976, video.

Centre (CCC). The Maoists had set up a storefront as a base of operations. The struggle for control of the CBA was nasty and violent—the storefront was attacked and had to be guarded around the clock. Eventually the CBA had democratic elections and a new board of Young Maoists did get control. That rift took a long time to heal. That is why the CCC took so long to be built and why it remains apolitical to the point of being absolutely bland in its programming.

Members of the Maoists forged cultural exchanges with Asian American activists and artists in the mid-'70s. I recall them coming to the Video In to view tapes. I attended some music concerts and literary events but was never an active member of that scene.

RF: Until the mid-'80s, you were one of the few non-white artists working in the avant-garde. Since then your work is much more associated with a community of Asian artists and artists of colour.

PW: Up until then, I had dismissed that aspect of myself. "New World Asians" and *Ordinary Shadows* was a way of reconnecting with the past and with other Chinese, Asians and with First Nations artists. When I made that shift I was vocal about it. There were a lot of people who literally took me aside and said, "You didn't need to do that; you are a good artist" and "Enough is enough. This is going to be damaging to your career and it's frankly quite boring." People told me those things, point blank. I've always done work about identity. From drug culture to sexual orientation, there's been a flow of things I've investigated. But the race card, people felt very excluded and/or threatened by it. The negative comments and resistance only fortified my determination. I work better when I am pissed off.

RF: Since the '80s, many artists get into the gallery system on a "race card" and then they hope to become "just artists." Your trajectory is quite different in that your career was built as an artist without a hyphen and you later chose to take on the issue of race and identity. What was it like in the '70s being one of the few non-white artists in the avant-garde?

PW: The 1970s were formative years for myself and the Video In. It was a time of tremendous ideological, artistic and sexual struggle. I was an angry young man with an insatiable curiosity. I had many questions, opinions and not a whole lot of patience. I transformed from adolescence to

With a syringe,
he removes
sixty units
of his blood
and randomly
injects it
into my back.

being a young adult. Donny and Marie to Patti Smith, disco to punk, Picasso to Chris Burden, licking pussy to sucking cock. Being non-white was the least of my problems. We were misfits together at our time of self-discovery. I was influenced by certain art trends and especially by the growing collection at Video In, which included conceptual, performance and feminist art, and particularly work about the self and the body. Early on I was acutely aware that I did not see my body or my views reflected. *The Mainstreet Tapes* (1976–80) is an autobiographical collection of recordings using myself and the Mainstreeters as the subjects. *Seven Day Activity* (1977) records a seven-day treatment for acne. This was my way of dealing

with my terrible acne problems: I push, prod and squeeze zits in close-ups with different voice-overs providing advice, my own voice talking about my feelings of inadequacy and shame.

in ten sity (1978) is the most expressive work of this period. In a custom built 8'x8' enclosure, I go through a public catharsis. Against the soundtrack of six punk anthems, I rage and violently bounce off the walls. The live performance is recorded by cameras built into all the walls and relayed to monitors watched by an audience. The work is dedicated to Kenneth Fletcher (1954–78), my collaborator and first boyfriend (our relationship was in the closet). He committed suicide as I slept. I woke up to him hanging at the foot of the bed. On the note pinned to his chest were the words "set me free"—a Patti Smith quote. It has taken me twenty years to write out and reveal these thoughts and details. What tormented him to commit suicide? What role did I play or what could I have done to prevent it? Or did my presence give him the strength to do it? I will never know and it doesn't matter. I can tell you that I loved him and I know that he loved me. The performance was done to show my rage and perhaps his. Our relationship and how he died was never revealed as part of the work. It wasn't the point.

We had gone to high school together. In 1976, Ken and I collaborated on our first work for colour video, *60 Unit: Bruise*. With a syringe, he removes sixty units of his blood and randomly injects it into my back. The different blood types results in a bruise shown in edited time. This was our blood-brother ritual. I cannot remember when we first became lovers. I think it was after this? Does it matter?

This was what it was like being a non-white avant-garde artist in the 1970s. At that time, I never thought about race:



Windows 97, Institute of Contemporary Art site installation, 1997,
neon & photo canvases, 4.2 x 3.7 m.

60 Unit: *Bruise* was not about mixed-race; I did not view myself as a Chinese "martial artist" performing in the box, and neither did the audience. Being a young man squeezing my pimples was a critique on beauty culture.

RF: Do you think that audiences today will view those works using a racial lens, and if so, how will that affect the reading?

PW: When I was curating "Yellow Peril," there were artists who did not want to be tainted as being Asian artists. Now there are artists whose entire careers are based on being "of colour." Some of those artists are working very hard at being "just artists" of no colour, meaning white.

RF: Do you think a community of misfits like that can exist again?

PW: When the artist-run movement began in the early 1970s, it was about being different, being alternative; it was about producing work that wasn't being supported by the established institutions, and commercial gallery system. The early artist-run groups developed out of a need to work collectively and to share resources. In the '80s, the big return to painting and the blue chip investment art boom influenced a new generation of artists and artist-run galleries that were developed not as an alternative, but as a bridge to getting into the commercial gallery scene. This was more acute in Montreal, Toronto and New York. Many of these galleries operated with stables of artists. They were not interested in the public, but with getting the right critics, dealers, collectors and museum directors. More often than not, conversations artists had were about their dealers and collectors. In Vancouver, galleries were started by graduate

students and directly reflected the academic curricula of the institutions.

The entire art industry has systematically excluded the appreciation and inclusion of other artistic practices from other cultural perspectives. Contemporary art has been defined by and for whites. Looking around Vancouver, there has been very little change. The institutions are the same. They have not reallocated resources, they are not willing to share power and access. The hard fight for "funding for diversity" was hijacked. Monies didn't go to new initiatives by new communities, but instead to "inclusion" in existing institutions.

It's unfortunate that society is so competitive. In order to survive, ideas—including "identity"—are reduced to black and white. Ambiguity is difficult to market. It's like bisexuality—people are confused and threatened by not knowing where you stand. We have evolved into a festival culture, conveniently programmed into separate categories: gay and lesbian, women of colour, First Nations, film, spoken word, theatre, fringe theatre. I don't see a lot of crossover, and I look. I am happy to see the many "different communities" co-exist, but I am personally interested in hybridity and cross-cultural possibilities.

I continue to make my own art and to produce other artists. I do this on a project-by-project basis. This allows me to continue exploring new possibilities for creating ways in which art can be experienced. After all, there is nothing else like a truly great art experience. It has the power to change one's perspective, to perhaps make one look, listen and understand the world just that much differently.

Richard Fung's latest video is *School Fag* (1998) co-directed with Tim McCaskell.

FUN CRITIQUE IN ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDS

Half Nelson

PAINTINGS BY BRIAN JUNGEN

TRUCK, CALGARY, NOVEMBER 14 – DECEMBER 13, 1997

REVIEW BY JEFF DERKSEN

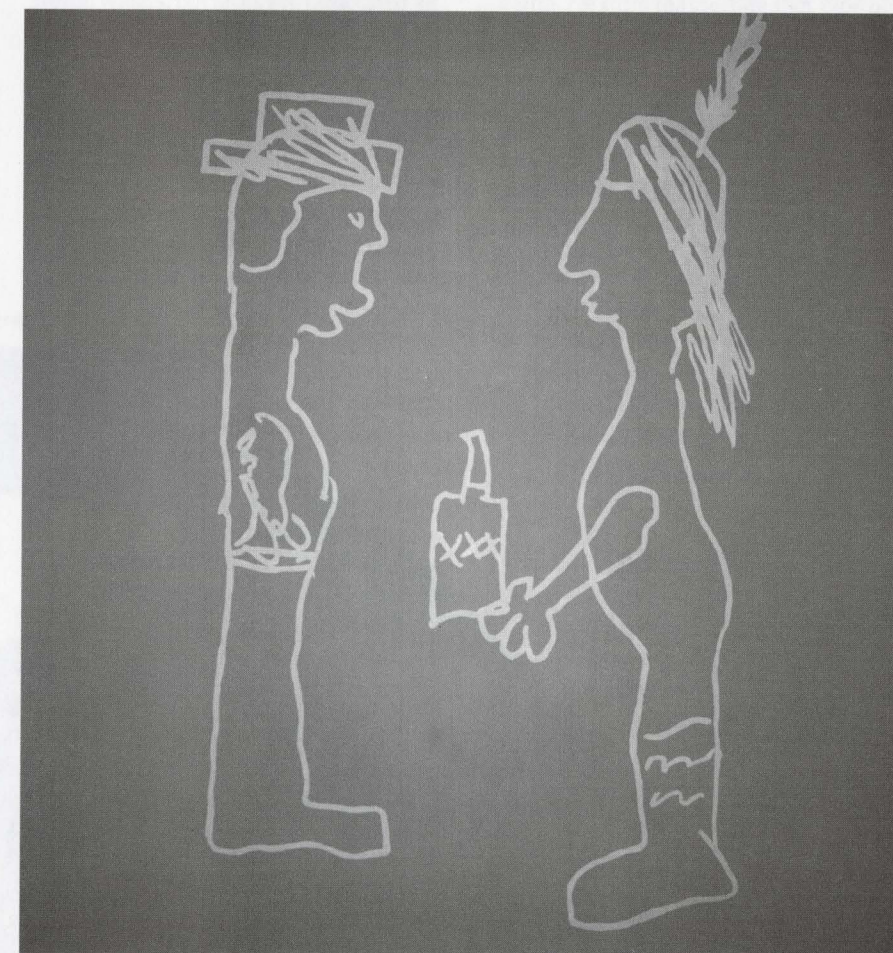
The large candy-coloured rectangles that house the crude, solicited drawings of imaginary "Indian" culture that comprise Brian Jungen's installation, *Half Nelson*, invoke the question of the role of aesthetics in cultural critique. At the same time, this work turns to ethnographic methods to both answer this aesthetic question and to raise the role that ethnography plays in cultural imagining. Jungen's installation adroitly avoids the trap of an easy criticism that is content to point to symptoms while letting the systemic organization of inequalities go unquestioned by moving to a critique of the systems of discourse and knowledge that are knit into a social logic. The tension between this critique and the aesthetic beauty of the installation manages to outmanoeuvre the anxieties of what social art can do, and how it can do it.

Half Nelson is an installation that relies on "field work" to supply its images. Jungen (himself a member of the Dunne-za Nation) conscripted non-Native volunteers to venture into the mysterious and inhospitable social spaces of Calgary—sites of inexplicable consumption and alienated social contact such as malls and indoor gardens—to ask citizens to draw their association of the idea or term "Indian." Following the credo of ethnographic objectivity, Jungen remained faithful to this raw data and painted these images, originally drawn by non-Native Calgarians, enlarged but unaltered, and floating within ten by nine-foot rectangles. The colours of these fields were muted tones of the vibrant acrylic tints he

had on hand in his studio, and the crude and unsure line drawings are in a complimenting colour to the field. The logic of bourgeois home decorating is here transported into the white cube of the gallery. On one wall, a lemon-sherbet yellow rectangle forms a diptych with a Pepto

Bismol pink rectangle. Inside the yellow field is a dampened greyish-brown outline of a "totem pole" in profile, and a full-frontal "totem pole" in a powder blue suitable for bathrooms, topped with a button-nosed teddy bear head—a sort of hybrid imagining of First Nations culture

Discord, Brian Jungen, 1997, flat latex on wall, 3.05 x 2.44 m (8' x 10').



melded with Toys Я Us. A long-haired stick figure in white and another pole image, this time with burnt orange smiley faces painted on its stem, hover in the thick pink field.

A larger rectangle houses one portion of a triptych in the same powder blue, another in the repeated burnt orange and introduces a new light fern green field. A tense dialogue of country and city, or innocence and experience, emerges in this triptych—a dialogue echoed in the installation as a whole. The blue section has the standard flattened “V” gesture that signifies a bird (in white), while the green section has a drawing of a bottle labeled “BEER” and a can labeled “LYSOL.” On an opposite wall, a fern green rectangle hosts the pastoral images of a darker, cedar green teepee and lodge with two Pepto Bismol-traced fir trees. Complimenting this curiously unpeopled “natural” imagery is a milk chocolate field with a pink headdress and a disproportionately large buttercup yellow feather below it. On the far wall, an orangey-pink salmon field with powder blue figures offers *Half Nelson*’s only narrative. The figures, an “Indian” signified by long hair crowned with a feather and a “white man” signified by a hat and gun, enact the bad history of colonial contact, in which the “Indian” figure reaches out to receive (or give?) a bottle marked XXX.

The dismal social logic and narrative that arises from these images—a cabinet of curiosities gathered in the field and taking the familiar route into the museum—is bleak in both its representations of imagined First Nations culture and in the ease with which these wilted yet pervasive racist images circulate within dominant culture. *Half Nelson* does the social work of cataloguing and presenting these racist images, but the semiotics of the installation as a whole foregrounds some tensions that are not immediately visible.

The lack of bodies in the two fields I have characterized as “natural” is a disturbing parallel of the anthropological method of collecting: free-floating artifacts are made to stand in for a culture, and the dehistoricized headdress (or whatever) becomes a static memory. Cultures are represented existing only in the past, or as dead, and the need for living bodies—and the relations they live in—is done away with.

The juxtaposition of the city and the country, a historical tension in Western society and one unavoidable in many First Nations communities, sets up the classic dichotomy between innocence and experience. The natural images—the bird, the trees, the feather, and by extension, the teepee—are unpeopled (suitable for a culture described in uncritical anthropology as a people without history), while the images of experience reflect the all-too-familiar false notion of First Nations culture as an undifferentiated drunken mess. The figures exchanging the bottle have a nice wavering ambiguity—perhaps not intended by the person from whom this artifact was collected—as it is unclear whether the “Indian” in the image is receiving or has just given the XXX liquor bottle to the “white man.” As well it could situate the “white man” as the source of the liquor—implying its social use in the relations between these two cultures.

Jungen has taken the role of ethnographer here—in a reversal of roles, the framed is doing the framing—but he is not attempting the standard salvage paradigm to reclaim more authentic or less debased First Nation cultures. Instead he has collected artifacts—these drawings—that reflect the dominant culture’s imagining of First Nations culture. In rejecting this salvage paradigm, *Half Nelson* moves from criticism to critique. One of the roles claimed for cultural anthropology and its literary wing,

ethnography, has been as a form of cultural critique for the West. The supposition is that a dominant culture can reflect critically on itself and its own organization and logic by understanding other cultures and by using them as an alternative model. If so, and this is a notion fraught with problems of power that have only been partially addressed by new ethnographic methods, then *Half Nelson* demonstrates that cultural anthropology has utterly failed to enter into any self-reflexive dialogue with First Nations culture in a way that would have had an effect in the public sphere or in the national imaginary. As an ethnographer, Jungen has chosen images that demonstrate that the dominant culture is curiously inhabiting the position it relegates to other cultures: a static and “backward” or primitive culture that is unable to understand cultures outside of itself, and therefore unable to “progress.” The crudity of the drawings is neither a smug aesthetic statement nor a populist graffiti gesture. Instead, it signifies the crudeness with which First Nations culture is imagined in the public sphere, despite the supposed potential of self-reflexive anthropology’s cultural critique.

The beauty of the show and its canny use of soft and saturated colours that mimic penny candies and other artificial pleasures foregrounds the role that aesthetics plays in cultural critique. The cheery and soothing installation space doesn’t dampen the effect of *Half Nelson*; it complicates this space by skewing expectations of a didactic show or heavy-handed criticism. Jungen uses aesthetics as an integral aspect of a social practice, foregrounding that aesthetics are always ideological. The usual binaries of political or aesthetic art fold into each other here as *Half Nelson* ups the ante on fun art by adding fun critique.

Jeff Derksen is currently working on essays in cultural poetics.

ARCHITECTURAL RE-ENACTMENTS

Deadpan

BY STEVE MCQUEEN

A SPACE, TORONTO, APRIL 25 – MAY 23, 1998

CURATED BY KIKA THORNE

REVIEW BY KENNETH HAYES

Two exhibitions running concurrently in Toronto present strikingly different, even opposed, relations between architecture and video. Barry Isenor’s *XXX Video*, exhibited in Mercer Union’s Project Room, is a reconstruction of three booths of a peep show the artist documented during a recent stay in New York City. Steve McQueen’s video *Deadpan*, shown at A Space in conjunction with the Images festival of independent film and video, is also a reconstruction of a sort, in which the artist reenacts a scene from the 1928 Buster Keaton film *Steamboat Bill Jr.* Isenor’s work refers to a concrete place that is a site of video’s consumption while McQueen’s returns to the archive of film images. Where the first draws out meaning, the second pushes it, so to speak.

Isenor, who is trained as an architect, made the best of Mercer Union’s small and rather airless Project Room by precisely inserting his plywood and plexiglass construction. He aligned the row of cubicles perpendicular to the entry wall facing into the centre of the room, thus forming a corridor along the east wall. This forced viewers to circumambulate the piece in a deliberate spiral before

XXX Video

BY BARRY ISENROR

MERCER UNION, TORONTO, APRIL 2 – MAY 9, 1998

entering it. The effect was to slow down the revelation of the construction and forestall a too-hasty recognition. Best viewed with company, the windows, slots and gaps in the booths created a complex play of open, transparent and translucent surfaces that overlapped, reflected and partly obscured images. The effect is similar to some of the constructed works of Dan Graham and Steven Willats, but lacks the desiccated air that is the legacy of conceptualism. It was amusing to watch people encounter the space and play with its structured relations—in the video’s absence, taking themselves as specular others.

Three colour photographs of the original peep-show structures were mounted on

the wall visible from the entrance; they linked the construction to its model without being simply documents of it. The pictures were casually executed, but formed abstract compositions of shallow colour-saturated planes and sharp angles that knowingly recalled Lissitzky’s *Prouns*. In fact, the room itself resembled the abstract cabinets of the Berlin avant-garde. Far from reasserting that type of autonomous modernist space, this work is sharply inflected by erotic and sensual drives. This content aligns the work with that of Helio Oiticica, the Brazilian artist who critiqued the limits prematurely imposed on modernism’s project of social and individual liberation. The object here is to register a protest and elegy for a quickly vanishing “old” New York.

The presentation of McQueen’s work participates in the on-going transformation of gallery spaces to suit video projection. Not only was a new wall constructed so as to reduce the gallery’s plan and section to the proportions of the video image, the floor was polished to heighten reflection. This solicitude contrasts with the vacancy of the gallery’s remaining space (about half its

Still from *Deadpan*, Steve McQueen, installation, video projection (B&W, silent), 1997.



OUT OF THE FRAME

a collective show of new lesbian photography

ELLEN FLANDERS, SANDRA HAAR, MARTHA JUDGE, SUE LLOYD, CARLA MURRAY, SHARON SWITZER
TORONTO, MARCH 31 – APRIL 29, 1998

REVIEW BY MICHAEL BALSER

The need to illustrate queer personal histories is evident in all of the works in "Out of the Frame," a recent exhibition of photo-based installation work by lesbians from the Toronto community. The artists collectively and individually propose a spectrum of strategies of presentation that challenge the conventions of traditional framing by invading the gallery space. A new frame is constructed to include the viewer. Moving through this maze of Queer representation, one cannot avoid becoming a player in this series of web-like personal narratives that reflect on the construction of public and private spaces. Much like performance art these works make demands on the audience by drawing attention to the viewer's physical position.

Although we may be accustomed to these installation strategies, the content of these sexy works accentuates the interaction between the work and the viewer: reminding us that being "out" is still a dangerous territory inhabited by gender conflicts, intersecting narratives and bodies searching for a place. The narratives in "Out of the Frame" are like performances. They collapse into one other like multiple theatrical events. The players are the artists in relationship to the camera, their subjects and the audience.

In the argument for lesbian visibility and the desire for a whole series of identities, the need for lesbian erotic material that reflects the diversity of lesbian desire continues to evolve. While radical feminists like Andrea Dworkin argue that any mediation of sexuality is an

objectification, and so anti-woman, some lesbians see the erotic as a source of political strength, claiming the right to investigate such areas in the visual arts.¹

The performer in Sandra Haar's *Snapshots* cannot cum without reconstructing the image of a surly man from childhood who might be father/brother/rapist or friend/man/woman/stone dyke or all of the above. The artist reveals, layer by layer, a complex sexuality that has evolved out of memory, resistance and desire. These drawings mimic vintage porno peepshows. They have an elegant line and a cartoon-like quality that remind me of early David Salle paintings. The drawn layer of porn is like a transparent text that constantly reminds us that we are looking through, not at, the work. This installation is like a private booth, a peep show, a masturbatory world—intimate—meditative. It includes a table at which the viewer must kneel to examine a grid of cards, like cheesy nudie playing cards. But, this game is tougher than strip poker. Here, the objective is to make an exchange (a playing card for a personal effect), to encourage the confession that it is okay to have feelings that confuse dominance and submission.

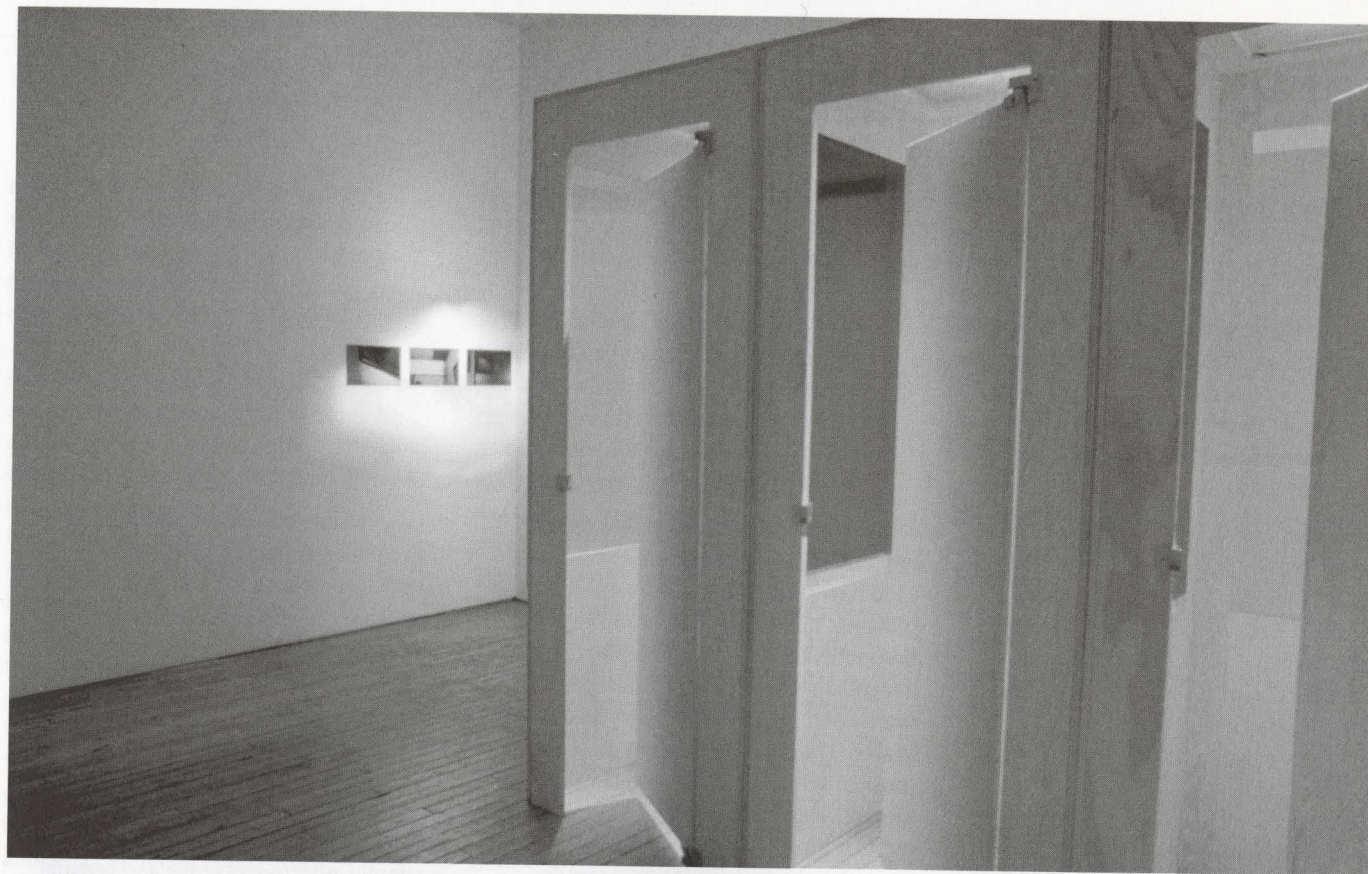
...when I called myself a lesbian, it was very important at the time, but in the long run, I don't know.²

A lesbian photographer's relationship to her subject is explored in the black and white vertical triptychs by Carla Murray. Her subjects are women familiar to the

local lesbian community. They are a series of photo-portraits that document a Queer history from within. *Queer (be)Longings* quietly claims an autodocumentary strategy that offers a microview into complex intersecting local histories. The characters are suspended on the gallery stage; bodies floating in space against a backdrop of pastel floral wallpaper upon which the personal statements of the portrait subjects are inscribed. Further reading of these texts reveals the process involved in creating the work and illuminates the diversity of identity within the lesbian/Queer community. The women were photographed in their preferred environments, over varying periods of time. There is a performative aspect to this installation in that the works are staged in such a way that the viewer must piece together the variable readings and points of view that emerge from the wallpaper. The viewer moves between the photographs and the texts in uneasy, uncertain and unpredictable improvisations.

Because same-sex love mirrors the body, it has a hard time accepting an abstract, rational and alien order. What remains hidden must become revealed through the structure of queer space. If the interiors within most architectural structures accommodate, queer space seduces.³

Sharon Switzer's installations draw the viewer into exquisite spaces. She has constructed corridors to house intimate moments. A closet and a corner are existing structural anomalies, converted and illuminated by digital technology. A backlit



XXX Video, Barry Isenor, installation for "Spidersense #4," 1998.

area) which was simply hidden by a black curtain. No obvious technical or artistic reason would explain the presentation of only one of McQueen's videos, just four minutes and three seconds long. This deliberate dedication of the projection apparatus to a single "major" work declares that we are far into the new spatial reification of video art that rejects the possibility and implications of broadcast that motivated video's early producers. This corresponds to the colonization of the Images Festival by other spectacular art films like Matthew Barney's *Cremaster 5* and Johan Grimonprez's *DIAL H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*.

The video displays McQueen's absolute impassivity as the end wall of a two-storey wooden shed behind him collapses in a perfect pivot about its base. Repeating a typical structuralist device, this scene is presented from an array of viewpoints: frontal, profile, from below, from inside the building, etc. He escapes entirely unscathed because an open

window perfectly coincides with his standing position. Not only is he oblivious to the impending disaster, he does not react when it occurs. Yet it is the very fact that he remained unmoved that assured his safety: had he fled, he might have been seriously hurt. These petrified dialectics have been made familiar by such well-known works as Bruce Nauman's *Pratfalls* and Jeff Wall's *Stumbling Block*, but this stance also has something distinctly British to it, perhaps having to do with tourists assailing Buckingham Palace Guards. The film culminates self-consciously in a curious close-up of the artist's face at the instant the wall passes over him. The shadow from above, and a moment later the reflected light from below, dramatically alters his features, an effect that is emphasized by being repeated about eight times in rapid succession. In a standard Hollywood film, a close-up of this sort would serve to reveal expression, but here it further denies expression, substituting for it a formal phenomenon of

lighting contrast that seems impossible to interpret solely in structuralist terms.

McQueen's use of architecture can only be described as emblematic. He presents a hieroglyph for a discourse, one that even endorses the precept that the tragic drama's action must be brief, sudden, and seem arbitrary. If the façade's collapse is meant to symbolize the fall of some hegemonic structure—even the end of empire—its modesty and rural setting are inappropriate. Of course it has been long noted that allegory has a tendency to overvaulting ambition and a fondness for the abstruse. The strength of Isenor's work is that it is abstract. Instead of re-presenting the video image, he presents the structure of spatial relations it creates. This frees people to respond to it in multiple ways that are not determined by the figural image and its fixations.

*Kenneth Hayes is an architect and curator based in Toronto. He is a former editor of *Splinter* magazine and has participated in numerous exhibitions.*

digital print is wedged into a corner, viewable through the transparency of Sandra Haar's work. This photograph was created on a flatbed scanner and processed by digital means. Switzer's subject is the interface between her body and memory, and the performances in Switzer's work happen in solitude. The scanner is a dummy camera that employs the arm of the artist to manipulate it and make it perform. A forearm grasped by a fist is erotically charged during the process of scanning—a moment experienced only by the artist/model/technician alone under a black curtain. In Switzer's bionic composites, hair and flesh are mounted and pressed into the walls, and architectural hardware like light bulbs and electrical fixtures become sensual protrusions and orifices: jarring and destabilizing.

...it is a place without a place. In it, I see myself where I am not, in an unreal space that opens up potentially beyond its surface, there I am down there where I am not, a sort of shadow that makes my appearance visible to

myself, allowing me to look at myself where I do not exist...⁴

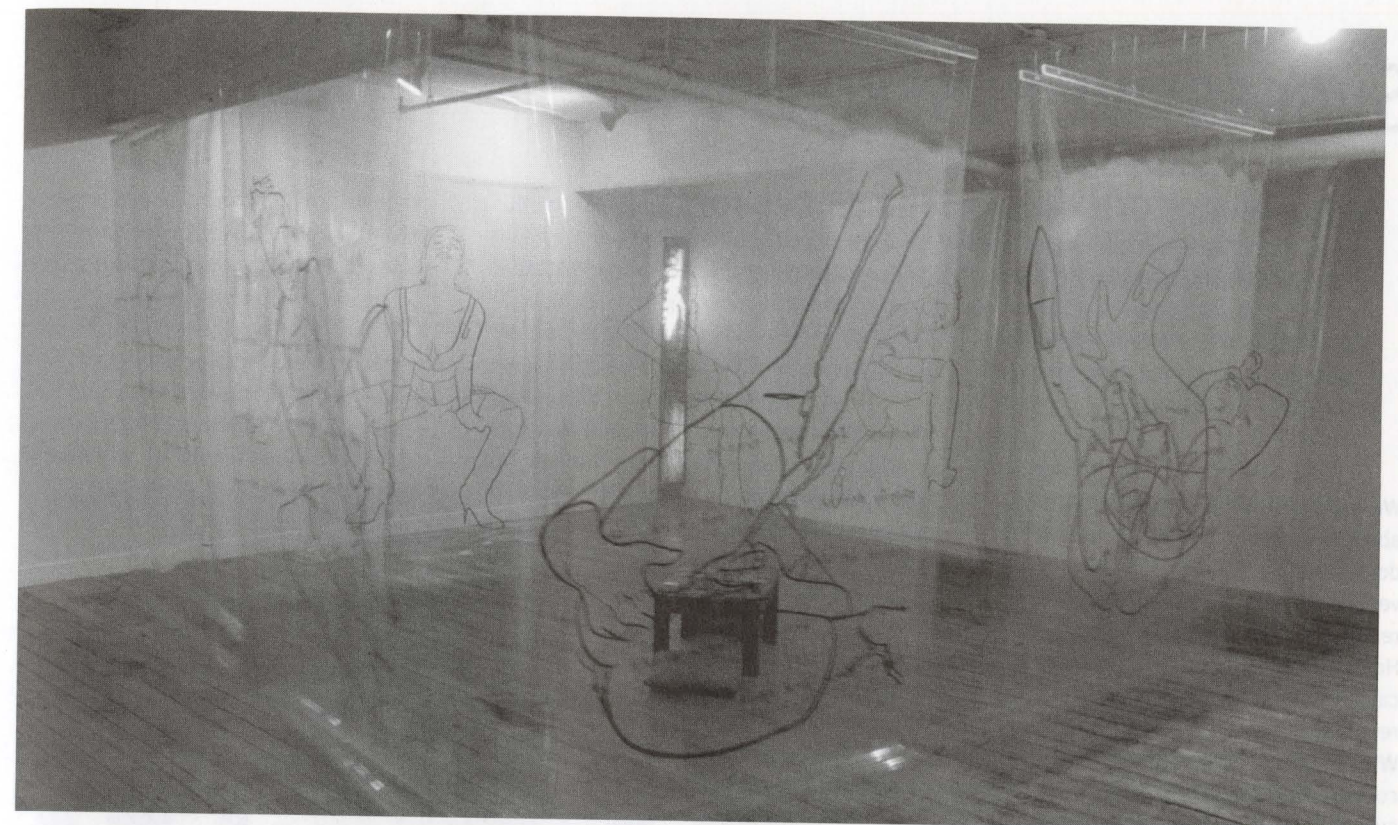
Like a play in three acts, *Lacking Desire*, an installation by Ellen Flanders, posits a triptycal response to the traditional notion of mutually exclusive territories—gay, Jew, woman. In *Response to Otto Weininger*, three imposing photographs of a man/woman “cross-dressing” are the backdrop for what appears to be a classroom, a synagogue, a pedagogical environment. The figure in the portrait is clipping his/her nylons to a garter belt, a prayer shawl is superimposed around the neck. A “lectern” holds a text by nineteenth century Viennese philosopher, Otto Weininger, and a carpet and four antique chairs complete the set. Otto was apparently a self-hating homosexual and closeted Jew. His “scientific” research considers women with a range of attributes including mannishness, active intellect and angular physical features. While I was standing at the lectern, being silently shocked by Otto's pathetic and witless text, a woman came into the gallery and

sat in front of me in one of the four “classroom” chairs. I smiled, continued reading and after a few moments realized that she thought I was part of the work. I was standing in the dominant position, behind the lectern, giving the impression that I might read from the text. For a moment I considered it!

...sex appears within hegemonic language as substance, as a metaphysically speaking, a self-identical being. This appearance is achieved through a performative twist of language and/or discourse that conceals the fact that “being” a sex or a gender is fundamentally impossible.⁵

Sue Lloyd's texts and photographs are sensual, ironic, gender-bending images that simultaneously invoke power and play. The tasks of writing diaries and fictions on the baseboards of the gallery walls, and that of strapping on a dildo made from PVC hose and gaffer tape are represented as arduous and obsessive acts. Traces of desire are scratched into the work.

contra posto, Sue Lloyd, 1998, black & white silver prints with handwritten text, each print, 41 x 51 cm.



Snapshots, Sandra Haar, 1996, ink on triacetate, printed cards, 2 cushions, table. Background: *twining*, Sharon Switzer, 1998, Duratrans print, wood & metal lightbox.

i disintegrate. lose form to find form. this is how. lose my place in space as a body in space. become a voice an instrument in time in space.⁶

These “power plays” draw the viewer's attention from wall to wall to the ground and even to exposed plumbing pipes. The rawness of the backdrops within the photos and the exposed hardware of the gallery are theatrical devices which push the boundaries of the frame, of the gallery and of gender. The *boys* in these pictures are pointing their guns at the viewer. One must actually get down on the floor to read the accompanying texts, ducking and taking cover in words that sing, chant and repeat...

re.form. in desire. longin. to speak. your tongue take it grace it give it ex pressure im print pression in pleasure.⁷

Martha Judge photographs herself with another woman in the context of a wild nature. The surfaces of these elegant life-size portraits, *Outside My Grasp ... Held*,

are broken by detailed drawings of marshland plants, like botanical illustrations, evoking memories of innocence. In the series of photographs something is offered, something is considered, something is taken away. Someone is left alone. This romantic narrative is continued in a second set of smaller images of body parts, like artifacts of unknowable physical acts. The larger photographs are hung informally, unframed, the edges of the paper curl forward into the gallery space. Like all of the artists in this exhibition, Judge has chosen to offer multiple modes of presentation, subsequently inspiring variable emotional response.

Emotionally charged performative acts, tentative desires and agency echo throughout the works of the artists in “Out of the Frame.” These photographic installations play with space and time, inviting the viewer into intimate, tenuous and provocative encounters. The opportunity for encounters such as these only occurs, apparently, once every ten years in a city that claims to have strong Queer

representation. “Site-specific,” the last exhibition of contemporary lesbian art in Toronto, was curated by Lynne Fernie for A Space in 1988. You do the math!

Notes

1. Emmanuel Cooper, *The Sexual Perspective: Homosexuality and Art in the Last 100 Years in the West* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 327.
2. From the installation text of *Queer (be)Longings* by Carla Murray, 1997.
3. Aaron Betsky, *Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire* (William Morrow & Co, 1997), pp. 20-21.
4. Michel Foucault, “Other Spaces: The Principle of Heterotopia,” *Lotus* 48-49, 1986, p. 10.
5. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 18-19.
6. From the untitled installation text by Sue Lloyd for the exhibition, “Out of the Frame,” 1998.
7. *ibid.*

Michael Balser is an artist and curator working in new media. His digital collages and video projection work, “QUADRA,” will be exhibited at the Phoebe Street Project (Toronto) in August 1998.

SUGGESTIVE POSES

Artists and Critics Respond to Censorship

EDITED BY LORRAINE JOHNSON, PREFACE BY JOHN GREYSON

TORONTO PHOTOGRAPHERS WORKSHOP AND RIVERBANK PRESS, TORONTO, 1997

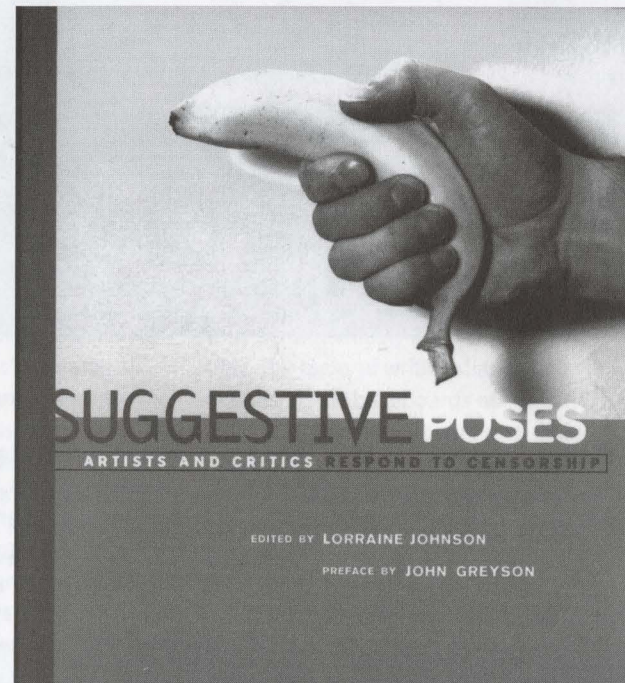
REVIEW BY ANDY FABO

We know what we're supposed to think about censorship. Anti-censorship orthodoxy is so strong in the art world that you very rarely hear anyone vocalize even a remotely pro-censorship position. However, art community reactions to cases of real censorship in the '90s have revealed this unanimity to be superficial. When incidents of censorship occur, the community is frequently divided in its support for the artists. Often the artists themselves are accused of being unreasonable, uncompromising, or of strategically creating the situation in order to increase their own media profiles. This unseemly situation is compounded by a lack of clarity about what actually constitutes censorship. Such confusions and divisions make *Suggestive Poses: Artists and Critics Respond to Censorship*, an anthology of essays and artists' projects on the subject of censorship, a valuable resource for the community.

Suggestive Poses was initiated by Lorraine Johnson and proposed to Toronto Photographers Workshop where she was co-chair of the Board. At first there was some question of the priority of the undertaking because acts of censorship at that time were confined to the hidden chambers of customs officers and the confiscation of naughty SM publications and tapes in isolated stores. However, the seizure of Eli Langer's artwork from Mercer Union nine months later (Dec. '93) and the ensuing pandemonium within the community highlighted the importance of such a book. Johnson took on the role of editor and she contributed a concise and insightful introductory essay that, along

with a congenial preface by John Greyson, written in his usual cheeky and fictive style, lays out a recent history of censorship in Canada and poses the major questions covered in the anthology. Johnson also punctuates the book with single pages of sound bytes of information and quirky anecdotes dealing with various facets of the issue. *Suggestive Poses* features four artists projects: *Aha*, a labial confrontation by Shonagh Adelman; *Mega Scenes*, a sassy commentary on the print media and recent events by Ho Tam; *Blind Bird in Flight*, a fictional conversation at a gallery opening of contentious photographs written by Hamish Buchanan; and *Seizure Story*, a conceptual work by the Kiss and Tell collective that layers personal narratives and homemade pornography stills onto a customs notice of confiscation of allegedly obscene printed matter served to them in 1991.

The essays in *Suggestive Poses* successfully cover the gambit of anti-censorship arguments and engage many of its most difficult problematics. Sociologist Mary Louise Adams provides a cursory overview of historical views of childhood, showing how radically these have



changed in the last centuries. She examines incidents that reflect the increasing sexual panic around children's sexuality.

While Richard Fung's essay is initially cloudy about issues of gatekeeping as opposed to censorship, he goes on to give a very succinct analysis of the conundrum of controlling hate literature as well as a view of anti-censorship activism from the perspective of a person of colour. Andy Paterson more thoroughly fleshes out the complexities of gatekeeping versus censorship in a witty fictional telephone dialogue between two cranky cultural bureaucrats. Su Ditta puts forward four well-researched case studies of public art institutions dealing with

censorship questions, detailing how their various approaches succeeded with their respective communities. One of the situations arose when she curated a large national survey of video that included sexually graphic work by Queer artists. This case study provides a rare view of an institutional response from the inside. Fortunately, Su Ditta is sufficiently self-critical to bring forward a discussion of the tricky issue of warning signs. The National Gallery refused to pull the controversial works but did compromise by using warning signs to appease the complainants. In a similar incident involving Evergon's photography at the Mendel Art Gallery in Saskatoon, gallery director Linda Milrod refused to install warning signs because she felt that they trigger preconceptions of the work, interfering with the public's right to judge for itself.

Tom Waugh's essay is an insightful exploration of self-censorship. In the final stages of preparation of his scholarly text on the history of gay pornography, his publisher's lawyers asked him to delete some of the more provocative images and digitally substitute the faces of more recent photographic subjects in order to avoid legal repercussions. In this piece, Waugh wrestles with his conscience, torn between his desire to bring many years of research and writing to fruition, and his wish to remain true to his principals inspired by the battles for gay liberation that he has fought since the early '70s. This dilemma was difficult to navigate and he was left feeling that some questionable compromises were made.

The two essays by contributors with legal training are markedly different. John Marriot, an artist with both a BFA and a LLB from Osgoode Hall Law School, examines the possibly legitimate limitations of free speech in a democracy, particularly pertaining to the protection of minorities. His arguments about colonial hegemony lead him to regard the historic

cultural restrictions of First Nations peoples such as the banning of potlatches, Sundances and Native languages in schools, as infringements of free speech. Unavoidable in this legal territory, he also analyzes Quebec nationalism as it pertains to notions of free speech. However Marriot's is a complex argument, not the usual knee-jerk Anglo lambasting of Bill 101.

Brenda Cossman provides an excellent essay that documents the cultural and social shifts leading to our current legal climate. A central point of her essay is that the appearances of change are deceptive. The current test for obscenity depends on feminist notions of harm and causality. While it may seem that a radical shift has taken place, she asserts that we're still stuck with the same old community standards test as arbitrated by patriarchal structures. Bringing a sophisticated grasp of cultural issues to the legal debate she recognizes that modernist "art for art's sake" arguments are no longer viable and illuminates how skeptical, contentious postmodernism (a fragmented cultural moment with many competing ideological and aesthetic positions) resists and defies notions of community standards that are inherent in obscenity laws.

Arguably, the 1993 raid of Mercer Union and the confiscation of Langer's drawings and paintings was the most shocking intrusion of the state into the cultural sphere in recent local history. The Langer case was the subject of much media attention, generating reams of journalism and editorial hand-wringing (as mainstream as *Maclean's* magazine and as far afield as the *New York Times*). In *Suggestive Poses*, the two writers dealing most extensively with Langer's work eschew mainstream journalism's appearance of detachment and supposed objectivity. Instead they provide very personal, anecdotal essays that talk as much about their

own journeys through cultural terrains as Eli Langer's. Robin Metcalfe provides a fragmented diary reflecting on his own development as a gay activist and art writer through the prism of Langer's provocative work. Elaine Carol similarly recounts her development as a feminist, Queer activist, writer and performance artist through various anti-censorship struggles. However, both of these personal journals are replete with details of recent censorship struggles and are valuable documents that provide a chronology of events and mini-portraits of the players involved.

The language of causality in censorship amplifies a notion of harm. However the Kathleen Mahoneys and Catharine McKinnons of this world are loath to examine the harm done to cultural institutions or to minority subcultures by the legal strictures that they engineered. An elegant essay by Thelma McCormick concludes this anthology, providing the insight and scope that decades of engagement with anti-censorship issues have given her. She convincingly argues that anti-pornography legislation does considerable harm to women and the causes of feminism, and she makes a devastating critique of the facile connections that anti-pornography feminists make between pornography and the subjugation of women.

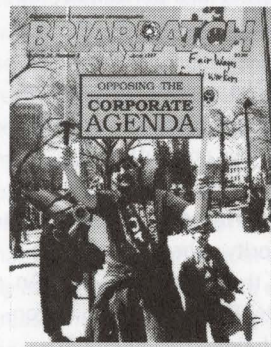
Censorship and anti-censorship proponents will always be engaged in an adversarial tug of war, and unexpected encroachments by the state will pop our bubbles of cultural security from time to time as long as the various obscenity laws remain on the books. For this reason, *Suggestive Poses* should be required reading for anyone sitting on the board of a cultural organization, if not artists at large.

Andy Fabo is an artist, teacher, curator and writer living in Toronto.

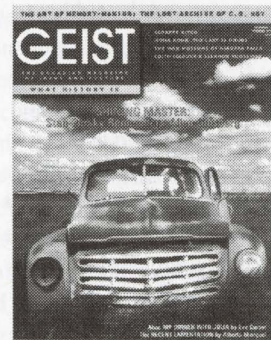
BOAP

BEST OF THE ALTERNATIVE PRESS

Looking for an
adventure in your
magazine reading?
Order a sample copy of the best of
Canada's other press by simply filling
out the request form.



BRIARPATCH is Canada's award-winning magazine, providing an alternative view on issues and events in Canada and the world. Essential reading for activists interested in politics, unions, the environment, women's rights and international affairs. We publish articles the mainstream media won't touch. Ten times a year.



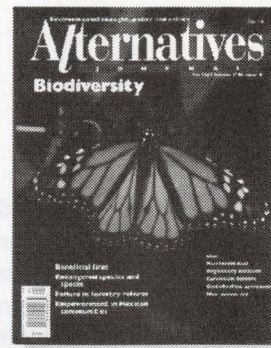
GEIST is home to the Honourary Canadian Awards, the Trans-Canada Phrase Book, the Canadian Mall Writing Competition, the Who the Hell is Peter Gzowski survey, and the very best in story, picture, essay, memoir, crossword, toon, and little-known fact. In print since 1990. "A publication that is, in this country, inimitable."
— Toronto Star



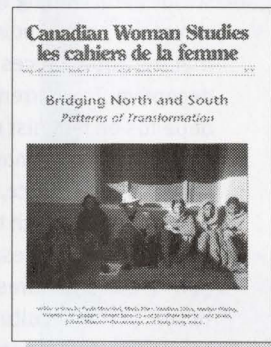
Principled. Radical. Independent. For over 30 years, **CANADIAN DIMENSION** has been a place where activists can debate issues, share information, recount our victories, evaluate our strategies for social change. Our pages are open to all progressive voices—debate makes the movement stronger. And it makes for lively reading!



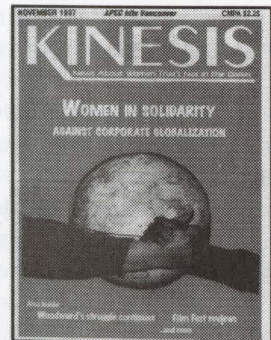
You're going to love **HERIZONS**, the Canadian feminist magazine that delivers the scoop on issues inside the Canadian women's movement today. The latest legal rulings affecting women, provocative interviews, health, new issues and debates. **HERIZONS** has it all. Plus satire, tons of reviews, and plenty of news at a glance. Join us.



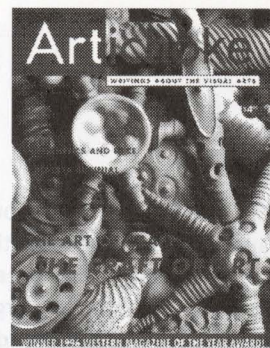
With over 25 years of journalistic experience, **ALTERNATIVES** is the most widely-read environmental journal in Canada. Thought-provoking articles go beyond band-aid solutions to consider concrete alternatives for a wide range of environmental issues. Look to **ALTERNATIVES** for environmental reports, opinion pieces, and reviews of eco-books.



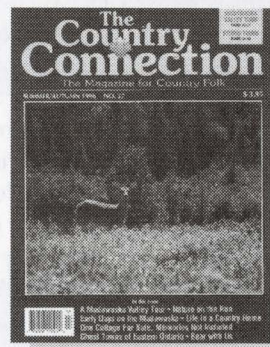
Insightful, informative, inspiring, **CANADIAN WOMAN STUDIES** is an indispensable resource for the feminist reader. We publish material that bridges academia and grassroots activism. Women's diverse voices from across Canada are featured in each thematic issue. Upcoming: Women and Education, Mothers and Daughters, and a 20th anniversary issue.



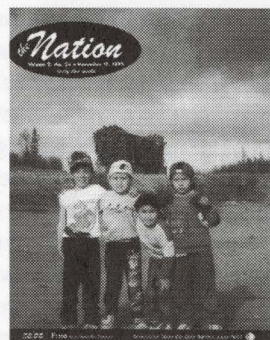
An indispensable news source and Canada's foremost feminist newspaper, **KINESIS** takes you where the dailies don't bother going. Through investigative reports, timely interviews, cultural affairs and national/international news, **KINESIS** provides a fresh look at what women are thinking—and doing—about their lives.



ARTICHOKE is Western Canada's visual arts magazine and winner of the 1996 Western Magazine of the Year Award for editorial excellence. Launched in Calgary in 1989, **ARTICHOKE** sustains a critical dialogue about visual arts in BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and beyond. Each issue features reviews, interviews, and profiles documenting art careers and events, cultural politics and art trends.



THE COUNTRY CONNECTION illuminates country life through heritage, cultural, artistic, pro-nature and outdoor themes. Stories, maps and photography are dedicated to the restoration of natural ecosystems, the preservation of heritage buildings, and the nurturing of low-impact lifestyles. A great see-and-do guide for nature lovers and rural adventurers. Vegan friendly.



News with an edge from Indian Country and traditional knowledge from the source. The award-winning magazine **THE NATION** is a bi-monthly that has broken all the industry's rules. Starting with two borrowed computers and a \$1000 ad, it has grown into one of the leading voices of Canada's North.

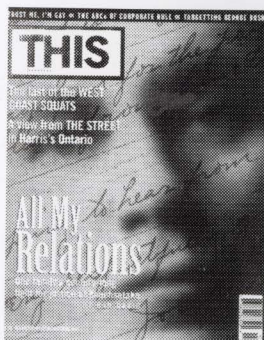


01897373 -M5V3A8-BR01

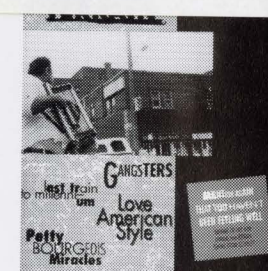
FUSE MAGAZINE
401 RICHMOND ST W SUITE 454
PO BOX 15357 STN BRM B
TORONTO ON M7Y 2W1



SOUTHERN AFRICA REPORT—for trenchant commentary and perceptive analysis on the latest events in Southern Africa! SAR has provided 12 years of consistently informed analysis on the region's political and economic developments. Published quarterly by writers and activists with first-hand experience in Africa. Visit us <www.web.net/~tclsac>.



Alternative journalism that doesn't flinch. With **THIS MAGAZINE**, the recognized leader in alternative journalism, you get genuinely fresh takes on Canadian politics, culture and the arts. You get writing that takes on neo-con myths with wit, personality and attitude. And you get award-winning investigative journalism that the mainstream won't touch.



Each issue of **SUB-TERRAIN** is a stimulating fusion of fiction, poetry, commentary and visual art from Canada and abroad. Voted one of the two "Best edited-in-Vancouver magazines with few pictures, lots of good words." — *Georgia Straight*, Best of Vancouver 1997. Publishing a new front-line of writers since 1988.



WE INTERNATIONAL brings a brand new face to the 21st century with reviews, interviews, art, essays and humour. Independent and 22 years old, **WE** (formerly *Women and Environments*) is an eco-feminist quarterly that prides itself on its world readership and representation, and ground-breaking research on women's global and community realities.

MAIL POSTE
Canada Post Corporation
Société canadienne des postes
Postage paid Port payé
if mailed in Canada si posté au Canada
Business Reply Réponse d'affaires
01897373 01



Economic crisis sweeps Asia. General strikes challenge the cuts in Ontario. Unemployed workers demonstrate in Paris. The world has become a terrain of crisis and struggle. Every two weeks, **SOCIALIST WORKER** analyses this terrain and argues for a way to fight back. News and analysis of the issues crucial to working people in Canada.

BOAP REQUEST FORM

To place your order, please:

1/ Indicate the magazine(s) you wish to receive.

- | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Alternatives | Artchoke | Briarpatch |
| Canadian Dimension | Canadian Woman Studies | Herizons |
| Country Connection | Geist | Natural Life |
| Kinesis | The Nation | Socialist Worker |
| New Internationalist | POV | This Magazine |
| S. Africa Report | Sub-Terrain | |
| WE International | | |

2/ Fill out your name and address.

name _____

suite no. _____ street _____

city _____ prov _____ code _____

telephone _____

3/ Calculate your payment. The first magazine you request costs \$5.00, each additional magazine is \$2.50. For example, if you order three magazines, your payment would be \$5.00 + 2 x \$2.50 = \$10.00. GST is included. **Please add \$5 to US orders, \$10 to international orders. Please make your cheque or money order payable to Chaos Consulting.**

4/ Mail this form with your payment. Send to: Chaos Consulting-BOAP, PO Box 65506, Stn F, Vancouver, BC, V5N 5K5. **Please allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery.** For inquiries only (no orders), e-mail chaos@axionet.com or fax:(604) 875-1403.

BOAP

BEST
OF
ALT
PRE
Look
adver
magaz
Order a sam
Canada's oth
out t

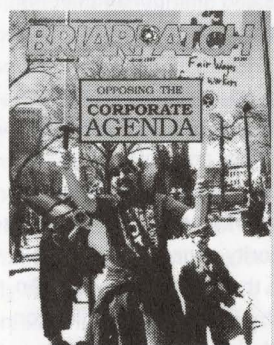
SWITCH TO FUSE!

NEW SUBSCRIBERS SAVE 40% OFF THE COVER PRICE 4 ISSUES FOR \$15.00

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ PROVINCE _____ POSTAL CODE _____

☐ Payment is enclosed ☐ Bill me later
☐ One year for \$15 ☐ Two years for \$28

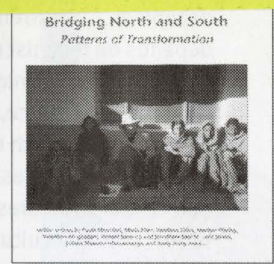
INSTITUTIONS: PLEASE ENQUIRE. OUTSIDE CANADA, SEND CHEQUE OR MONEY ORDER FOR \$20 U.S. FOR FOUR ISSUES (INCLUDES POSTAGE). FOR MASTERCARD ORDERS, CALL (416) 340-8026.
FUSE MAGAZINE, 401 RICHMOND ST. W., SUITE 454, TORONTO, CANADA M5V 3A8. GST # 123969768.



BRIARPATCH is Canada's award-winning magazine, providing an alternative view on issues and events in Canada and the world. Essential reading for activists interested in politics, unions, the environment, women's rights and international affairs. We publish articles the mainstream media won't touch. Ten times a year.



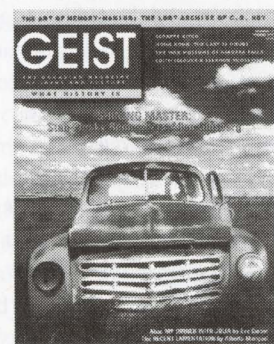
Principled. Radical. Independent. For over 30 years, **CANADIAN DIMENSION** has been a place where activists can debate issues, share information, recount our victories, evaluate our strategies for social change. Our pages are open to all progressive voices—debate makes the movement stronger. And it makes for lively reading!



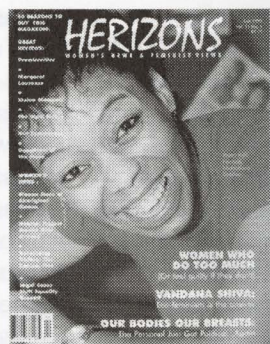
Insightful, informative, inspiring, **CANADIAN WOMAN STUDIES** is an indispensable resource for the feminist reader. We publish material that bridges academia and grassroots activism. Women's diverse voices from across Canada are featured in each thematic issue. Upcoming: Women and Education, Mothers and Daughters, and a 20th anniversary issue.



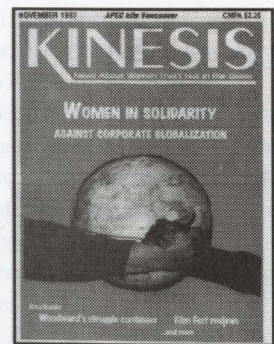
THE COUNTRY CONNECTION illuminates country life through heritage, cultural, artistic, pro-nature and outdoor themes. Stories, maps and photography are dedicated to the restoration of natural ecosystems, the preservation of heritage buildings, and the nurturing of low-impact lifestyles. A great see-and-do guide for nature lovers and rural adventurers. Vegan friendly.



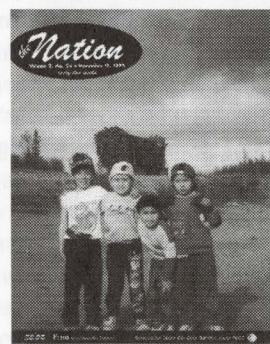
GEIST is home to the Honorary Canadian Awards, the Trans-Canada Phrase Book, the Canadian Mall Writing Competition, the Who the Hell is Peter Gzowski survey, and the very best in story, picture, essay, memoir, crossword, toon, and little-known fact. In print since 1990. "A publication that is, in this country, inimitable." — *Toronto Star*



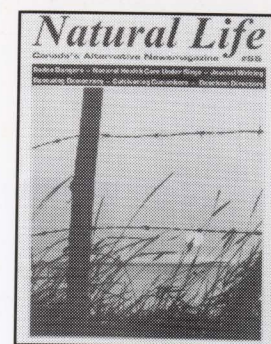
You're going to love **HERIZONS**, the Canadian feminist magazine that delivers the scoop on issues inside the Canadian women's movement today. The latest legal rulings affecting women, provocative interviews, health, new issues and debates. **HERIZONS** has it all. Plus satire, tons of reviews, and plenty of news at a glance. Join us.



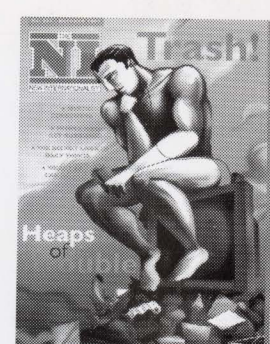
An indispensable news source and Canada's foremost feminist newspaper, **KINESIS** takes you where the dailies don't bother going. Through investigative reports, timely interviews, cultural affairs and national/international news, **KINESIS** provides a fresh look at what women are thinking—and doing—about their lives.



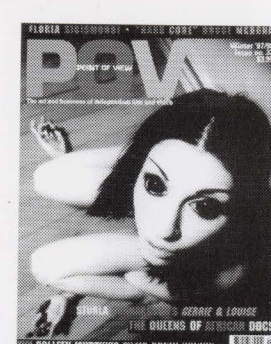
News with an edge from Indian Country and traditional knowledge from the source. The award-winning magazine **THE NATION** is a bi-monthly that has broken all the industry's rules. Starting with two borrowed computers and a \$1000 ad, it has grown into one of the leading voices of Canada's North.



NATURAL LIFE is Canada's alternative newsmagazine—in print and on the Internet at <www.life.ca>. Founded in 1976, we are now Canada's widest-ranging source of information and inspiration for reinventing how we live... in our communities and on our planet. Always honest, always provocative, always slightly ahead of our time.



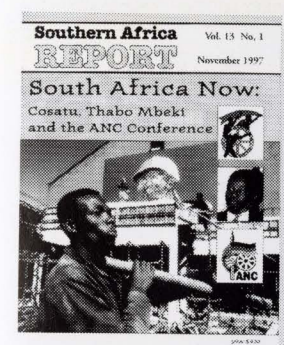
Who's being exploited? How should we live? Who will save the Earth? Find out what's really going on with **NEW INTERNATIONALIST**, a five-time Alternative Press Award winner. From endangered species to child labour, each month **NI** takes a radical look at a specific theme. We examine all the angles to put you squarely in the picture.



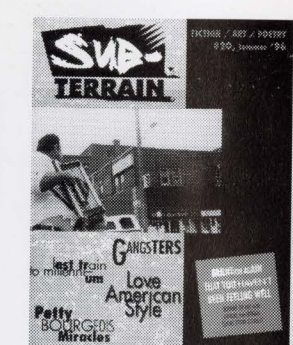
POV is Canada's cutting-edge magazine on the culture, politics, art and business of independent documentary film and television. **POV** also covers a diverse range of work from features and shorts to video art through lively analysis and timely criticism. Published three times per year.



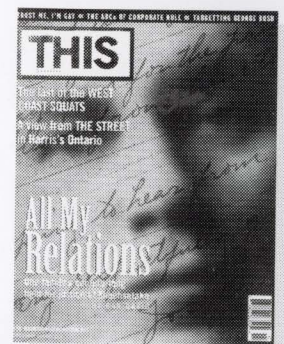
Economic crisis sweeps Asia. General strikes challenge the cuts in Ontario. Unemployed workers demonstrate in Paris. The world has become a terrain of crisis and struggle. Every two weeks, **SOCIALIST WORKER** analyses this terrain and argues for a way to fight back. News and analysis of the issues crucial to working people in Canada.



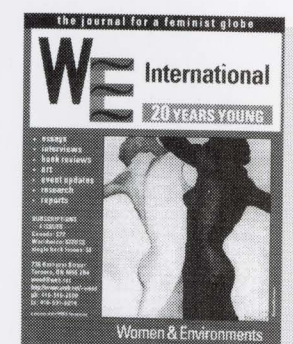
SOUTHERN AFRICA REPORT—for trenchant commentary and perceptive analysis on the latest events in Southern Africa! **SAR** has provided 12 years of consistently informed analysis on the region's political and economic developments. Published quarterly by writers and activists with first-hand experience in Africa. Visit us <www.web.net/~tclsac>.



Each issue of **SUB-TERRAIN** is a stimulating fusion of fiction, poetry, commentary and visual art from Canada and abroad. Voted one of the two "Best edited-in-Vancouver magazines with few pictures, lots of good words." — *Georgia Straight*, Best of Vancouver 1997. Publishing a new front-line of writers since 1988.



Alternative journalism that doesn't flinch. With **THIS MAGAZINE**, the recognized leader in alternative journalism, you get genuinely fresh takes on Canadian politics, culture and the arts. You get writing that takes on neo-con myths with wit, personality and attitude. And you get award-winning investigative journalism that the mainstream won't touch.



WE INTERNATIONAL brings a brand new face to the 21st century with reviews, interviews, art, essays and humour. Independent and 22 years old, **WE** (formerly *Women and Environments*) is an eco-feminist quarterly that prides itself on its world readership and representation, and ground-breaking research on women's global and community realities.

BOAP

REQUEST FORM

To place your order, please:

1/ Indicate the magazine(s) you wish to receive.

- | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Alternatives | Artichoke | Briarpatch |
| Canadian Dimension | Canadian Woman Studies | Herizons |
| Country Connection | Geist | Natural Life |
| Kinesis | The Nation | Socialist Worker |
| New Internationalist | POV | This Magazine |
| S. Africa Report | Sub-Terrain | |
| WE International | | |

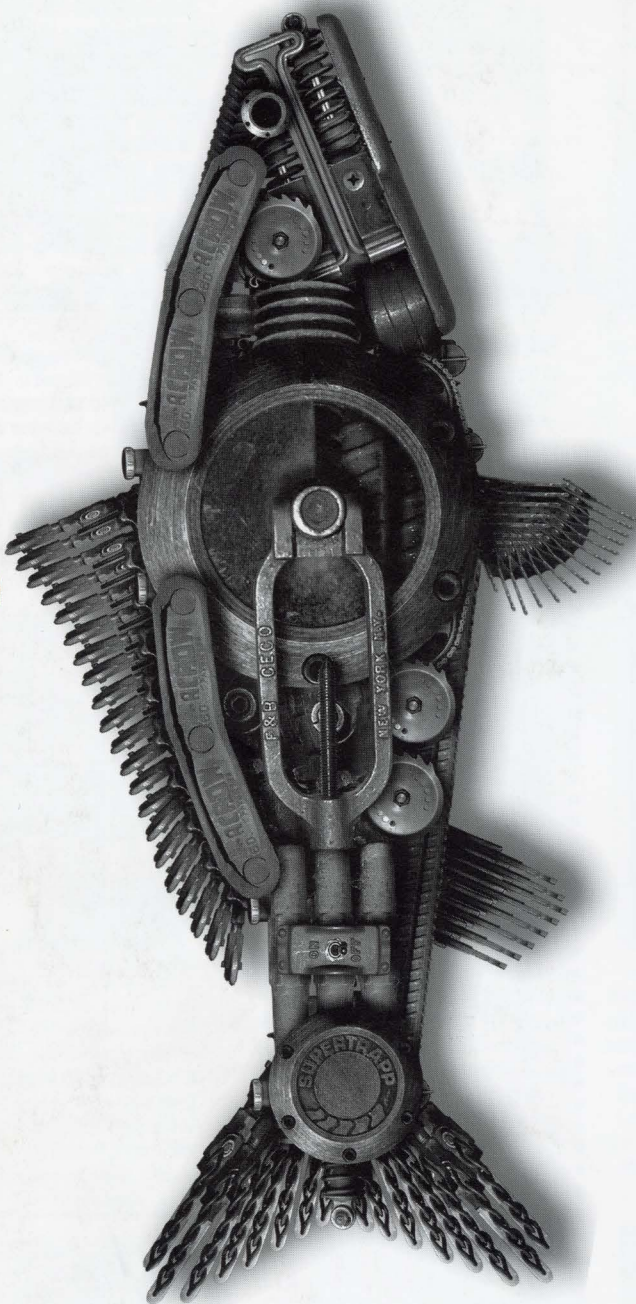
2/ Fill out your name and address.

name _____
suite no. _____ street _____
city _____ prov _____ code _____
telephone _____

3/ Calculate your payment. The first magazine you request costs \$5.00, each additional magazine is \$2.50. For example, if you order three magazines, your payment would be \$5.00 + 2 x \$2.50 = \$10.00. GST is included. **Please add \$5 to US orders, \$10 to international orders. Please make your cheque or money order payable to Chaos Consulting.**

4/ Mail this form with your payment. Send to: Chaos Consulting-BOAP, PO Box 65506, Stn F, Vancouver, BC, V5N 5K5. **Please allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery.** For inquiries only (no orders), e-mail chaos@axionet.com or fax: (604) 875-1403.

www.torontoimageworks.com



create^{tivity}

digital imaging
& photographic services

- Large-format digital output
- High resolution scanning & film output
- Custom photographic printing & proofing
- C-41, E-6 and Agfa Scala B&W processing
- Darkroom Rentals
- Mounting, Laminating & Framing

edge^{ucation}

new media
computer training

- Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, PageMaker
- Macromedia Director, Authorware, Flash
- Quark XPress, Immedia
- HTML & Web development
- Interactive Multimedia
- Digital Publishing & Imaging
- Full & Part-Time Courses
- Free Seminars

web

< CHECK OUT OUR NEWLY
REDESIGNED WEB SITE

call 416.703.1999
toll free 1.888.867.2252



TORONTO IMAGE WORKS
80 Spadina Avenue, Suite 207, Toronto, Ontario M5V 2J4