

**fuse** art culture politics

THE PINKY SHOW

**Is  
Anybody  
Watching  
These  
Guys?**



*Also:*  
Randy Lee Cutler  
TRUTH AND  
CONSEQUENCES

Francisco Fernando  
Granados  
REFLECTIONS OF AN  
UNGRATEFUL REFUGEE

Gita Hashemi  
THERE IS A  
THIRD VOICE IN IRAN

ARTEXTE  
508-460 RUE STE-CATHERINE O  
MONTREAL QC H3B 1A7

\$7 Volume 33, Number 1



7 25274 81331 5

printed in Canada

PM40022164 R8623

104.7 more issues after this one.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Franco Boni, June Pak,  
Denise Macharacek, Anar Ali,  
Srimoyee Mitra,  
Jessica Shepherd (on leave).

**STAFF**

Izida Zorde, EDITOR  
Heather Haynes, PUBLISHER  
Cris Jaw, ART DIRECTOR  
Chris Gehman, COPY EDITOR  
Richard McKibbin, PROOFREADER  
Amber Landgraff,  
EDITORIAL INTERN/IMAGE RESEARCHER  
Nahed Mansour, PUBLISHING INTERN

**CONTRIBUTING EDITORS**

Anthea Black (Calgary), Andrea Fatona (Peterborough), Richard Fung (Toronto),  
Gita Hashemi (Toronto), Steve Loft (Ottawa), Ashok Mathur (Vancouver/  
Kamloops), Kirsten Forkert (New York), R. William Hill (London UK), Randy  
Lee Cutler (Vancouver), Janna Graham (London UK), Michelle Jacques (Toronto),  
Jessica Wyman (Toronto), Milena Placentile (Winnipeg), Lee Rodney (Windsor).

**FOUNDING EDITORS**

Clive Robertson, Tom Sherman and Lisa Steele

Cover image: The Pinky Show. *The Consequences are Terrifying*, 2009.

FUSE is published four times a year by Artons Cultural Affairs Society and  
Publishing Inc., a non-profit artists' organization. All inquiries and return of  
undeliverables to the following address:

**Artons Cultural Affairs**  
454-401 Richmond St W., Toronto ON M5V 3A8 (Canada)  
**EMAIL:** info@fusemagazine.org **TEL:** (416) 340-8026

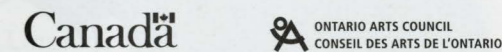
Copyright © 2009 Artons Publishing Inc. All rights reserved under International Copyright  
Union. Any reproduction without permission is prohibited. Send permission requests to  
Access Copyright (800) 893- 5777. Artons Publishing purchases First North American Serial  
Rights and copyright reverts to the writer after publication. Artons Publishing assumes no  
responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts. Manuscripts will not be returned. A copy of our  
Writers' Guidelines is available on our website. 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.

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES:** \$24 per year; Institutions \$36 per year (in Canada only). Outside  
Canada \$28 U.S. per year, \$36 International; Institutions \$48 U.S. Decisions regarding who  
qualifies as an individual subscriber remain the right of the publisher.

Printed in Canada by Dollco Printing.

FUSE is indexed in the Alternative Press Index and ARTbibliographies Modern, and is  
distributed by, and a member of, Magazines Canada (416) 504-0274. FUSE acknowledges the  
financial support of the Government of Canada through the Publications Assistance Program  
and the Canada Magazine Fund toward our mailing, editorial, production, and project costs.  
We also acknowledge financial assistance from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario  
Arts Council. Finally, we are grateful for the many hours of volunteer and partially paid labour  
that are provided by everyone listed on our masthead, and some not listed.

Publications Mail agreement No. 40022164 Registration No. 8623 / ISSN0838-603X



10248 106 Street Edmonton AB

**LATITUDE 53**  
CONTEMPORARY VISUAL CULTURE

**15 JAN-3 FEB** MAIN SPACE Gabriel Coutu-Dumont,  
Sketches Of Synchronicity  
PROJEX ROOM Stacey Cann, Forgotten Love Affairs  
*Opening Reception 8pm Friday 15 January 2010*

**20 FEB 2010** 53 Ways To Leave Your Lover  
A Celebration of Romance, Heartbreak & Revenge  
*Silent Auction & Fundraiser 7pm*

**5 MAR-10 APR** PROJEX ROOM  
Patrick J. Reed, WADCUTTER  
*Opening Reception 8pm Friday 5 March 2010*

10215 112 Street Edmonton AB



harcourthouse

**26 NOV-19 DEC** MAIN GALLERY Candace Makowichuk &  
Ruth-Anne French  
IN THE FRONT ROOM... Lee Henderson  
*Opening Reception 7-10pm 26 November 2009*

**7 JAN-13 FEB** MAIN GALLERY Chris Cooper  
IN THE FRONT ROOM... Rachel Hellner  
*Opening Reception 7-10pm 7 January 2010*

**18 FEB-20 MAR** MAIN GALLERY Corinne Duchesne  
IN THE FRONT ROOM... Gerald Beaulieu  
*Opening Reception 7-10pm 18 February 2010*

The Winter  
Season  
at Edmonton Artist  
Run Centres

www.latitude53.org  
www.harcourthouse.ab.ca



IN REMEMBRANCE



Ayanna Black  
1939-2009

Poet, activist, mentor, traveller, volunteer  
— Ayanna Black made a major difference  
to Toronto as a place of culture and social  
justice. Born in Jamaica, she moved to  
London, England to help her uncle raise  
three children. She then came to Canada  
and turned her energy to many creative  
actions. She was a co-founder of *Tiger Lily*,  
the pioneer literary journal for women of  
colour, and the Canadian Artists Network:  
Black Arts in Action (CANBIA). She was  
programming chair of Toronto Arts Against

Apartheid, and led the effort to bring Bishop Tutu here. Ayanna  
wrote three books of poetry — *No Contingencies* (1986), *Linked Alive*  
(1990), and *Invoking the Spirits* (2009) — and edited three influential  
anthologies of African Canadian writing. She was a member of the  
boards of many arts and community organizations, including The  
Women's Art Resource Centre. But none of these accomplishments  
reveal her as a person: the friend and mentor who could go from  
serious discussion of social justice to whooping laughter at the world's  
ways in a second. She leaves her partner Eckehard Dolinski, her cousins  
and nieces, and countless friends. One of her poems reads in part  
"I'm not afraid/my eagle body I/ trust."

— John Oughton



Joane  
Cardinal-Schubert  
1942-2009

Canada lost one of its greatest champions  
for the arts with the untimely passing on  
17 September of Joane Cardinal-Schubert  
after a long and courageous battle with  
cancer. While she was acknowledged as  
an exceptional and accomplished visual  
artist, Joane also made her mark as a cura-  
tor, writer, long-time contributing editor  
to *Fuse Magazine*, poet and lecturer. She  
was a strong promoter and supporter of  
Aboriginal arts activities in her hometown  
of Calgary. She also became interested in  
video, and was a major influence in the development of the Aborigi-  
nal Program at the Banff Centre. But her greatest contribution may  
well be her successful campaign to have Aboriginal artists accepted  
into the mainstream of contemporary Canadian art. In recognition of  
her contributions, she received numerous awards. The fourth woman  
in Alberta to be recognized by the Royal Canadian Academy for the  
Arts (1986) with the RCA designation, she also received the Com-  
memorative Medal of Canada in 1993, an Honorary Doctor of Laws  
degree from the University of Calgary in 2003, the Queen's Jubilee  
Medal in 2005, and the National Aboriginal Achievement Award in  
Art in 2007. Joane is survived by her husband, Mike Schubert and  
their sons Christopher and Justin.

— Clint Buehler

BUDDIES IN BAD TIMES THEATRE presents

# THE rhubarb FESTIVAL

feb 10-28, 2010



TORONTO'S ANNUAL  
3-WEEK CONVERGENCE OF  
CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE

FESTIVAL DIRECTOR  
**ERIKA HENNEBURY**

ASSOCIATE CURATOR  
**ALEX WOLFSON**

Featuring **Jess Dobkin, Glenn Marla (NYC),  
Ulysses Castellanos, Sherri Hay, Betty Burke,  
Neal Medlyn (NYC), Rae Spoon, Jeremy Bailey,  
Ryan G. Hinds, Karen Bernard (NYC),  
Pony da Look, d'bi.young**  
and many more.

Design: jakcreative.com Photo of Jess Dobkin: David Hawe

FESTIVAL PASSES ON SALE DECEMBER 1!

**buddies**  
IN BAD TIMES THEATRE

12 ALEXANDER STREET, TORONTO, ONTARIO

BOX OFFICE 416-975-8555

artsexy.ca

ORDER | INFO | GIVE\*  
**416-975-8555**

\* GIVE TO BUDDIES BY MAKING A TAX-  
DEDUCTIBLE CHARITABLE DONATION

33.1 content



FEATURE



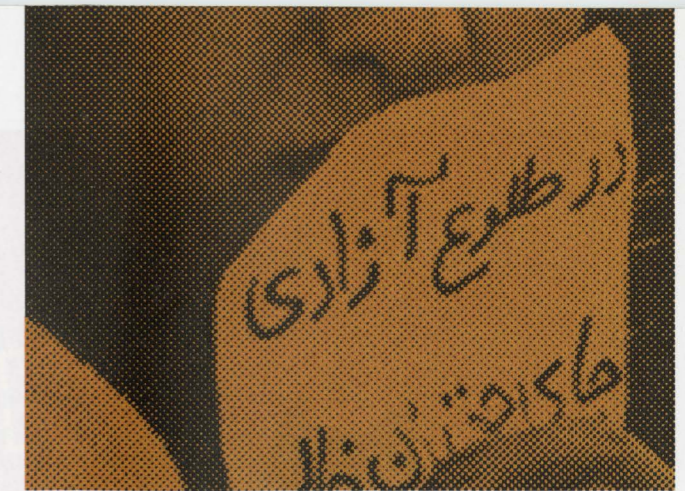
ARTIST PROJECT

REVIEWS



SHORT FUSE

- 07 Editorial
- 08 Truth and Consequences: A Commitment to Generosity, Truthfulness and Reconciliation  
BY RANDY LEE CUTLER
- 14 There is a Third Voice in Iran  
BY GITA HASHEMI
- 18 Gently but Firmly Poking Your Brain with a Stick: Milena Placentile in Conversation with The Pinky Show
- 30 Reflections of an Ungrateful Refugee  
BY FRANCISCO FERNANDO GRANADOS
- 26 The Fundred Project  
BY MEL CHIN
- 34 I WILL NOT CONFUSE  
BY KEVIN RODGERS
- 36 Palestine Represents: 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Toronto Palestine Film Festival  
REVIEW BY NAHED MANSOUR AND LEILA POURTEVAF
- 38 Friendly Neighbourhood Terrorists: ATSA's *Change*  
REVIEW BY DAVID GARNEAU
- 41 Trap and Snare: Omer Fast's *Nostalgia*  
REVIEW BY BRENDA GOLDSTEIN
- 44 Pushing Boundaries: Non Compliance Short Experimental Program at imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival  
REVIEW BY CARLA TAUNTON
- 47 Revolutionizing Autobiography: Roger Hallas' *Reframing Bodies: AIDS, Bearing Witness, and the Queer Moving Image*  
REVIEW BY STEPHANIE ROGERSON
- 48 Five Ring Circus  
BY NO ONE IS ILLEGAL
- 49 2010 Olympics Index  
BY AM JOHAL



fuse art culture politics

Gently poking your brain for social change.  
THE PINKY SHOW



Also:  
Randy Lee Cutler  
TRUTH AND CONSEQUENCES  
Francisco Fernando Granados  
REFLECTIONS OF AN UNGRATEFUL REFUGEE  
Gita Hashemi  
THERE IS A THIRD VOICE IN IRAN

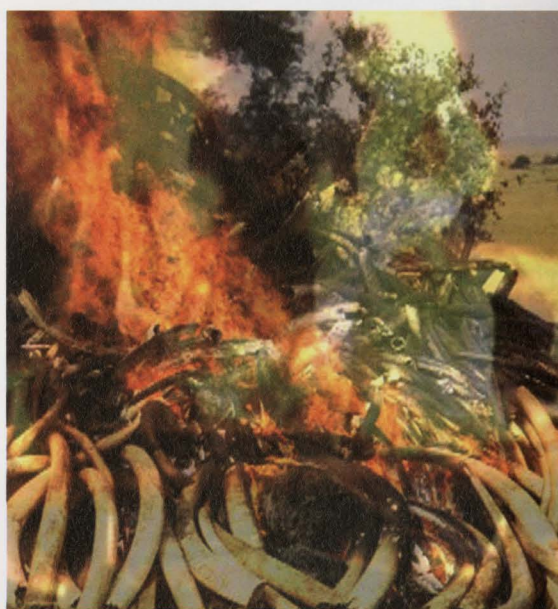
the consequences are terrifying

Subscribe Today!

With a 30-year publishing history, FUSE is where art and politics meet.

416 340 8026

WWW.FUSEMAGAZINE.ORG



Nyumba Ata Choma, 2008

**Brendan Fernandes**  
**HARAKA HARAKA**  
February 4 - March 13, 2010



The Rope of Hope, 2008

**Anna Biró**  
**TEXT IN TEXTILES**  
April 1 - May 1, 2010



LÀ OÙ L'ART TRAVERSE LES FRONTIÈRES/  
WHERE ART BREAKS DOWN BARRIERS

3680 Jeanne-Mance St., Office 103  
Montréal, Qc, Canada H2X 2K5  
t. 514 982-1812  
www.m-a-i.qc.ca

Exhibitions presented at the MAI

Gallery Hours:  
Tuesday to Saturday,  
from 12 Noon to 6 pm.

FREE ADMISSION



AN UNEXPECTED FUTURE

*"The artist shall at all times refrain from making any negative or derogatory remarks respecting VANOC, the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Olympic movement generally, Bell and/or other sponsors associated with VANOC."* (VANOC, 2009)



Photo: Lisa Kannakko

In the third of her trilogy on critical pedagogy, bell hooks reflects on how one of the roles of critical education is to ask people to consider the necessity of protecting and participating in democracy. Democracy cannot be assumed, she argues, it must constantly be manifested and enacted. This act of manifestation is part of a participatory process that positions the responsibility, benefits and rights of civic society at its very core, with each individual responsible to the collective good of the whole.

A number of contributors to this issue write from Vancouver, where many people are organizing in response to massive funding cuts to the arts and significant cuts to other not-for profit sectors. Avoiding the fact that the cuts across the board were a result of Olympic overspending, The BC government put an interesting spin on the cuts to arts arguing that it was either these or larger cuts to women's, children's and homeless groups. This effectively set up a scenario where funding to artists would mean taking food and shelter away from women, children and homeless people. At the same time, security and policing initiatives intended to "solve homelessness and improve public order" by clearing people out of the Downtown Eastside, effectively eliminated the civil liberties of long term residents to create a more hospitable environment for corporate sponsors and tourists. Speaking to the repercussions of the Olympics on communities in British Columbia in *Five Ring Circus*, No One is Illegal calls for solidarity — arguing that the games provide a license to investors and developers to displace people and grab land. In a related piece, housing activist and journalist Am Johal presents an index that outlines the disparities between budgeting for Olympic building projects and security and spending on homelessness, community service and arts.

Ideologically-based budgeting decisions are just one of the topics covered in this issue's interview with Hawaii-based art collective The Pinky Show — a group personified by kitten news anchors Pinky and Bunny. Reflecting on the problem of

consciousness raising in *Gently, but firmly, poking your brain with a stick*, Pinky and Bunny cover an extensive range of subjects, from the ongoing effects of colonialism, civil rights abuses and state-sponsored violence to the structure of cultural institutions and representation in popular media. In conversation with Winnipeg artist and curator Milena Placentile, the Pinky Show reflect on their work as part of a broader educational project intended to bring submerged and marginalized truths to a global audience.

The question of truths is also taken up in Randy Lee Cutler's article, *Truth and Consequences*, which considers Foucault's conception of parrhesia as it relates to a recent exhibition and forum on the possibilities for talking about race and challenging the conditions associated with racism in constructive and generous ways. Reflecting on speaking out, or truth telling, as a fundamental component of democracy, Cutler writes that speaking out requires that we continually exercise our franchise by enacting our right to freedom of speech alongside our responsibility for a collective good. This responsibility is reflected in a related article by Francisco-Fernando Granados, *Reflections of an Ungrateful Refugee*, a narrative of the author's own experience of attempting to represent refugee experience outside mainstream scripts of idealized Canadian Multiculturalism.

Considering the possibility of an unexpected future, one of the projects that Granados reflects on proposes to offer tourists the rare chance of having a socially conscious cruise around Vancouver (albeit in a boat shaped like his own head of hair), featuring audio guides about local refugee issues as seen from the perspective of refugees. This type of experiencing of the city would allow visitors and locals to "explore the beauty of Vancouver, not through its colonialist past or neoliberal omnipresent," but from the perspective of often unheard residents. This collectively constructed, evolving and multivocal narrative would go a long way toward protecting a democracy based in participation.

— Izida Zorde, Editor

# TRUTH & consequences:

**A COMMITMENT  
TO GENEROSITY,  
TRUTHFULNESS,  
AND RECONCILIATION**

by Randy Lee Cutler

My intention was not to deal with the problem of truth, but with the problem of truth-teller or truth-telling as an activity ... Who is able to tell the truth? What are the moral, the ethical, and the spiritual conditions which entitle someone to present himself as, and to be considered as, a truth-teller? About what topics is it important to tell the truth? ... What are the consequences of telling the truth? ... And finally: what is the relation between the activity of truth-telling and the exercise of power, or should these activities be completely independent and kept separate? Are they separable, or do they require one another?

— Michel Foucault,  
*Discourse and Truth: The Problematization of Parrhesia* (1983)

In the autumn of 1983, Michel Foucault delivered six lectures in English at the University of California at Berkeley under the title *Discourse and Truth: The Problematization of Parrhesia*. For his swan song, the philosopher examined *parrhesia*, the act of fearlessly speaking the truth. He began with the origins of the word in early Greek thought and then presented a concise and erudite history of ideas. “The word ‘parrhesia’ appears for the first time in Greek literature in Euripides [c.484–407 BC], and occurs throughout the ancient Greek world of letters from the end of the Fifth Century BC.”<sup>1</sup> While there are various forms of the word, much of the focus is on problematizing the activity of truth-telling. What does it mean to take on this role and how does it affect transformation both for the speaker and the audience?

Speaking out and taking on the role of the parrhesiaste addresses the ways in which “truth” might be framed, negotiated and represented. It informs and is informed by questions of subjectivity, politics, ethics, aesthetics and our obligation for the common good. We all know that to speak candidly can mean courting risk, whether in terms of one’s career, livelihood or personal safety. In our present cultural moment, with its own particular complexities, who takes on the role of the parrhesiaste? Who speaks truth to power? For example, the city of Vancouver passed the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games bylaw in June 2009 that will restrict the distribution and exhibition of unapproved advertising material and signs in any Olympic area during the Games. Only celebratory signs, defined as those that celebrate the Games and create or enhance a festive environment and atmosphere will be allowed to exist on private or public properties. There are concerns that the Vancouver 2010 Integrated Security Unit (ISU) will use this Olympic edict to justify a crackdown on activists and prohibit freedom of speech. This example illustrates how speaking out is a contextual activity that operates within particular frameworks of censorship. The emphasis is on the question of who speaks out and under what circumstances.



Abbas Akhavan. *Stress Positions* (Installation Detail), 2009. Photo: Blaine Campbell. Courtesy: Artspeak.

These far-reaching ideas are part of the curatorial premise of an exciting event that took place last autumn in Vancouver. *Speaking Truth to Reconciliation* was a project in two parts curated by Sadira Rodrigues for Artspeak. The first platform was the exhibition *Race: Proposals in Truth and Reconciliation* at the gallery from 11 September to 31 October, 2009. It showcased the work of Abbas Akhavan, Kristina Lee Podesva and Mohammad Salemy. The second component took place on 23 and 24 October in the form of a two-day forum at Emily Carr University. “Speaking Out: A Lamentation for Parrhesian Strategies” featured local and international speakers asked to consider the possibilities of “speaking out” in the context

of cultural production. Speakers included the artists in the exhibition as well as Ashok Mathur, Sven Lütticken, Ken Lum, Ted Purves, and myself.

The curatorial platform considers the adoption of a position to “speak out” as an oppositional strategy, and the ways in which this might reveal the limitations or structures in the operation of power. In her curatorial statement, Rodrigues asks, “What are the possibilities of talking about race today? It is critical that we continue to challenge the conditions of racism, marginality, exclusion and xenophobia. But how does one approach talking about a subject whose archaeologies of knowledge have been laden with histories of conflict and contestation? And

**WE WILL  
DEMAND  
TRANSPARENCY  
AND  
DEMOCRACY  
FOR THE MARKET**

Kristina Lee Podesva,  
*Structures of Relief*, 2009.  
Courtesy: the artist.

**WE WILL VEIL  
OUR APATHY  
IN THE FOLDS  
OF POETRY**

**WE WILL  
PRESENT  
AMBIVALENCE  
AS A STRATEGY  
OF  
CONSEQUENCE**

**WE WILL  
DEREGULATE  
THE SYMBOLIC  
ECONOMY**

**AND INVEST  
OFFSHORE**

**WE WILL  
DIAGNOSE  
DISTORTIONS  
OF AMBITION  
AS SYMPTOMS  
OF SUCCESS**

**It is critical that we continue to challenge the conditions of racism, marginality, exclusion and xenophobia. But how does one approach talking about a subject whose archaeologies of knowledge have been laden with histories of conflict and contestation? And how does one do this with a commitment to generosity, truthfulness and reconciliation?**

how does one do this with a commitment to generosity, truthfulness and reconciliation?"

Not surprisingly, Rodrigues has a personal motivation for this project. Having spent the last 10 years working locally and nationally curating exhibitions, developing public programming at the Vancouver Art Gallery, and acting as diversity facilitator with the Equity Office at the Canada Council for the Arts, she is well versed in the complexities of race, representation and communication. Her current approach with this project is to consider whether marginal and oppositional strategies are useful to cultural production. Can an oppositional approach that was fruitful at earlier moments in history retain its efficacy? How does one speak "truth" or foster an environment of parrhesia without re-inscribing the conventional hierarchies and distributions of power, especially when the truth-tellers of, say, 20 years ago, are now in positions of power themselves. Is there a necessary distancing from these strategies, perhaps through a more nuanced approach? What are the most productive ways to enter the conversation when talking about important issues? How does one critique and problematize systems of power? By recognizing that the dynamics of power and knowledge are always shifting depending on the context, we find ourselves constantly negotiating and perhaps improvising our relationships so that conversations and debates continue to occur.

One of the key characteristics of *Speaking Truth to Reconciliation* is a commitment to generosity and generous interactions, which

is extended to intellectual thought. Often, criticality translates as a hard-edged authority and rigidity rather than a dynamic dialogue that adapts to participants and context. How do we hear what another says without responding exclusively to highly charged emotions or personal politics? Some important effects of this project appear to be the ongoing conversations that have occurred between Rodrigues and Melanie O'Brian, the Director/Curator at Artspeak and among artists and writers in the community, as well as in the more private platforms of casual conversations. In the realm of parrhesia, as Foucault reminds us, truth games can have deep consequences. Friendships may suffer for it; speakers risk losing their popularity when their opinions are contrary to perceived norms, and scandal might ensue.

**T**he opening night of the exhibition *Race: Proposals in Truth and Reconciliation* coincided with Swarm, Vancouver's annual festival of artist-run culture organized by the Pacific Association of Artist Run Centres. The evening was suffused with a combination of melancholy, shock and outrage. The provincial government had recently announced cuts to \$20 million in gaming grants (more than 90 per cent of current funding), which, while problematic, was also a reliable resource for arts organizations and community arts groups. Interestingly, many people were more "comfortable" speaking truth to these cuts than the more thorny issues of race and representation. It is not entirely clear why. Perhaps the stake-

holders see this loss in funding as the very foundation upon which exhibitions can be realized, regardless of the curatorial premise. In his essay, "Secrecy and Publicity: Reactivating the Avant-Garde," Sven Lütticken corroborates this. "It is telling, however, that when a work gets too 'political', part of the art audience will still object to an improper use of art." I wonder whether race politics within the realm of cultural production is marginalized specifically because of its unambiguous relationship to lived experience and therefore antithetical to the neo-conceptual practices that currently dominate. Perhaps Lütticken is correct in his assessment that many contemporary artists "...convey a sense that meaningful communication must be sought in a non-public realm, in small groups."<sup>2</sup> It does seem that productive conversations occur both at differing scales and in diverse contexts. Admittedly, the unfolding of this project has been instructive for the degree of generosity that people are prepared to extend to complicated issues, personalities, and public debate. I would argue that for an exhibition with such loaded subject matter, the work itself was slight. Rather than directly courting risk, the show created an active space for the viewer to engage the work and its provocative proposals.

The three artists in the show, selected for their ongoing interest in truth-telling and race politics (whether through strategies of hospitality, dialogue or in-your-face opposition), were asked to expand and/or shift their own parameters for speaking truth.

Abbas Akhavan's work, a project in four parts, indirectly addressed the problematics of race and representation drawn from his own ongoing interest in the correlates of hosting, hospitality, hostility and hostage. For the opening night piece titled, *Ghosts*, the artist extended an invitation "to as many visibly non-white people as possible to attend the event." This highlighted a few things: the general absence of people of color at Artspeak openings; the assignment of racialized representation onto the viewer; and, perhaps, the impossibility of this depiction outside of actual individualized embodiment. By this I am referring to two things. Firstly, the artists' own discomfort in being asked to foreground their own racialized identity in the production of work. And secondly, that race cannot be addressed comprehensively in any generalized way without acknowledging the specificities of embodied experience. In a way, the invitation was secondary to the gesture, which underscored provisional appearances and absence rather than an ongoing participatory presence. The second piece, *Stress Positions*, was comprised of two six-inch platforms placed on top of each other against a wall. A label affixed high on the wall was only accessible to the visitor who mounted the dais. It read: "Each day, a Caucasian male will come into the gallery, stand on this platform, and host discussions on accountability and reconciliation." Akhavan evokes Yoko Ono's 1966 *Ceiling Painting* (or *YES Painting*), where viewers had to climb up a white ladder in the centre of the room, where a magnifying glass hang-

ing from the ceiling allowed them to see the word "YES" written in tiny letters on a framed piece of paper affixed to the ceiling. But rather than an affirmation, *Stress Positions* simultaneously evinces an invitation and its inevitable failure. The artwork is a trap.

The third piece, *Guest*, is a weekly site-specific performance for the duration of the exhibition in which a white woman in full costume visits the gallery with a portable audio system and belly dances for an hour. With the gallery doors propped open, the performance takes over the space, rendering the other two artworks temporarily silent while she gyrates and spins in place. The spectacle points to the dominance of Orientalism in many representations of race, as well as the problematics of racialized embodiment. The final piece will occur at the forum, "Speaking Out: A Lamentation for Parrhesian Strategies," which accompanies the exhibition. Here Akhavan, who was born in Iran, has invited an Iraqi artist to impersonate him, wearing his style of clothes and hair, again as a way of addressing representation, ghosts, guests and failure to perform as expected. An illustrated lecture written by the artist will be translated into Arabic (which Akhavan does not speak) and delivered by the impersonator.

**M**ore tangibly visible is Kristina Lee Podesva's *Structure of Relief*, comprised of five take-away posters and a video installation within an impossibly small space. The video is a single-channel work featuring graphic and text animations

that cycle through a series of contradictory statements. The poster project operates as free “propaganda” for gallery visitors. It also circulates in the public realm whether on bulletin boards, in free newspaper stands, or wherever else they found habitation.

The five statements on the posters are:

**WE WILL DEMAND TRANSPARENCY AND DEMOCRACY FOR THE MARKET**

**WE WILL VEIL OUR APATHY IN THE FOLDS OF POETRY**

**WE WILL PRESENT AMBIVALENCE AS A STRATEGY OF CONSEQUENCE**

**WE WILL DEREGULATE THE SYMBOLIC ECONOMY AND INVEST OFFSHORE**

**WE WILL DIAGNOSE DISTORTIONS OF AMBITION AS SYMPTOMS OF SUCCESS**

Some of the statements from the video are:

**WE WILL OPPOSE/ANTICIPATE/ DEMAND TRANSPARENCY AND DEMOCRACY FOR THE MARKET**

**WE WILL DENOUNCE/ REVEAL/VEIL OUR APATHY IN THE FOLDS OF POETRY**

**WE WILL CRITICIZE/STUDY/ DEREGULATE THE SYMBOLIC ECONOMY AND INVEST OFFSHORE**

**WE WILL RETRACT/REFINE/ REPEAT ANY MISSTATEMENTS UNTIL THEY ARE PUBLISHED**

**WE WILL PROVE/DENY/DECLARE WHAT IS IMPORTANT WITH RHETORIC AND RECEIPTS**

Podesva is primarily engaged in truth as an ethical investigation. Her contradictory statements are indexed to lived experience and a more immediate relationship to truth via community conversations. Using statements borrowed, taken, and adapted from a variety of personal sources, the artist explores how power functions between the individual,

the institution and the collective. In her consideration of how to talk about truth and race, she questions *how* we are rather than *who* or *what*, thereby addressing ideas of consideration and generosity in the curatorial premise.

Mohammad Salemy’s contribution is comprised of two video works placed side-by-side, as well as archived posters and flyers. On one monitor, *Newton’s Third Intervention* presents rough documentary footage from a collective protest against Artspeak and the Canadian Art Foundation in 2006. Salemy and three collaborators condemned Canadian Art Gallery Hop Vancouver’s acceptance of American wine sponsorship. They argued that they could not accept US sponsorship of art in North America, while the Americans’ simultaneously destroyed the oldest cultural artifacts in Iraq. According to Rodrigues, the work questions the limits and possibility for political action through a “complicated figure in the local community, who is often willing to take the role of the parrhesian (or ‘truth teller’).” A conversation is presented on the second screen where Sara Mameni questions Salemy’s intentions and strategies.

**A**s a fundamental component of democracy, speaking out requires that we continually exercise our franchise by enacting our right to freedom of speech. And yet this is neither easy nor without risk. According to its Greek origins, *parrhesia* was a significant aspect of artistic practice whether through writing, theatre or the visual arts. In our own time, how does truth telling operate within the arena of cultural production? The current gallery structure plays a large part in which artworks get exhibited and by extension reviewed. For an artist who creates work that does not easily fit within normative practices or purposefully takes up oppositional approaches, opportunities can often be scarce.

The act of fearlessly speaking the truth is an activity predicated on frankness, danger and duty. The interlocutor, with his or her own social context and sense of duty, embodies a personal relationship to truth via moral, social, and/or political obliga-

tion. Speaking truth is one thing. Doing this with a commitment to generosity, truthfulness and reconciliation means taking one’s time in how ideas and feelings are put into words. Zen monk and poet Norman Fisher’s own practice attempts to speak truth with generosity. “This raises the question of how we speak the truth — skillfully or unskillfully, thoroughly or with only a few details, kindly or not so kindly, at the right time or at the wrong time. In what style and at what pace do we communicate this version of the truth? With what attitude and tone of voice? All of these factors make more of a difference than you might think, not just in style but in substance.”<sup>3</sup> By placing the stress on the role of the truth-teller rather than what specifically is said, Foucault underscores the activity rather than the question of whether a statement is true or not. What is less apparent in his analysis and central to this curatorial project, is how the performance unfolds and what shape the specific relations take.

Where Foucault’s six lectures are a historical and nuanced analysis of how the truth-teller’s role was variously problematized in Greek philosophy and in our own present context, I wonder whether the parrhesiaste, particularly within the frame of cultural production, can become drunk in courting risk and danger. As Foucault asks, “What are the moral, the ethical, and the spiritual conditions which entitle someone to present himself as, and to be considered as, a truth-teller?” Even as we attempt to speak the truth or reframe it within artistic practices, we must be mindful of at least these two questions: 1. Who holds a credible relationship to the truth?; and 2. How does one speak the truth? In order for reconciliation to be possible and within reach, we must remember that the substance of truthfulness is intertwined with the how of generosity, skill, thoroughness, kindness, etc.

As the public forum for these ideas will happen after the deadline for this article, it is unclear what specific issues will come up and dominate the conversations. The line-up is designed to present some historical framing for these debates both locally and nationally,

offering a platform to consider our contemporary moment. The presentation by Ted Purves, independent curator and chair of the Social Practice graduate program at the California College of the Arts in San Francisco, should provide a broader exploration of the role of truth telling in cultural production and education. As the author of *What We Want is Free: Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art*, (2005), Purves’s interest in gift economy may expand the discussions on the practicing of generosity and the strategies to be employed.

As a framing device, Foucault’s lectures on free speech operate as the theoretical foundation upon which these events unfold. Complicated and contextual, the role of the parrhesiaste is often an uncomfortable yet necessary place to inhabit. How we perform truth-telling may tell us something about the role and efficacy of artistic expression within a larger social and political context, which in turn might also open up a discussion about how cultural production can speak truth to power. □

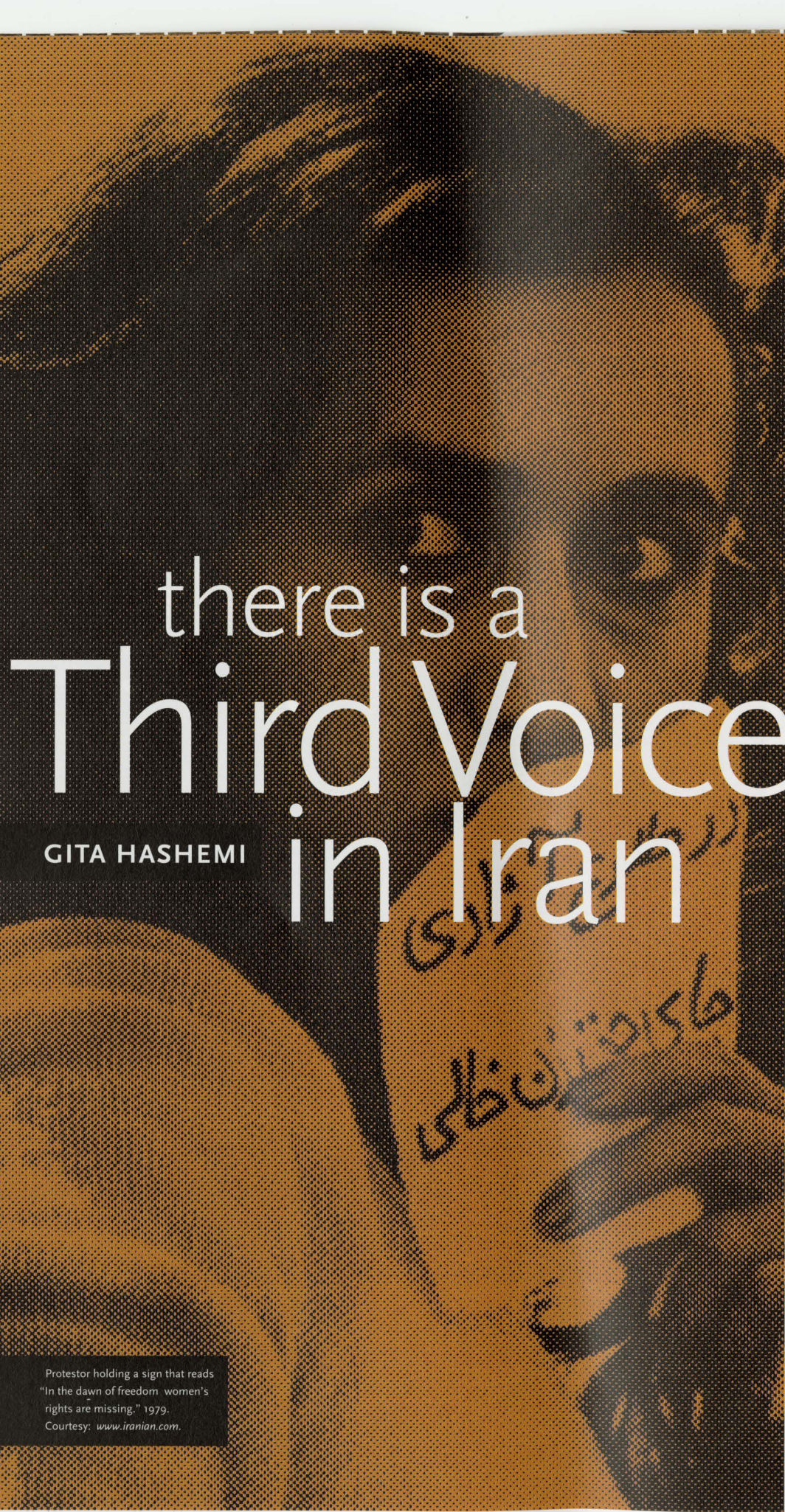
Notes:

1. The Berkeley lectures were edited by Joseph Pearson and published by *Semiotext(e)* in 2001 as *Fearless Speech*.
2. Sven Lütticken, *Secrecy and Publicity: Reactivating the Avant Garde*. (London: New Left Review, 2002). <http://www.newleftreview.org/A2414>
3. Norman Fisher, *Taking our Places: The Buddhist Path to Truly Growing Up*. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004). P.164.

**RANDY LEE CUTLER** is a Vancouver based writer, artist and educator. She contributes writing to catalogues and art magazines as well as maintains an experimental relationship to pedagogy and practice. She teaches at Emily Carr University.

In Abbas Akhavan’s *Guest*, 2009, a veiled Caucasian belly dancer attends Artspeak at irregular times and dances for 30 minutes (*Guest* is one of four interventions by Abbas Akhavan). Photo: Francisco Fernando Granados. Courtesy: the artist.





# there is a Third Voice in Iran

GITA HASHEMI

Protestor holding a sign that reads "In the dawn of freedom women's rights are missing." 1979. Courtesy: [www.iranian.com](http://www.iranian.com).

On 7 March 1979, less than a month after the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the then-supreme leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, demanded that the transitional government ban unveiled women from entering or working in government premises. The next day, and for several days after, thousands of women staged spontaneous street demonstrations and sit-ins in front of government buildings in many cities across Iran. The largest demonstration started on 8 March at the University of Tehran, where, for the first time since the 1953 U.S.-funded *coup d'état* that brought down the popularly elected nationalist government of Mohammad Mosadegh, a coalition of Iranian feminist groups were marking International Women's Day with a conference. The conference was well attended by international feminists, including a group of French feminists who collaborated with Iranian activists in filming the women's protests and making the only documentary to date about this historic moment.<sup>1</sup>

The Tehran protest covered large city blocks along just renamed Revolution Street, extending to the headquarters of National Radio and Television (today known as Seda va Sima) and the Ministry of Justice. Many men — mostly leftist activists — joined the protests and some acted as human barriers between women and the torrents of fundamentalists who came at them with sticks, chains and utility knives. This was the unorganized early version of what we know today as the Basij militia. The protestors' message was simple: "We revolted in order to be equal." The popular slogan was "*dar tolo-e azadi, jay-e haq-e zan khali*" (in the dawn of freedom women's rights are missing).

However, the ideologues and leaders of the male-dominated political organizations that were soon to stage their

own opposition to the Islamic government, and lose, abandoned women, arguing that gender equality could only be defined as a byproduct of socialist and/or democratic systems, and that women's rights at that moment were secondary to the class struggle and the larger struggle for democracy. Women were thus literally and ideologically beaten back into submission. Mandatory veiling, soon extending beyond government buildings to encompass all public places, was one in a series of concerted attacks on the civil and legal rights and personal freedoms of women, including taking away divorce, custody and travel rights, and limiting women's fields of study and work.

In spite of this historical setback, over the past 10 years women's rights activists have been using highly creative and diverse forms of social and political engagement to once again mount a serious and radical campaign for change in Iran. Resisting repeated attacks, women's groups have articulated major legal and political challenges to the fundamentalists' rule by demanding changes to the constitution of the Islamic Republic toward full equal rights for women (for example, the One Million Signature Campaign), and, simultaneously, mobilizing women to break down social and cultural barriers such as gender-based violence, poverty and unemployment.

In a remarkable recent documentary titled *We Are Half of Iran's Population*<sup>2</sup> feminist Iranian filmmaker Rakhshan Bani-Etemad<sup>3</sup> interviews a large number of women, including students and housewives alongside political personalities, researchers and women's rights activists from diverse political/ideological formations who work in many different areas of research and activism. Made over the few months prior to the 12 June 2009 elections, and released on YouTube just a week before election day, the film also briefly looks at the activist coalitions that were created this past spring in order to take advantage of the brief opening in the public sphere for discussing women's agendas and their needs and demands during the presidential campaign. A common question the director asks of the interviewees is what demands they have of the presidential candidates and on what basis they will decide whom to vote for. The footage is then played back to three out of four candidates (Ahmadinejad did not respond to Bani-Etemad's invitation to participate), and the candidates' responses to women's demands recorded as part of the documentary.

The majority of activists in the film — from Islamic, secular-nationalist and/or leftist orientations — demand fundamental changes to the discriminatory legal and political frameworks in Iran, including changing the sections of the constitution that enshrine discrimination against women. Other demands include joining the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (the Islamic Republic of Iran is not a signatory yet), opening economic, social and political opportunities for women, guaranteeing the right of women to organize politically, and several social policy demands, including social spending to create work opportunities and equal rights to education for women. Many of those featured in the film argue that these measures should not be labeled women's concerns only, as they benefit the entire society and therefore must be priority concerns of the society as a whole in this election round.

In their turn, the three candidates — Mehdi Karroubi, Mir-Hossein Mousavi (the leader of the so-called Green Movement) and Mohsen Rezaee — and their advisors and/or wives, while acknowledging women's active contributions in the 1979 Revolution and to socio-political life, pay lip service to only some of the issues raised by women, stopping short of formulating concrete responses to the questions asked of them. Most interesting and evasive is Mousavi's response. He insists that given the "traditional" dominant culture in Iran, any solutions to women's issues must be in ad-

herence with tradition. His conservatism comes as a shock even to his fully veiled wife, Zahra Rahnavard, who jumps in at one point to say that the executive branch has both the responsibility and the means to change laws and conditions. Mousavi's response is reminiscent of Mehdi

Bazargan's — he was the Prime Minister of the 1979 Transitional Government, who responded to Khomeini's decree and women's protests by issuing a statement saying that although he did not agree with mandatory veiling, the women in his own family and those of his cabinet ministers had always been veiled in accordance with their Islamic faith and traditions, and followed that by signing policy letters that barred women judges from presiding in courtrooms and closed government buildings to unveiled women.

Rakhshan Bani-Etemad's timely intervention brilliantly displays the fundamentalism inherent in the views of all of the candidates and their inability to respond meaningfully to people's demands. It leaves no doubts about the futility of supporting one candidate over the others, as it correctly shows them all as part of the same regressive political discourse that has dominated Iran for the past 30 years.

During the post-election events in June and July 2009, while the world focused on street demonstrations and/or behind-the-curtain negotiations between political factions and presidential candidates and their cleric supporters/foes, many commentators and observers expressed surprise at the strong presence of women on the streets. Such commentaries showed a complete lack of familiarity with Iranian history and an ignorance of current grassroots political dynamics. Bani-Etemad's documentary shows a highly organized, home-grown and broad-based women's rights movement that has, over at least a decade of overt





Activists holding a workshop focused on violence against women, Tehran, May 2008. Photo: Raha Askarizadeh.

activism and three decades of resistance, created the socio-cultural conditions for women to participate not just as so many bodies in street demonstrations, but as significant voices in the country's political discourse. It was no accident that many women's rights activists and their legal teams were among the first to be arrested — in their offices and homes or on the streets — as the post-election uprising started. The guardians of the Islamic Republic were quite clear that the persistent daily work of these activists, and the vast networks they have created in collaboration with students, workers and ethnic rights activists, had directly contributed to the massive shift in the country's political culture and prepared the ground for a broad mobilization of ordinary people in the political process and the ensuing mass protests.

For the progressive people of the world to show solidarity with the grassroots struggles for change in Iran, it is not enough to rally around the face of Neda Aghasoltan, a female accidental victim, or hail Mousavi, an accidental leader who by now has almost completely lost any popular support and disappeared from the picture. It is not enough to get on the green band wagon carrying viral songs by this or that Western band or to applaud disconnected diasporic born-again politicians playing "radical chic" by sporting green dresses and scarves in international film festivals. It is essential to recognize and support the articulate and organized progressive forces in Iran. The Iranian women's movement is not a U.S. feminist majority export, it didn't start organizing in June 2009, and it is not a momentary engagement. It is one of the most radical oppositions to the ruling elite, as it challenges the very foundations of the fundamentalist patriarchal system that governs Iran. *This is the "third voice."* Become familiar with it. Amplify it. Broadcast it. □

Start here: <http://www.forequality.info/english/>

Notes:

1. The documentary, simply titled *8th March 1979*, is available at <http://video.google.de/videoplay?docid=8842589185458786745&hl=de#>
2. *We Are Half of Iran's Population* is available at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L\\_BinbdFndI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_BinbdFndI)
3. <http://iranianstudies.ca/privatelives/000432.html>

**GITA HASHEMI** is an Iranian-born artist, writer and curator based in Toronto. She participated in the 1979 Revolution and women's protests against fundamentalist rule. She was an active member of Democratic Organization of Women of Iran until she left in 1984.

# artist-run Calgary

## UPCOMING ARTISTS

Dagmar Dahle  
Scott Rogers  
Jim Laing  
Roja Aslani  
Dagmara Genda

Tammy McGrath  
Dan Gibbons  
Jordan & David Doody, and  
Amélie Brisson-Darveau &  
Pavitra Wickramasinghe  
Stephanie Anne Clark and Jan  
Peacock

Nate Larson & Marni Shindelman  
City of Magpies  
Jordan Tate  
Susy Oliveira

STRIDE

403.262.8507  
[www.stride.ab.ca](http://www.stride.ab.ca)

TRUCK  
Contemporary Art in Calgary

403.261.7702  
[www.truck.ca](http://www.truck.ca)

T N G  
The New Gallery

403.233.2399  
[www.thenewgallery.org](http://www.thenewgallery.org)

**Bamberton: Contested Landscape**  
**Cedric and Nathan Bomford**  
January 8 to February 20  
Opening and Artist Talk Friday January 8 at 7:00pm

**Open Word: Readings and Ideas**  
**David O'Meara**  
January 19 at 7:30pm

OPEN SPACE  
510 FORT STREET, 2ND FLOOR  
VICTORIA, BC V8W 1E6  
250.383.8833  
[openspace@openspace.ca](mailto:openspace@openspace.ca)  
[www.openspace.ca](http://www.openspace.ca)

**A SPACE GALLERY**

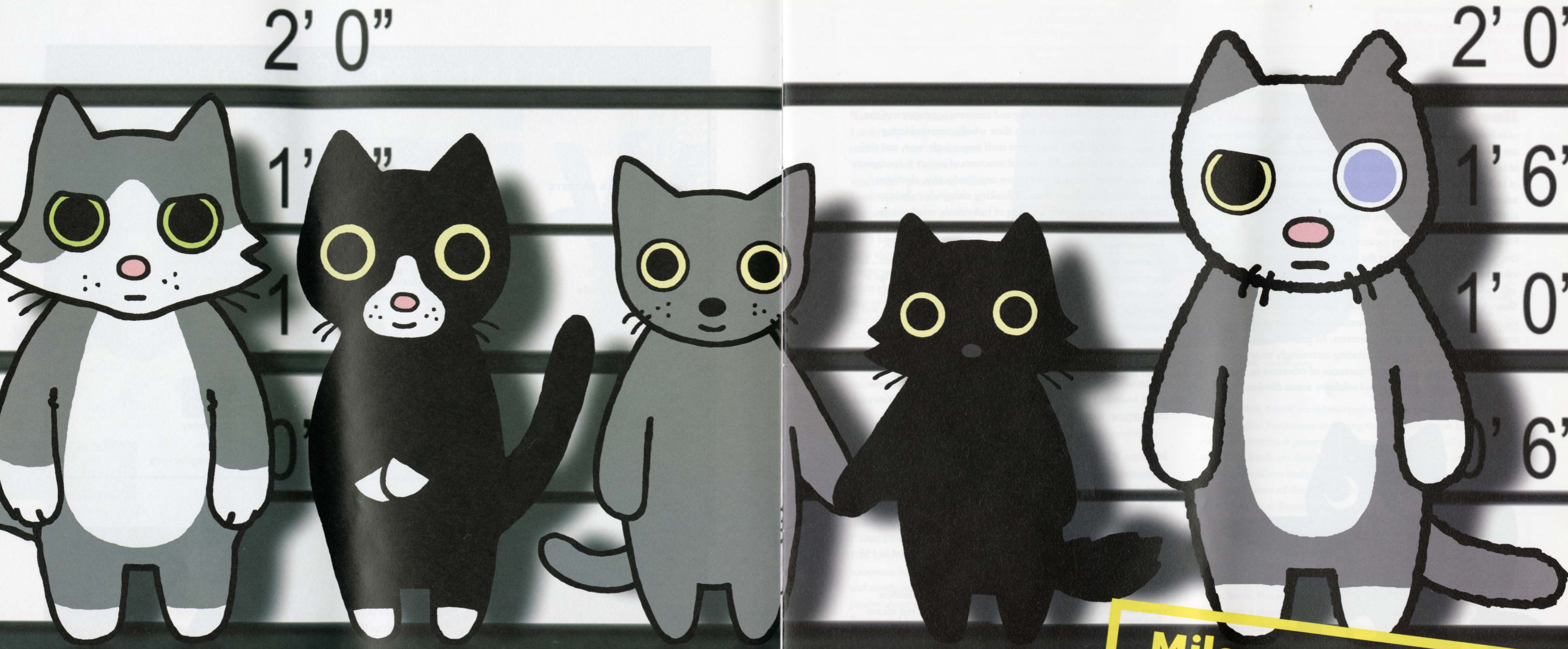
critical art + culture

Established in 1971 as one of the first not-for-profit, artist-run centres, A Space Gallery's mandate encompasses the investigation, presentation and interpretation of contemporary and experimental art forms. We are committed to programming critical and politically engaged work that is oriented around non-dominant communities and crosses disciplines, cultures, abilities, gender and sexual orientation as well as work in new media and technologies.

For information on our semi annual calls for submissions visit [www.aspacegallery.org](http://www.aspacegallery.org)

401 RICHMOND STREET WEST, SUITE 110  
TORONTO, ONTARIO, M5V 3A8 . 416-979-9633  
[INFO@ASPACEGALLERY.ORG](mailto:INFO@ASPACEGALLERY.ORG) [WWW.ASPACEGALLERY.ORG](http://WWW.ASPACEGALLERY.ORG)

A Space Gallery gratefully acknowledges the support of our members and project partners as well as the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council and the Toronto Arts Council.



The Pinky Show. Lineup, 2009. Courtesy: Associated Animals Inc.

# Gently, but firmly, poking your brain

In a world awash with slick, corporate media that seamlessly merge info all varieties need some “gentle poking” now and again as a reminder

**Milena Placentile**  
IN CONVERSATION WITH  
**The Pinky Show**

# with a stick.

tainment and advertising with a relentless editorial bias, brains of that the ideas we receive daily cannot be accepted blindly as facts.

**How can people** be introduced in meaningful ways to information they might not otherwise encounter? In what ways can we collaborate to piece together neglected or misrepresented histories and highlight marginalized alternatives to our present state of being? How can we stimulate ethical reflection on the nature of information as a concept? How can new ways of thinking and being inspire creative approaches to a new world?

From an undisclosed desert location, a collective of gentle-voiced cats have worked together for the past five years to enact possible solutions to these questions through the production and dissemination of a radical educational project called *The Pinky Show*. *The Pinky Show* champions intellectual curiosity, openness and compassion via carefully researched video presentations on ideas generally unavailable through mainstream sources. Its goal: to support social change agents worldwide by cultivating increasingly aware citizens via thoughtful engagement with questions of otherness in order to inspire respect, understanding and solidarity across divisions.

Considering the relatively young and innocent appearance of the participating cats combined with their wholly unthreatening demeanors, the collective proves itself surprisingly wise, and their curiosity to investigate the essential structures of society is contagious. As Pinky herself states at pinkyshow.org, “reductive, absolutist and otherwise dishonest ways of thinking ultimately culminate in the very real and tangible harming of individuals, relationships, communities, and society itself.” She is thus inclined to distinguish between types of information that are sanctioned by schools, governments, cultural institutions, militaries, corporations, etc., and types that are ignored. For these kitties, any area of knowledge is fair game; including major but under acknowledged histories, culture in all its manifestations, official and proposed policies, and commentary or propaganda.

In addition to producing videos and publications, *The Pinky Show* collective also deploys human representatives to carry out their educational objectives via diverse forms of community programming, including workshops, public presentations, art exhibitions, and agitprop dissemination.

**Milena Placentile:** Hi Pinky and Bunny! Thank you for taking the time to chat with me. As you know, I’ve admired your work for a long time and once I started to tell others about our plans to develop an exhibition in Canada, I was thrilled to discover just how many more fans you have around the world. This shouldn’t be the least bit surprising considering that your website notes you have received 7 million episode views from visitors located in 155 countries since 2005. Remarkable!

**Pinky:** Thank you for your very nice words. Seven million views — yeah, I suppose you’re referring to the giant red sticker on the home page of our website that says “OVER 7 MILLION VIEWS!”? Sorry, we know that’s irritating; it’s marketing logic.

**Bunny:** Actually, that number is not particularly meaningful. 7 million is only what we can easily count via internet metrics. But we don’t have any idea how many people watch our videos offline in classrooms, study circles, or whatever. Apparently, a lot of teachers and students download and use them, but we can’t count stuff like this because once a video is downloaded, who knows what happens to it?

**Pinky:** It’s also kind of difficult for us to estimate what percentage of our viewers would call themselves “fans,” since we do receive a medium-size heap of hate mail every day, which we do read. We basically do a discourse analysis on most everything we receive; ‘cuz of course we’re interested in how people are understanding what we’re trying to say. I think Bunny is especially interested in mapping patterns of misunderstanding; keeping track of what parts of our arguments are ignored or repeatedly go unaddressed.

**Bunny:** This is true. I definitely study the hate mail more than our fan mail. The so-called “counter-arguments” provide us with better data for how to move forward.

**MP:** One of the first things a new visitor to pinkyshow.org might notice is that Pinky often plays a role similar to that of a news anchor. Thus, one objective of *The Pinky Show* could be perceived as an effort to draw attention to how the media conveys information. Media awareness is difficult to achieve by happenstance. How did you come to analyze the structures of power influencing the media, and at what point did you realize you could contribute to efforts aimed at revealing these structures?

**Pinky:** I don’t know how people understand the media they’re exposed to. On one hand, it’s clear to me that consumers of movies and advertisements and everything else are never completely unconscious of how we’re being manipulated. But to be realistic I’d have to say the score is something like: Corporate Media Elite: 108, Everyday Consumer: 3. We’re getting pounded. The consciousness landscape that’s been created for us to live in is expansive and nearly seamless and I doubt we figure anything out by being passive about it. It sounds kind of ridiculous to say, but I think Bunny and I only started figuring things out after we sat down and literally said to each other, “We need to make critical consciousness a priority. What kind of activity can we do to help us accomplish this?”

**Bunny:** I think we started with: “Let’s make a puppet show that explains how ideology works.” We were studying a lot about ideology at the time.

**Pinky:** Yeah. That was the original idea, until we figured out how hard it is to make cute puppets that work. Basically, we just wanted *The Pinky Show* to be a record of our own learning. We wanted to learn more about ideology and marginalized knowledge and all that stuff, but I think we realized pretty quickly that a lot of what we wanted to explore wouldn’t make much sense to U.S. Americans, because U.S. Americans tend to look at the world through an upside-down framework that doesn’t have much to do with historical facts. We decided it’d be important always to return to the source of that upside-down-ness, which, in the case of the United States, is confusion over the nature of its own structure. That’s the big one — U.S. Americans can’t answer the question, “What is the United States?” The short answer, so far as we can



The Pinky Show. <above> Roadkill Report from Baker, California, 2008. <opposite page> The Consequences are Terrifying, 2009. Courtesy: Associated Animals Inc.

tell us, “The United States is a settler state.” That’s the basic structure, even though almost nobody in the U.S. would be able to tell you what settler colonialism is, even if you put a gun to their head. But that’s the basic point of reference for us — that’s how we’re connected to the history of imperialism; that’s why we have capitalism as the answer to everything; that’s why we’ve got genocide for Native people and “civil rights” for everybody else. That determines what kinds of cultural spaces are going to be

exalted while others are submerged or disappeared; what kinds of ideological formations are going to dominate; what kind of education system is going to be imposed; what kind of consciousness the schools are designed to cultivate; and on and on. To us, the settler colonialism analysis provides much more explanatory power than the “home of the free, we’re spreading democracy to everybody” narrative. Bunny?

**Bunny:** I just want to say that we like history and we also believe in learning from mistakes. So we wanted to make a show that discusses history in a way that actually made sense, instead of the ridiculous “Rock On America!” narrative Americans get in the schools. Because seriously, what kind of lessons can anyone draw from such a distorted “history?” So that’s important. Anyway, sorry we didn’t really answer your question about the media, but to us the media is only one component of the dominant hegemonic structure.

**MP:** Oh! No problem, this is great! These are just the responses I knew you’d provide to a simple question, so with that in mind, here is another: *The Pinky Show* covers an enormous range of subjects, from the ongoing effects colonialism (including discussions about illegally occupied territories and other forms of state-sponsored violence) to the enactment of irrational policies (such as the US war on drugs) and the structures of cultural institutions such as museums. I am sure many people wonder how you developed your positions and what type of “credentials” you possess in order to call yourselves educators. What are your thoughts on this?

**Pinky:** When people ask us if *The Pinky Show* is an educational project, I’m okay with just saying “yes” because the word “education” has become such a general term with wide applicability. But the question of whether or not we are credentialed educators is more loaded — it requires that an uncritical, but not politically arbitrary, connection be made between institutional affiliations, professional credentials, and presumably, high quality intellectual

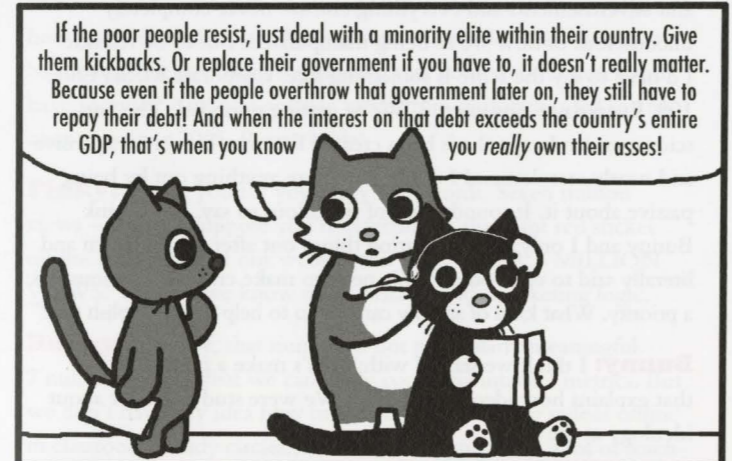
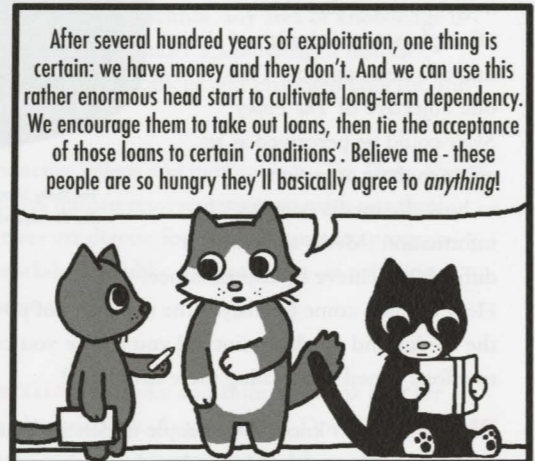
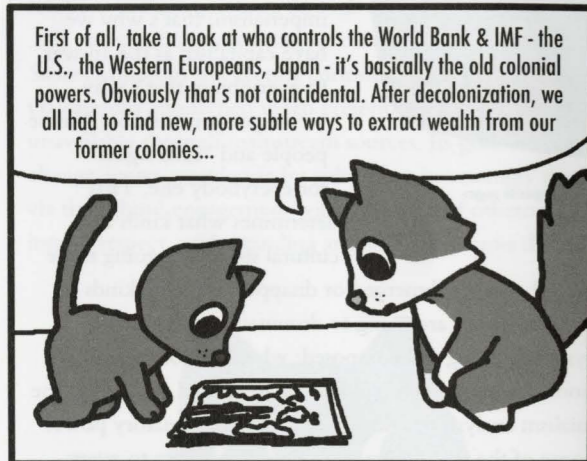


the consequences  
are terrifying



## Banked Into Submission

The Globalizationist's Guide to Developing Poverty



work. So, does our work have value? I don't know — can people evaluate that for themselves or do they need to look at my c.v. first? Especially because we are often addressing contentious subject matter that's really only meaningful when people examine it from their own political locations — our position is, hey, let's not even talk about our credentials. We realize there will always be people who refuse to consider our work because 1) we're cats; or 2) we don't state our professional credentials up front. Fine. We're more interested in calling attention to the rituals of legitimation when it comes to the world of ideas.

**MP:** Following on the theme of legitimation, let's talk for a moment about disciplines, and the general idea that some types of activity are more or less legitimate within the sphere of a certain discipline. Your website indicates that *The Pinky Show* is an educational non-profit entity, yet, you are also clearly involved in artistic practices such as painting, installation, graphic design, and of course video-making. Thinking about the worlds of contemporary art and classroom education, which certainly intersect but are often treated differently, where do you feel you fit in terms of both your objectives and the types of people supporting your work?

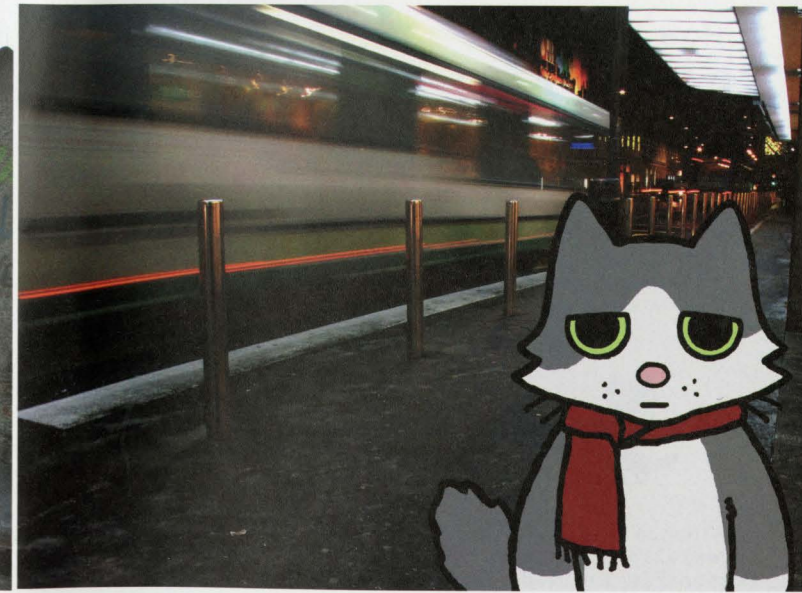
**Pinky:** Our interests and objectives remain more or less consistent no matter what format we're working in. Of course each format comes with its own set of formal constraints, historical associations and whatnot; we try to keep these things in mind even as we're jamming all of our interests into these nice little containers. Basically, when you're finished making a 1-page mini-zine, it's got to work nicely as a 1-page mini-zine, period. Don't evaluate a 1-page mini-zine in terms of its ineffectiveness as a video, which sounds really stupid, but that's what we see a lot in critiques of all sorts of cultural production. We also try to focus on the pedagogical

utility of any text we produce, regardless of actual format, especially as it relates to its intended audience.

This all sounds simple enough, but in practice things get messy pretty quickly. Viewed through the lens of contemporary art, for example, I'm sure our "educational" work looks dreadfully didactic. From a classroom teacher's point of view, maybe our *Class Treason Stories* installation feels too vague, discursive, or just plain weird. Both cultural spaces come with a range of audience expectations we can't control. When these values begin to interfere with each other our tendency is to privilege clarity. It's not as if we're anti-poetry, or don't value carefully constructed visual pleasure. But where we're coming from, we need to make decisions — conceptual, formal, and otherwise — based on our own understanding of our social obligations, which are themselves based on an analysis of ideology and hegemony. Our personal preferences aren't a big part of this project.

**Bunny:** You asked about where we're going to find support. When we first came out, people thought we were all about anti-corporate greed, so at least we got some supportive e-mails from the progressive community. Then the Iraq war started and we made a very popular video taking an unpopular position (at that time) denouncing the war, so even though we lost the support of the patriotic crowd — patriotic progressives included — at least we had some support from a small antiwar bunch. Then we came out and said the whole U.S. is founded on the continuing violence of settler colonialism and pretty soon even the antiwar folks got pissed at us. We like to joke that if we do our project long enough, eventually everybody will hate us.

**Pinky:** We're trying to figure out how to keep a project like this going, long-term. This is not a very carefully calculated experiment;



The Pinky Show. <left> Bunny and Pinky at Social Center ROG, 2008. <right> Bunny in Ljubljana, 2008. <opposite page> Banked into Submission: The Globalizationist's Guide to Developing Poverty, 2007. Courtesy: Associated Animals Inc.

we are just trying to be honest and do the best work we can and I guess we will see if society thinks we are useful or not. We are probably not a good ideological fit for a university, unless you can point us to a nice masochist university somewhere.

**MP:** Ha ha! Don't I wish! What about your work in the form of comic pages, 'zines, and books?

**Pinky:** I'll put it in economic terms. All of the videos and zines on our website are available for free. We do this because many of the people who are most interested in our work are coming from extremely economically devastated parts of the world. It's a perspective thing. When we saw this emerging as a viewership trend, we decided that we didn't want to charge people money to watch our videos or download our stuff. We couldn't figure out how to charge affluent New Yorkers \$2 to watch a video but someone from Cameroon only \$.05. So we said: Let's make everything free; maybe people who have some money and understand the political nature of its uneven distribution will think our project has value and will help to keep this thing going. Oops, mistake. So now we have a hard time paying our electricity and food bills.

I frame it this way because selling material objects has become our latest "experiment." Which is kind of ridiculous because, yeah, selling stuff is probably one of the oldest means of economic survival. But for us it was like, "Hey, we're broke. Do we give up? Or... should we try... selling something?" So we made a book. Our book is titled *I Want To Punch Your Face*, which probably won't endear it to people who are, at least theoretically, against face-punching. It's actually not — surprise! — NOT a pro-face-punching book. We just thought this title more catchy than the alternative, *I Want To*

*Punch Your Face But I Won't Because It's Just Wrong*. I like it, Bunny likes it; now we have to see if anybody else will like it. We have to find a publisher for that. Oh, also we hope that somebody will trade money for art-objects we make — that's support too.

**MP:** I'd like to ask you now about the perceived impact of your collective activities. The inspired mail you receive is possibly one indicator — and maybe you would like to address that — but perhaps you can also tell me about other moments that have inspired you to continue with the project.

**Pinky:** To be honest, we hesitate to offer evidence that *The Pinky Show* is making this great, big positive difference. Over the past couple years we've received a few hundred e-mails and letters from people containing some really amazing stories about how this project has helped change their life in some way. I'm happy that someone out there is feeling stronger or can work through difficult things more clearly because of this project, this is genuinely important to us. But at a political level, estimating the impact of our project is very difficult, maybe impossible. We're focused on developing a body of work that in sum total has the potential to transform consciousness. Of course we're not sure if we're doing things the right way or not — we just have our theory and we are putting it into practice. This is a long-term project, and until we finish, I almost don't want to think about how people are feeling, even if it's positive feedback. We just have so much work to do and I don't want to be distracted. Bunny and I will keep working as hard as we can for as long as possible and then maybe later someone else will come along and draw conclusions and lessons from what we've done, and then move forward with that. Just like we've done with the work of many others who came before us.

**MP:** What's next for The Pinky Show, and what can others do to help?

**Pinky:** Of course our first priority is "survival." This means we want to keep on working. Second is "expand" — we want more than just the two of us producing *Pinky Show* work. No matter how many hours we work every day, it's pretty obvious the two of us alone aren't going to be able to finish the enormous pile of work we want to complete before we die. So we want more *Pinky Show* workers and also we need several billion dollars so we can pay them. Bunny?

**Bunny:** That's all.

From November 12 – December 12, *The Pinky Show* presented *Class Treason Stories (excerpts)* at Gallery 1C03 at The University of Winnipeg. The exhibition explored the application of knowledge for either socially beneficent or individualist and competitive purposes. *Class Treason Stories (excerpts)* travels to Toronto Free Gallery opening January 14, 2010 with an artist talk on January 16. Human representatives of *The Pinky Show* will also be stopping in various cities across Canada over the next few months, so keep your eyes open for opportunities to meet with them and share ideas. □

**MILENA PLACENTILE** is a Winnipeg-based curator of contemporary art interested in promoting socially and politically engaged practices and facilitating audience experience.

I want to punch your face.

a picture book by  
Pinky & Bunny



A  
PINKY  
Book

The Pinky Show. <above> *I Want to Punch Your Face: a Picture Book by Pinky and Bunny*. AK Press: 2010. <below> *How to Get Free Land in 5 Easy Steps: A Handy Guide for Imperialists and Other Reasonable Individuals*, 2009. Courtesy: Associated Animals Inc.

## How to Get FREE LAND in 5 easy steps

### 1. ELIMINATE NATIVE PEOPLE.

Choose the most appropriate strategies: disease, criminalization/ incarceration, blood quantum, cultural genocide/forced assimilation, forced out-migration, cultivate poverty, just kill them.



A handy guide for imperialists and other reasonable individuals

### 2. REPLACE ALL ASPECTS OF NATIVE SOCIETY WITH YOUR OWN.

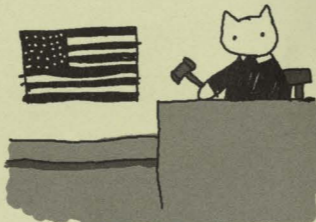
Examples: Government & Law, Economy, Religion, Culture.



Useful code-words: Progress, Modernization, Development, Inevitable.

### 3. INVENT LEGAL INSTRUMENTS THAT ALLOW YOU TO CLAIM OWNERSHIP OF NATIVE LANDS.

Examples: Treaties (you don't have to honor them), Annexation (doesn't have to be legal), Referendums (rig the vote)



### 4. CONTROL HISTORY

Write history the way you want people to believe it and teach it in all the schools (misinformation OK; eventually people forget what really happened). Commemorate official history with celebrations, statues and honorific naming.



Call the whole process 'democracy'. Call opposing viewpoints lies and revisionism.

### 5. DONE! ENJOY YOUR NEW LAND!\*

Remember: You've worked hard; you deserve everything you've taken. "To the victors, the spoils!"



\*Empire requires constant maintenance (repeat steps 1-4). Failure to do so may lead to loss of control.



The United States of America thanks you for your active support of our occupation and control of Native lands, both here and abroad.

Special Thanks: the politically inert masses of hard-working consumers

The Pinky Show:  
www.pinkyshow.org

# The Fundred Project

Operation Paydirt/The Fundred Dollar Bill Project is an art/science project initiated by North Carolina-based artist Mel Chin. The project has a critical mission: to support a solution to lead-contaminated soil in New Orleans and to help end this source of childhood lead poisoning. Paydirt brings together the science to transform lead so that it is no longer harmful and a strategy for citywide implementation. Fundred is a nationwide project designed to raise awareness of this environmental threat and collect the funds necessary to remedy it.

Anyone can make their own Fundred Dollar Bills — original, hand-drawn interpretations of U.S. \$100 bills. The goal is to create and collect over 3 million of these artworks. This cumulative total of 300,000,000 Fundred Dollars supports the equivalent cost (in U.S. Dollars) required to make safe every lead contaminated property in New Orleans, so that every child is protected.

These valuable drawings will be picked up by a special armored truck and presented to U.S. Congress with a request for an even exchange of the creative capital — your Fundreds — for real funding to make safe lead-polluted soils in New Orleans. See [fundred.org](http://fundred.org) for more information.

**FUNDRED.ORG**

## DRAW A FUNDRED DOLLAR BILL

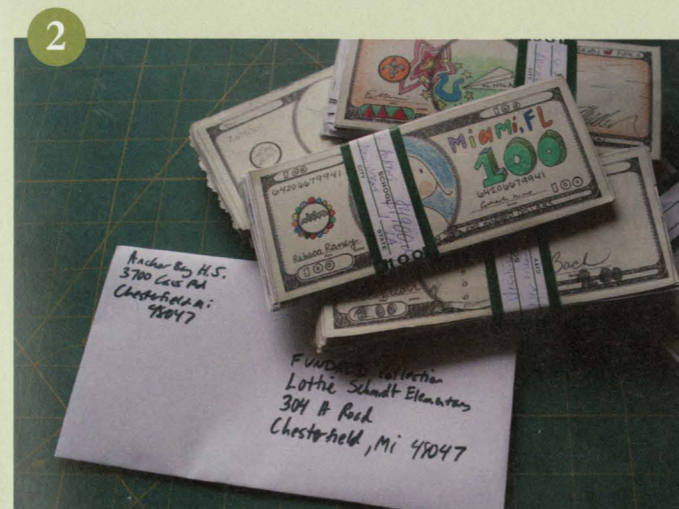
SUGGESTIONS:

- 1 INSTEAD OF BENJAMIN DRAW YOURSELF OR ANYBODY OR ANYTHING YOU WANT!
- 2 NAME YOUR DRAWING
- 3 PUT A BIRD IN THE CIRCLE
- 4 WRITE IN THE NAME OF CITY STATE COUNTRY WHERE YOU WERE BORN
- 5 MAKE UP YOUR OWN SERIAL NUMBER
- 6 TRY TO PUT IN FIVE 100s IN FOUR DIFFERENT WAYS! & WRITE IT TOO!
- 7 SIGN YOUR DRAWING
- 8 TEACHER OR WITNESS SIGNS HERE

BE SURE TO FILL OUT THE OTHER SIDE OF YOUR FUNDRED

TRIM

Make a Fundred! Make a Difference! [WWW.FUNDRED.ORG](http://WWW.FUNDRED.ORG)



**FUNDRED.ORG**

**1 MORE SUGGESTIONS:**  
INDEPENDENCE HALL IS SORT OF A HOME TO AMERICA. DRAW YOUR HOME, REAL OR IMAGINARY - COULD BE AN APARTMENT, HOUSE OR CASTLE

**2 MONEY HAS COOL SYMBOLS & SAYINGS MAKE UP YOUR OWN**  
**WHY:** TO ASK CONGRESS FOR REAL MONEY TO FIX LEAD POLLUTION IN NEW ORLEANS

**3 ADD TREES IF YOU LIKE LIVE OAK, MAPLE, PALM TREES OR SOMETHING TOTALLY DIFFERENT**  
LEAD SAFE SOIL

**4 ADD FOUR MORE 100s ON THIS SIDE!**  
AND HAVE SOME FUN DESIGNING YOUR FUNDRED!

**WHEN:** MAKE YOUR DRAWING NOW! WHEN \$300 MILLION ARE COLLECTED... WE WILL DELIVER

**WHERE:** IN YOUR CLASS, SCHOOL, CITY, EVERYWHERE!

**HOW:** DRAW YOUR FUNDRED AND SEND IT TO YOUR NEAREST COLLECTION CENTER

YOU CAN ADD PLANTS TO MAKE IT GREENER  
FIND THESE ON A \$1 DOLLAR BILL

AMOUNT CHECKERS

IN GOD WE TRUST

ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS

TRIM



Theories of Decadence and Aesthetics of Excess  
Glitch Medieval Art and Its Modern Interpreters  
The Archive in Contemporary Culture  
Photography's Discursive Spaces  
Visual Culture in Chinese History  
The Adventures of Arte Povera  
The Palace in Latin America  
Creative Critters  
Commune Manzoni  
Scratch-N-Sniff  
Canadian Kunstkammer  
The Gestalt of the Vault  
Attitudes and Altitudes  
A Stitch in Time  
Saves Embodied Information  
Mapping Medievalism  
Cultivators of Culture  
Forensic Imagination  
Economizing Culture  
Why Make Pictures?  
Just My Imagination  
H is for Heterotopia  
Collecting Cultures  
La Maison d'Artiste  
Adaptation Nation  
Art is a Hammer  
Transformations  
Vampire Picnic  
Lost in Transit  
Sonic Fictions  
Klein Mystery  
After Images  
La Perruque  
Paracinema  
Extemporal  
Nietzsches  
Exposé 67  
Multimart  
Expulsion  
Digipop

**IT HAPPENED AT WESTERN**

[www.uwo.ca/visarts](http://www.uwo.ca/visarts)

**Diane Landry: The Defibrillators**

Organized by the Musée d'art de Joliette  
Eve-Lyne Beaudry, Curator  
16 January through 14 March 2010



Diane Landry, *École d'aviation (Flying School)* 2000 (photo: courtesy of the artist)

**msvu art gallery**

Mount Saint Vincent University, Seton Academic Centre  
166 Bedford Highway  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
902 457 6160  
[www.msvuart.ca](http://www.msvuart.ca)



**Dunlop Art Gallery**  
CENTRAL GALLERY

**Mind the Gap!**  
Co-curators Amanda Cachia & Jeff Nye  
Organized by Dunlop Art Gallery  
CONTINUES TO JANUARY 3, 2010

**Michele Provost, Selling Out**  
Curator Sandra Dyck  
Organized by Dunlop Art Gallery  
JANUARY 9 TO MARCH 7, 2010

**SHERWOOD VILLAGE GALLERY**

**Mind the Gap!**  
Co-curators Amanda Cachia & Jeff Nye  
Organized by Dunlop Art Gallery  
CONTINUES TO JANUARY 3, 2010

**Lyndal Osborne, ab ovo**  
Curator Catherine Livingstone  
Organized by Dunlop Art Gallery  
JANUARY 23 TO MARCH 21, 2010

REGINA PUBLIC LIBRARY, 2311 12TH AVENUE  
REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN S4P 3Z5  
TEL 306 1 777 6040 FAX 306 1 949 7264  
WWW.DUNLOPARTGALLERY.ORG

REGINA PUBLIC LIBRARY

SASKATCHEWAN ARTS BOARD

THE CANADA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS SINCE 1957

LE CONSEIL DES ARTS DU CANADA DEPUIS 1957

**PLUG IN THE CITY**

Rob Kovitz: *Ice Fishing in Gimli* [a novel]  
December 12, 2009 - February 21, 2010

FAX  
December 12, 2009 - February 21, 2010  
Curator: João Ribas

Julieta Aranda, Dan Graham, Matthew Higgs, Germaine Kruij, Glenn Ligon, Yona Friedman, Anne Tardos and over 100 more.

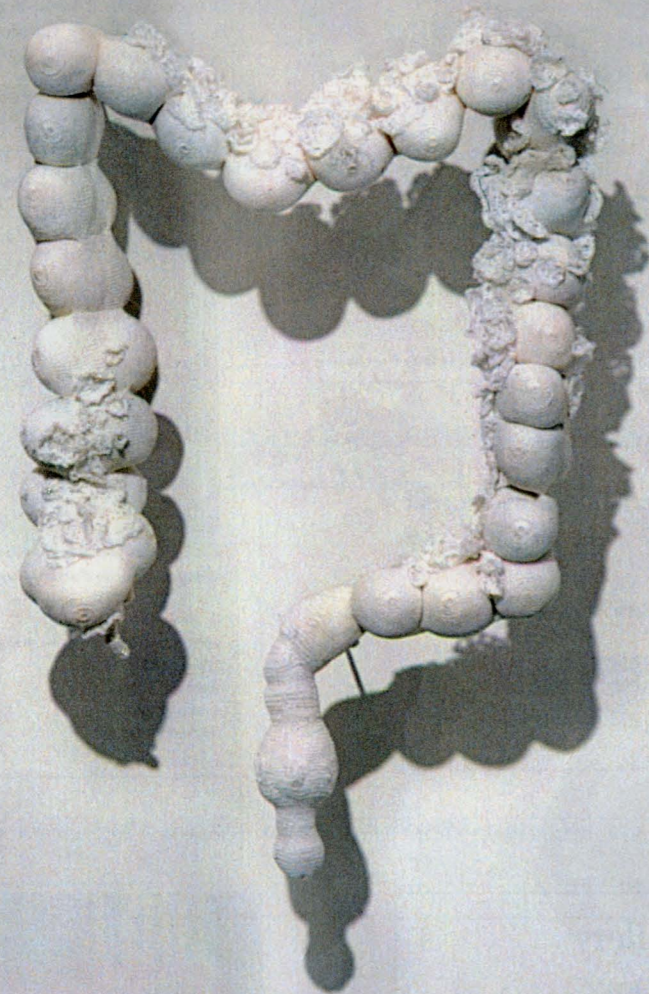
FAX is a traveling exhibition co-organized by The Drawing Center, New York, and iCI [Independent Curators International], New York, and circulated by iCI.

Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art  
286 McDermot Avenue, Winnipeg, Canada  
[www.plugin.org](http://www.plugin.org)

Canada Council for the Arts / Conseil des Arts du Canada

WINNIPEG ARTS COUNCIL

Naufús Ramirez-Figueroa.  
*Ashen Wreath to Bloom*, 2006.  
Courtesy: the artist.



## RECIPROCAL GAZING: Reflections of an Ungrateful Refugee

FRANCISCO-FERNANDO GRANADOS

In my years as part of a group of refugee teenage activists in Vancouver, I had the chance to talk at conferences and youth gatherings inside and outside of the city to try to raise awareness and give visibility to the increasing set of challenges that faced my community. In the urgent, post-9/11 climate of closing borders, exponentially increasing numbers of deportations and everyday racism, it felt necessary to speak out about our realities and give a voice and a face to issues that were being made invisible by both government and media.

Talking to the *Vancouver Sun*, Global News and documentary crews became increasingly frustrating as it became obvious that their interest in our stories had less to do with creating some kind of discussion around our work in the community and more to do with repeating an idealized version of Canadian multiculturalism where everyone, even racialized young people, had a chance to speak. The frameworks for representation these outlets provided were too rigid, too predetermined, too small. Refugees are meant to be grateful, and talking about the struggles of institutionalized discrimination or the brutalizing refugee certification process would not fit into these frames. Seeing the version of our stories rendered in print or on the screen made it feel like a sideshow, amplified and simplified so it could be consumed at a mass scale. Although the cameras could capture our likenesses, their one-directional gaze could not recognize the nuances of our situations.

The need to speak out is still pressing, but the frameworks for representation need to be transformed in order to go beyond the problematic of this one-directional way of looking. The search for cultural forms that engage a more complex point of view led me to art as an area of practice and research. Recent politically aware practices coming out of Vancouver present the possibility of a two-way gaze in representation, one that allows for dialogue to structure the work. Projects by my artistic partner and collaborator Amy Zion and fellow Guatemalan-born artist Naufús Ramirez-Figueroa create a visual manifestation of the circumstances that shape the lives of refugees without rendering the experiences of those who participate as easily consumable spectacle. In different media, and under different conditions, both of them commit to sustained collaborative relationships — in Amy's case with me, and in Ramirez-Figueroa's case with his mother — that have a significant bearing on the construction of the project itself.

In her 2009 video installation *Le Bateau L'Avenir*, Amy Zion conflates the tourist and the refugee to create a promo stand for a fantasy aquatic attraction for Vancouver's upcoming 2010 Winter Olympics. The boat, modelled after my somewhat unconventional hairstyle, promises to take Olympic visitors on an "unparalleled... interactive tour... just off shore from Vancouver's downtown core." *L'Avenir*, which refers to Jacques Derrida's notion of the unexpected future, would offer tourists the rare chance of having a socially conscious cruise around the city, featuring audio guides about local refugee issues. This unique opportunity would allow them to "explore the beauty of Vancouver, not through its colonialist past or neoliberal omnipresent, but through the unknown possibilities brought on by the Other."

The piece is an unorthodox product of my artistic partnership with Amy. Over the last year we have worked together as collaborators, but for *Le Bateau* we decided to change roles and become artist and model. As a gesture of solidarity, Amy wanted to create a monument to refugees. Through a series of ongoing discussions, I served as a consultant for the piece. We realized that a monument to the

refugee could not be a monument in the conventional sense: it could not be static, or made out of heavy metals. My unruly mestizo hair and its queer silhouette felt like the appropriate material for the project. Hair, a marker of racial difference, can stand for the refugee without putting any likeness on show. This allows for the figure to become visible while avoiding the exploitative trappings of conventional representation. Being consulted throughout the process brought about a kind of recognition between Amy and I that allowed us to rework the relationship between the artist/mediator and her subject.

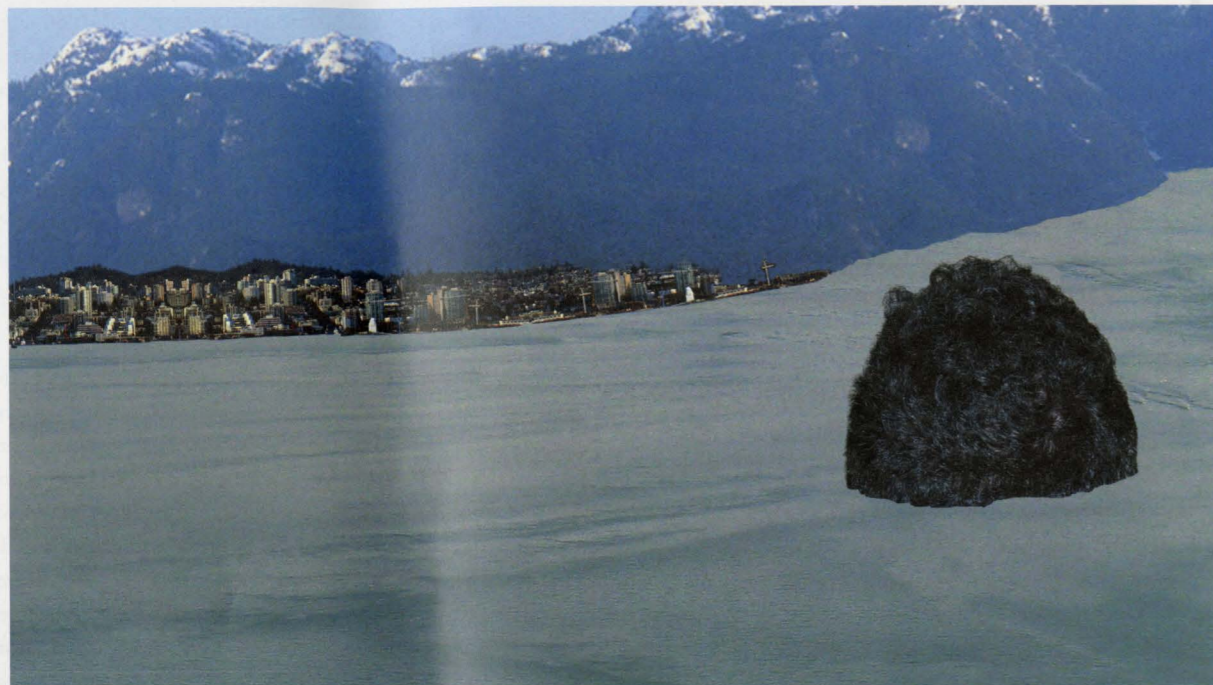
Our consulting relationship also recognizes the limits of representation. *Le Bateau* does not claim to speak for refugees. The video portion of the piece sees through the eyes of the tourist. Winding locks of black hair from the boat interrupt the utopian sight of the sea, the sky and the expensive Vancouver waterfront. This obstructed master view tells of the position of the tourist and the refugee in the context of the Olympic games. In our relationship of reciprocal recognition, Amy not only frames me as the subject of her representation, she also manages to evidence her own position of privilege as a Canadian-born citizen. In this way, the relationship is able to create a balanced dialogue that still admits to the differences in power.

With its humorous, outlandish and eerie proposition, *Le Bateau* explodes the logic of late capitalist transnational movement. Global neoliberalist policies have created the conditions that allow refugees and tourists to exist as groups of displaced individuals. The economic privilege of the tourist depends directly on the oppressive social and economic conditions that force many people in developing countries to flee. Refugees who reach countries of asylum are systematically kept in subordinate positions, continuing the legacy of European and North American colonialism.

In Canada, we have a situation where Vancouver is hoping to attract visitors from all over the world while policies that have been in place since 9/11 continue to close national borders to keep out "terrorists" and "illegal immigrants." The Safe Third Country Agreement, signed in 2002 by Canada and the United States, makes it possible for refugee claimants attempting to come into Canada to be returned to the US, forcing them to claim status in a country that routinely detains asylum seekers in isolated makeshift prisons. Other such measures include the recent visa requirement for people coming into Canada from Mexico and the Czech Republic, and raids carried out in schools by the Canada Border Services Agency in 2006, in which Latin American youth living in Toronto were detained and later deported.

In the face of these systematic forms of oppression, cultural work that imagines refugees as multi-layered subjects that cannot be contained by stereotypes is crucial. The work of Naufús Ramirez-Figueroa embodies the broken and mended connections in refugee families, the process of migration, and queer male sexuality, all in one intricate sculptural figure. His 2006 piece *Ashen Wreath to Bloom*





Amy Zion. *Le Bateau*  
L'Avenir (Video Still), 2009.  
Courtesy: the artist.

is delicately crocheted in the shape of a large intestine that hangs on a wall, as if floating. The piece was made in a vertical journey through the continent, travelling back and forth until it was completed. It echoes the circumstances of refugee subjects who have to be uprooted before they are fully formed. Ramirez-Figueroa knitted the piece with his mother, who still lives in Guatemala. The two of them, who lived apart as a consequence of the civil war that ravaged the country for more than thirty years, began working on the sculpture during one of his visits, after she taught him how to crochet a couple of years before. The connections between the bulbous shapes in the blooming wreath map out a relationship between two separated but familiar collaborators, creating a dialogue between them that goes beyond a spoken, written or pictorial language.

The use of an intestine as a symbol points to a visceral relationship to identity that is complex and sometimes conflicted. In conversation, Ramirez-Figueroa tells me that the idea for the piece came out of his childhood fears of being kidnapped and having his organs stolen and sold — a common fear for those of us who grew up in Guatemala. The gut is a site of passage for anything that enters the body, including trauma, which cannot be illustrated, only felt. The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) states that a “refugee claimant has the burden” of proving that he or she is “eligible for... protection.” A claimant’s eligibility is determined at a Refugee Board hearing that feels more like a criminal trial than a certification of migratory status. I remember visits to counsellors and psychologists where I was encouraged to speak about my memories of trauma so that they, as experts, could attest to it and lend credibility to my family’s claim in front of the IRB. Refugee trauma must be manifested and made official in order to be authenticated. Without any kind of biographical reference that may or may not

be a part of his particular experience, Ramirez-Figueroa’s gesture of putting an internal organ up for display parallels the processes of certification and authentication that are demanded from migrants.

Yet, the sculpture cannot be defined only through the lens of immigration. A queer sensibility is also a part of the work. The intestine is an element in male homosexual play. Viewed in this way, the organ is an expression of queerness that refers back to migrant experience by virtue of being a two-way channel. The different dimensions of the work exist together, in exchange with each other, refusing to be pinned down.

In both of the artworks that I’ve discussed here, the process of engaging with another results in cultural expressions that account for my experience, and likely that of other people with similar stories. When the dominant paradigms of nationalism and capitalism fail to recognize the humanity of those who are not legible within its structures, this kind of recognition provides not only an important political statement, but a necessary means of validation. □

#### Notes

1. “Process for Making a Claim for Refugee Protection.” Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. Last updated September 10, 2009. October 17, 2009. <http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/Eng/brdcom/references/procedures/proc/rpdspr/Pages/rpdp.aspx>

**FRANCISCO-FERNANDO GRANADOS** is a Guatemalan-born, Vancouver-based artist and writer currently working in performance, social intervention and cultural criticism. Through his practice, he aims to create ephemeral spaces where socio-political contexts can collapse and co-exist with personal stories.



To January 17, 2010  
**Steven White** The Combine Project

January 22 to February 28, 2010  
**Convergence**

47th Annual Juried Exhibition of Fine Art

**Voyage of Discovery**

Selected Works from the Permanent Collection

Tom Thomson Art Gallery  
840 First Avenue West, Owen Sound  
ON Canada n4k 4k4 Call 519-376-1932  
[tomthomson.org](http://tomthomson.org)

STEVEN WHITE, BRIAN'S ARC.

Andy Fabo, Aidan Urquhart, Michael Belmore, Amy Switzer, Andrew Van Schie, Dieter Schweiger, Barry Prophet, Kevin O'Byrne, Steve Sopinka



get yer pansy asses up here...

NORTH BAY, ONTARIO

FEBRUARY 13 - March 20, 2010

apologies to Simon Frank, this is his work, "Ice Hut" from Ice Follies 2006. Photo taken by Liz Lott.



## StFX Art Gallery

Dec 1 to 20 • Gordon Kennedy sculpture

Jan 5 to Feb 7 • Nancy Stevens paintings

Feb 9 to Mar 7 • Joanne Chilton mixed media

Art @ X

Mar 9 to 13 • Student Union Photo Exhibit

Mar 23 to Apr 1 • Art Department, Student Show

April 10 to May 2 • Fine Art Faculty Exhibition

Winter hours:

Tue to Fri, noon to 6 PM

Sat & Sun 1 to 4 PM

1<sup>st</sup> fl Bloomfield - Antigonish, NS

(902) 867-2303 • [galleries@stfx.ca](mailto:galleries@stfx.ca)

[www.stfx.ca](http://www.stfx.ca)

SUPPORTED BY SIFX UNIVERSITY & THE COMMUNITIES OF NORTHEASTERN NS

### The art of the book.



**POLAROID: ATTILA RICHARD LUKACS & MICHAEL MORRIS**

A large-format, full-colour collection of Polaroids that served as referents for Lukacs' paintings, organized into grids by Morris. Includes essays by Stan Persky, Michael Turner, and others.

Available in early 2010



**VANCOUVER SPECIAL**

The past, present and future of Vancouver according to Charles Demers, featuring stunning photography by Emmanuel Buenviaje.

Now available; [vancouverpecialbook.com](http://vancouverpecialbook.com)

ARSENAL PULP PRESS; [arsenalpulp.com](http://arsenalpulp.com)





## PALESTINE REPRESENTS: 2nd Annual Toronto Palestine Film Festival

REVIEW BY Nahed Mansour and Leila Pourtavaf



<clockwise from top left> Jumana Manna, *Familiar* (Video Still), 2007, Courtesy: the artist; Hany Abu-Assad, *A Boy, A Wall, A Donkey* (Film Still), 2008; Mahdi Fleifel, *Arafat and I* (Film Still), 2008; Javier Corcuera and Fermin Muguruza, *Checkpoint Rock: Songs of Palestine* (Film Still), 2009, Courtesy: Toronto Palestine Film Festival.

The 2009 Toronto Palestine Film Festival (TPFF) kicked off a week of programming with the goal of giving established and emerging Palestinian filmmakers a stage to showcase their work under the theme of “non-stereotypical cinema.” Opening just nine months after Israel’s air strikes on Gaza in December 2008, the festival was contextualized locally by persistent outrage and public debate over both Israeli military actions and attempts to suppress the dissent of artists and anti-Israeli apartheid activists in the city. On the heels of these public disputes, the second annual festival launched a refreshing week of programming that responded to the media frenzy with a nuanced and pluralistic representation of contemporary Palestinian cultural production.

Highlights of the festival included the Canadian premier of Cherien Dabis’ *Amreeka* (2009), which opened the festival to a sold-out audience. The film follows the story of a single mother and her son who emigrate from the West Bank to Illinois looking for a better future, initially oblivious to the harshness of Arab American life post 9/11. The film captures the experience of migration with stunning accuracy and subtle sentimentality, from naïve excitement to the trauma of the first racist experience in a new country and the ubiquitous sense of indefinite exile. The complex intergenerational perspectives present in the film create a narrative that multiple audiences can relate to.

One of the biggest strengths of the festival as a whole was its ability to bring together a diverse range of Palestinian narratives. While many films focused on the everyday life of Palestinians living under occupation, others turned the lens to the large Palestinian communities living in exile in places such as Beirut, London and New York. Among these, one of the most popular films screened during the festival was Emmanuel Hamon’s

*Selves and Others: A Portrait of Edward Said* (2003). Filmed shortly before the prolific writer’s death, this documentary provides a unique perspective on the importance of Said’s cultural identity to his body of work. In contrast, Mahdi Fleifel’s short comic sketch, *Arafat and I* (2008) reveals a different aspect of exile, one in which the longing and nostalgia for a homeland leave the protagonist perpetually unable to fulfill his most basic need, to find an English girlfriend who cares about chairman Arafat. The focus on the Palestinian diaspora was especially interesting for audiences who rarely get a glimpse into life in exile in film.

Many of the films that focused on life inside the Palestinian territories exposed the complexities of life under occupation. Hany Abu-Assad, director of *Paradise Now* (2005), contributed two films that engage with this dynamic. *Rana’s Wedding* (2002) centres on the title heroine’s seemingly impossible task of getting married and convincing her father to support her hasty decision within a span of 10 hours. Navigating East Jerusalem, Ramallah and all the checkpoints in between, the challenges of her day are amplified by roadblocks, soldiers, stone-throwers and overworked officials. By presenting the film from the perspective of a young, determined woman, Abu-Assad highlights everyday instances of Palestinian resistance. His other film, a short called *A Boy, A Wall, A Donkey* (2008), uses Israel’s separation wall as the backdrop to the narrative. The hilarious story revolves around three boys’ efforts to shoot a film without a camera — a challenge that they resolve, ironically, by recording their action film on the Israeli surveillance cameras that monitor movement along the wall.

The theme of creative resistance despite limited resources and under severe and strenuous conditions informs Javier Corcuera and Fermin Muguruza’s *Checkpoint Rock: Songs of Palestine* (2009). The film follows Suhell Nafar, a member of the Palestinian hip-hop group DAM, as he moves through and showcases the small but vibrant contemporary music scene in Palestine and Israel proper. From classical and folk musicians to a wedding singer, from hip-hop performers to a rock band, the film shows the ways in which Palestinian musicians use their art as an instrument of resistance. *Checkpoint Rock* deals with many of the same themes and even features some of the same musicians as TPFF 2008’s closing film, Jackie Salloum’s *Sling Shot Hip Hop* (2008). Although *Checkpoint Rock* is less slick and captivating than Salloum’s interpretation, a packed audience cheered, danced and sang along to the music as though it was a live concert. As a result, TPFF 2009’s closing night was one of the most memorable experiences of the festival. The large and lively audiences that were drawn to screenings throughout

the week were a testament to the importance and relevance of the festival to the city.

TPFF 2009 engaged a broader audience through its special programs, including an art exhibition, a series of panel discussions and a food and film brunch. The exhibition “Jewels in the Machine,” curated by Reena Katz and housed at the Beaver Hall gallery, was particularly noteworthy. Bringing together local, diasporic and Palestinian artists, internationally acclaimed works such as Jamelie Hassan’s *The Oblivion Seekers* (1985) and UK-based collective de-colonizing.ps’ *Decolonizing Architecture* (2005–2009) were presented alongside the work of emerging artists Jamana Manna, John Kameel Farah and Insaf Al-Shaded. Perhaps the strongest work in the show, Jamana Manna’s eerie video *Familiar* (2007) depicts the artist breastfeeding from her mother with a sound-track that exaggerates the sucking sounds produced. The perverse performance by an adult woman of an innocent act of a child captures the artist’s yearning for comfort and security while evoking the desperation that can accompany the desire to return home. This loaded metaphor is amongst the most memorable images presented during the festival.

The 2009 installment of TPFF successfully expanded its content and scope from the previous year, screening 34 films and presenting related special programming. Events were held at various venues throughout the city and a range of co-presenters, including Reel World, imagineNATIVE, Inside Out and the Images Festival, revealed an exciting network of alliances. The strength of the festival was that the programming went beyond the somewhat didactic theme of “non-stereotypical cinema from Palestine,” and was instead a productive site for examining the multiplicity of Palestinian identity at home and in the diaspora. The fact that such a young festival has grown so much in one year, and that it has been organized in its entirety through volunteer efforts, is a testament to the dedication of an ever-expanding group of local artists and activists. □

**NAHED MANSOUR** is a Toronto-based artist and activist whose video and performance works have been presented throughout Canada. She is currently completing her MFA at Concordia University.

**LEILA POURTAVAF** is a writer, activist and independent curator who is pursuing graduate studies in Near and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Toronto. Leila holds an MA in Media Studies and was a founding member and Montreal Coordinator of the BOOKMOBILE project.



ATSA. *La Banque à Bas*, 1997. Photo: Luc Sénécal. Courtesy: the artists.

## FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURHOOD TERRORISTS: ATSA's *Change*

Paved Arts • 18 September – 17 October, 2009

REVIEW BY David Garneau

Early fall 2009 saw the arrival of two emissaries from Montréal in Saskatoon. Pierre Allard and Annie Roy, the charismatic founders of ATSA (Action Terroriste Socialement Acceptable/Socially Acceptable Terrorist Action), a Montréal-based not-for-profit cultural organization, converted the Paved Arts gallery into a shop/archive. The installation is a condensed retrospective of the group's products and artefacts along with documentation of a decade of social interventions.

The shop offers environmentally friendly hankies, not-made-by-slave-or-child-labour "Change" t-shirts, key chains with miniature, bombed-out SUV's attached, and more! All are available for purchase by the armchair anarchist and eco-hipster. The archive, which blends with the store, contains large photographs, newspaper clippings and other traces of some of the 20 urban interventions the duo have produced in the past decade. You might have heard of their 1998 action, *State of Emergency/État D'Urgence*, where, in celebration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, they



ATSA. *Parc Industriel*, 2002. Photo: Martin Savoie. Courtesy: the artists.

set up a huge refugee camp for homeless people in the heart of Montréal. Or, perhaps you saw pictures of *Industrial Park/Parc Industriel* (2002), a city lot filled with sculptures made from blocks of industrial and commercial waste. It was an art world joke at the expense of Minimalism, and an indictment of waste-making and (mis)management. Most likely, you read about ATSA's production of fake Montreal bylaw enforcement tickets in 2005. These were enthusiastically deployed by nearly 350 citizens who distributed over 10,000 fines for offences ranging from engine idling, remote car starting, poor vehicle maintenance, driving gas-guzzlers, etc.

ATSA mobilizes armies of collaborative volunteers for their actions. Some events are sanctioned by civic officials, others are clandestine; a few are or become acts of civil disobedience. All are fun. The artists explain that, for them, "art is a game — a serious one whose power lies in its ability to effect real change; yet a game all the same." The collective produces exciting events that call attention to our many problems, local and global. Allard and Roy characterize

themselves as court jesters who use humour to disarm and provoke change among the elites and leaders as well as regular folk. They harness the media's hunger for spectacle, the conscientious mob's desire for conscientious mobbing and the artist's growing need to be relevant. Their long-term commitment to their community avoids the critique levelled at social engagement artist/tourists whose hit-and-run art attacks generate more fun than results.

Paved Arts, located in Saskatoon's depressed but perpetually, possibly revitalizing Riversdale district, is the appropriate location for ATSA's provisional "branch." The gallery is committed to its neighbours and to social action art. Even for those who regularly attend the gallery, ATSA is likely to be a revelation. Very few Francophone Québec artists come out this way and the scene is not well-known here. Local artists and activists are likely to be inspired by the ATSA example. However, their brand of social mobilization may be difficult to follow in our leaner cultural economy.



<left> Installation view of *Change (the Store)*, 2009 by ATSA. Courtesy: the artists. <top right> ATSA. *The Banquet (État d'Urgence)*, 2004. Photo: Martin Savoie. Courtesy: the artists. <top bottom> ATSA. *Attack #10 10 000 Ticket*, 2005. Courtesy: the artists.

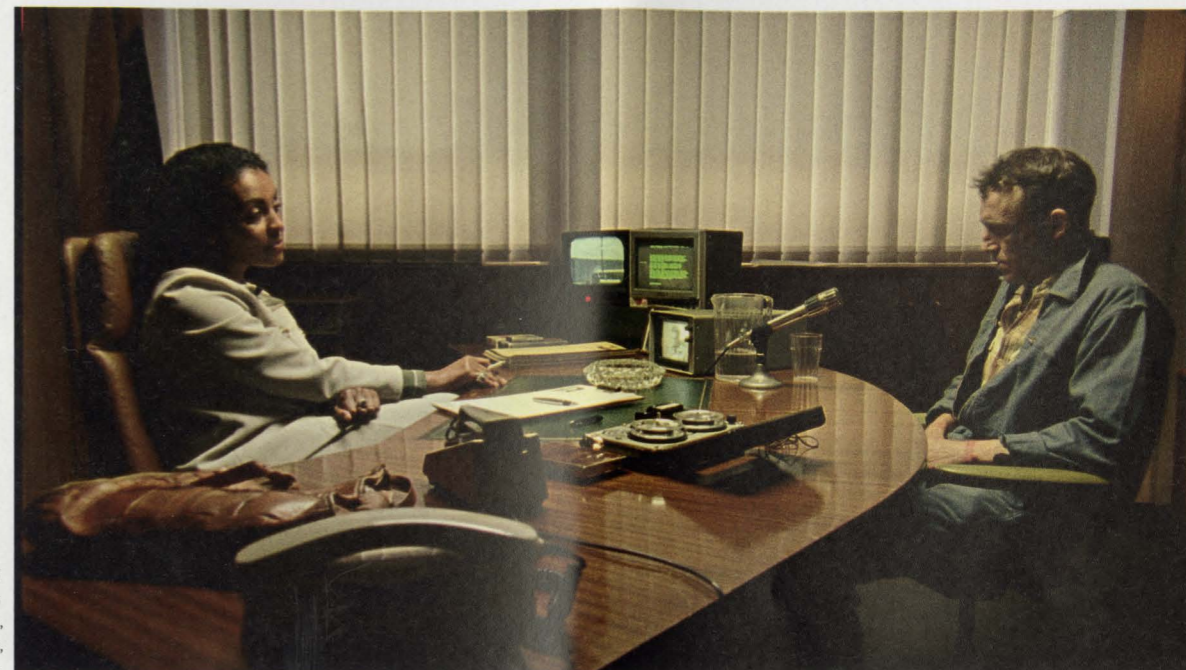


Like General Idea and N.E. Thing Company Ltd. before them, ATSA mimics corporate culture ostensibly to critique it. However, it is striking how comfortably the drag fits. A great deal of money has gone into this organization. The events, exhibitions, documentation, website, catalogue, DVDs, products, etc., are all expertly produced. The more time you spend with these products and representations, the greater the difficulty in separating Change™ and ATSA™ from the corporate entities they appear to critique. While not a branch of government, the collective's activities are perhaps not antithetical to the motives of its funders. Art often articulates the dominant culture's repressed aspects. In this case, ATSA, as court jesters, are able to articulate the most obvious of our perpetual injustices back to the institutions responsible for their remedy. ATSA's lesson is that in order to be effective, artists need to be novel while also being responsible. A completely oppositional stance will be ignored or repressed. A vertical invader comes up from within, transforms by adopting and adapting received cultural

codes. In order to be heard, one must speak a language that can be understood. The risk, however, is that by imitating dominant forms of discourse, one can more easily be co-opted by them. Fun and art can be a carnivalesque rehearsal of revolution, or smaller changes; or they can just be fun and art.

The euphoria of engagement, of doing something productive or at least symbolic, is exhilarating. As is the case in any media campaign for social improvement, it is difficult to determine the impact of these efforts. It might be best to think of them as part of a general, slow shift in consciousness and behaviour and recognize that humour and engagement are necessary complements to grimmer apocalyptic strategies. □

**DAVID GARNEAU** is an artist, curator and critic, and Associate Professor of Visual Arts at the University of Regina.



Omer Fast. *Nostalgia III* (Video Still), 2009. Courtesy: the artist, gb Agency, Paris, Postmasters, New York, Galerie Arratia, Beer, Berlin.

## TRAP AND SNARE: OMER FAST'S *Nostalgia*

Hamburger Bahnhof Museum of Contemporary Art  
11 September 2009 – 3 January 2010 REVIEW BY Brenda Goldstein

On September 22, Israeli-born, Berlin-based Omer Fast's trilogy *Nostalgia* was awarded the 2009 *Preis der Nationalgalerie für junge Kunst* (National Gallery Prize for a young artist). *Nostalgia* begins with an initial video — *Nostalgia I* — which is shown on a flat screen outside the two main projection rooms. It is of a man in military/outdoors-man gear, a British gamekeeper building a simple animal trap. The audio is the voice of a man with a West African accent describing the construction of a snare. It seems ordinary, in fact, banal, and the temptation is to give it a pass. The piece, however, builds momentum like a steam engine; over the course of the installation's next two components the story of the trap and snare becomes a complex central motif.

The next two rooms and two screens — *Nostalgia II* and *III* — reveal Fast's careful approach to storytelling, one that melds documentary and narrative fiction in a way that is as complex and structured as the descent into his three screen, three narrative,

walk-through installation. *Nostalgia* is a synthesis of medium and genre in which film and HD video are used with attention to the character and texture of each medium. Fast carefully combines documentary and fiction and what emerges is a complex treatment of what it means to try to portray, or retell the minutiae that make up historical events; particularly tragic ones.

*Nostalgia II*, from which the soundtrack of *Nostalgia I* has been lifted, is a dual projection of a filmmaker interviewing the man whose voice we hear, a refugee claimant. As the interview progresses, it becomes more invasive — the filmmaker starts to sound like the adjudicator of a refugee board: more insistent about details, trying to establish exact time-lines, interrogating the claimant about even the smallest inconsistencies. The refugee claimant moves from candor to evasiveness, and there are events he can't or does not want to remember. He may have been a child soldier, he may have had a family and a father. It becomes less and



<left> Omer Fast. *Nostalgia I* (Video Still), 2009.  
<opposite page> Omer Fast. *Nostalgia III* (Video Still), 2009. Courtesy: the artist, gb Agency, Paris, Postmasters, New York, Galerie Arratia, Beer, Berlin.

less clear what exactly has happened but the through-line of the original trap story remains. It becomes a refrain — its construction is repeated with descriptions of a species of tree that is easy to bend, does not leave chemical traces when bent to construct the trap and therefore doesn't reveal imminent danger to the local animals. The story ends describing a monkey reaching in to grab the bait as the snare tightens to catch it. The story gains resonance every time it is told, its allegorical properties shifting with the images on screen. In *Nostalgia II* the story is repeated by the refugee claimant, but it feels like both men are walking into traps set long before either of them entered the room. The workings of memory are not rational processes and trauma does not lend itself to easy recall, so their roles have cast them as adversaries.

Finally, in *Nostalgia III*, shown as a large projection in the final room, one finds elements of the same refugee's story in an intertwined multi-narrative 16mm film. Here the characters have been transformed, their gender, skin colour, authority and power inverted: the partially fantastical story is far removed from our present-day reality and instead is set in a future that contains contemporary technological elements within the visual style 1960s past. In this future-past,

the first world has become the third world — the black characters are where we are to expect the white ones to be. The story of the snare is repeated several times with chilling effect: a soldier in a group patrolling for white-skinned refugees attempting to cross a border illegally tells it as a cautionary tale; a father tells the story tearfully at bedtime to a child we later find is not there. In one scene, a black child tells the story of the snare as a presentation in front of her classmates (also black). When she is accidentally interrupted by a frail looking white janitor, he is berated by the teacher and apologizes with servile deference. Later (or earlier), he sits in the office of a ministerial black woman. She interrogates him about the "tunnels," where people have been crossing illegally, and offers him a deal which will allow him to "stay" if he informs — jeopardizing the lives of a group of white refugee seekers whose progress we follow through the tunnels.

It is Fast's subtle and intricate touch with his scripting that extends the impact of the installation. The allusions to tunnels and the images of an immense cement wall on a well-placed monitor on the minister's desk are motifs that extend the reach of this piece, with allusions to Gaza and a metaphorical link to immigration policy. Like *Blade*

*Runner*, *Nostalgia* makes use of a fictional alternate reality, all the while addressing the complexities of identities, the function of colonialism, the inadequacies of refugee claimant systems and the arbitrary nature of both military and bureaucratic power. However, this story is not one you have heard before. Fast, like any scriptwriter worth his salt is as tuned in to audience as he is to genre — the vast majority of his audience, patrons and supporters in the often rarified world of European institutional galleries and museums still come from a particular demographic. It is Fast's clever scripting devices that turn this installation into an experience that leaves the viewer winded from a sharp violence on everything we hold dear about our privileged, first-world existence. □

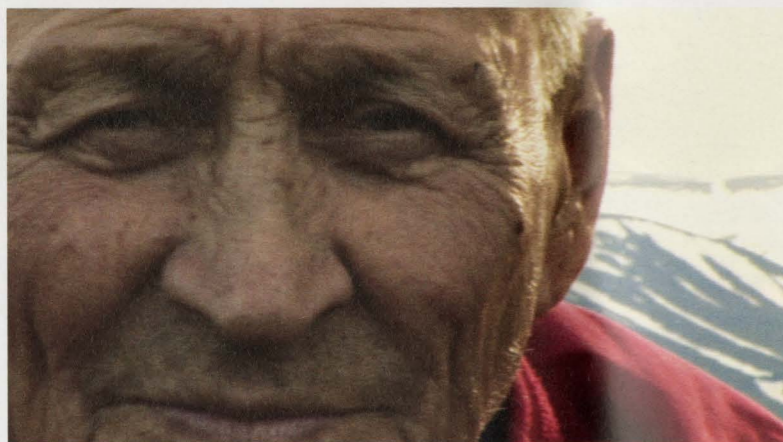
An excerpt of one of Omer Fast's earlier works *CNN Concentrated* is available online: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wNwj7WLEqkY&url>

**BRENDA GOLDSTEIN** is a Toronto film and video installation artist currently living in Berlin. Her film installation *Hereafter* will be part of a solo show at Mercer Union this spring.



## PUSHING BOUNDARIES: “Non Compliance” Short Experimental Program at imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival

14 – 19 October, 2009 REVIEW BY Carla Taunton



Liselotte Wajstedt. *Ansikten/Faces* (Film Still), 2008. Courtesy: imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival.

The 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary imagineNATIVE Media and Film Festival once again programmed ground-breaking Indigenous-produced films, video art and media works and celebrated Indigenous media and film produced over the past decade. This year's festival highlighted the significant use of film and media by Indigenous artists, locally and globally, for sharing stories as a means to assert resistance and cultural continuity. This year's experimental shorts program, “Non Compliance,” screened on the second day of the festival (Thursday, October 15) at the Al Green Theatre. Co-presented by LIFT and the Images Festival, the program showcased thought-provoking and engaging works by Christiana Latham (*Soldier Toys*, 2008; *Lady Raven*, 2008); Steve Loft (*down(town) time*, 2009); Alexis Young (*Gimme My Fix*, 2009); Beric Manywounds (*I Heard a Light*, 2009); Simeon Ross (*Penicillium Roqueforti*, 2009); Amanda Strong (*Honey for Sale*, 2009); Jenny Fraser (*I am what I YAM*, 2009); Liselotte Wajstedt (*Ansikten/Faces*, 2008); Bear Witness (*Eyes*, 2009); Archer Pechawis (*Horse*, 2007); Terry Haines (*Warrior*, 2008); Cara Mumford (*Echoes*, 2008); Dana Claxton (*Her Sugar Is?*, 2009); Kevin Papatie (*Entre l'arbre et l'écorce/Worlds Apart* 2008); and Caroline Monnet (*IKWÉ/WOMAN*, 2009). These filmmakers investigated diverse subject matter such as representations of Indigenous identities in popular culture; cultural continuance and the significance of Indigenous language and spirituality; Indigenous storytelling; and experiences and histories of colonialism. Collectively, they fleshed out the idea of “non-compliance,” as it refers to the artists' shared refusal to accept the status quo.

Highlights from this program include *down(town) time*, by Mohawk artist Steve Loft, an experimental two-channel drama

with two storylines. Loft includes himself in the video as the host of a karaoke night at the Woodbine bar in downtown Winnipeg. Dressed in a cowgirl outfit, an Aboriginal woman steps up to the mic to sing “Your Squaw Is On The Warpath.” Meanwhile, on the adjacent screen, a man from the bar goes down to the basement washroom where he is attacked by two others. While the two storylines are separate, the violence of the song is physically manifested in the violence of the attack. Highlighting the role of stereotypes in the ongoing marginalization of Aboriginal people, Loft's inclusion of this well-known song by Loretta Lynn reflects on the continued violence experienced by urban Aboriginal people in Winnipeg.

Many of the films and videos in “Non Compliance” are intended to displace silences and invisibilities. In *Ansikten (Faces)*, Sami filmmaker Liselotte Wajstedt surveys mountain landscapes and incorporates Sami faces into the image, exploring Indigenous relationships to land and the significant connections between Indigenous identities, cultural knowledge and place. *Ansikten* alludes to the living histories of the Sami people in Sweden by incorporating the multi-generational faces of this Indigenous community. *IKWÉ (WOMAN)*, by Caroline Monnet, is a video-based exploration of the significant role of women in Indigenous communities and the role of storytelling in the transmission of knowledge. The complex meanings of the incorporated images of water are beautifully elaborated by the oral narrative in Cree and French — telling grandmothers' stories about women's roles as Water Keepers and Givers of Life. The inclusion of sound and voice in these films engages the viewer through multilayered narratives. Yugameh artist Jenny Fraser's *I am What I YAM* and Gwich'in artist Christiana

Latham's *Soldier Toys* both incorporate repetitions of still imagery to create a rhythmic story-line. These two works, however, have polarized themes: *I am what I YAM* is an exploration of sexuality, procreation and transformation using images of differing types of yams with sounds of heartbeats, whereas *Soldier Toys* incorporates repetitive images of war and death showing the interplay between histories of genocide and violence.

Many of the works in this program presented Indigenous recontextualizations and decolonizations of history, identity and representation, such as the world premiere of Lakota artist Dana Claxton's *Her Sugar Is?* This work pointedly and playfully incorporates old film footage of burlesque shows that used the iconic and highly sexualized imagery of the Indian Princess and the Cowgirl alongside other images of showgirls and dancers. In this short video, a triptych screen becomes centre stage for topless women dancers. The centre channel shows black and white film footage of white women dressed up as “Indian Princesses,” while the other two channels mirror one another as a stage for the backup dancers of the central show. *Her Sugar Is?* is quintessential Claxton — a multi-layered work that reflects on the exhibition and sexualization of Indigenous women's bodies and the relationships between women's bodies, violence, colonialism and entertainment. The gaze is a thematic connection between *Her Sugar Is?* and Cayuga artist Bear Witness's *Eyes*, which recontextualizes familiar scenes from Hollywood movies, such as *Cheeno*, *The New World*, and *The Last of the Mohicans*, linking representations of relationships and encounters between Indigenous and non-Indigenous men and women. Plains Cree artist Archer Pechawis' new film *Horse* presents a similar aesthetic to that of *Eyes*, both incorporating

high contrast and Technicolor as effective visual strategies for re-contextual storytelling. *Horse* is a re-telling of colonial history that reveals violence and experiences of colonization while highlighting the survivance and continuance of Indigenous knowledge and spirituality. These new works by Claxton, Witness and Pechawis reveal the complexities of the many stories that are frequently presented as one dimensional.

The works making up “Non Compliance” exemplify imagineNATIVE's commitment to screening films and videos that share and assert dynamic local and global self-determined Indigenous perspectives. The festival's selection of films, videos and new media works includes many that push boundaries of both form and knowledge. This annual festival has become a site for multifaceted and continued negotiations of the legacies of colonialism in settler-nations and for active participation and contribution towards the Indigenous decolonization of Indigenous histories, bodies, knowledge and cultural production. □

**CARLA TAUNTON** is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Art, Queen's University and is an alliance member of the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective. Her current research focuses are Indigenous performance and video art. She is committed to Indigenous solidarity work.

**REVOLUTIONIZING AUTOBIOGRAPHY:**  
**Roger Hallas' Reframing Bodies:**  
*AIDS, Bearing Witness, and the Queer*  
*Moving Image*

Duke University Press, November 2009 REVIEW BY Stephanie Rogerson



Roger Hallas. *Reframing Bodies: AIDS, Bearing Witness, and the Queer Moving Image*. Duke University Press: 2009.

Roger Hallas' new book *Reframing Bodies* reflects on a history of AIDS activism spanning 1984 to 2008, the use of new media and the importance of bearing witness. Focusing on queer media production, Hallas reveals a history of AIDS activism through video and media interventions that speaks with an urgency that clearly reflects collective trauma and queer visibility.

Hallas examines works by Gregg Bordowitz, John Greyson, Derek Jarman and Ultra Red, among many others who use cultural production as a tool to articulate the urgency of loss and death. Works such as Bordowitz's *Habit* (2001) are discussed in the context of developing methods of bearing witness to queer social history through the act of testimony. Hallas skillfully locates the relevance of time-based media to queer political action by arguing that queer media-makers "re-frame the body of the AIDS witness not just on a representational level on the screen but also in its relation to other bodies — in front

of and behind the camera, in front of the screen, off screen, and in the world."

Hallas discusses *Sando to Samantha, aka, The Art of the Dikvel* (1998), a video by Jack Lewis and Thulanie Phungula, in relation to queer visibility, HIV/AIDS and the fall of Apartheid in the wake of South Africa's first democratic election. Reflecting on the interconnections of homophobia, racism, HIV status and lack of medical support, Hallas considers how the immediacy of the crisis in the late 1980s and early 1990s culminated in public and taped interventions. Further, Gregg Bordowitz's *Fast Trip, Long Drop* (1993) and Tom Joslin and Peter Friedman's *Silverlake Life: A View From Here* (1993), among many others elucidated in this book, are discussed as participating in the global movement toward an AIDS activism that insisted on creating queer and infected visibility within a general public that seemed intent on erasing this community from existence.

Hallas discusses the sense of urgency in representing people's lives during the height of AIDS activism as a vital factor in decisions to seize and appropriate mass media. Illustrating this point with an example from an immensely popular TV show, MTV's *The Real World* (1997), he considers the case of Pedro Zamora. Zamora, a Cuban American AIDS educator had been cast as a member of *The Real World* by producers in the hopes of explosive reality TV drama. Producers expected Zamora's presence as a gay man of colour living with AIDS to incite conflict. However, as Hallas writes, Zamora used his screen time "to expand his HIV/AIDS pedagogy to a national level," assisting in "queer counterpublicity in the midst of the majoritarian public sphere." In another striking example where mass media was usurped, writer and AIDS activist John Weir invaded a live broadcast of *CBS Evening News with Dan Rather* in 1991 shouting, "AIDS is news. Fight AIDS, not Arabs!" This example from ACT UP's *Days of Desperation* not only illuminates the urgency of AIDS activism and visibility but also the presence of a crucial queer history that was invested in radical social politics.

This excruciating, tender and evocative book not only produces a timeline of politicized queer corporeal action but peels back the intrinsic value between intersubjectivity and representation. *Reframing Bodies* explores the boundaries of visibility and visibility through an archive of AIDS activism and queer social history that leaves no rock unturned.

**For more information on AIDS activism and oral histories please go to:**  
<http://www.actuporalhistory.org>

**STEPHANIE ROGERSON** is currently pursuing a PhD in Visual Culture at the University of Western Ontario, with a focus on early photography and queer representation.

DRINK  
**STEAM WHISTLE**  
 PILSNER

**DO ONE THING  
 REALLY, REALLY WELL.**





# Building Resistance to the 5-Ring Circus

BY No One is Illegal

While the 2010 Winter Olympics are still a short time away, many are well aware of the devastating impact they are having on our communities. From traditional Indigenous territories to the impoverished Downtown Eastside (DTES), from migrant workers to low-income families, thousands are being evicted, displaced, and exploited.

It is undeniable that the Olympics are causing the devastation of the environment, creating homelessness, perpetuating the theft of Indigenous lands, exploiting migrant labour, forcing greater privatization, accruing massive public debt and resulting in increased public repression and state-sanctioned criminalization.

According to historian George Monbiot (2009), the Games are less about sports than they are “a legacy of a transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich... Everywhere they go, the games become an excuse for eviction and displacement; they have become a license for land grabs.” For anyone who maintains any illusions of Olympic prosperity, recent Olympic budgets make clear that there is no projected profit. Instead, while thousands are losing their jobs, and access to public services such as education and the arts is being cut, Olympic corporate sponsors are getting bailed out. These sponsors — such as oil and gas company Petro-Canada, military aircraft producer General Electric, chemical manufacturer Dow Chemical, and Alberta tar sands financier Royal Bank of Canada — have some of the worst environmental and social practices on record.

According to a report by the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, the Games have displaced more than two million people around the world over the last 20 years (not including the one million displaced by the Beijing Games). Meanwhile, over 13,000 RCMP, military and security personnel will be in Vancouver during February 2010. This \$1-billion security operation is the largest in Canadian history and has been dubbed “the Surveillance Games” by sociologist David Lyon.

No One Is Illegal has been increasingly active in the anti-Olympic movement, offering our support to DTES residents and anti-poverty efforts, as well as to Indigenous land defenders and urban activists and their allies in the “No Olympics on Stolen Native Land”

movement. While many people are being impacted by the Olympic Industry, one of the most significant effects is on Indigenous people. Indigenous people are impacted by the long-term plunder of their lands, disproportionately experiencing poverty in urban areas. They are also the primary targets of repressive policing and surveillance resulting in countless arrests. This glaring reality is what the Vancouver 2010 Organizing Committee (VANOC) is trying to hide by desperately selling the idea of Native consent to the Games through the creation of the corporate-and-state-sponsored Four Host First Nations body.

In light of the extreme levels of state repression, including surveillance, intimidation and attempts to create divisions in the movement, we invite activists to get informed, get involved and express their public solidarity with this growing resistance. Over the upcoming months, No One Is Illegal will be focusing our energies on building an effective, inclusive, and disruptive anti-Olympics movement with our allies. Based on the call by the Indigenous Peoples Gathering in Sonora, Mexico to boycott the Games, the Olympic Resistance Network has called for a global anti-colonial and anti-capitalist convergence between 10 and 15 February, 2010 in Vancouver, Coast Salish Territories. While working towards this convergence, we have been encouraged to think of human interconnectedness rather than social and political isolation in building long-term alliances to strengthen our shared struggles for justice, dignity, and liberation.

**NO ONE IS ILLEGAL VANCOUVER** is a grassroots anti-colonial and anti-racist migrant justice group. We struggle for a world in which no one is forced to migrate against their will and people can move freely. We position ourselves within broader movements against capitalism, militarism, oppression, poverty, imperialism and other systems of domination and exploitation. As a movement for self-determination that challenges the ideology of border controls, we actively offer our support to Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island. Visit us at [www.nooneisillegal.org](http://www.nooneisillegal.org)

## 2010 OLYMPIC INDEX COMPILED BY Am Johal

Average number of days that go by before a homeless person dies in BC: **12**

Budget for 2010 Olympic Security: **\$900 million**

BC Arts and Culture Budget for 2009-2010: **\$35.2 million**

BC Arts and Culture Budget for 2011-2012: **\$3.7 million**

Number of homeless people in BC: **10,500**

Number of homeless people in Metro Vancouver: **2,800**

Percentage of homeless people in Metro Vancouver who are Aboriginal: **32%**

Percentage of homeless women in Metro Vancouver who are Aboriginal: **50%**

Percentage cut to BC Arts funding by 2011: **90%**

Percentage of provincial budget dedicated to arts: **1/20<sup>th</sup> of 1%**

Percentage of BC arts organizations that received no gaming funding this year: **44%**

Return on investment for every dollar spent on arts: **\$1.36**

Amount the 2010 Athlete's Village is over budget so far: **\$130 million**

Interest costs on city-backed loan to developer of the Athlete's Village: **\$146 million**

Ratio of homeless people in BC to athletes in 2010 Winter Olympics: **5:1**

Costs of Sea-to-Sky Highway: **\$600 million**

Annual costs of housing a homeless person: **\$28,000**

Estimated cost of leaving a homeless person on the street: **\$55,000**

Cost of Richmond Indoor Speed Skating Oval: **\$125 million**

Estimated annual budget of the Helen Pitt Artist-Run Centre that is closing its doors on November 1st due to arts cuts: **\$80,000**

Cost of the Whistler Sliding Center — **\$43 million**

Cost of the Whistler Nordic Center — **\$120 million**

Cost of the UBC Winter Sports Center — **two rinks, \$32.9 million**

Cost of the Hillcrest Park Stadium — **curling, \$23 million**

Cost of the Whistler Olympic Village — **\$41 million**

Cost of upgrades to BC Place, General Motors Place, and Pacific Coliseum stadiums: **\$27 million for Coliseum, \$18 million for GM Place, \$450 million for BC Place**

Estimated number of visitors to 2010 Olympics: **250,000**

Number of hotel rooms in Metro Vancouver: **27,000**

Number of single resident occupancy hotel rooms in the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood which have been converted to other uses since the Olympics were awarded to Vancouver: **1,150**

Number of tickets handed out to Downtown Eastside residents during Vancouver Police Department's pre-Olympic selective ticketing blitz in 2008 for infractions such as jaywalking, not having a bell on your bike, etc: **1,900**

**AM JOHAL** has a Master of Economics from the Institute for Social and European Studies in Hungary. He was involved in starting UBC's Humanities 101 program, was the founding Chair of the Impact on Communities Coalition, and initiated the 2010 Homelessness Hunger Strike Relay and Vancouver Flying University, a collaborative art project. He is a columnist with Rabble.ca and a contributor to Inter Press Service.



# OAGAO

## The Ottawa Art Gallery

2 Daly Avenue  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1N 6E2  
613-233-8699  
[www.ottawaartgallery.ca](http://www.ottawaartgallery.ca)

Free Admission  
Tuesday to Sunday

## FIBRED OPTICS

26 Nov. 2009 - 14 Feb. 2010

FRANCES DORSEY, JÉRÔME HAVRE,  
ED PIEN, MICHÈLE PROVOST

Curator: Andrea Fatona

## NIGHTLIGHT

14 Nov. 2009 - 7 Feb. 2010

BRUNO BOBAK, A.J. CASSON,  
MAURICE CULLEN, SHERRARD GRAUER,  
MARIE-JOSEPH GEORGES DELFOSSE,  
EDWIN HOLGATE, JOHN KOERNER,  
YVONNE MCKAGUE HOUSER,  
ARTHUR LISMER, HENRI MASSON,  
MAX MAYNARD, KAZUO NAKAMURA,  
WILL OGILVIE, PAT O'HARA,  
HERBERT PALMER, GEORGE PEPPER,  
CLAUDE PICHER, PHILIP SURREY

Curator: Catherine Sinclair



Conseil des Arts  
du Canada

Canada Council  
for the Arts



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL  
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

THE ONTARIO  
TRILLIUM  
FOUNDATION



LA FONDATION  
TRILLIUM  
DE L'ONTARIO

Ottawa

# DMG



## Jon Sasaki Good Intentions

January 13 -  
February 24, 2010

**DORIS MCCARTHY GALLERY** University of Toronto Scarborough  
1265 Military Trail Toronto Ontario M1C 1A4 416.287.7007 [www.utscc.utoronto.ca/dmg](http://www.utscc.utoronto.ca/dmg)  
Tuesday to Friday 10AM - 4PM Wednesday to 8 PM Saturday & Sunday Noon - 5 PM

## Peter Smith You May Find Yourself

March 3 -  
April 14, 2010

torontodartsbouncil  
An arm's length body of the City of Toronto

ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL  
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

# WINNIPEG IS PUBLISHING:

## Anthologies

### Art City

#### Art City

Contributors: Wanda Koop, Susan Chafe, Jason Granger, Cam Forbes  
ISBN 978-0-9810935-0-5     \$25.00     [www.artcityinc.com](http://www.artcityinc.com)

### send+receive festival of sound

#### send + receive: 10 years of sound

Contains 2 DVDs featuring over 11 hours of audio performances by 20 Canadian + International artists, a documentary by Caelum Vatnsdal, and booklet with essay by festival creator steve bates  
\$25.00     [www.sendandreceive.org](http://www.sendandreceive.org)

## Artist Books

### aceartinc.

Daniel Barrow | **Everytime I See Your Picture I Cry**  
[consult website for details]     [www.aceart.org](http://www.aceart.org)

### PLATFORM centre for photographic + digital arts

Jeanne Randolph | **The Critical Object [Digital Redux]**  
Edited, with a foreword by J.J. Kegan McFadden  
ISBN 978-0-9697675-6-5     \$10.00     [www.platformgallery.org](http://www.platformgallery.org)

## Monographs

### Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art

spmb, Eduardo Aquino, Karen Shanski | **Complex order: intrusions in public space**  
Aquino and Shanski, eds.  
ISBN 978-0-921381-34-1     \$45.00     [www.plugin.org](http://www.plugin.org)

### Urban Shaman Gallery Contemporary Aboriginal Art

Kent Monkman | **Dance to the Berdashe**  
Contributors: Steven Loft, Barry Ace, Mike Hoolboom  
ISBN 978-0-9731935-2-7     \$10.00     [www.urbanshaman.org](http://www.urbanshaman.org)



(((send+receive)))

aceartinc.

PLATFORM  
centre for photographic + digital arts

PLUG IN THE

URBAN SHAMAN  
CONTEMPORARY ABORIGINAL ART