

fuse art culture politics

bikes, boats and big ideas

Radical Research at the Front Lines

Also:
Amy Zion
ART COURTESY OF
THE OLYMPIC GAMES

The Aboriginal
Curatorial Collective
CHANGING THE
ARTISTIC LANDSCAPE
IN CANADA

Michael Wheeler
WHY SHUTTING
DOWN PARLIAMENT
WAS A BAD IDEA



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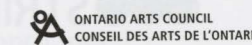
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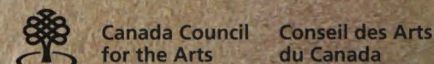
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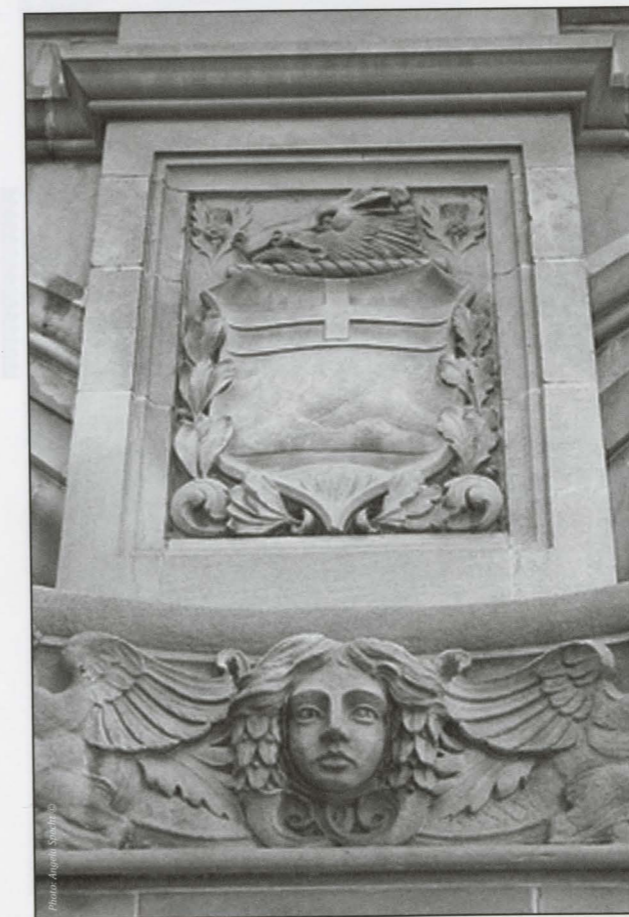
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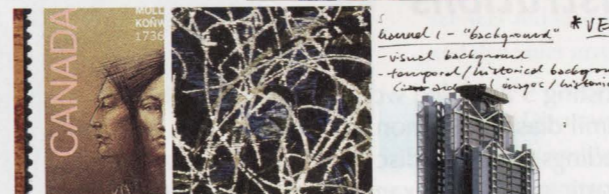
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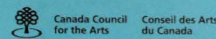
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March 28 > Abbas Akhavan & Jayce Salloum

April 10 > Nahed Mansour & Meena Murugesan

May 1 > Gitanjali Lena & Nilan Perera

10am-4pm, Hart House, UofT

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SAVAC is hosting 3 artist-led workshops that will look at the 2009 Tamil diaspora demonstrations.

Through readings, lectures, discussions and hands-on exercises, participants will examine how these events relate to local ideas of nationalism and multiculturalism, transnational and diaspora political models, and other similar demonstrations in Canada and around the world. The workshops aim to activate the voices that get lost in the dominant representations of the protests, and create a broader dialogue around the social, political and performative efficacy of the protests. Facilitating artists will consider photographic and documentary practices and the internet as both tool and archive; public space, ownership, citizenship; the use of language by spectator and participant alike; sound and the body as a device of resistance. These events will assist in organizing SAVAC's event for the 2010 Tamil Studies Conference at UofT.

FOLLOW THE MONEY

Amy Zion begins her article in this issue with a discussion of how over the past two years the arts in Vancouver have accessed a lot of money through the funding initiatives of VANOC. She points out that there are very few people, herself included, who have not benefited from VANOC's patronage. Given this patronage, it is unsurprising that while many artists have been vocal about the impacts of the Olympics on Vancouver communities, many others are conflicted about vocalizing their opposition — particularly since many forums exist as a direct result of VANOC's funding. Of course, discussing the money in art practice often returns us to the fact that there never seems to be enough to go around (see below) — but following the money raises interesting questions regarding who and what kind of work gets funded and the benefits and problems that come with money: problems that can follow from both having and not having enough.

Janna Graham follows the money in her article "Spanners in the Spectacle," which considers international art/tourism extravaganzas such as the Venice Biennale and Documenta in the context of the labour relations that produce them. Reflecting on radical research projects that investigate working conditions for those that provide everything from educational services to installation services and security, she scrutinizes the desires and dynamics involved. Graham looks specifically at the interventions that casualized arts workers staged at Documenta and last summer's Venice Biennale, considering the pedagogical turn of the arts in recent years but with a political economic twist — contrasting the positions of artists, curators and thinkers interested in education with those who perform its daily tasks.

Steve Loft, Jesse McKee, Leanne L'Hirondelle and Candice Hopkins reflect on shifting institutional representation and the work of developing and visioning the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective in this issue's feature interview. In their conversation, they reflect on the development of the collective, the work of aboriginal artists in an international context as well as internal debates about setting the direction of the ACC. Considering the often diffi-

cult relationship between aboriginal art/artists and mainstream institutions, they reflect on both important achievements and continued issues as they chart their way forward. As Jesse McKee points out in his introduction, "the health and strength of this nation-wide community of curators and other cultural producers has dramatically shifted the landscape in terms of aboriginal visual arts, and curatorial practice as a whole in the country."

Looking at the importance of the alternatives and contexts that many artists and small independent organizations give to mainstream and institutional agendas sheds light on the short-sightedness of the coming cuts by the Federal government to small magazines across Canada. The cuts follow on the decision of Heritage Canada to increase the number of subscribers that small magazines require in order to qualify for funds. For some magazines, this change has meant that they have to double their subscriber numbers by Fall 2010 — on less than a year's notice. While increasing subscriptions is a reasonable goal, doubling them in less than a year's time is a goal that is impossible for most to reach. What this change effectively means is that a great many small magazines, representing communities across Canada interested in alternative forms of literature and art, environmental engagement and dance, cinema, theatre, politics and other forms of culture, will be losing a significant part of their operating budgets.

For large, mainstream magazines this change in program delivery will have very little effect. Magazines from Rogers Communications will continue to fill Canadian newsstands. The same will not be said for a number of literary, environmental and art magazines that you may also consider an important part of your "Canadian Heritage." Following this particular money trail leads down some pretty predictable roads. Fuse will continue to build upon our 35-year publishing history, our commitment to the artist run movement and to progressive politics. Like many in alternative arts and media, we are working on how to change the way we deliver our magazines and our programming. In the meantime, please visit www.fusemagazine.org to subscribe.

— Izida Zorde, Editor



Photo: Lisa Kannakko

CULTURAL OLYMPIAD
DIGITAL EDITION
SCREENS:
How Art and
Representation
Figure into
the Olympic
Winter Games

BY AMY ZION



In Vancouver, demolition and intensified construction are how the city is being prepared for “the world stage,” with the Olympic Winter Games coming to symbolize unfulfilled housing promises, the harassment of activists and journalists, the criminalization of homeless people and broad-based attacks on civil liberties. As artists and community activists struggle in response to these circumstances and to recently announced provincial funding cuts — a result of Olympics overspending — many are taking pause to consider the implications of the Cultural Olympiad.

The Vancouver 2010 Organizing Committee (VANOC) has boasted that this is the first time a Cultural Olympiad (CO),

a smaller and less prominent component of the Olympics constituting “a celebration of the contemporary imagination,” began two years before the opening of an Olympic Games. Sponsoring festivals and exhibitions showcasing the work of local, national, and international artists, it is a celebration — rather than a competition — of national art production. Between 2008 and 2010, VANOC will have funded hundreds of major contemporary art exhibitions, public art commissions and local and international theatre and dance troupes. VANOC has provided so much funding, in fact, that there are few individuals in this art community, including myself, who have not benefited from their funds in some direct or indirect

way. While funding has been distributed to institutions across the cultural scene, CODE Screen, a digital platform for virtual visual art exhibitions hosted on the Vancouver 2010 website, provides a particularly interesting entry point into how a representation of Vancouver is being constructed and projected to the rest of the world.

Using the work of Governor General’s Award recipients as a departure point, CODE Screen claims to be a record of Canadian contemporary art circa 2010, arranged into exhibitions-of-sorts: unlike gallery documentation exhibited online, the work in these exhibitions exists only in the space and time of the worldwide web.



Matt Smith. *Paaf*, 2006.
Courtesy: Private Collection.
<opposite page> Lynne Cohen.
Untitled (Red Door), 2007.
Courtesy: the artist.

The works have never met nor have they been formally introduced, and the CO’s web page makes no such pretense. They have asked curators from across Canada to create web-only shows, complete with a short exhibition statement and descriptions of each work and artist. This platform is intended as a virtual complement to the opening and closing ceremonies, a sense of what Vancouver is able to achieve culturally, available to people who cannot travel to Vancouver for the live events. For those viewers at home, out in the world, CODE Screen becomes a virtual way to experience what the website calls an “art break.”

Without knowing the particular and intended temporal and spatial contexts of the works, the exhibitions create narratives that are contingent on entirely different and new contexts. Decontextualized, the online images no longer operate as art works, but instead function as pieces in a series of visual essays composed of digital photographs. That is, they are *not* artworks, they are signs or records of artworks in the form of digital web images; an image of a large-scale sculpture is experienced in the exact same way as a time-based performance or small painting. Modes of interpretation of visual images, and consequently meaning, are greatly affected and changed, as art becomes ordered sets of signs to be interpreted. In this way, they are

creating a linear and uncomplicated way of experiencing an exhibition that is closer to reading a book.

Within this platform, some curators tried to promote critical thinking about the Games. Kate Armstrong, for instance, explores the theme of group psychology, which takes on a host of connotations in relation to the Olympics: team sports, surveillance, crowds. Milena Placentile curated one CODE Screen grouping of works that engage with competition and another focused on corporatization; and there are several more series that tackle a host of other topics ranging from variations on the “book” to ways of seeing and taking in knowledge. These virtual exhibitions launch approximately every two weeks, they began back in mid-September and will continue until the middle of March. Currently there are nine available online, but one by Vancouver-based curator Daina Warren stands out. Entitled *If These Walls Could Talk — Room for Reflection*, it is the only series, so far, that addresses the impact of the Olympics on Vancouver.

Warren presents a curatorial narrative that begins with an image of an empty lobby-like waiting room, rigid in its symmetrical composition made asymmetrical only by the faint outline of a door on the right side of the picture plane. This image, and the following image of an empty display wall,



<above> Dina Gonzalez Mascaro. *New Wall: hospital + parking lot*, 2007. Courtesy: Private Collection. <below left> d.bradley muir. *Velvet Rose* (*Dreams for Sale*), 2004. Courtesy: Beaux arts des Amériques. <below right> d.bradley muir. *Midnight Haze* (*Dreams for Sale*), 2004. Courtesy: the artist.

are photographs by Governor General's Award recipient Lynne Cohen. A document of an empty outdoor stage installation by Alexandre David follows, leading into *Dreams for Sale* (2004), a series of photographs by d. bradley muir that juxtapose veneers of half-finished suburban homes with natural settings. Christopher Pratt's urban environment of a painted rigid architectural scene then appears. His buildings lead into a picture of a small architectural model viewed from above and infested with white nests: Joanna Staniszki's *Silk City*. The exterior architecture motif continues in the next photograph by Matt Smith, who documents the implosion of the infamous Woodward's building. Kevin McKenzie's *Obscura*, the following haunting black-and-white photograph, flashes forward to the rebuilding of Woodward's as *W2*. Finally, the narrative is capped off with images of Dina Gonzalez Mascaro's *New Wall: hospital + parking lot*, resin-encased urban detritus that evokes our fetishization and creation of nostalgic objects.

Warren's exhibition can be seen as an outline of Vancouver's journey to 2010: the opening photograph of an official lobby, perhaps of a building where decisions are made, leads to an empty display wall, anticipating what's to come. The plans created inside Cohen's photographs begin to be realized in Alexandre's empty plywood stage, beginning the construction that continues into muir's images of readymade homes, veneers covering background construction and wilderness. Pratt's painting is a finished building, with rigid lines and a muted palette much like Yaletown's! monochromatic green glass towers. This contrasts with the next image, Stasinski's building model covered in silk worms. Most Vancouverites will catch this subtle allusion to the bed bug epidemic caused by the implosion of Woodward's, pictured in the next photograph by Smith. The famous landmark department store building was demolished in 2006 after remaining technically vacant for over a decade. It was rebuilt and recently reopened, the construction process documented in Mackenzie's *Obscura*. Mascaro's



sculptures illustrate the impulse to archive the small fragments left over from the rapid changes occurring within the landscape.

This background is my own interpretation of the visual essay, based on my lived experience of Vancouver. But as I mentioned earlier, this platform specifically addresses viewers on the web, people who are not experiencing the city physically and have no access to the context in which this narrative was produced. So then, if viewers aren't meant to get from these exhibitions a sense of the social situation in Vancouver... what is the function of these images?

Exhibiting and commissioning contemporary art produced by a select group of cultural practitioners is a way to construct the appearance of a free and liberal society enjoyed by all. As a society can, after all, be judged based on what it permits to be exhibited publicly.² But mediating artworks through a virtual format removes pieces from their context and thus disconnects them from their social field, denying those who produce and receive the work political agency. This

creates the appearance of a free and liberal society, when in reality surveillance cameras are being installed in public spaces and people are being censored and targeted. A well-known recent example involves prize-winning journalist Amy Goodman, who was stopped at the US-Canada border and interrogated about whether she would speak about the Olympics at her talk scheduled at the Vancouver Public Library. During her interrogation both her vehicle and laptop computer were searched.

Even overtly political work is rendered impotent in this project, existing only to lend an appearance of criticality to the commissioning body, VANOC.³ For example, Gathie Falk's *Veneration of the White Collar Worker No. 1*, included in *Exhibition No. 7: Corporatization — A Persistent Lil' System*, loses its meaning when decontextualized. The work pictured was one of two site-specific murals commissioned for the Department of External Affairs building in Ottawa in the early 1970s, during the rise of contemporary globalization and corporate

culture. The 24 ceramic tiles (a material very hard to comprehend in a digital photograph) simultaneously monumentalize the office worker who passes by the piece everyday, and plays with the idea of a variation on a regimented uniform. When a work like Falk's is removed from its time and place, its significance and interpretation is determined by its new context: the time of the omnipresent now, and the space of the Vancouver 2010 website. This is a way to use the interesting visual quality of an artwork without its social commentary.

VANOC's attempt to erase the realities of politics around the Olympics is perhaps most evident in a video created by the organization, entitled *Lights Will Guide You Home*, a montage of torch relay footage from past Olympics, complete with a soundtrack by pop sensation Coldplay. The footage dates back to the first torch relay, which took place at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, through moments captured in Nazi filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia* (1938). However, as Alan Marcus from the University of





Kevin McKenzie. *Obscura*, 2008.
 Courtesy: the artist. <opposite
 page> Amy Zion. *Image Study*,
 2009. Courtesy: the artist.

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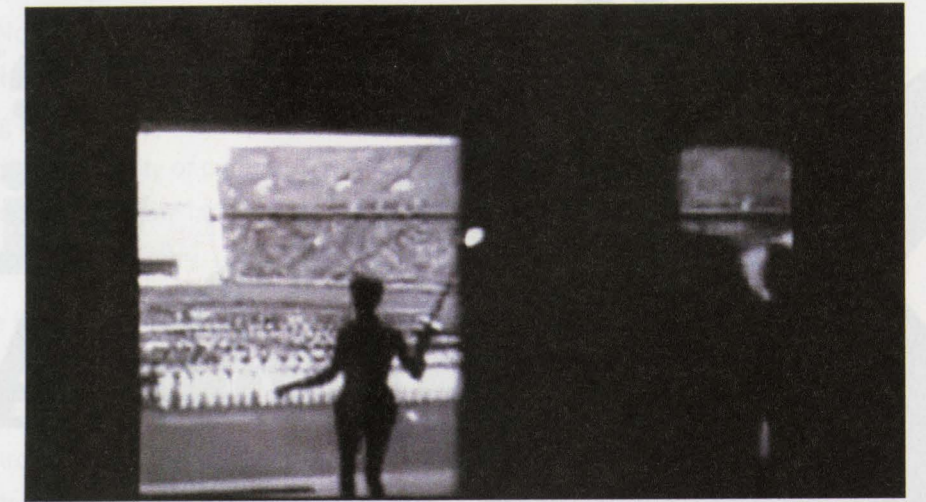
Aberdeen recently pointed out, VANOC altered Riefenstahl's scene in which the torch is carried into the stadium.⁵ It is possible, but not likely, that they questioned the structural integrity of the stadium architecture and decided to increase the width of the column about three fold, conveniently covering the small crowd of Nazis in Seig Heil formation.

This disavowal of history and politics in favour of an ahistorical and apolitical moment aptly reflects an impulse to sanitize brutal facts, and shows how in both the 1936 and current Olympics, there is a strategy to produce and distribute creative and inspirational images to gloss over or "screen" the public away from less palatable truths.

The city, in anticipation of a gross surge in tourism and to facilitate the desires of property developers, has gone to great lengths to both censor displays of resistance or criticality toward the Olympic games and to push through civic changes that have meant broken housing promises, defunded social programs, the prohibition of homelessness, ticketing people living in the Downtown East Side for minor infractions, and creating a "greenway" along Carrall Street to subtly reroute visitors away from the obvious poverty and hardship on display in the neighbourhood.

It is still too soon to know what will happen to the residents of this neighbourhood, but the city has passed laws that allow police to arrest people on the streets if they refuse to go to a shelter. They have created a way to remove people, not images of people, from their context, the space of their neighbourhood during the time of the Winter Games. Homelessness is a very large and concentrated problem in Vancouver. Visitors who come to Vancouver will not be able to act as political agents of social change, because they will not experience the reality of the situation, only a temporary, constructed reality created by VANOC. It is through a comparison to the framing of contemporary art that the Cultural Olympiad becomes a logical extension of VANOC's attempt to orchestrate a production meant for the city's visitors, rather than its residents.

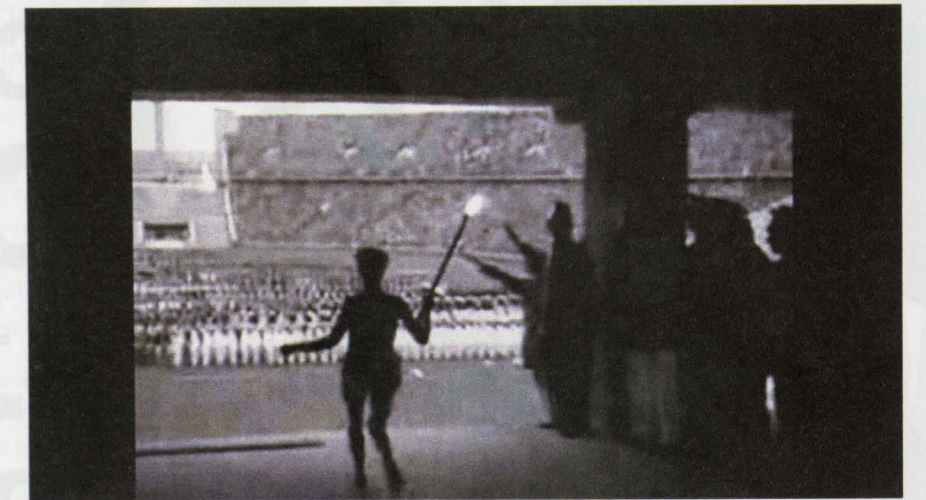
Vancouver 2010 Torch Relay Preview (Coldplay - Fix you)



0:25 / 3:45

14,069 views

Excerpt from "Olympia" (1938) - torch into stadium



0:21 / 3:01

28,693 views

NOTES:

1. A neighborhood in Downtown Vancouver, dominated by similar residential towers on top of commercial "podiums."
2. It would, for example, be harder to curate a Robert Mapplethorpe show in a small town in Mississippi than in New York City, and thus one assumes that New York City is more open, more liberal when it comes to homosexuality.
3. Banks collect contemporary art in a similar way. In 2001 Kara Walker, famous for her nightmarish silhouettes of pre-Abolition America, was named the Artist of the Deutsche Bank.
4. Marcus was invited to speak at the Joan Carlisle-Irving Lecture Series at the University of British Columbia on November 2, 2009. His talk was entitled "Bodies on Display: Gender Ambiguities and Riefenstahl's *Olympia*."
5. Mayor Giuliani used a similar strategy to drastically reduce the homeless population in New York City.

AMY ZION is the Assistant Editor of *Fillip*, a contemporary art magazine published from Vancouver, BC.

Jesse McKee in Conversation with the

Aboriginal Curatorial Collective's

Steve Loft, Candice Hop- kins and Leanne L'Hirondelle



Walter Scott. <above> Young Punk, 2010. <opposite page> Flying Head, 2010. Courtesy: the artist.

initiated in 2005 by founding members Ryan Rice, Barry Ace, Ahasiw Maskegon-Iskew and Ron Noganosh, the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective (ACC) has gathered a tremendous amount of momentum by keeping its ever-growing membership as its priority. The health and strength of this nation-wide community of curators and other cultural producers has dramatically shifted the landscape of aboriginal visual arts and curatorial practice in the country.

This discussion with ACC members Steve Loft, Candice Hopkins and Leanne L'Hirondelle took place in the wake of the 2009 Aboriginal Curatorial Collective conference, Camp Kabeshinàn, held at the National Gallery of Canada last October. Talking through some of the issues that came up at the conference, we reflected on the ongoing project of facilitating critical writing by aboriginal authors who are mapping territories for art history and theory, the ACC's commitment to negotiating its multiple voices, and how the collective's actions are producing new and unexpected realities within the circuits of the art network in Canada and abroad.

JESSE MCKEE: One of the things that struck me at the conference was the multi-faceted way that the ACC operates. It's able to do research, connect and network its members, and also, in a way, act as a kind of lobby group. To be present and let institutions know that there is still a lot of work to be done, with regard to how Aboriginal art, ideas and artists are made part of arts institutions.

LEANNE L'HIRONDELLE: If you think about us sitting here, most of the stuff we've done is exclusively Aboriginal art until recently. We're still kept in our little space. Institutions are still not fully open to giving voices to aboriginal artists.

CANDICE HOPKINS: When it comes to this idea of collectives, there have been groups before us. The Aboriginal Group of Seven (as they were colloquially known) — which was called the Professional Native Indian Artists Incorporated and then Society for Canadian Artists of Native Ancestry (SCANA) — the Society for Yukon Artists of Native Ancestry (SYANA) as well, and now there is the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective. But I think it's interesting that this collective is broad-based and that membership is a priority. In working with other organizations and institutions, I've noticed that the ACC has become a reference point. I've heard it time and again: "why don't you contact the ACC if there is an issue and they can lobby around it?" And also, it's just a simple thing, but the listserve distributed by e-mail to ACC members and affiliates really helps people stay connected. It can rally people around certain issues. It hasn't happened a lot, but it has happened a couple of times. It also disseminates knowledge.

STEVE LOFT: I think we do need to be constantly challenging mainstream art institutions on how they are presenting culture and educating about culture. But I don't know if that's best done through the style of the national arts service organization model. It can be problematic. It has happened a couple of times and it's been interesting, but I don't think I want the ACC to take that lobby position as its main focus.

CANDICE HOPKINS: Why not?

STEVE LOFT: Because it takes a lot of effort and resources. One thing I like about the ACC is that it hasn't done that. It doesn't have a fixed office and staff. There have been models like CARFAC that have been very successful. But I don't know if you can build an organization like that in the current funding climate, coming late in the game. The other thing about the ACC is that it's member-based and driven... it's built on a broad range of perspectives and the exchange of ideas. The ACC is very comfortable with that. We don't have to speak with one voice. This is our organization, we can have these little battles and people can't say "look at them, they aren't agreeing." There is something very powerful and poignant about this, but it doesn't lend itself to a great deal of advocacy. You'd need to develop just an advocacy group for that, to say: "National Gallery, what have you done lately?" "Vancouver Art Gallery, what are you doing about this?" I think there is a place for that, but I don't know if the ACC is it.



JESSE MCKEE: That's one of the strong points of the group. There is this talking of many voices, this inter-nation talking. It resists an idea of Indigenous homogeneity that some institutions might think you represent. But when they see that there are multiple conversations going on at once, I think it lets institu-



tions know that this group is a complex, living organization that is negotiating its own direction.

CANDICE HOPKINS: SCANA made space for Aboriginal artists in larger institutions, but it took years. For the ACC, there is this interest and need to just do our own thing; I don't think the issue is as much about lobbying any more. There is also the ACC's goal of collecting writing by and about Aboriginal artists and creating a bibliography of these collected texts. It's very important because a lot of this information hasn't been compiled and we need to create a knowledge base even if it's small right now.

STEVE LOFT: We've got to move on that. The website has done a lot, but we have to publish more. There have been publications that have been really important along the way. *Making Noise*, *Naming a Practice* and *Vision, Space, Desire*. But we have to get new writing happening. The ACC shouldn't box itself into a national arts service organization model, because we want to be about art and ideas and ways to disseminate. We haven't quite figured it out but we're going in this really interesting direction. The ACC has defined itself better and better every year. We're really on the cusp of creating a new model, but we're not there yet.

CANDICE HOPKINS: It's important to note from this year's conference, I think Jason Baerg pointed out that this is the only national curatorial organization in Canada. I thought that was quite telling, that it has so many members and so many of these members are young. I wonder what that means and why it is?

LEANNE L'HIRONDELLE: I think it has to do with the ways a lot of people are getting educated now. In the past, a lot of people didn't go into fine arts. Our communities funded nursing and all these other things, not fine arts. It has to do with the number of people taking their BFAs and Art History degrees now.

CANDICE HOPKINS: But I think the question is also why there isn't a NSO for other curators.

JESSE MCKEE: The ACC must recognize they are the only one. It was good to see (at the conference this year) the research that was being done about independent curators across the country as a whole.

STEVE LOFT: What's interesting about the ACC is that it hasn't deviated from its reason for being. A lot of organizations say "we can get money here, so we can do that," and then they end up becoming that other thing. They may end up furthering the funder's agenda, not their own. And that's dangerous.

JESSE MCKEE: One thing that I was wondering about was exhibition histories. This comes from something that happened during Lee-Ann Martin's talk, where she started calling out specific decades and the audience responded by shouting out major artistic achievements, important exhibitions and drastic social and political implications. This was one of the most exhilarating moments of the

conference for me. And it made me think about another project, *Former West*; this first part of the project was a conference put on by Basis voor Actuele Kunst (BAK) in Utrecht (NL). This project is meant to counter that term "former east" that has appeared since the 1990s in Europe. At the conference, Okwui Enwezor referred to some major heralded exhibitions like *Magiciens de la Terre* (Pompidou Centre, 1989, curated by Jean-Hubert Martin). He said this exhibition was only interesting to him as a point of opposition. Because when it happened in 1989, for a French curator to determine that these are legitimate African arts at the same time that the French government was devaluing French currencies in Africa by about 70%, was not only problematic but offensive. To consider these major shows that had occurred early in terms of a post colonial discourse in exhibition-making practice, I think there is a lot of research that needs to go into them so we can look at what the motives behind them were and how to deal with them now in hindsight. Is there a push to put out critical writing on some of these exhibitions that were mentioned during Lee-Ann Martin's presentation?



A.C.C. Curators Camp Kabeshinàn – Gépég: Winds of Resistance, an arts event initiated by a collective of francophone Aboriginal artists from Quebec and curated by Guy Sioui Durand and France Trépanier, at La Filature – AXENEO7 and DAIMON, Gatineau, Quebec, November 21, 2009. Courtesy: the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective.

CANDICE HOPKINS: There have been specific exhibitions that have been written about quite a bit. *The Spirit Sings*, which took place in 1988 at the Glenbow Museum and traveled to the Canadian Museum of Civilization, is one of those. Based on the criticisms and protests surrounding the exhibition, which was seen as not adequately representing the present realities of Native people through its focus on Aboriginal objects and culture collected before or at the beginnings of European contact, the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples was developed in 1992. The Task Force attempted to change the way museums worked with living Native communities, their objects and artifacts, and recommended

that communities be consulted as part of the curatorial process. What came out of The Task Force, which Lee-Ann Martin was part of, was good on paper but the recommendations were largely unenforceable. In other words, there was no means to ensure that museums worked with Native communities to inform the way they represented objects, artifacts and Native culture. I think many museums did significantly change their practices. There was a widespread push for this change. I think what is also important to document is the shifts that occurred out of other exhibitions, particularly those that attempted, in modernist terms, to frame Aboriginal objects within the prevailing art discourse, including *Magiciens de la Terre* and *People of the Potlatch*, an exhibition that took place in 1956 at the VAG, as well as the VAG's *Art of the Raven: Masterworks by the Northwest Coast Indian* that took place in 1967. The last two exhibitions were trying to incorporate objects and reconsider them at a far earlier point than MoMA's 1984 exhibition "*Primitivism*" in 20th Century Art: *Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*. The 1960s marked another shift, a moment when the first Aboriginal curators started organizing exhibitions. This was partially initiated through the Indians of Canada Pavilion at Expo 67, which artist and curator Tom Hill participated in. Then you have exhibitions that followed like *Indigena* from 1992, which was held at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, curated by Lee-Ann Martin and Gerald McMaster. These are exhibitions that arguably changed the artistic landscape in Canada. Coming from a curatorial perspective you're always taught about exhibitions that changed the way we view things, but these examples are often from the United States and Europe and rarely from Canada. And I think it's more important to know our exhibition history here.

STEVE LOFT: And to know it from an analytical perspective. We can read the essays written at the time. They are interesting and informative. But nobody has done an analysis of the trajectory Indigenous art has taken. We like to say how much things have changed, but really without meaningful analysis and critical reflection, how do we keep track?

What would be interesting is someone writing in a historical perspective and being able to analyze what was going on politically and socially at the time, and placing the exhibition in its importance in that way. And that is the history that our curators and theorists will

be learning. That will change everything. That was what was coming out of this year's conference. And it came out in our sessions; it came out loud and clear in mine! We need to write this all down. Yeah we're from oral histories, but if we don't get it down it's a real disservice to the future. That is our job now. That's the kind of thing we need to be doing.

JESSE MCKEE: I noticed there have been certain moments and clusters of attention that were paid to the aboriginal arts scene. What struck me when I was doing research in London at the INIVIA library, the readings on aboriginal arts and exhibitions dated from the late 1980s up until about 1992 — because there was that flurry of activity around aboriginal everything in the lead-up to the 1492 anniversary... That clustering effect, do you think that's because the focus was still coming from somewhere else? Now you have a self-initiated momentum and a part of that is the ACC's powerful self-organization and self-determination. What do you think kicked that off in the past decade?

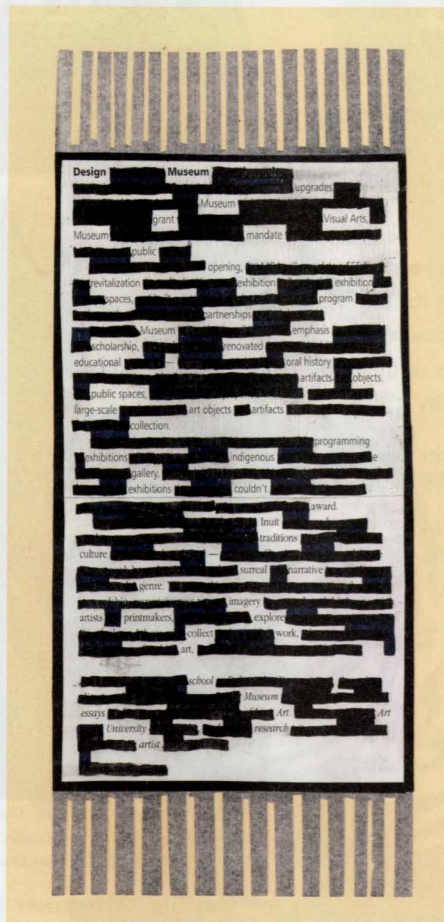
LEANNE L'HIRONDELLE: I think it's learning the Euro-Western history that did it. That's what made people able to challenge it. Because people started learning this history and were able to say that there are gaps here and this doesn't fit. This learning allowed people to challenge history from a different point of view.

STEVE LOFT: Once you get a critical mass of Aboriginal people working in the field, things begin to change dramatically. It's not about challenging others. It's about centering on what you do and creating the space to critically examine Indigenous art as its own practice. Now, as a young curator, you can specialize in Indigenous art. You don't have to go through a whole other (mostly Euro art historical) route and then come to it.

CANDICE HOPKINS: Do you think that as an aboriginal curator or someone who is focusing on Indigenous art that you don't necessarily have to get a more conventional education?

STEVE LOFT: Why should you? You're going to follow the things that interest you. There is this feeling that as a curator of Indigenous art, this is somehow all you know and this is something you only ever want to curate. That's ridiculous! It should be seen as a specialty. I want to be able to learn that history in my 4 to 5 years in university. Why should I spend 4 years on the other stuff and 1 year on what I want to study?

LEANNE L'HIRONDELLE: A lot of art history has not been lost, it's been erased. When I taught Indian art history, trying to find



Walter Scott. <top> *Western Listings*, 2010.
<bottom> *Alternative Outcomes*, 2010.
<opposite page> *Who is Speaking*, 2010.
Courtesy: the artist.

information was nearly impossible. Sometimes you get the information from the "authority" and it has mistakes in it. So you have to tell the class that it isn't right. A lot of the research is anthropological, so it's also developing something that gives you the information that needs to be there in the right way.

When you teach Indian art history according to university guidelines you wind up using the framework that came from western ways of thinking to teach. That's something that has to be thought about and challenged. I don't think it's as easy as we think it could be — especially since the university doesn't really fit within an aboriginal worldview.

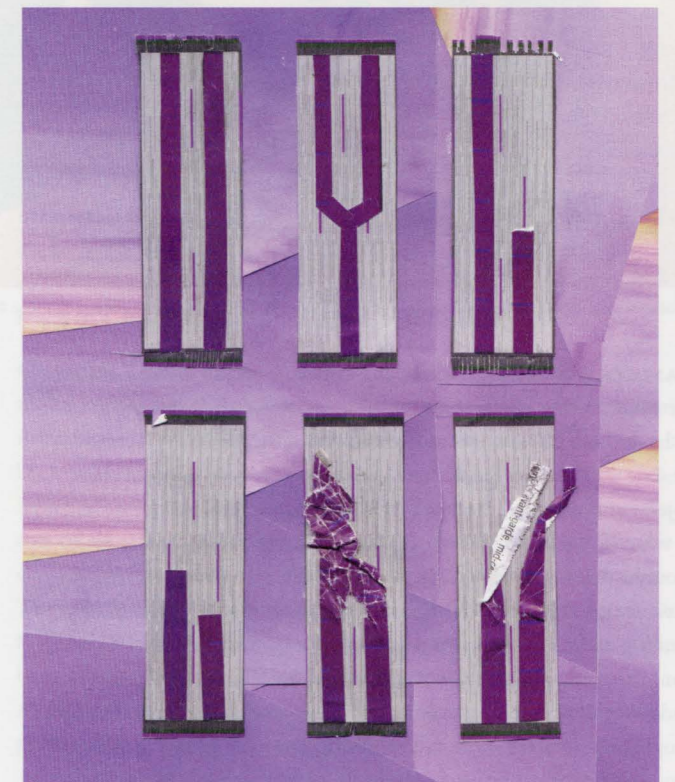
JESSE MCKEE: With major institutions like the NGC and AGO reformatting their galleries to retell that historical narrative, as something a lot more complex than the settler nation myth, the academics are going to have to wake up. Institutional galleries are leading that kind of scholarship in a way.

CANDICE HOPKINS: I think you're right that institutional galleries are leading this scholarship. There wasn't much academic or other writing that has come about in response to the NGC's re-hanging of the permanent collection of Canadian art to include works by Aboriginal artists in the *Art of this Land* exhibition. I was surprised, because I thought it would have generated more interest from art historians and others to really look at this shift in representation and what it means even just in relation to the history of exhibitions at the NGC. Before that, Richard Hill had curated *Meeting Ground* at the AGO, which also re-hung the gallery's Canadian collection to incorporate Aboriginal objects and worldviews. This installation only lasted about 4 months. I don't think anyone aside from Richard has written about it. This was an extremely exciting time where the institution actually reconsidered the relationships and contingencies between Aboriginal and other Canadian art in a cohesive fashion.

STEVE LOFT: It's one of those cases where institutions takes three steps forward and then two steps back. They talk a good game and get a program going, but unfortunately when the special Aboriginal money runs out, they go back to where they started. And that's an ongoing problem. We need people in permanent positions in those organizations who say this is the right thing to do regardless. It has to be part of our ongoing commitment to Canadian Art. Not because we got a special grant.

LEANNE L'HIRONDELLE: How do you feel about the word Canadian... because you say it with such ease?

STEVE LOFT: From the specific context of the National Gallery it has a very clear meaning. One of the changes we've tried to make at the NGC, and we'll see if it sticks, is that Aboriginal artists now identify themselves. They can still be collected but they don't have to be called Canadian on the labels. There are artists who exist in this territory that we call Canada and should be in the collection.



We don't want to create a situation where if you don't consider yourself Canadian you won't be in that gallery.

CANDICE HOPKINS: I actually have more issues with the word Canada as nationalist.

STEVE LOFT: You know how powerful words are. We use language that we feel conflicted about because there is nothing to replace it. Someone needs to be sitting at the table saying "you can't say nation in that way," or "we're not tribes," "you should ask the person first," or maybe "the artist doesn't want to be labeled in that way by even being in here."



Installation view of *Meeting Ground* looking west, 2003. Photo: AGO Photographic Resources. Courtesy: The AGO.

CANDICE HOPKINS: One of the criticisms of *Art of this Land* at the NGC is that it's fair enough to bring Aboriginal objects in and to have these objects and artifacts in dialogue with early Canadian art, but they remain in *dialogue* and despite the inclusion of these objects and artifacts, the story of Canadian art remains quite similar to what it was before. What Richard Hill tried to do at the AGO brought this idea further. He worked with a designer to make vitrines that reflected Aboriginal designs and motifs, while also creating an area where you could make a tobacco offering. In addition, the ceiling and carpet was designed to reflect the sky world and underworld, thereby incorporating ideologies of the local Aboriginal people. These were quite radical changes for the gallery and the way that Canadian art was previously contextualized. Now I think that the AGO's collection of Canadian art functions similarly to the NGC, where you have these objects in dialogue. How do you show the relationships between Aboriginal objects and art when galleries themselves are so steeped in existing ideologies?

JESSE MCKEE: I wanted to touch on this small show from 2006 that was put on by Iaspis in Sweden. *A Fiesta of Tough Choices – Contemporary Art in the Wake of Cultural Policies*. The show tried to take account of what was going on in Sweden around multiculturalism in the arts in the middle of this decade. What was curious about this project for me was the candidness of the discussions. For a country that doesn't have much of a colonial past and a small im-

migrant population, because of a very rigid labour policy, this kind of thinking is encouraging. But one of the major questions that *A Fiesta* raises is what is beyond the politics of inclusion that the past several decades have been spent trying to achieve? Was its success ever guaranteed? I would say that there has been a resistance to this total inclusion in the mainstream and it's obvious that there needs to be a continued space for self-organization and self-determination. How might these thoughts pan out as the ACC starts to work in a more international way? Can we start with your thoughts about the Venice and Basel trip for the Aboriginal Curatorial Delegation last summer?

LEANNE L'HIRONDELLE: Venice and Basel were my first times seeing the commercialization of artworks, how they become investments. It's kind of what happened to the radical message, it becomes something else entirely there.

STEVE LOFT: Venice is such an anachronism in so many ways. It's important to be at sites like that and to understand why they have attained such importance. It gives you real insight into the hegemony of a western and European view of art. But it's really breaking down. It's laughable. National pavilions are showcasing artists that aren't actually nationals. It, like any big art institution, doesn't want to change. It wants to be the prosecco swilling home of the white elite. But it can't be anymore. The difference between a place like that and the Sydney Biennial is enormous.

CANDICE HOPKINS: I was in Turin recently for a conference on the history of Documenta. The curator of the next Documenta, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, invited some of the people involved in its early iterations to talk about the beginnings of the event, and how different curators approached their respective Documenta exhibitions. When Arnold Bode first came up with the idea of Documenta, it was conceived in opposition to Venice — particularly its organization around national pavilions. It remains one of the most prestigious places to see work and for artists to show. But artists also find interesting ways of intervening. I think of the time when Santiago Sierra boarded up the Spanish Pavilion or when Gabriel Orozco presented a lone shoebox in the Mexican pavilion. I think those were really important gestures because they caused us again to reconsider our relationships to these events, how they frame artistic practice, and the enormous weight of somehow representing an entire nation.

But the Biennale is also so hierarchical, something which bothers me and doesn't get talked about in a broad way in the art world because we are all complicit on some level. People who see the Biennale first are collectors — not other arts professionals, critics, etc. Then you have to scramble to get a ticket and you have to be affiliated with an institution, but of course specific affiliations carry more weight. Even at the conference in Turin, there were different levels for participants. People's tag colours designated whether you were an invited guest, whether you were someone important, a regular attendee, or if you were press. These tag colours also indicated how much you paid for things, whether things were free for you, whether you got to go to specific dinners and gatherings and so on. What's amazing to me is that you invite people there like Okwui Enwezor and Catherine David, who are interested in opening up the frame of reference for art, but then replicate these systems of hierarchy as part of the structure of the event.

LEANNE L'HIRONDELLE: Makes you wonder what we are pushing for. We want to take part in a critical dialogue. Not the other part, all that hierarchical stuff.

JESSE MCKEE: Do you want the prosecco?

STEVE LOFT: Yeah, I think we should be there. I don't think it will ever go away. Artists are challenging the biennials in interesting ways. Curators certainly are. But I think it's important to be there. And if the house crumbles while you're there, that's ok, as long as it doesn't take you down with it.

CANDICE HOPKINS: Okwui Enwezor is an interesting case to consider with regards to the way he and his colleagues have made space for African art. There is more knowledge about the history of African art and contemporary practices than ever before. Credit also has to be given to the *Vision, Space, Desire* conference, which was organized by the Smithsonian, by Gerald McMaster and Paul Chaat Smith, and took place in Venice in 2005. Organized so that it took

place after the conference Robert Storr organized as a way of preparing for his Venice Biennale in 2007. The Smithsonian brought a number of delegates to Venice and some of the speakers participated in both events. Robert Storr did come to *Vision, Space, Desire*, but slept through most of the presentations.

In the 2007 Biennale, Robert Storr did try to make space for Africa, but it ended up happening in an awkward way through the use of works from the Sindika Dokolo African Collection of Contemporary Art — essentially one of the only collections and collectors who could turn an exhibition proposal around in the three-month time period and have the required funds to stage the show. What did amount in the end, despite everyone's good intentions, was problematic. Perhaps it comes down to a question of what is genuine inclusion. Or, perhaps inclusion is the wrong word?

JESSE MCKEE: Irit Rogoff, a professor at Goldsmiths University in London, has an ongoing research platform called Geo-Cultures. One of the main things that this platform exposes is an economy of exchange for local knowledge. It's mapping new alliances between periphery A and periphery B. Glasgow can speak to Marseilles without going through London and Paris first. Or how Marrakech can now speak directly to Gwangju in South Korea. This thinking could speak of a lot of potential for the ACC. To connect its activities elsewhere and not have to be channeled through the official outreach of Canada's muffled and polite international cultural policy.

CANDICE HOPKINS: I think that's right. Peripheries can link together in order to avoid these behemoth structures or bureaucratic institutions that shift a little bit, but never really change. To bring it back to the ACC, there are members from Australia and New Zealand and some in other parts of the world. There has always been a sort of natural connection between the Americas and Australasia because of political alignments and existing exchanges between artists. There is already talk of organizing exhibitions between these sites to further encourage cultural exchange and strengthen the relationships between these peripheries and see the potentials in the margins. As Jolene Rickard said during the *Vision, Space, Desire* conference, perhaps the question is, "how can we make small work for us?"

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CANDICE HOPKINS is the Sobey Curatorial Resident, Indigenous Art, at the National Gallery of Canada.

STEVE LOFT was the first Aboriginal Curator in Residence at the National Gallery of Canada.

LEANNE L'HIRONDELLE is the Director/Curator at Gallery 101, Ottawa.

Illustrations by WALTER SCOTT, who is an artist and musician in Montreal.



<left> Bike Block at the Candy Factory Copenhagen. Photo: Robert Logan, 2009.
<right> "Give me Back my Money Day," a direct action at the Venice Biennale 2009 by S.a.L.E. and the Embassy of Piracy. Courtesy: S.a.L.E.

AMONG THE MANY free schools, night schools, mock research agencies, temporary academies and special thematic issues that make use of the idealistic language of education as art, the distinction between the role of artists, curators and thinkers *interested* in education and those who perform its daily tasks in galleries and other educational institutions is commonplace. Across these, as Dieter Lesage points out, education is "the buzz word in the art world," (Manifesta 6). Or, as Irit Rogoff suggests, within the "educational turn in curating," it is "less fashionable to go into too much detail about institutions of art education."¹

This turn to education can be read as simply another in a string of long-term social and political projects that are routinely "discovered" (like Columbus "discovered" America) by the contemporary art world to satiate an endless demand for circulation of the "new." More generously, perhaps, it is also possible to read the distinction of "the pedagogical" from the other spaces in which education takes place, as a distancing from the instrumentalized processes through which arts and cultural education — whether in the gallery or the university — have become central to the neoliberal project. This opposition is vital at a moment in which the Bologna Process for European Education reform, UNESCO's Road Map to Arts Education and a range of institutional practices assign to arts education the tasks of profit-making, spectacle-enhancement and training for a highly flexible and economically stratified "creative class" of workers. And, with so many within the arts education departments of galleries and universities either uninterested or unable to work against the force of these mandates, the impulse to invent an alternative universe of "education in art" is understandable.

However, the claim to the autonomy of the artist or intellectual thinking *about* education or an "educational turn" in distinction from those who work as educators — particularly in the context of exhibitions that pay their way — bears hints of an historical, and by now tedious, art world hierarchy that separates educational functions (the people who work with the people) from those erudite or genius efforts of the artist. It also misses one of the core propositions of most projects of critical education: that knowledge be shaped by collective analysis of the conditions in which we are implicated and through which we might align with the struggles of others.

If the project of an "educational turn" is indeed to find new strategies for opposing, exiting or even surviving

SPANNERS IN THE SPECTACLE:
RADICAL RESEARCH
AT THE FRONT LINES

BY JANNA GRAHAM

In the flurry of art projects, exhibitions, writings and publications on the "pedagogical turn" of the arts in recent years, we seldom hear the voices of workers for whom art and pedagogy have been connected in practice for many decades — those educators, mediators and interpreters based in galleries.

these new regimes of arts education, it is necessary then to move beyond professional distinctions, to include those actively engaged in the struggle between the education of a neoliberalized “creative class” and the creation of emancipatory and critical education. It is with this in mind that we might look to a number of recent provocations in which artists and gallery workers on the frontlines of European cultural events have begun to formulate their own turns within the landscape of art and education.

“CREATIVITY” HERE DENOTES EVERYTHING FROM THE MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES USED BY MANAGERS TO GET BETTER RESULTS FROM THEIR WORKERS TO THE “FREEDOM” TO BE SELF-EMPLOYED (OFTEN CODE FOR SELDOMLY) AND THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING IDENTIFIED WITH THE “CREATIVE CLASS.”

Where the idea of gallery educators might conjure a team of upper class (mainly women) guides wearing cardigans and clinking glasses, picture instead a group of interns in pirate costumes arriving by boat to the 53rd Venice Biennale with signs that read: Give us our money back! This act launched a collective self-inquiry into the working conditions of exhibition interpreters at the Biennial and their differential terms of employment. A collaboration between the by now notorious free knowledge group Pirate Bay and a local squatted social centre, this momentary interruption simultaneously launched a workshop series on free knowledge and a workers’ enquiry into the conditions of free labour at the Biennial.

While its opening media grab (which attracted the attention of both hipster magazine *Dazed and Confused* and the local police) was anything but subtle, the decision of Pirate Bay to align themselves with S.a.L.E. Docks, a local social center organizing education workers at the biennial, is a lesser known fact. Their stunt linked the Pirate Embassy, a public education project on intellectual property sanctioned by the Internet Pavilion (one of the biennial’s collateral projects), to an unsanctioned enquiry into conditions of work at the biennial by the workers themselves. While the Pirate Embassy invited visitors to become ambassadors of a state of “love and freedom of the internet” contra the regulation and capitalization of information, the S.a.L.E. Docks enquiry asked who organizes and derives profit from the exhibition that was its host?

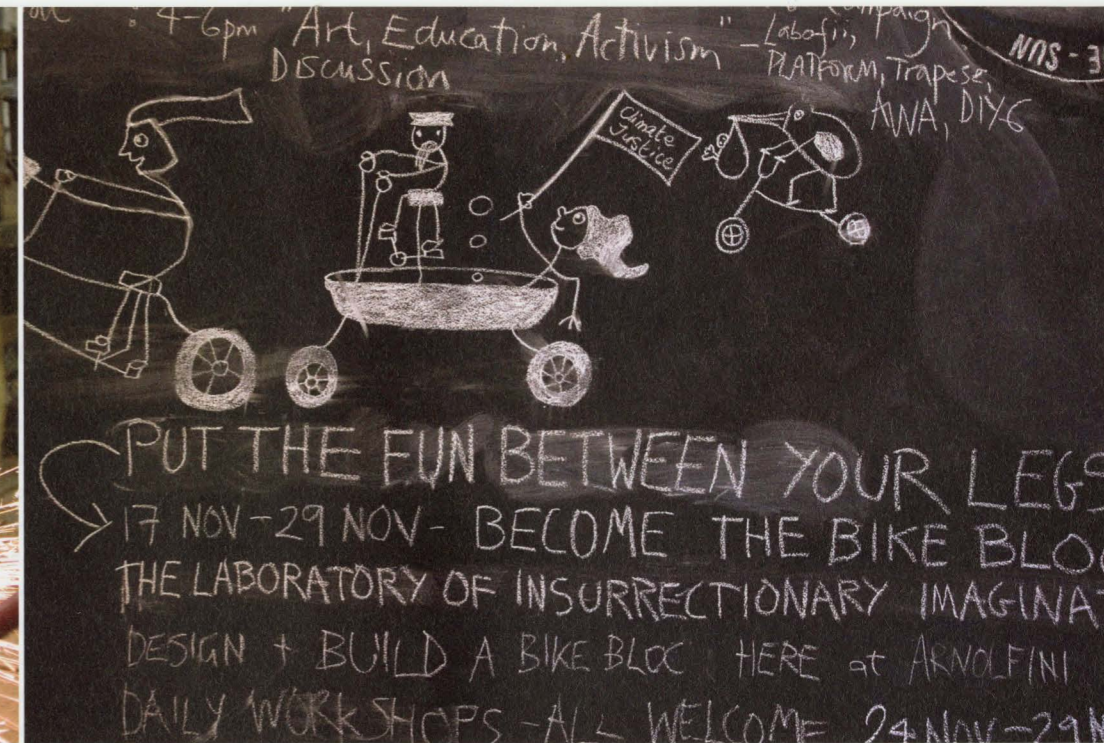
Activists from S.a.L.E. Docks, many of whom were employed as interpreters for the biennial, brought to light the labour conditions that underpin its multi million dollar international tourism and art market love affair. Revealing a multitude of positions — including invigilators, who guard art works and are employed by the outsourced private company Adecco, tour guides employed by the Biennial to be on call at all times for a stipend of 500 euros per month and free labouring “cultural mediation” interns gaining work experience — the group’s research highlighted the different conditions and desires of workers. For example, collaborating with a union strike that closed the Biennial on August 4 in order to challenge the Biennial Foundation for violating a new contract that promised to re-employ interpreters in subsequent years, activists also made public the role of the subcontracting company, Adecco, who had recruited and hosted unpaid training days (described by activists as “hoax days”) for tour guides who were then called to work only for the preview days of the exhibition.

S.a.L.E.’s investigation also demonstrated that beyond the 110 workers who participated in the strike, there were students and others (paid and unpaid) who did not. For

them, job security was not a central issue. Rather, the promise of a job, and indeed the promise of agency within the biennial and the art world in general, were of much more central concern and a primary motivator for working under conditions even lesser than those argued for in the strike.²

The complicity of cultural workers in the chain of casualized employment is what activists from Euromayday network describe as the “precarious arrangements we all agree to in our everyday lives.” In their campaign “Enough is Enough!” they worked with janitors, trainees, supervisors, security guards, installation staff, tour guides and, in particular, educators at the 2007 Documenta 12 in Kassel, Germany. Their intention was to reveal both the material conditions of work — such as pay and instability of employment — and the reasons why people participate in explicitly exploitative cultural work experiences. Part of their analysis — developed through a series of interviews and collaborative editing sessions — revolved around the issue of incorporation. The European megashow incorporates so many “alternatives” that it seems difficult to imagine working outside of them. The willingness of workers to accept precarious conditions was motivated by factors that included fear of losing out on opportunities, the thought that a poorly paid job might lead to a better one, the love of being around artists and the excitement of being part of a vocation called “Art.” However, when it came to working conditions, beyond problems of lack of shifts, poor pay and uncompensated work, many quoted “dullness” as a primary disappointment of their work at Documenta 12.

Enquiries at the Venice Biennial and Documenta 12 follow from a number of recent studies into the working conditions of cultural workers in Europe through processes of self-education and investigation. This research is developing at a moment when discourses of “creativity” and cultural education are increasingly becoming integral to the flexibility of European labour markets. “Creativity” here denotes everything from the motivational strategies used by managers



<left> A Bike Blocker welding at the Candy Factory Copenhagen. Photo: Robert Logan, 2009. <right> Installation detail of PLATFORM at the Arnolfini Gallery, 2009. Photo: Siobhan McKeown. <below> Working in the installation at the Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol Bike Block, 2009. Photo: Amy Scaife.



to get better results from their workers to the “freedom” to be self-employed (often code for seldomly employed) and the possibility of being identified with the “creative class.” The distinction (along with poor labour conditions) of being a “creative” worker, particularly in the circuit of contemporary art exhibitions, sets the bar for both desires and expectations, wherever the term is used. If the contemporary art spectacle extravaganza represents the ultimate carrot in the carrot-and-stick equation that the offer of “creativity” has become, then it is even more crucial to uncover its central myths and contradictions.

THESE ACTS OF RADICAL RESEARCH AND CRITICAL GALLERY EDUCATION, WHEN ALIGNED WITH SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, DECENTRE THE GALLERY AS THE PRIMARY SITE OF CHANGE, EVOKING A PEDAGOGICAL REALM THAT USES THE GALLERY OR EXHIBITION AS A MERE STOPPING POINT ALONG A LONGER TRAJECTORY.

This understanding of self-education on the part of the cultural worker — of exposing the contradictions between the offer and actual working conditions — is different than stating, as some have, that students, cultural and knowledge workers are “the new working class.” Rather, it is precisely because those working in the creative sector are not the working class that the creativity carrot offers such a compelling model for restructuring the economy. To discuss conditions of work here at the exhibition is to reveal the unspeakable and unglamorous: that at the heart of the cultural operation there is a

plethora of tremendously un-creative tasks and uncompensated labour.

The research of Intermittents du Spectacle, seasonal cultural workers in France, was in many ways a precursor to these more recent “militant research” initiatives. This group understood the problem of claiming exceptional or generalized status for the cultural worker. Their enquiry into their own conditions of work in relation to new unemployment regulations notoriously resulted in a series of strike actions throughout the summer of 2003 in which a number of cultural events were interrupted or repurposed for public discussion. Aware that any proclamation of “precarity” from cultural workers risked feeding directly into the production of better rights for a new “creative class,” their demands for a social welfare system that allows for the survival of seasonal workers were positioned to include social rights for all, in particular, undocumented migrant groups and the unemployed.

All of these projects go some way in developing a collective critical consciousness of the conditions that produce an art mirage to mask the deterioration of the welfare state, the disproportionate number of educational programs for artists and curators vis-à-vis employment opportunities and the emptiness of promises made for the endless expansion of creative industries. Few, however, have begun to pilot direct interventions into the nature of the work itself, and in particular the nature of the desired interface between gallery workers and patrons, visitors and publics.

Another study at Documenta 12 — this one sanctioned by Documenta — was undertaken by its tour guides. It revealed how workers might inject their own agency into the exhibition by staging performative interventions into one of its central commercial and educational offers: the tour. This study, led by Dr. Carmen Mörsch, was recently published in two volumes titled *Documenta 12 Education* (Institute of Arts Education, Zurich, 2009). It suggests a range of ways in which the workers of such exhibitions

might pull at their seams and assumptions from within.

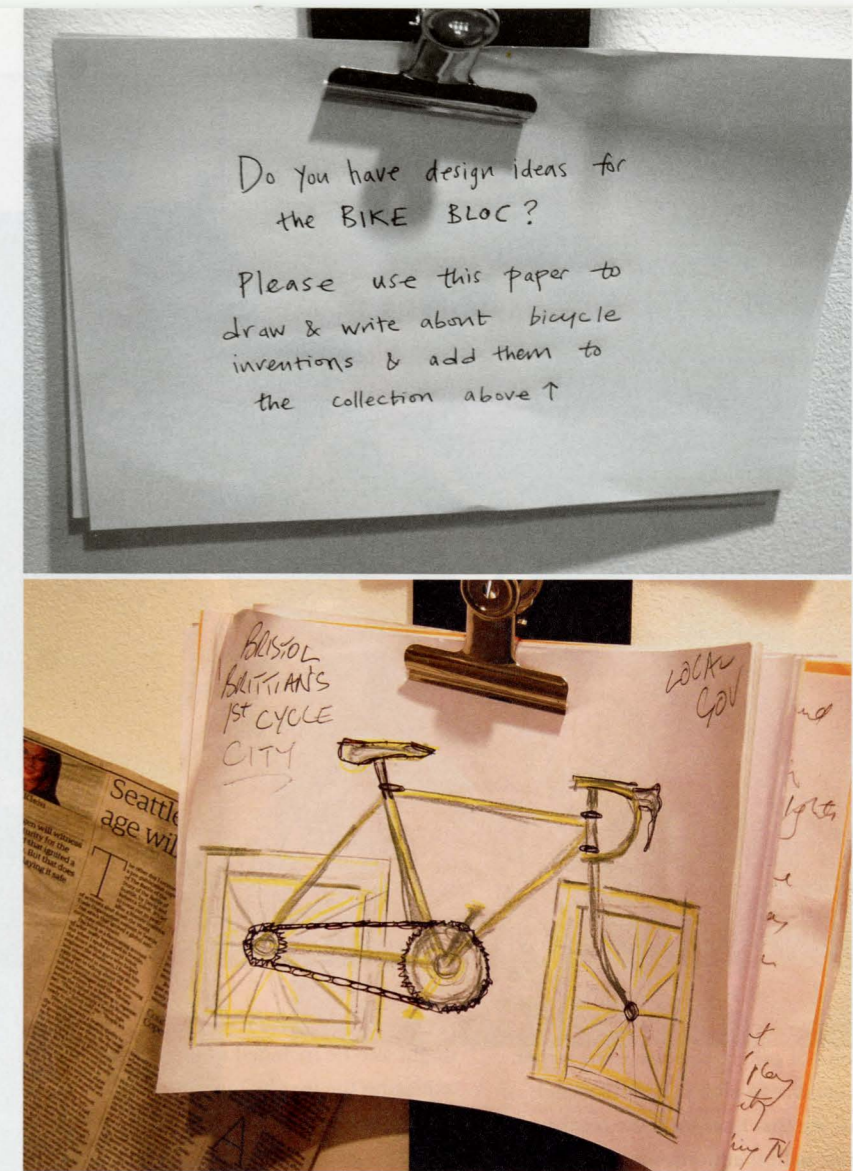
Hansel Sato’s investigation, *Performing Essentialism at Documenta 12*, for example, takes up the question of touring as a deconstructive project, intervening directly into the desires cultivated among visitors to the spectacular exhibition. Sato, a Peruvian migrant to Austria, was questioned many times by visitors to the exhibition who were skeptical of his ability to conduct a tour in the German language when not of German origin. Against the implicit racism of the question “where are you from,” Sato used the tour as a space to problematize essentialist ideas of German whiteness. Treating the tour as a critical performance, Sato introduced himself to each group as emerging from a different cultural background, only to reveal half-way through the exhibition that he had lied. The intervention was used to stage discussions with visitors about the eyes with which they look upon the work of international artists as cultivated by contemporary art spectacles — in his words, to “reflect on the constructions of perceptions in the group.” In discussions, visitors to the exhibition revealed their reactions to his various personas, one suggesting that when Sato introduced himself as an Uro native of Peru, he did not appear confident of his knowledge of European art. Small and intimate in scale, such an understanding of research lies not only in an analysis of the desires cultivated by a consumer orientation towards art in an exhibition like Documenta, but in the “educational offer” of such an exhibition and research as the site of intervention.

Sandra Ortmann’s *You could have told us right away that the artist is gay: Queer Aspects of Art and Gallery Education at Documenta 12* connects her experiments in dressing up and dressing down at Documenta and “analyzing its impacts” in relation to her broader involvement in queer activism. The antagonisms and ambivalences that she experienced in the exhibition foregrounded a working group titled *Queer Activism and Artistic Strategies*, which inaugurated a network of

queer and LGBT activists from Poland and Germany during the period of the exhibition.

Connecting gallery guides and local activists, artist-educator Wanda Wieczorek and local community educator Ayse Gülec initiated a series of working groups to make use of the Documenta marketing machine to facilitate and bring to light initiatives of social justice education, anti-racism, migrant justice and the use of public resources. Operating semi-autonomously from Documenta itself (it did not receive any funding from Documenta apart from the staff time of Wieczorek — a director’s assistant not an educator), the working groups used the exhibition locally as a site from which to launch visible campaigns on unemployment, migrant support, anti-racist education, the privatization of public assets such as water and public housing. Where this process began, as Helmut Holzappel points out, as a hierarchical one — i.e. an initiative of the Directors of Documenta to elaborate their own thematic to the local people of Kassel through the production of an advisory group — its evolution into a non-hierarchical, self-organized and semi-autonomous network suggests that it is possible for the educational arm of such an enterprise to move beyond notions such as access and outreach.

These studies understand the terrain of conditions as inclusive of possibilities whose aims are situated on a path that leads further afield than the questions and concerns of the exhibition itself. This is what Mörsch and the tour guides describe as “Critical Gallery Education.” Critical Gallery Education shares with the militant research practices of S.a.L.E. Docks and Euromayday Hamburg an interest in revealing the core contradictions within the spaces of art, “... address[ing] the ways in which the market influences structure, presentation, perception, and reception of art and therefore counters the middle class illusion that art is detached from economy to which it’s actually closely tied. It considers the cultural and symbolic capital of art and its institutions as constituents of inclusionary and exclusionary practices in the art field. At the same time,



Installation detail of PLATFORM at the Arnolfini Gallery, 2009. Photo: Siobhan McKeown.

it acknowledges and communicates the fact that symbolic capital gives rise to a desire, and develops both strategic and sensuous ways to appropriate such capital.”¹⁴

What does it mean for the curators to stage themes or leitmotifs for Documenta 12 as broad and important as the vulnerability of human existence (“What is Bare Life?”), the time of contemporary practice (“Is Modernity our Antiquity?”) and the question of education itself (“What is to Be Done?”) in the context of the marketing-driven, mash-up of public/private partnership that is the contemporary form of the spectacular exhibition? Beyond stating these as questions for heady consumption by lines of summer visitors, what kinds of educational actions are possible within and without such a tangled set of commitments? What and who do they support?

There are, of course, limits to the capacity of critical education to produce major shifts

in the output of an exhibition that operates on a short term scale. As Sato’s interventions showed, the tour as a framework — that is, as a revenue generating source for Documenta — cultivates the desire for expertise and static identities, and limits the amount of time in which an intervention can occur. And the revenue model that supports touring, in which guides are paid by the tour, not for additional planning, reflection, analysis or local engagement, means that interventions such as those of the Documenta 12 Study are undertaken without compensation. The issue of incorporation discussed by Euromayday, is also clearly at play. A critical tour could easily be on offer as part of the next Documenta.

To some extent these limitations are exceeded when they are connected to broader local and translocal social movements, rather than to systems of valorization produced by the art world for itself.



A DoubleTrouble custom build bike is being test ridden at the Candy Factory. The Bike Bloc was an essential part of the Reclaim Power demonstration whose aim was to force its way into the Bella Center using only peaceful means and to take over the talks and set up a "People's Assembly." December 16, 2009. Photo: Kristian Buus.

In this sense we might move beyond the specific roles of gallery educator, researcher, artist and curator to plot an historical and conceptual arc that lines up these recent initiatives in radical education with, say, the Hybrid Workspace of Documenta 10, which convened dozens of social movement players to formulate the *Kein Mensch ist illegal/ No One Is Illegal* manifesto and subsequent campaigning network. Activating many across Europe and North America on the issue of borders and migrant's rights, the group developed an agenda that included "hiding and supporting illegal migrants, squatting churches, organizing public or semi-public debates about illegal border-crossing and starting actions against deportations." The impact of such a campaign was widespread, including a series of border camps across Europe, a migrant caravan that moved across Germany throughout the late 90s and early 2000s and a shift in support for migrants under attack by new European border regimes.⁵

A more recent example, in which UK-based environmental justice art collective PLAT-FORM, working at the Arnolfini in Bristol (UK) populated the galleries with eco-activists working on a range of educational

programs with gallery staff and visitors, might also be included in such an arc. In exploring the involvement of galleries in accepting sponsorship from gas and oil companies to gain cultural capital and legitimacy from the art world, the collective connected gallery workers and visitor to broader ecological issues and used the exhibition to recruit and prepare local people to attend (and even blockade) the COP15 Summit in Copenhagen. The group understood the pedagogical interfaces of the gallery as its most useful asset.

These acts of radical research and critical gallery education, when aligned with social movements, decentre the gallery as the primary site of change, evoking a pedagogical realm that uses the gallery or exhibition as a mere stopping point along a longer trajectory. Terms such as "squatting," "stealing the limelight," engaging in "parasitic occupation" or "thinking with conditions" of the educational role of the gallery or exhibition, help us understand how the entangled sites in which creative production, emancipatory rhetoric and exploitation meet are also sites in which new alliances and new demands might be produced.

Notes:

1. Lesage, D. (2009). *The Academy is Back: On Education, the Bologna Process, and the Doctorate in the Arts*. In e-flux journal for, 03, 2009.
2. See *Pirate Bay heads to Venice art Biennale* <http://www.variety.com/article/VR1118004606.html?categoryid=1009&cs=1>
3. <http://www.blay.se/files/eop.pdf>. and *STRIKE AT THE BIENNALE OF VENICE!* At <http://carrotworkers.wordpress.com/2009/08/04/strike-at-the-biennale-of-venice/#more-147>
4. p. 20 Documenta 12 Education no. 2
5. Helmut Holzappel. *Local Projects*, Global Art. Cross-Cultural Cooperation

JANNA GRAHAM is an educator, organizer and student. A member of collectives *Ultra-red* and *Micropolitics Research Group*, she is involved in investigations of labour conditions in London's cultural sector. As Projects Curator at *Serpentine Gallery*, she runs the *Centre for Possible Studies*, a neighbourhood-based artist and community research program.



Adrian Stimson, 2009-10

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VOCABULARY

AND

INDEX TO UNIVERSAL SIGNALS OF APPROXIMATION

(ONLY AN APPROXIMATION)

This Part is arranged alphabetically: every Signal for the use of all nations is here inserted in its proper position, with the Signal Letters placed to the right.

	Access		Council - s
	Account (personal)		Council - s - led - ling - lor
	Account (minutes)	CHBL	(lore)
	Accountable		Complaint (mechanisms)
CHBD	- will be held accountable		Compliance - - - - -
CHBF	- will not be accountable		Conditions
	Adherence - - - - - NOF		- weather
	Adhere to it (in writing) - NOQ	CHBM	- municipal
	Afraid - - - - - MWT		Conditional
	- I am afraid of KB		Critical - ity - - - - - RMP
	- do not be afraid		Criticize - - - - - HRN
	Agencies (Boards and - JFP	CHBN	Damage - d
	Commissions		- damages cannot be repaired
	Agent of - - - - - BCD		Democrat - cy - ic - ization
	? - BCF	CHBP	Dis
CHBJ	Arms length		Discourse - ive
	Belong-ed		Dispute Resolution Process QPB
	- where do you (or vessel		Elect - s - ed - ing - ion - QPG
	indicated) belong?		- is elected for
	Bitter - - - - - BCJ		- at the election of - - - QPF
	Board - BCK		Equity - able - QPJ
	- will you (or person		- policy - - DJH
	indicated) come on board? BCL		- between people - - - - PTJ
	Cc		- inside of community
	- Bcc - - - - - BCG		Family. Families - - - DRC
	Communicate - ion - BCR		- divisions - - - DPH
	- you can communicate		- loyalties
	with and receive a reply	CHBQ	- unity
	in	CHBR	- silences
	- stopped or interrupted PFH	CHBS	Fifty - fifty split - - - - HLO
CHBK	City Council		
	City Hall		
	Code - - -		

The Signal Letters on the right denote the Universal Signals Of Approximation

CHBT	Forward - s - ed - ing - will you forward my letters? I have forwarded the - - VKS	CHFP	Organize .org Organization Organizational (structures)
CHBW	Fund	CHFQ	Reconcile - s - d - ing - iation - - - - - QLJ
CHDB	Funding	CHFR	Revise Revisions - - DQR Revisit DQT
CHDF	Hand - s - all saved - all lost - - - - - MRT	CHFS	Riding
CHDG	Inquire - s - ed - ing - y - ies	CHFT	Secret - s - the following signal is in cipher - the following communication is private - - - - DMF
CHDJ	- inquire into or about - did not bother to inquire		Stand - s - ing - ards DMG - Standing Committee
CHDL	General - Auditor - - - - - RKW	CHFV	- Statements
CHDM	Invest - igate - did we investigate? - was there a formal investigation?	CHFW	- public
CHDR	Language - s	CHGB	- ideological
CHDS	- the failure of	CHGD	Support - ive - do you think we could get support from ? QRN
CHDT	- as reminders of	CHGF	Unavoidable - y - could not prevent - - QBP (or, be prevented) - - - QBC - - - - QBS - QNG
CHDV	Mayor	CHGJ	Vex - ed - ing - atious
CHDW	Mayoralty	CHGK	Violate - s - d - ing - ion
CHFB	- has the mayor's ear		Wreck - age - ed
CHFD	- reminded the mayor of	CHGP	- I shall stand about to see if I can pick up anything from the wreckage - - - - - NHF
CHFG	Meaning - s	CHGQ	Wound - s - ed - ing - none wounded NHG - many wounded - - NHJ - NHK - NHL
CHFJ	- the failure of	CHGR	
CHFL	- Minute - d - s	CHGS	
CHFM	(for minutes of latitude, longitude or time, see) Municipal - - - - PHS Municipality - - - - PHT	CHGT	3 3rd party (review) 416.392. . . .
CHFN	Of - of you or your - - - - DWN - of us or ours - - - - DWP - - - - - DWQ Opinion - what is your opinion? - what do you think of ? - what is the general opinion?	CHGV	
		CHGW	
		CHJB	
		CHJD	

REENA KATZ's project, *A One-Part Code Book* alphabetizes ciphers and their translations for easy decoding. Usually, only the most basic questions, verbs and nouns can be communicated. These secret messages are transmitted among people who have access to the book. Using the U.S. Navy's 1890 version of the International Code of Signals for the Use of All Nations, Katz looks at the institutional knots and flows of equity politics at Toronto City Council, particularly in relation to Palestinian Human Rights.

NEGOTIATING INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATION:

Maegan McIsaac in Conversation with Belkin Curator Scott Watson about curating contemporary First Nations art, the historic role of SCANA in shifting curatorial practice and the Vancouver art scene

Installation view of *Fountain*, 2005 by Rebecca Belmore.
Photo: Jose Ramon Gonzalez. Courtesy: Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery.

MAEGAN McISAAC: A number of exhibitions of Indigenous art in Canada, such as *The Spirit Sings*, have been surrounded by political debates, protests and controversy. What ongoing challenges do you face as a curator of Aboriginal art?

SCOTT WATSON: My attitude towards contemporary Aboriginal art is not to isolate it as a category. The mandate of The Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery is contemporary international art. So a contemporary Aboriginal artist is an international contemporary artist in my view. There are two streams of practice called contemporary First Nations art in BC. One stream might be typified by Brian Jungen, Rebecca Belmore and Laurence Paul Yuxweluptun, among others. These artists may or may not deal

with First Nations identity, land claims and other issues, but their idiom is contemporary in an international sense. Then there are other artists who are deeply invested in the maintenance and continuity of traditional forms. Robert Davidson is a famous example. Those practices also exert a claim as contemporary art. I think there is tension between the two practices and an institution feels it.

MAEGAN McISAAC: Do you feel a need to address this tension as a curator?

SCOTT WATSON: Yes. It is a concern to First Nations artists themselves, and I observe it and write about it. It involves commissions, money and reputations. Say, for example, the Vancouver airport authority has

a charge to fill the airport with First Nations art as a signifier of place. There are major issues in using First Nations art to signify place where there are unresolved treaties and land claims. They have also deliberately chosen First Nations art that refers to traditional forms rather than video, oil painting or photography. In other words, this becomes a matter of ideological critique at some point.

MAEGAN McISAAC: How has the general approach to exhibitions featuring Aboriginal art changed since the late 1980s and 1990s?

SCOTT WATSON: It has changed a lot. The lobby group SCANA (Society of Canadian Artists of Native Ancestry) formed in the 1980s and all the Native artists working in the 80s belonged to this group. Joane

Cardinal-Schubert, Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, Robert Houle and Carl Beam were all members. They lobbied the National Gallery of Canada, which led to the *Land, Spirit, Power* exhibition, and they lobbied the Vancouver Art Gallery, which led to an exhibition of a similar scale. They set things off and then the institutions themselves acted. Today, the National Gallery has specialist curators in First Nations art, and the galleries devoted to the story of Canadian art contain First Nations art. This also happened at the Art Gallery of Ontario. These changes are the result of the dialogue between SCANA and these institutions in the 80s, so that was a very important period and a shift in how First Nations art is curated. I was a curator at the Vancouver Art Gallery when eight well-

known artists from SCANA came to see me to say "what is going on here?" They really woke the institutions up.

MAEGAN McISAAC: You curated Rebecca Belmore's work in exhibitions that have toured across Canada, and in global exhibitions like the Venice Biennale. Are there different concerns when curating Aboriginal art within Canada and on the global stage?

SCOTT WATSON: Yes. In the Canadian art world, there is a constant critical conversation between the past, present and future about the issues, historical and present, that affect First Nations people. People in the Canadian art world are sensitive to this, and understand the issues from a Canadian point of view. But when you go abroad, say to Europe, it's like going back in time and you are faced with very old clichés about what "Indians" are. It's harder for an artist to manage their identity in Europe than it is in North America.

MAEGAN McISAAC: Would you organize an exhibition featuring a First Nations artist differently in Canada than you would abroad?

SCOTT WATSON: No. The same logistics are involved. We are promoting an artist. Our press releases help launch an artist's identity, like Rebecca Belmore at the Venice Biennale for example. You have to be careful about what you want to do there. We all knew she was the first female Aboriginal artist ever to represent a country at the Venice Biennale after one hundred years of the event. Should we say that? If so, does that allow no other view to emerge about the work? We would have those discussions all the time.

MAEGAN McISAAC: Do you think that the burden placed on aboriginal artists to represent place, identity and culture is different in Canada and outside Canada?

SCOTT WATSON: Yes, but I'm not sure how. You would get a better answer about that from Rebecca Belmore. She moves a lot back and forth between the United States and Canada, and she has certainly remarked to me on several occasions about the differ-

ences in what it's like for a First Nations person in Canada and in the United States. There are different histories, different cultural values, and different events. I guess the issue is that any artist should be free to make work about anything they want.

MAEGAN McISAAC: Do you see contemporary Aboriginal artists like Rebecca Belmore, James Luna and Jimmie Durham resisting the global in their work through a deep commitment to their communities, or is there a more complex relationship there?

SCOTT WATSON: It's more complex. I don't know James Luna and Jimmie Durham's work in depth, and I have never thought of them as relating to a particular community, but I think of them as international artists because I see them in international contexts. Likewise for Rebecca Belmore. If there is something particularly Anishnabe about her work, I'm not sure I know what it is. It's there, in the iconography and the poetics of her work. But some of her work, like *The Named and the Unnamed*, is about Vancouver, where she lives but is not from. I think her concerns are pretty far-reaching and global, and in her hands those issues become a position of resistance.

MAEGAN McISAAC: Contemporary shows seem to make a specific effort to represent globalism through these artists. That is what I mean when I say these exhibitions are global. And maybe there is a tension there because Indigenous artists are expected to represent a locality, but they are also expected to be a part of a global dialogue in the exhibition.

SCOTT WATSON: I think that burden falls on all artists, but perhaps on First Nations artists more heavily because of their historical situation. They are still involved in a struggle for basic justice, and it could be said that many other groups of people in the art context are not involved in that struggle. But First Nations artists are, and that puts them in a special position.

MAEGAN McISAAC: What does it mean to be a curator of global exhibitions?

SCOTT WATSON: I don't like the word "global." I prefer international. It's maybe a more old-fashioned word, and it's not associated with globalization, which is a pejorative for large corporations stomping on local economies. I think the international art phenomenon works in the opposite way. The more the phenomenon of international art expands with biennials all over the world, and the more international art touches down in a place, it enlivens, revives, and strengthens whatever art scene is there. Whereas when global capitalism touches down in a region it smothers, absorbs and snuffs out the regional economy. The art world works the opposite way, as I see it.

MAEGAN McISAAC: What does it mean to be an international curator?

SCOTT WATSON: Well, I work in Vancouver.

MAEGAN McISAAC: Do you see yourself as an international curator?

SCOTT WATSON: I work internationally with Vancouver art, but not always. I work with international artists in Vancouver. I move back and forth.

MAEGAN McISAAC: Do you see a tension between the local and the international in your own curatorial practice since you are taking Vancouver art into the international realm?

SCOTT WATSON: I don't think so. The two things have an unusual relationship that I am interested in. Vancouver has an art history that has always intersected and connected with other places and phenomena within the larger world of art. It is not an isolated history. But that relationship shifts and changes. The character of what international art is has changed and grown a lot in the last 20 or 30 years. But I would say that is always there. Vancouver has a particularly healthy scene for its size. It is an internationally known art centre, therefore it can maintain itself. Many artists stay here. They don't run off to New York or Berlin, meaning that there are enough people here to have a serious conversation about art. In other places this size in North America, that doesn't happen. The local museums are filled with known international artists and no local artists. If you are an artist in that city you may think you need to move to Los Angeles, New York or Vancouver. That's not a problem in Vancouver, but it could be. Vancouver's local scene is very fragile, but if you look at the Civic Art Museum, the Vancouver Art Gallery or this one, we show and purchase a lot of local art, and that's unusual. If you went to Seattle, you wouldn't see a lot of local Seattle art in the museums.

MAEGAN McISAAC: What projects are you currently working on?

SCOTT WATSON: We're working with Ron Hamilton, who is a Nuuchahnulth artist who makes ceremonial screens. He wants us to show contemporary screens that he makes along with historical ones from museums, and there will be some archival material that we will show. What we show is work in progress, and I'm looking forward to working with him because he's a fabulous artist who is not sufficiently celebrated.

SCOTT WATSON is a professor in the Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory and Director/Curator of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery at the University of British Columbia, where he is also Chair of the graduate Critical Curatorial Studies program.

MAEGAN McISAAC is an emerging scholar with a particular interest in contemporary Canadian art. She currently lives in Nelson, New Zealand, where she is conducting research and producing exhibitions about Nelson's history at Founders Heritage Park.

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Image: Geoffrey Farmer, *The Surgeon and the Photographer*, 2009

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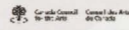
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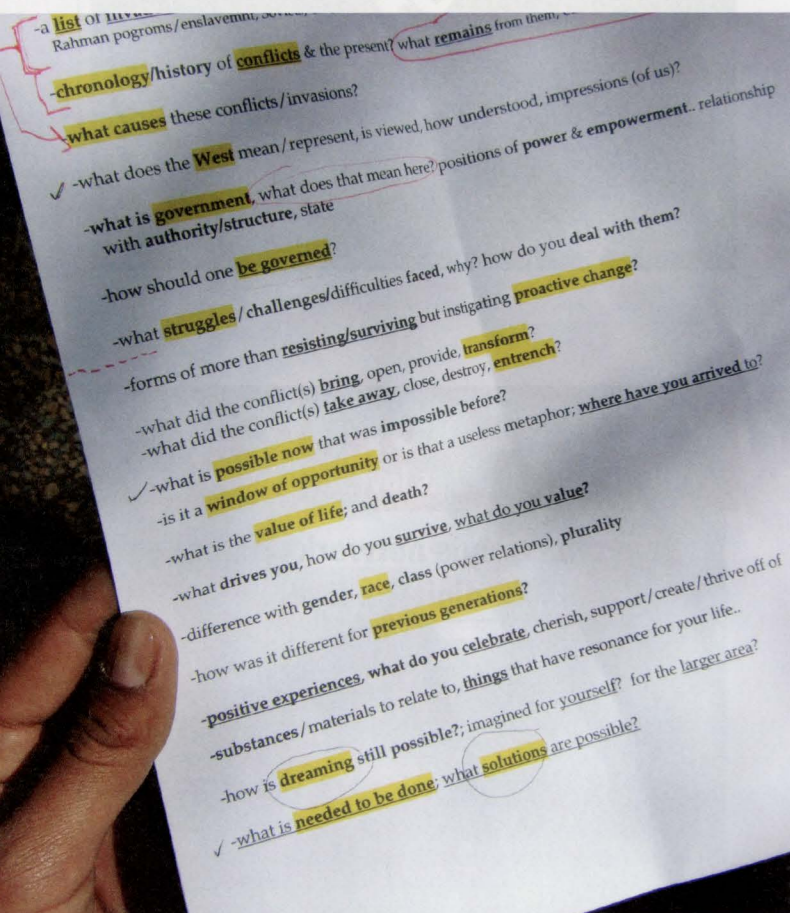
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MATERIALIZING MEANINGS: JAYCE SALLOUM'S *history of the present (selected works 1985 – 2009)*

Kamloops Art Gallery • 25 October 2009 – 3 January 2010

CURATED BY Jen Budney REVIEW BY Portia Priegert



in the process, revisional routes, taping, notes with Sanjee, Bamiyan, Afghanistan, 4/16/08 [DSCF2892]. Photo: Jayce Salloum, 2008.

Jayce Salloum uses his art as a lever to pry open conventional assumptions and superficial analyses, creating space for dialogue and new understandings. His work operates at a fundamental level, asking viewers to question what they know and how they know it — essentially to reconsider the world around them. This open-ended approach requires much of audiences, and has earned the Vancouver-based artist a reputation as challenging. Moreover, the voluminous archival qualities of his videos and installations resist easy consumption. But for those willing to spend time with it, Salloum's first retrospective is an immersive and overwhelming affair; prodigious and at times frustrating, it is ultimately successful in prompting critical reflection.

The retrospective, featuring work from 1985 to the present, is organized by the gallery's former curator, Jen Budney, now associate curator at the Mendel Art Gallery in Saskatoon. Budney, in her catalogue essay, describes Salloum's vocation as a "multi-pronged transnational cartography of human experience and relations, or a process of way-finding through visual and material culture in different parts of the globe." He is, she observes, better known outside Canada than within, and has exhibited at leading international galleries and biennials as well as small storefronts and community centres. While Salloum's projects and cultural activism are linked to various social-justice issues, Budney emphasizes his work's epistemological grounding. "It is, I believe, the failure of the imagination inherent in the West's (and increasingly the world's) attachment to certain concepts — all of which are epistemologically related — such as individualism, the inevitability or naturalness of capitalism, the nation-state, and particular forms of empiricism, which frustrates some viewers of Salloum's work, who would prefer the artist speak from a fixed, identifiable standpoint and present us with messages and products that are easy to consume," she writes.

A major component of the retrospective is an installation of *untitled videotapes*, an ongoing series that explores global sites of resistance. Probably Salloum's best-known work, it includes two tapes dealing with the legacy of colonial settlement on the Syilx, the indigenous



Installation detail of *map of the world, 1999-2009* by Jayce Salloum. Photo: Ray Perreault. Courtesy: the artist.

people of B.C.'s Okanagan Valley, where Salloum grew up. Other tapes feature a dialogue with Soha Bechara, a former Lebanese National Resistance fighter, and conversations with artists, academics and workers in the former Yugoslavia. The installation, presented simultaneously on monitors and projected on the walls of a darkened gallery, is compelling for both its thoughtful content and its visuality.

Still, Salloum is keenly aware that his work is just a partial representation of a much larger body of information and experience. "I don't think a total understanding is possible, or even what we're aiming for," Salloum tells Mike Hoolboom, who interviewed him for *Practical Dreamers: Conversations with Movie Artists*. "With subjects/people in all my tapes, we can only imagine what this life was/is like — in fact, we can't imagine it. We can only have very partial glimpses or fragments of understanding at best. It's more about other things, like materializing an approach to the material, developing a sense of the situation on the ground, addressing specific representational issues, articulating the various positions and relationships, and

finding an empathy for the subjects. The work is designed for what I've called 'productive frustration.'"

One interesting aspect of Salloum's work is his disruption of the space "between what one is looking at and the formulation of its meaning," says Vancouver curator Keith Wallace, who contributed an essay to the retrospective catalogue. Salloum destabilizes conventional viewing habits with strategies like juxtaposition and appropriation, as well as video techniques such as blackouts, choppy edits and shaky camera work. Says Wallace: "It decelerates our normal process of consuming images as they confront us on a daily basis, and offers the viewer some semblance of ownership in the processing of knowledge and the making of meaning."

This concern is also evident in Salloum's installations, including *Kan ya ma kan (There was and there was not)*, a massive collection of photos, postcards, books, documents and other cultural artifacts relating to the history of Lebanon, Salloum's ancestral home. White gloves set out on a table invite visitors to explore the archive.



Installation detail of *(Kan ya ma kan) There was and there was not*, 1988-1998 by Jayce Salloum. Photo: Ray Perreault. Courtesy: the artist.

Similarly, Salloum encourages viewers to manipulate *table of contents*, a table covered with hundreds of images cut from books, part of an installation called *Acts of Consumption*, which questions the formation of knowledge. Another installation, *map of the world*, is a large multi-panel collage of flayed business envelopes, photos, sketches, dried seed pods, string, leaves and other found objects that Salloum accumulated over a decade. While it is not interactive, it manifests a concern with archiving experience and offers viewers space to make their own associations.

The retrospective also includes Salloum's photo-based work, which ranges from streetscapes of late-80s New York to a 2008 project in Afghanistan with the Hazara, a persecuted ethnic minority. For the latter, Salloum explored the Bamiyan Valley, where he documented an arid landscape littered with rusting military equipment as well as empty cliff niches that once sheltered two colossal Buddhas destroyed by the Taliban in 2001. One of the most potent images shows an assembly of schoolgirls in white headscarves.

The power of Salloum's work can be explained in part by his empathy. The trust he builds allows subjects to reveal themselves in

affecting ways so viewers can connect emotionally on a deeper level than with conventional documentary or news formats. While some have queried his involvement with those outside his own identity affiliation, Salloum says he operates from a position of solidarity. "I speak in affinity with," Salloum tells Hoolboom. "My videotapes are collaborations, there is an exchange, a sharing and a trust ... it's what we as subjects are saying that is important, not the fact that I am from that locale or not, or whether I am black, white, red, yellow, brown or an undefined shade of grey." While there are no easy solutions to complex world issues, this retrospective asks viewers to embrace their humanity — to observe, to think and to feel.

history of the present, presented at the Kamloops Art Gallery, from Oct. 25, 2009 to Jan. 3, 2010, will be exhibited at the Confederation Centre Art Gallery in Charlottetown from Sept. 11, 2010 to Jan. 3, 2011 and the Mendel Art Gallery in Saskatoon from Oct. 7, 2011 to Jan. 13, 2012.

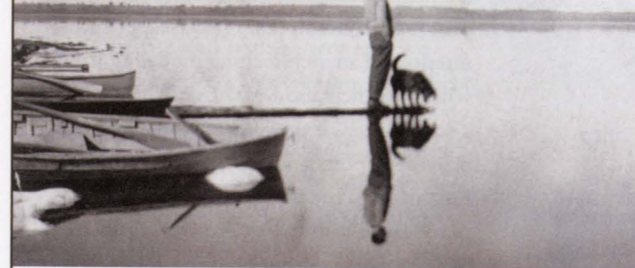
PORTIA PRIEGERT is an artist and writer based in Kelowna. She was director of the Alternator Gallery for Contemporary Art from 1999 to 2007.

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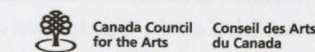
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THREE TAKES ON THE DISSOLUTION OF EMPIRE: *Stories from Places and Times Distantly Close*

Western Front Gallery • 21 November 2009 – 16 January 2010

CURATED BY Liz Park REVIEW BY Glen Lowry

The desire to resituate artistic production in relation to unfolding narratives of global urban development is at the crux of *Stories from Places and Times Distantly Close*, curated by Liz Park. This awkwardly titled exhibition comprises three distinct but thematically connected works: two from Toronto-based Will Kwan and one from international media collective Cinema Suitcase (Mieke Bal, Zen Marie, Thomas Sykora, Gary Ward and Michelle Williams). Each of these works speaks of the volatility of market forces and shifting geographies of global capitalism. In her curatorial statement, Park suggests that these works reflect on the current era of economic instability by providing “a closer look at the seemingly distant places and times where the consequences of free global trade can be felt in tangible and direct ways.”

Cinema Suitcase’s 2006 documentary *Colony* focuses on Batanagar, a company town built by the Bata Shoe Company in India’s West Bengal province. Batanagar exists as the ruins of an empire built by Czech industrialists Tomáš and Jan Bat’a, a dilapidated testament to their modernist vision. Dubbed the Henry Ford of Eastern Europe, Tomáš Bat’a is said to have wanted to create a world in which no one need go without shoes. To this end, Bata established an international network of industrial “colonies” that provided employees with social amenities: hospitals, schools and recreational facilities. These Bata-villes were modeled on the Czech town of Zlin, a master-planned community designed by architect František Lydie Gahura (a student

of Le Corbusier) in the wake Bata’s success in the outset of the twentieth century. As such, Batanagar, at least as an idea, provides a poignant alternative to globalization’s brutal anti-social drive, a corollary to what we might think of as neoliberalism’s violently atomizing forces.

Cinema Suitcase is known for an approach to “experimental social documentary” that strives to create intimacy by allowing people to self-narrate their stories. True to form, *Colony* is driven by conversations with various stakeholders, including descendents of the factory owners and workers left at Batanagar. Their personal reflections describe the demise of a colonial model from different points of view and in so doing infuse the situation with a level of melancholy that works against the development of a critical position. *Colony* invites viewers to consider globalization’s complicated relationship to earlier colonial and post colonial spatial practices. Viewed through images of the verdant ruins of Batanagar’s crumbling campus and the memories of the abandoned labourers, the utopian ideals of Bata’s company town seem less toxic and less brutal than the new labour camps and Free Trade Zones/Export Processing Zones that have replaced them.

Will Kwan’s *Canaries (the bank and the treasury)* provides a distinct counter point to the themes of post colonial urban life outlined in *Colony*. Centred on the figure of the HSBC building in Hong Kong, Kwan’s three-channel video layers a complex intersection of historical events and personal desires.

Founded as the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation by the British in the aftermath of the Opium Wars to facilitate trade between China and Europe, HSBC played a key role in the development of international trade routes, which connected economies and communities across an intricate geography of dispersed industrialization. Mixing historical footage, images of colonial paintings, contemporary streetscapes and interiors of an architectural modeling studio, with documentation of the artist fabricating a scale model of the HSBC tower, *Canaries* provides a poignant representation of city building and the underlying fragility of the monumental structures that tend to locate and organize global mobilities. Metaphorically, Kwan’s work juxtaposes the apparent solidity of the bank, a synecdoche for imperial trade and finance, with the fluidity of geographic migrations.

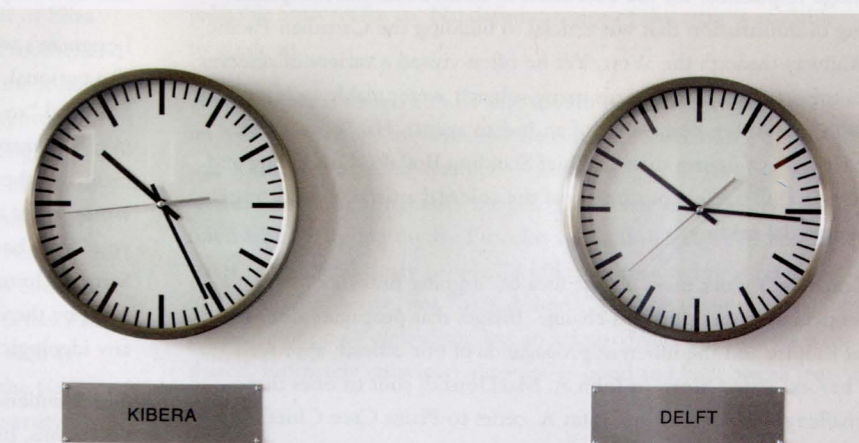
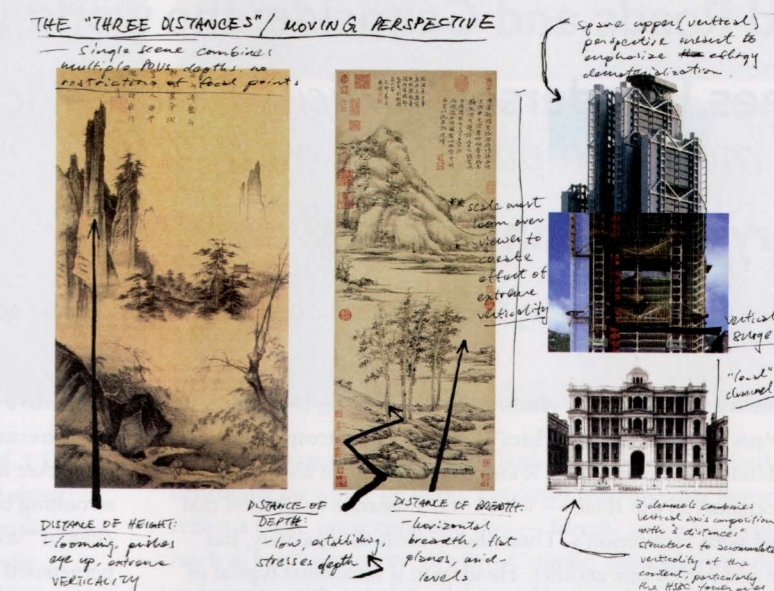
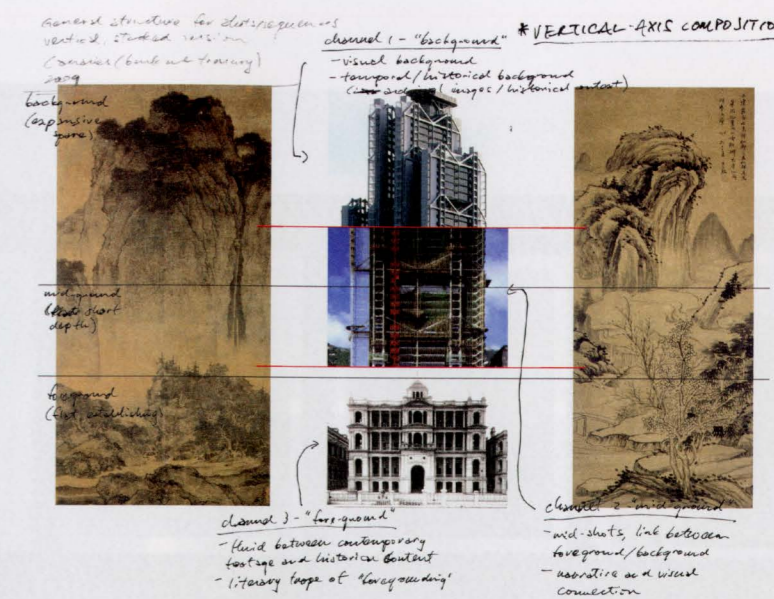
An important symbolic element of Kwan’s video involves his construction of a maquette of HSBC Hong Kong headquarters. Kwan’s narrative introduces the figure of a test facility, a wind tunnel and series of maquettes used to test or model airflow patterns, some of which are labeled with the names of cities or other urban sites. The flows engineered in this laboratory, as much as the architectural models over and through with they blow, are reminiscent of intricate patterns of history and powerful winds of political change that shaped Hong Kong during the 20th century. In the context of the decade following the 1997 repatriation of Hong Kong to China, the fragile canaries — not only “the bank and the treasury” but also the city’s diasporic subjects — stand in stark relief to the powers of the global market — capitalism’s coal mine.

This environmental trope is echoed in Kwan’s *Clocks that Do Not Tell the Time*, the third discrete artwork in the exhibition. Inasmuch as his clocks do not tell the time, they do gesture toward fragmentary, disparate temporalities (or chronotopes) that exist on the margins of the so called “world market.” According to Kwan, the clocks point to “the peripheral, shadowy, and heterotopic sites of

the global economy: mines, toxic dumpsites, camps, industrial parks, factory towns, corporate and military operational headquarters” (http://www.studiowillkwan.com/work_clocks.php). Pondering Kwan’s multifaceted realization of Foucault’s *heterotopia*, viewers are challenged to locate themselves within this relational paradigm — to synchronize our watches to centre or margin.

The narrative focus of these artworks is a crucial aspect of Park’s exhibition, as explicit reference to “stories” in the title suggests. So too is the problematic of location or critical positioning. From where or how do we enter colonialism’s unfolding denouement? These are the questions that are posed by these works. The extent to which Cinema Suitcase’s single-channel video responds to these questions from within the conventions of the documentary form raises difficult issues around the politics of representation, particularly in relation to Kwan’s more self-reflexive approach. While Kwan’s works provide a nuanced layering of colonial histories that activates and implicates the gallery space, *Colony*’s use of English sub-titles for English dialogue is not only annoyingly redundant, but also raises concerns around normative assumptions about the audience and function of the work within a gallery setting where viewers might expect to engage with textual ambivalence and a diversity of representational strategies. Nevertheless the histories and geographies engaged by the three works provide important perspectives on the uneven developments of global capitalism, or more to the point, its apparent demise.

GLEN LOWRY is a writer, editor and educator. With Henry Tsang and M. Simon Levin, he is working on *Maraya*, a public artwork linking Vancouver and Dubai. He edits *West Coast Line* and is Chair of Online Learning & External Collaborations at Emily Carr University.



Will Kwan. <top> *Canaries (the bank and the treasury)* (Digital Study), 2007-present. <bottom> *Clocks That Do Not Tell the Time (Detail)*, 2008. Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid. Courtesy: the artist.



Mary Longman. Stamps – Famous Aboriginal Women, 2009. Courtesy: the artist. <opposite page, left> James Henderson. Untitled (Plains Indian), c. 1924. Courtesy: The Mendel Art Gallery. <opposite page, right> Mary Longman. 10 Bill – MacDonald, Big Bear, and Poundmaker, 2009. Courtesy: the artist.

Grid Roads and Genocide: the world is not flat

James Henderson's *Wicite Owapi Wicasa* —
the man who paints old men

Mary Longman's *New Work*

Mendel Art Gallery • 25 September 2009 – 10 January 2010 REVIEW BY Bart Gazzola

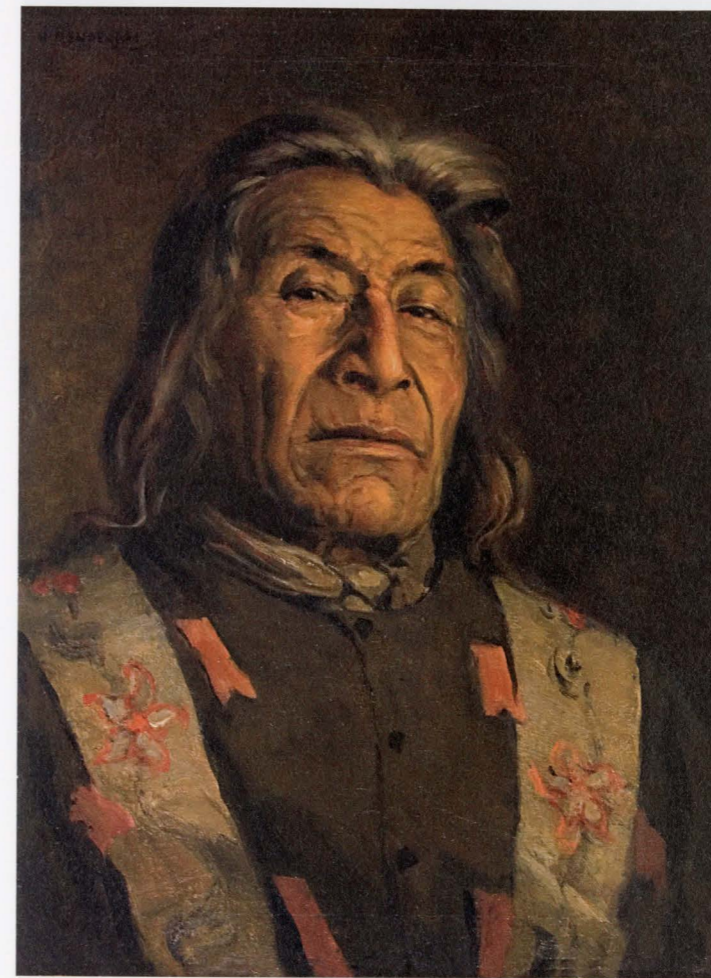
While the Mendel's "Whose History? Reconstructing Indigenous & Settler Pasts on the Canadian Plains" focused on a retrospective of James Henderson's work titled *Wicite Owapi Wicasa*, it also spoke to Mary Longman's *New Work* — which was a separate exhibition that coincided with Henderson's. These shows evolved separately, but enhance and enrich one another. Henderson is somewhat typical of his era (he died in the 1950s) both in painting Hugh Richardson, the judge responsible for the execution of Louis Riel, and for spreading disinformation that was crucial to building the Canadian Pacific Railway through the West. Yet he often visited a variety of reserves in the area (necessary, as his many subjects were unable to leave without written permission of an Indian agent). His "empathetic portraits" of figures such as Chief Standing Buffalo, Calf Flying and Sitting Bull trouble our image of the colonial artist, complicating superficial readings.

Longman's work picks up the idea of "arguing histories:" her lenticular images shift and change. Images that propagate notions of Empire and the inherent propaganda of our official, approved "heroes" (the Queen or John A. MacDonald) shift to ones that challenge this hegemony. John A. cedes to Plains Cree Chief Poundmaker, but they corrupt each other, as Longman's version of the bill with MacDonald includes a drawing of the political assassination of Louis Riel. Where you stand determines what you see, so you get a massive dollar bill that depicts the Queen from one

perspective and Buffy Sainte Marie from another, compromising (or correcting) a fragment of national mythology. Other images are darker in their transitions — a Harlequin Romance image of a swooning blonde woman embraced in the muscular arms of a bare-chested "savage" shifts to an image that portrays a rape and massacre perpetrated by settlers (the specific site and incident are irrelevant: they were numerous). This is Saskatchewan: we ARE a palimpsest and new "myths" are corrupted — or corrected — by the past.

Longman's works are specific to our heavily gridded, province, and also personal. Her images of LeBret, Saskatchewan (known for its historical "re-enactments" and one of the oldest residential schools in the country), however, reach beyond the personal. She offers images of the few present day stamps that commemorate Aboriginal women, but in her representation you realize that (as Chuck D says) you "look back and find nothing but rednecks for 400 years..." Sampled historical images have their implicit biases cast in sharp relief by the images they meld with in the lenticular process, ruining any ideological "purity" associated with national myths.

The Henderson show is installed in a manner conscious of his contradictions, his various "Saskatchewan" at the front part of one gallery contain his CPR works, intermixed with romantic landscapes of the Qu'Appelle Valley, while most of his Aboriginal portraits are isolated from this larger "nationalist" narrative of empire in a separate room. The co-curator of the exhibit, Dan Ring, with



Dr. Neal McLeod (whose own Mendel exhibition, *Sons of A Lost River*, is also about Saskatchewan facts and fictions), spoke about arranging the works in a way that acknowledged the contradictions of Henderson's "worlds," like a parent keeping unruly family members apart at Christmas. So Richardson, regal and gold-framed in the front room, is a gatekeeper, isolated amidst romantic images of "his country." But most telling is Henderson's portrait of Eliza Rider and her daughter. The intimacy of this portrait of mother and child, gazing out in ease and comfort, is unlike the sentiment in his other Aboriginal portraits, with an air of tempered and appropriate rage. Empathetic, like a friend's image made after being invited into a warm and homey space. This indicates a different man than the dutiful servant of empire that his landscapes — and his social affiliations — suggest. He left no journals, but I think it best that he didn't. The people and places Henderson depicted tell us enough. At the related *Whose History? Reconstructing Indigenous & Settler Pasts on the Canadian Plains Conference*, which hosted speakers such as Gerald McMaster (speaking of his work at the AGO in the Canadian collection), Len Findlay and Lynne Bell of the University of Saskatchewan, and the co-curators Dr. Neal McLeod and Dan Ring, Henderson was described as paradoxical, whereas Longman spoke of her work in terms of "intersections." Was Henderson a racist capitalist, or an empathetic portraitist? I would reference Longman's



lenticular images, and say he was both, shifting back and forth depending on where he stood. Longman is "correcting history" to reflect a truth, using contested sites — literally and metaphorically (such as her "correction" of a pro-Catholic, colonial statue that shifts and merges with one that celebrates Aboriginal leaders and history). But because Henderson left no journals, he provides no clean, palatable answers for us. No defining voice of the artist is available to guide us.

Wicite Owapi Wicasa is a show that should go elsewhere, as it portrays Saskatchewan, the west and Canada in a contradictory and sometimes oppositional manner — something made stronger in its dialogue with Longman's images. This is not about palatable, often false, founding myths. I'd echo a common adage out here that states, "we are all treaty people." I interpret that saying as referring to a common history, not "us and them," not the often reactive discourse of post-colonialism, but an acknowledgment that we have shared, intimately entwined histories — good and bad, but all true.

BART GAZZOLA hosts and produces *The A Word*, on CFR 90.5 FM / cfr.ca, and is visual arts critic for *Planet S* magazine. He has taught digital imagery for a decade at the University of Saskatchewan.

À l'affiche for the First Time in English Canada: *The Automatiste Revolution: Montréal 1941-1960*

Varley Art Gallery • 28 October 2009 – 28 February 2010
 CURATED BY Ronald Nasgaard REVIEW BY Debra Antoncic

Embracing the interdisciplinary nature of the group of artists gathered around Paul-Émile Borduas in the early 1940s in Montreal, *The Automatiste Revolution: Montréal 1941-1960* showcases dance, theatre, poetry and literary endeavors along with experimental work in painting. Although the gradual opening up of the intellectual climate did not take hold until a decade later, the manifesto published by the Automatistes in 1948 is often considered a starting point for Québec's Quiet Revolution. This exhibition is a welcome reminder of a time when artistic experimentation fueled by intellectual debates aspired to challenge the repressive atmosphere of post-war Quebec.

The antithesis of a daunting blockbuster show, the exhibition provides a comprehensive yet concise history of the Automatistes from the earliest paintings to the large-scale, fully abstract works of the 1950s. The death of Borduas in 1960 provides a convenient end point, although the group had effectively dispersed earlier, separated by geography and internal dissent. Carefully balancing scholarly and educational content with aesthetic presentation, the exhibition includes photographs, books, video and other documentation to accompany the early works executed under the principles of automatic writing gleaned from their reading of the French Surrealist author André Breton.

While the exhibition opens with the first abstract canvas attempted by Borduas, a compelling introduction is provided by a mural-sized photograph of members of the group. Positioned above the entrance to the gallery, the photograph documents the group's second exhibition, which took place in 1947 at the apartment of Mme Gauvreau, mother of Pierre and Claude Gauvreau. Suggesting a congenial gathering of a close-knit circle of friends, the picture shows members of the Automatistes seated with the pivotal figure of Borduas beneath his painting *Leeward of the Island* (1947). In the photograph, the painting dominates the domestic setting, although we are perhaps too accustomed to the large-scale paintings produced by the American Abstract Expressionists, so that the paintings by the Automatistes appear small today. Nasgaard attributes this difference in scale to the

lack of funds for large canvases available to the impoverished artists in Montréal; however, the photograph suggests that the origins of the movement lie within the conventions of easel painting rather than the large-scale public murals that informed the work of Jackson Pollock, for one.

According to Ray Ellenwood's catalogue essay, the aesthetic investigations undertaken by the artists were not the ultimate goal, but merely a means to an end. In this analysis, the critique of artistic conventions is a starting point for challenging the strictures of contemporary life and the institutions that support them, most notably the dominance of the Catholic Church in Québec society. As history tells us, the challenge did not go unnoticed, with Borduas suffering immediate consequences for his rebellion: the loss of his teaching job at l'École du meuble. The language employed by Ellenwood in his description of a "heterogeneous collective" suggests why the group was perceived as potentially disruptive, particularly during a period of intense anxiety regarding communist subversion within Canada. The multidisciplinary nature of the group, which included proponents of modern dance, experimental poetry and theatre, along with the use of a manifesto to announce their aspirations, no doubt added to contemporary suspicions.

Ellenwood is careful to distance the group from Marxism and emphasizes the absence of communist sympathies among the Automatistes. Nonetheless, members of the group may have been perceived by authorities as, if not members of the Communist Party, at the very least "fellow travelers." The suppression of communist and "broadly defined" unionist activities in Canada in the early years of the Cold War, employed most vigorously in Quebec through provisions of the Padlock Law, no doubt had a chilling effect on intellectual debate. Against a background of police surveillance, forfeiture of property rights under charges of illegal assembly and other methods of censorship, the photograph depicting a congenial evening among friends and colleagues takes on new significance.

It is this suspicion of potential subversion that perhaps accounts for the lack of attention the Automatistes as a group have received in Canada in subsequent years. As the publicity for the exhibition invariably notes, this is the first comprehensive exhibition of the Automatistes in English Canada and also the first time the group has been exhibited in the United States. Borduas and other members of the Automatistes participated in many solo and group exhibitions from the 1940s on, not only in



Marcel Barbeau. *Rosier-feuillies*, 1946. Courtesy: the artist and SODRAC. <right> Paul-Émile Borduas. *Composition*, 1942. Courtesy: Estate of Paul-Émile Borduas and SODRAC.

Québec but in major public institutions in English Canada, such as the National Gallery and the Art Gallery of Toronto (now the Art Gallery of Ontario) and also internationally. Emblematic of the tendency to privilege the individual artist as singular, creative (male) genius and the promotion of art as "personal expression" in the context of the Cold War, the lack of attention for the *Automatiste Revolution* in the past also suggests sensitivity around artist's groups, particularly those organized for political, rather than aesthetic, investigations. Institutions have perhaps been more accepting of the positioning of Borduas as mentor to a circle of younger adherents and subsequent histories have situated the group within a context of rising Québec nationalism.

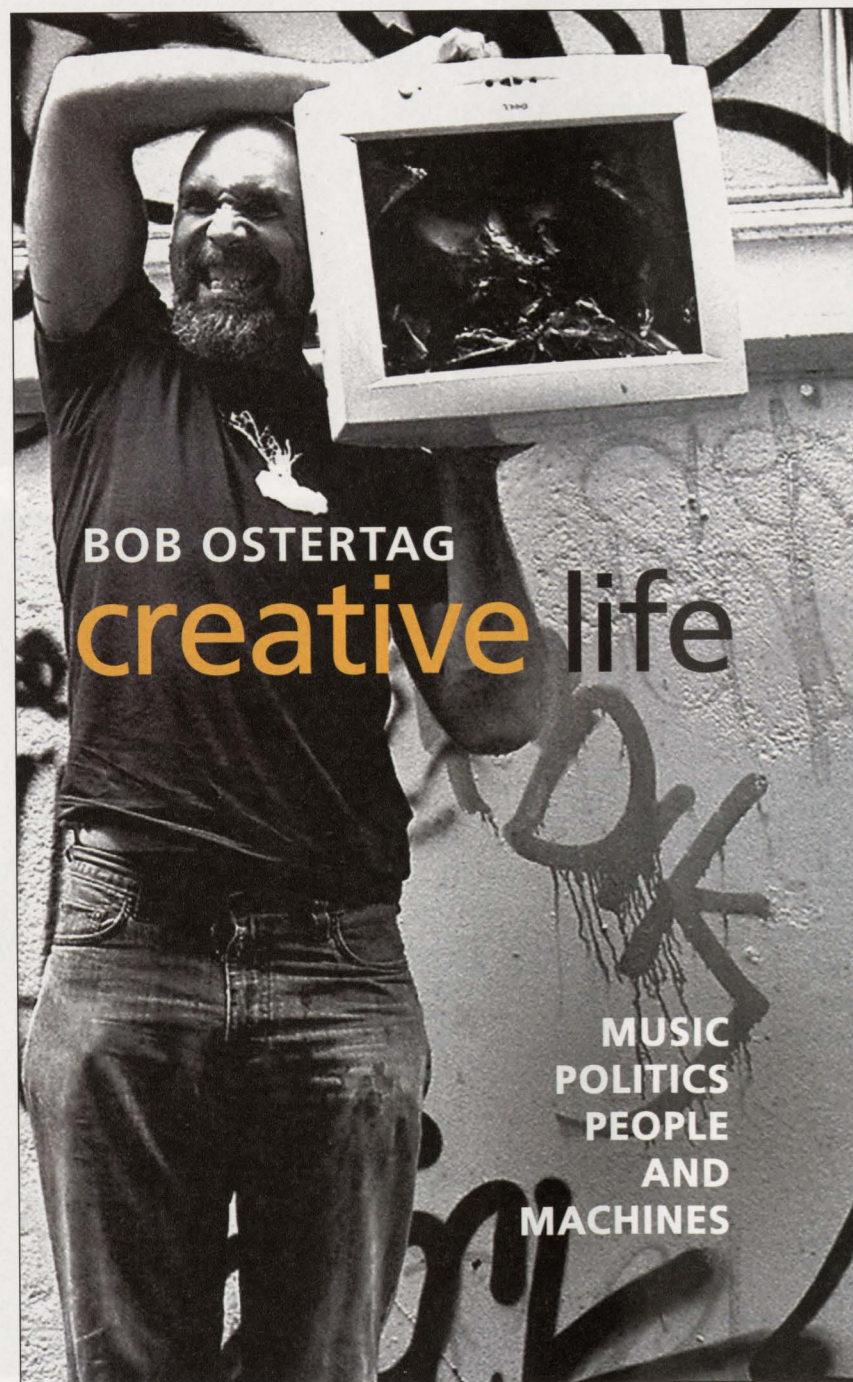
Needless to say, the exhibition at the Varley is long overdue. While many of the works may be familiar, the opportunity to view them in the context of the other work produced at the time should not be missed. It will also be interesting to observe the progress of the exhibition south of the border.

DEBRA ANTONCIC is a Ph.D Candidate in the Department of Art, Queen's University. An art historian and curator, her exhibition reviews and other essays have appeared in *Canadian Art*, *RACAR* and *Fuse Magazine*.



FROM EL SALVADOR TO PANTYCHRIST: Bob Ostertag's *Creative life: music, politics, people and machines*

University of Illinois Press, 2009 REVIEW BY Chris Gehman



Bob Ostertag's name is probably unfamiliar to most people. But if you know it, it could be from a number of contexts: as an improvising musician; a composer; or a journalist and activist. I first came across Ostertag's work in the early 1980s, when he was involved in the avant-garde improvised music scene active mainly in New York and Europe. Ostertag collaborated with guitarist/composer Fred Frith and percussionist Charles K. Noyes on the wonderfully strange and inexplicable *Getting A Head* (1980) and with Frith and singer Phil Minton on *Voice of America* (1982). During the late 70s and early 80s Ostertag also performed with Anthony Braxton, Eugene Chadbourne and John Zorn as part of larger improvising ensembles. Ostertag stood out in this world because he performed using experimental electronic instruments and recording devices, while most of his colleagues played traditional instruments in unusual ways. He also stood out in introducing direct reference to contemporary politics through the use of found sounds on tape.

“Cheap rent, I learned, is more important to fostering a vital art scene than grants, galleries and so on.”

— Bob Ostertag

I lost track of Ostertag after *Voice of America*, only to be surprised by his appearance on stage with a sampler at the 1989 Victoriaville Music Festival, as part of Fred Frith's Keep the Dog group. I was surprised again when he presented his multi-media *Balkan Suite* at Montréal's Festival International: Nouveau

Cinema/Nouveau Medias in the fall of 2000, this time working with interactive digital video and a live performer as well as sound. In fact, Ostertag is full of surprises. As it turns out, he really did take a break from music-making for several years during the 1980s. Following a disastrous accident that destroyed his hand-made synthesizer, he temporarily abandoned music to concentrate all his energies on Latin American politics. The Sandinista movement in Nicaragua had recently overthrown a decades-old dictatorship, while El Salvador was mired in a protracted and extremely violent civil war. As Ostertag describes his feelings at the time, “What was the point of another little show at an obscure underground venue for a handful of in-the-know hipsters when death squads in El Salvador were murdering over two hundred people a day, American aid to the regime was ramping up, the revolutionary movement was gaining momentum by the day, and there was simply no time to lose?” He spent his years in Latin America as a journalist, occasionally returning to the US to lecture and do fundraising. Since his return to music, Ostertag has been very productive, and continues to refuse to repeat himself. He now frequently incorporates visual media into his performances (often in collaboration with Québécois animator Pierre Hébert), and with works like *All the Rage* (1993, a commission for the Kronos Quartet) and *PantyChrist* (1996/99, with Justin Bond and Otomo Yoshihide), has brought avant-garde practice and queer politics together. He has also continued to write, notably as a blogger for *The Huffington Post*, coauthor of *The Yes Men: The True Story of the End of the World Trade Organiza-*

tion (2004) and author of *People's Movements, People's Press* (2006).

“It is striking that the technology NATO used to bomb Yugoslavia is the same technology I use to make music, which is also the same technology used to make the computer games that simulate real-life wars.”

— Bob Ostertag

In his new book, *Creative Life*, Bob Ostertag describes the unique path he has followed, and tries to make the connections that are not always obvious or clear. Many of the texts that make up the book have been published elsewhere, but in the most divergent forums, ranging from *Mother Jones* to *Musik-Texte*, from *The Wire* to *QuestionCopyright.org*, so that bringing them together in a single volume is an important step for Ostertag in making clear the ideas and motivations behind his work. He acknowledges that the worlds he has inhabited, as a queer person, a political activist and an avant-garde musician, have often seemed entirely separate from one another, but he has frequently been able to bring them into productive contact with one another. One thing Ostertag is not afraid to do is to criticize his allies and colleagues: with bracing forthrightness, he calls out mainstream newspapers for the dishonesty of their “professional standards;” the avant-garde for its political indifference; mainstream gay culture for its dullness; the Sandinistas and FMLN for strategic blunders;

and, in one memorable short essay, academic computer music for being “awful.”

“I have always thought the notion that there is such a thing as ‘gay art’ was ludicrous, and I have never been interested in being a ‘gay artist.’”

— Bob Ostertag

Creative Life contains personal histories; extended reports from Latin America; a journal of Ostertag's tour of the Balkans with *Yugoslavia Suite* (an intense experience!); appreciations of artists James Magee and David Wojnarowicz; and essays on the intersections of experimental media, queer politics and technology — all rooted in the artist's practice and experience. In some ways it's a complicated, perhaps even messy book, but its intensity, clarity and directness are refreshingly tonic at a time when the art world often seems sunk to its neck in academicism, careerism and outright fraud. This book, and Ostertag's practice, give one hope that there can still be such thing as an “avant-garde,” and that people working in culture need not choose between art and political engagement.

Bob Ostertag has made all of his music to which he holds the rights available for free download on his website at <http://bobostertag.com/music-recordings.htm>.

CHRIS GEHMAN has been balding for several years, but has yet to achieve the rigorous baldness of Bob Ostertag.

FROM EL SALVADOR TO PARTY CHRIST:
Bob Ostertag's Creative life: music, politics,

MANOEUVRING PARLIAMENT BY Michael Wheeler

University of Illinois Press, 2006 Illustration: Chris Gehman

In the last week of January 2010, thousands of people turned out to rallies across the country to demand the Harper government rescind its prorogation of Parliament. The rallies were part of a rising movement of citizen led participation — frustrated “ordinary” Canadians taking to the streets in order to show their increasing disappointment with a government intent on undermining the conventions of parliamentary democracy. What was interesting in this case was that the decision to prorogue parliament was based on the belief that Canadian citizens are indifferent to democratic government. This assumption completely underestimated the momentum of grassroots organizing and power of web 2.0 platforms such as facebook.

The move by a minority Prime Minister to suspend Parliament days after being ordered by a majority of MPs to hand over documents relating to allegations of a government cover-up of the torture of Afghan detainees undermined the fundamentals of Canadian democracy. At its core was the notion that a PM representing one third of the country could choose to ignore MPs representing more than half. The manoeuvre was fundamentally undemocratic — using the letter of the law to violate the spirit of the law.

Prior to prorogation on 30 December 2009 the legitimacy of the Conservative government had been quickly disintegrating: On 18 November 2009, diplomat Richard Colvin testified at the Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan that detainees captured by Canadian soldiers were routinely tortured when handed over to the Afghani detention system and that this was widespread and common knowledge in 2006. Faced with

the possibility of an international human rights scandal that could implicate the entire Ministry of Foreign Affairs and possibly the Prime Minister's Office in violations of the Geneva Convention, Harper went on the offensive.

The government began to characterize any questions or requests for information on the topic as “attacks on our troops,” while giving full and unfettered access to government documents to witnesses

who had been most damningly implicated by Colvin's testimony. The committee deteriorated into a farce as high-ranking military and government officials referred repeatedly to documents that MPs questioning them were denied access to. Faced with little recourse, opposition MPs in The House banded together to pass a rare “order-to-produce,” which has the power of subpoena, to force the government to release the documents.

On 15 December 2009 Conservative MPs boycotted the committee hearings leaving it unable to call witnesses. They justified this move by criticizing the opposition parties for having poor holiday spirit: “It's not the time to be having meetings that are implying, intentioned or not, that Canadians are somehow guilty of war crimes,” explained Conservative MP Laurie Hawn. Two weeks later, facing the possibility of being held in contempt of Parliament, Harper suspended the ability of MPs to pursue the matter further through a telephone request for prorogation to Governor General Michaëlle Jean.

The move was predicated on citizen apathy and proved to be a grave miscalculation for Harper and a major victory for grassroots organizing. Over 210,000 Canadians joined the facebook group Canadians Against Proroguing Parliament, more than double the members of all four major Canadian parties combined. Significantly, this online forum translated into massive national on-the-ground mobilization. An estimated 25,000 people attended pro-democracy rallies in every major Canadian city on January 23rd, while the government dropped 15 points in the polls.

Will these newly politicized citizens engage in more complex and demanding forms of social protest? The 2008 Federal election had the lowest turnout in history. Whether or not the new facebook political class remains engaged and invested in the political process in the future will play a huge part in determining whether democracy is restored or denied.

MICHAEL WHEELER is Co-Artistic Director of Praxis Theatre, Editor of praxistheatre.com, and 2010 Director in Training at The Tarragon Theatre. He is currently creating a play about Canadian civil rights titled *Section 98*, and is a member of The Wrecking Ball and Department of Culture.

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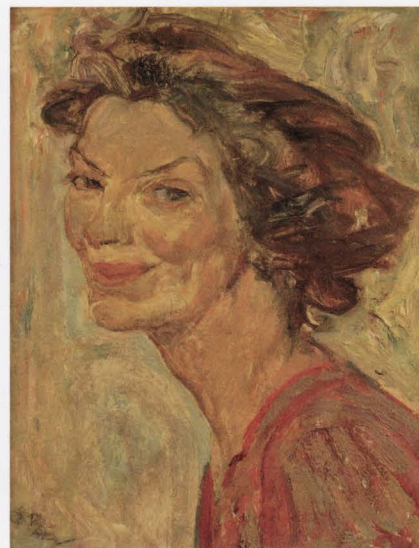
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