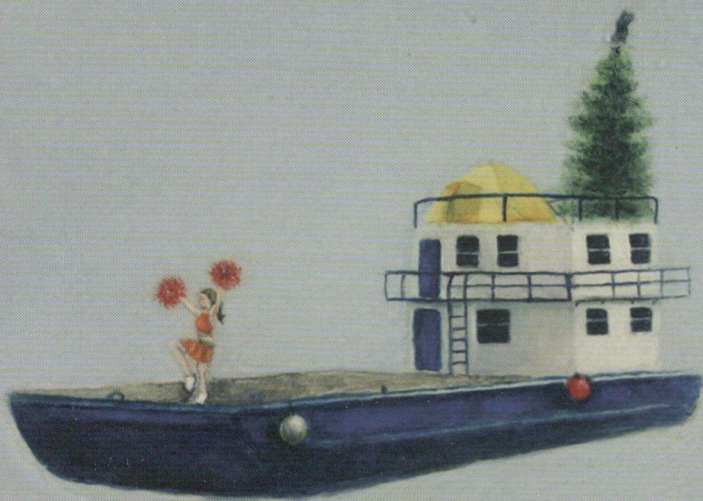


Sky Vessels

Jennifer Dorner

When I am not around

Tamara Henderson



**While in New Brunswick,
visit Saint John.**

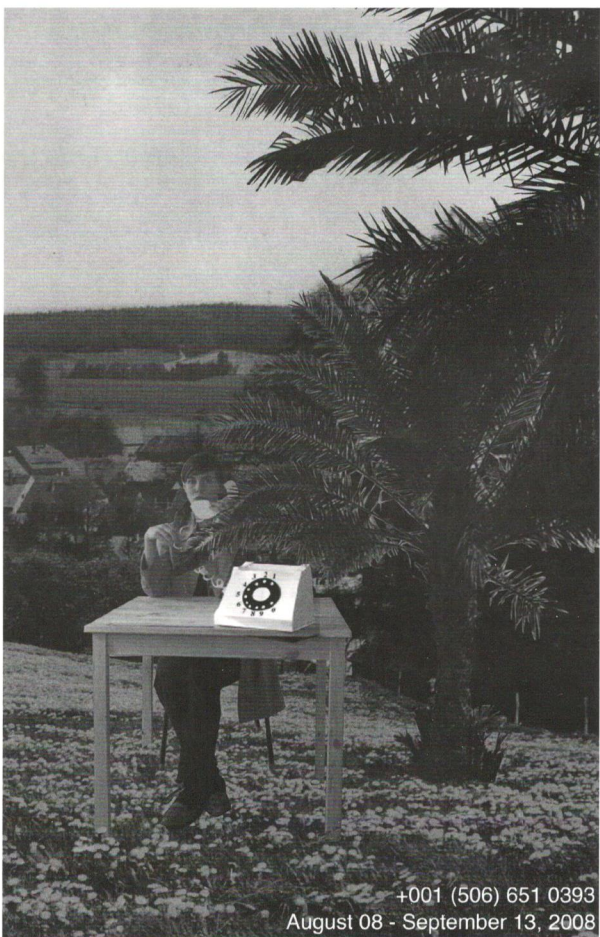
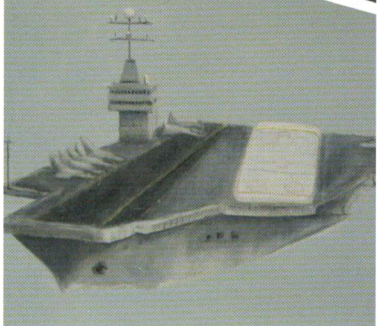
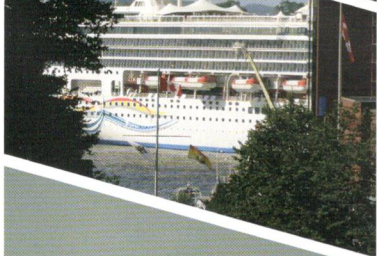
It is the only New Brunswick city to have half-stumbled into the industrial age with the incumbent landscape. The province is mostly a place of trees and dead darkness in the night. And rivers and ocean waters. It is a beautiful place, I think, although hardly pastoral and certainly not spectacular. There is an ordinariness tending to bleakness that makes the landscape seem natural. With its rough-and-ready climate, the New Brunswick landscape is something like God's baseline for a natural environment, no aspect of it too much of this or that, just the raw, unexclaimed elements of nature. And there are many trees, and at night a solid darkness that even the liberal use of light standards at highway intersections only emphasizes. Context, after all, is everything.

For Montréal artist Jennifer Dorner's exhibition *Sky Vessels* at the New Brunswick Museum, and Sackville native Tamara Henderson's *When I am not around*, installed in a former ATM vitrine in downtown Saint John, context is indeed everything.

Saint John, perhaps like any city, is a story of human progress and transgression. I like it. Coming to Saint John is something like stumbling onto a Robert Altman movie set. Or, at least, it was the day I visited to see the two art projects that had been organized by the then-homeless and peripatetic Third Space Gallery.

Coming out of the forest in the approach to the city, there was only the brief heads-up of suburbia before entering an odd urban landscape that seems to be all highway. What had minutes before been open road was suddenly a claustrophobic stream of heedlessly speeding cars.

Although it was a beautiful day, the bedrock of industry that is Saint John was made even more apparent by the bright sun as gigantic smokestacks issued the most beautiful plumes of white against the blue sky. The sights and smells of industrial paper-making and oil refining were all too present – especially the smell.





The New Brunswick Museum is encased in a pseudo-historic façade inside the Market Square mall, itself encased in a possibly pseudo-historic building.

After parking below ground, under the museum, I walked up King Street to see Henderson's installation. King is a street that rivals those of San Francisco in its steepness. Instead of ending up at King Square, I made a wrong turn towards Queen Square, several blocks away, before realizing my mistake.

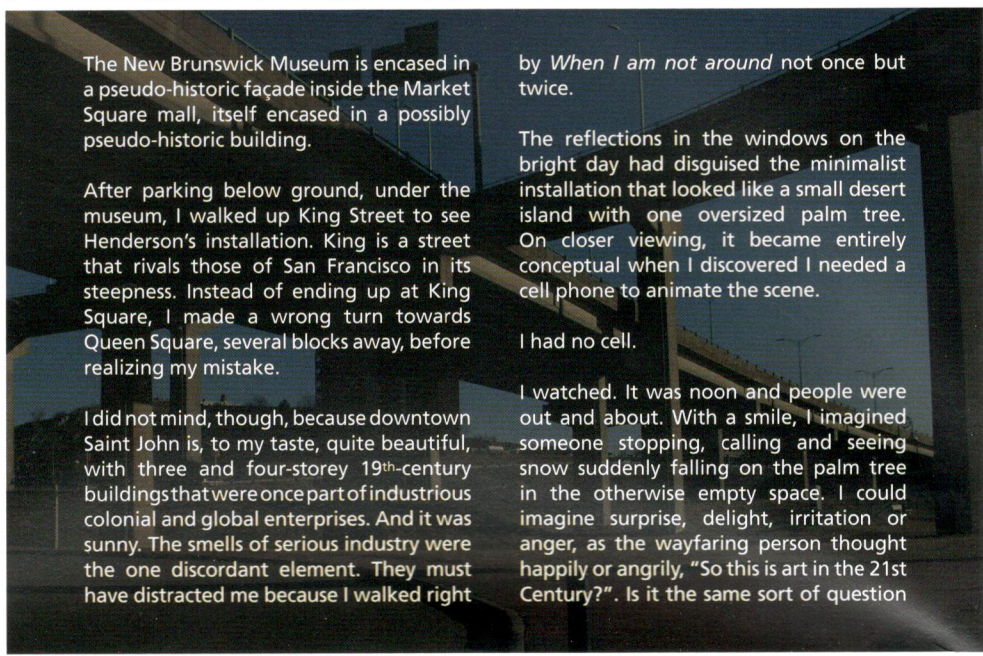
I did not mind, though, because downtown Saint John is, to my taste, quite beautiful, with three and four-storey 19th-century buildings that were once part of industrious colonial and global enterprises. And it was sunny. The smells of serious industry were the one discordant element. They must have distracted me because I walked right

by *When I am not around* not once but twice.

The reflections in the windows on the bright day had disguised the minimalist installation that looked like a small desert island with one oversized palm tree. On closer viewing, it became entirely conceptual when I discovered I needed a cell phone to animate the scene.

I had no cell.

I watched. It was noon and people were out and about. With a smile, I imagined someone stopping, calling and seeing snow suddenly falling on the palm tree in the otherwise empty space. I could imagine surprise, delight, irritation or anger, as the wayfaring person thought happily or angrily, "So this is art in the 21st Century?". Is it the same sort of question

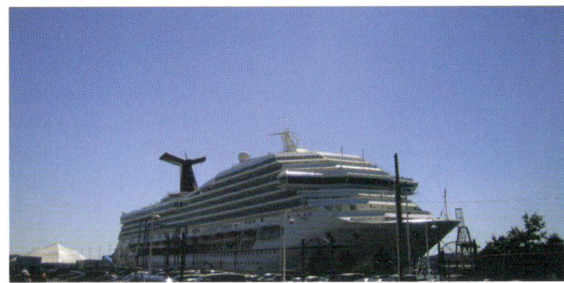
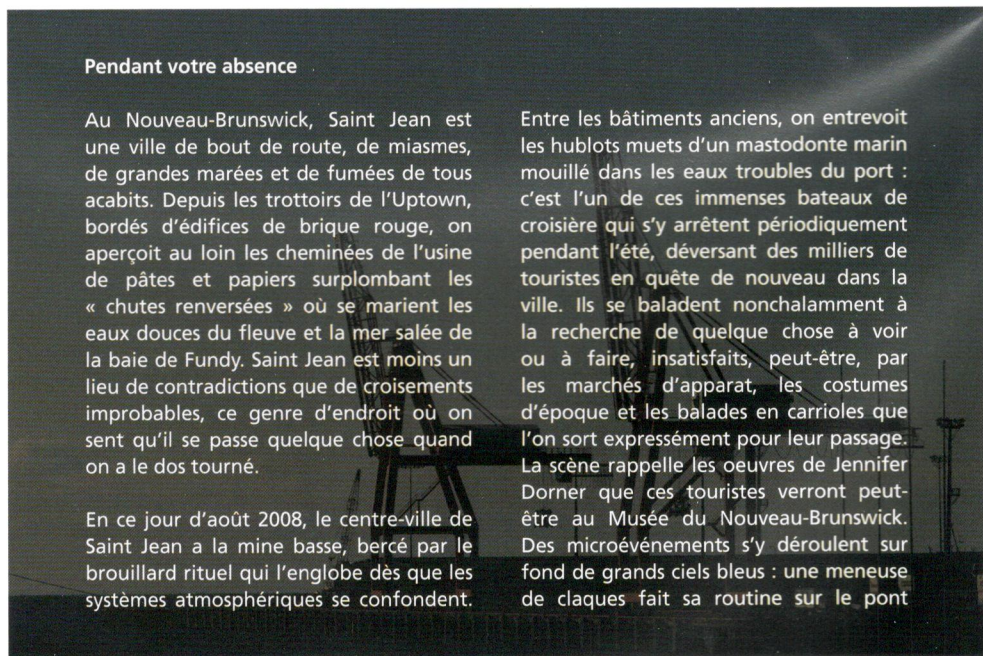


Pendant votre absence

Au Nouveau-Brunswick, Saint Jean est une ville de bout de route, de miasmes, de grandes marées et de fumées de tous acabits. Depuis les trottoirs de l'Uptown, bordés d'édifices de brique rouge, on aperçoit au loin les cheminées de l'usine de pâtes et papiers surplombant les « chutes renversées » où se marient les eaux douces du fleuve et la mer salée de la baie de Fundy. Saint Jean est moins un lieu de contradictions que de croisements improbables, ce genre d'endroit où on sent qu'il se passe quelque chose quand on a le dos tourné.

En ce jour d'août 2008, le centre-ville de Saint Jean a la mine basse, bercé par le brouillard rituel qui l'englobe dès que les systèmes atmosphériques se confondent.

Entre les bâtiments anciens, on entrevoit les hublots muets d'un mastodonte marin mouillé dans les eaux troubles du port : c'est l'un de ces immenses bateaux de croisière qui s'y arrêtent périodiquement pendant l'été, déversant des milliers de touristes en quête de nouveau dans la ville. Ils se baladent nonchalamment à la recherche de quelque chose à voir ou à faire, insatisfaits, peut-être, par les marchés d'apparat, les costumes d'époque et les balades en carrioles que l'on sort expressément pour leur passage. La scène rappelle les oeuvres de Jennifer Dörner que ces touristes verront peut-être au Musée du Nouveau-Brunswick. Des microévénements s'y déroulent sur fond de grands ciels bleus : une meneuse de claques fait sa routine sur le pont



some of their predecessors might have asked about the necessity of sending a sailing schooner from Saint John to China 150 years earlier?

Busy Saint Johners. No one stopped that day. It gave me an opportunity to wonder about the "I" in *When I am not around*. I had assumed it referred to Tamara.

But we normally do not expect an artist to be present with her work. Maybe it refers to "me," the audience so rarely present for contemporary art? Maybe. Maybe not.

Context is everything. And Saint John is as good a place as any to see what we think. Maybe it is a good thing to seek an audience in situ rather than luring people into special places? Maybe.

I wandered easily down steep King Street towards Market Square, the New Brunswick Museum and Jennifer Dorner's *Sky Vessels*. From the top of King Street, you get a nice view of the city that culminates in the inner harbour. As I rounded the corner, the view was drastically foreshortened by a large white object dominating and obscuring all else: an unexpected, huge

ocean cruise ship I usually only expect to see in warmer waters. Its bright whiteness was so at odds with the darker tones of Saint John; its etched, pristine-ness contradicted by the wafting smells of paper-and oil-making. The Coen Brothers envisioned this, I thought! For the tourists on the boat a new land is a new land, I supposed, and each one comes with its quaint local habits.

The sight of the ship was a fitting transition from Tamara Henderson's installation to Jennifer Dorner's nine large, square paintings.

The New Brunswick Museum exhibits art regularly and has a sizeable collection, but it often seems like an interactive, educational petting zoo for natural and social history, with art as a jewel in the crown of civilization. OK, I am being too hard. But Dorner's paintings were installed in a hallway. The pop song *Book of Love* was playing loudly in an adjacent room. Kids were noisily enjoying educational fun close by.

Because it was a hallway, there was no place to sit. During the half-hour I spent



d'une goélette, une patinoire de hockey s'étend sur la piste d'un porte-avion, une grue dépose un corbillard sur un esquif, une montagne russe s'élève sur un navire militaire, autant descènes invraisemblables que l'on ne remarque qu'en se collant le nez à la surface du tableau.

En quittant le musée, les visiteurs remonteront ensuite la grand-rue King, l'oreille attirée par un roulement de tambour rythmique. Au passage des voitures, des baguettes frappent la peau de petites caisses claires suspendues aux fenêtres d'un bâtiment centenaire dont les locaux – une ancienne taverne – ont été désertés. Décidément, cette déambulation prend des tournures pour le moins insolites. Si les vaisseaux célestes de Jennifer Dorner invitaient à rester alertes à ce qui se passe dans les replis

de l'ordinaire, les tambours de Stephan Schulz, eux, donnent à emboîter le pas en ce sens. Au son sec de leurs ronrons, on tourne à gauche sur la rue Charlotte. Une deux, une trois, une quatre, en avant toute!

La promenade saccadée suit son cours. Devant la fenêtre d'un ancien guichet automatique, on s'arrête, interdit. À l'affiche : Tamara Henderson – *When I am Not Around* – 506 651 0393. Derrière la vitrine, un petit palmier est à demi enterré sous une pile de flocons étincelants. À l'aide d'un portable, on compose le numéro de téléphone, et comme par magie, il se met à neiger sur le plant vert, le cellulaire fixé à la boîte de confettis blancs étant réglé à vibrations. Où est l'artiste? En son absence, la neige s'accumule comme le ferait une fine

standing and looking, only one other person stopped – momentarily. She insinuated the paintings were not to her liking. A bunch of kids ran by. Otherwise, I had the hallway to myself. It was like being back at the vitrine, but with no one in sight. As is proper for a public Canadian museum, at least the smells had been filtered out.

Sky Vessels did not look comfortable in the New Brunswick Museum. The paintings were square and monochromatic, almost colour field in their aspect. They were laid out in a grid, the atmosphere minimalist, the dynamic surfaces reflecting the viewer's field, the miniature content belying the overall scale. The content was Dada-esque, surreal in a post-modern way. It was as if Dorner took all of the principle 20th-century modes of aesthetic perception and laid them to rest together very early in this new century!

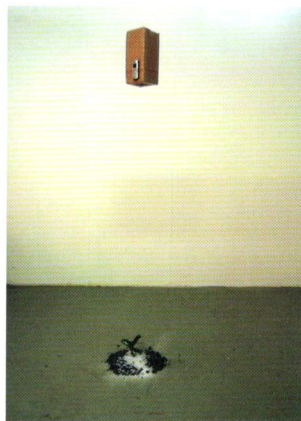
Why didn't my one co-visitor like the paintings? There was so much at which to look. And laugh. And wonder at.... an amusement park roller coaster on a military radar ship?!

Context is everything.

Caveat emptor.

The projects discussed will no longer be up for viewing when you visit Saint John although perhaps something else will make the visit luminous.

John Murchie
Upper Sackville, New Brunswick, 2009



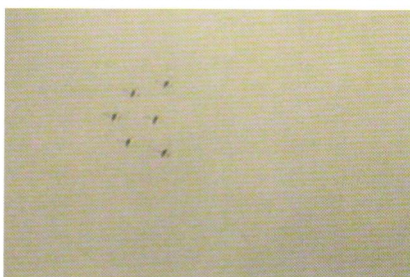
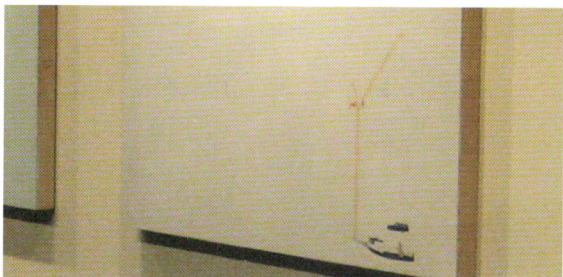
couche de poussière. Signe du temps, signe de croisements. Est-ce à dire que le fantastique et l'improbable surviennent lorsque nous sommes ailleurs? Incrédulés, les visiteurs en croisière commencent à comprendre que sous couvert de l'imperturbable, il se passe vraiment quelque chose dans ces rues apparemment très sages.

Les déplacements, les départs et les retours impliquent notre absence d'un lieu et notre présence dans un autre. Que se passe-t-il quand nous sommes ici et pas là? Pensivement, le flâneur traverse le marché couvert de Saint Jean. Le toit de ce plus ancien marché public au pays a été fabriqué avec l'ossature intérieure de la coque d'un bateau. À une certaine époque, c'est ici qu'on assemblait les plus

solides bateaux de pêche naviguant sur les mers de la côte est. C'est un peu comme si le marché était coiffé d'un chalutier renversé voguant sur les flots inventés par la brume, omniprésente le long de ces rives.

Les touristes abondent dans l'allée centrale du marché. Cependant que la ville se démaquille, ils redescendent tranquillement vers la cité flottante qui émerge au-dessus des immeubles rouges, les rappelant au bercail. Ce soir, leur bateau aura déjà quitté les eaux de la baie de Fundy. Pendant leur absence, que se passera-t-il dans la ville de Saint Jean?

Claudine Hubert,
Montréal, Québec, 2010



third space tiers espace

contemporary art contemporain

Sky Vessels, an exhibition of paintings by Jennifer Dorner, was held August 15 - September 20, 2008 at the New Brunswick Museum. **When I am not around**, an installation by Tamara Henderson, was held August 8 - September 13, 2008 at third space gallery.

L'exposition de peinture **Sky Vessels**, de Jennifer Dorner, s'est déroulée du 15 août au 20 septembre 2008 dans les galeries du Musée du Nouveau-Brunswick. L'installation **When I am not around**, de Tamara Henderson, a été présentée du 8 août au 13 septembre 2008 à la galerie tiers espace.

Jennifer Dorner, originally from BC, received her BFA from the University of Ottawa, and MFA from the University of Western Ontario. Previously the Director of eyelevel gallery in Halifax, NS, she is now based in Montreal, QC, pursuing her multi-disciplinary artistic career as National Director of the Independent Media Arts Alliance. She has taught at the University of Western Ontario, Dundas Valley School of Art and has a strong passion for advocating for the arts with an emphasis on artist-run culture.

Originaire de la Colombie-Britannique, **Jennifer Dorner** a obtenu un baccalauréat en beaux-arts de l'Université d'Ottawa et une maîtrise de l'Université du Western Ontario. Ancienne directrice de la galerie eyelevel, à Halifax, elle habite actuellement Montréal où elle se consacre à sa carrière d'artiste et occupe le poste de directrice générale de l'Alliance pour les arts médiatiques indépendants. Elle a enseigné à l'Université du Western Ontario ainsi qu'à la Dundas Valley School of Art, et elle s'implique activement dans le milieu de la culture autogérée au Canada.

Tamara Henderson was born in 1982 in Sackville, New Brunswick. Her work has been shown recently at the Frankfurter Kunstverein in Frankfurt, Germany; at the Center for Contemporary Art in Kita Kyushu, Japan, where she was one of seven artists selected for a residency; and at the Ursula Blickle Stiftung in Unteroevisheim, Germany. Tamara Henderson is currently based in Stockholm, Sweden.

Tamara Henderson est née en 1982 à Sackville, au Nouveau Brunswick. Son travail a été présenté récemment au Frankfurter Kunstverein à Francfort en Allemagne; au Center for Contemporary Art à Kita Kyushu au Japon, où elle était une des six artistes choisis pour une résidence, et à la Fondation Ursula Blickle à Unteroevisheim en Allemagne. Tamara Henderson vit et travaille à Stockholm, Suède.

After working at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design for most of two decades,

John Murchie lives in Upper Sackville, New Brunswick for the better part of two decades where he works as a farmer, artist, researcher, curator, writer, cook, baker, and arts administrator. Currently, he is reading Leonard Michaels.

John Murchie a œuvré au Nova Scotia College of Art and Design pendant près de vingt ans avant de se relocaliser à Upper Sackville où, depuis près de vingt ans, il occupe tour à tour des fonctions de fermier, d'artiste, de chercheur, de commissaire, d'écrivain, de cuisinier, de boulanger et d'administrateur des arts. Il lit actuellement un ouvrage de Leonard Michaels.

After studying history of art and translation, **Claudine Hubert** lived in Saint John for a few years where she specialized in translating texts on the visual arts. She is currently developing a practice of text-based audio artworks. Since 2007 she has occupied the position of programming coordinator at OBORO, a new media artist-run centre in Montreal.

Après des études en histoire de l'art et en traduction, **Claudine Hubert** s'est installée à Saint Jean (N.-B.) pendant quelques années, où elle s'est spécialisée en traduction de textes sur l'art. Elle développe actuellement des pratiques en écritures textuelle et sonore et occupe, depuis 2007, le poste de coordonnatrice à la programmation du centre d'artistes en nouveaux médias OBORO, à Montréal.

Chris Lloyd is artistic director of third space gallery, which he manages to do while working as head technician for DHC-ART in Montreal, and maintaining a steady, one-sided correspondence with the Prime Minister of Canada. He summers on the Peninsula.

Chris Lloyd assure les fonctions de directeur artistique de la galerie tiers espace depuis Montréal, où il est également chef technicien pour DHC-ART. Depuis près de dix ans, il poursuit un projet artistique qui consiste en une correspondance unilatérale avec le premier ministre du Canada. Il passe ses étés sur la péninsule de Kingston.

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