
no more potlucks

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Editorial

This is the *Waste* issue.

Waste as in:
To fail to use.
To neglect to care for.
To consume carelessly.
To gradually destroy.
To wear down the body.
The passing of time.
A barren land.
Futility.

Zero waste, get wasted, to lay waste, hazardous waste, wasteland, waste not want not, wasting away, waist.

In this issue...

Superstar NMP regular contributor, Momoko Allard, interviews ***Sarah Anne Johnson*** about using a mixed media approach to art in order to push the bounds of photography. NMP has the privilege of featuring Johnson's work on the cover of issue 21. In recent years, Johnson has used photography, sculpture, drawing and performance to look back into her grandmother's trauma as a victim of the CIA's illegal MK-ULTRA experiments. She has also sailed through the Svalbard archipelago as a participant in the Arctic Circle residency program, out of which came her newest series: *Arctic Wonderland.*

As part of an ongoing NMP exclusive 2012 series of raw interviews with audio/sound artists, ***Owen Chapman*** parle avec la charmante ***Magali Babin***.

"Call Me They" is a weekly blog that ***Coco Riot*** and NMP regular ***Elisha Lim*** update weekly with illustrations, stop motion animations, letters to newspaper editors, a talk show, a petition, and every imaginable ingredient for a happy, robust trans community. For NMP, ***Elisha Lim*** and ***Coco Riot*** explain the *Call Me They* movement.
Dumpsters/Dumpstering...

Gisèle Trudel presents a paper that discusses the operations of the waste landfill situated at Lachenaie, Québec, 45 km from Montreal. Trudel explains that garbage dumps began to appear on the margins of urban centres shortly after the industrial revolution. The dedication of a precise location for burying waste began concurrently with urbanization, as wasteful packaging increased and the 'life cycle' of goods diminished.

Frank Suerich-Gulick explores the healing role that dumpstering played for him at a time of personal crisis and pain and how dumpstering functioned as therapy to help him come to terms with his trans identity.

Gabrielle Théroux uses falconry to disperse the seagull population of a Montreal garbage dump. Her insights reveal a unique and unusual relationship between nature and trash, explains ***Jordan Coulombe***.

Political wasteland...

Our other NMP favorite, ***Yasmin Nair***, explains how the gay movement's argument in favour of marriage for the sake of better health care in the US is false. Yasmin argues: "Gay marriage is supposed to help my breasts. The gay marriage movement, in its relentless search for rationales for what is inherently a conservative movement around "normalcy" and acceptance, often makes the case that healthcare is a primary reason to make it legal. In the process, it has created a climate where the most progressive/lefty people, gay and straight, fail to see that healthcare is an economic matter and something that should go to everyone, regardless of their marital status."

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http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/nomorepotlucks

Evan Light suggests that in Québec, people have become used to police violence. Every year, writes Light, marches are organized against police brutality, and every year complaints are filed, and yet every year the human rights atrocities continue. Learning how to talk about police violence and the ways it affects society is a starting point to changing the social and political systems that seemingly render these dynamic 'normal.'

Liz Brockest suggest that we are living in a time of FAT panic and questions the fears the surround the fat body. Brockest talks about how fat bodies are continually represented as garbage receptacles in popular media: large vessels that represent wasted opportunities, a lack of control, and undesirability. But such stereotypes harm everyone… how can we change this?

Nothing wasted…

Trish Salah is back with poetry drawing from her forthcoming book, *Lyric Sexology.* These poems interrogate the affective and representational politics of feminist, sexological and psychoanalytic discourses on transsexuality. Transmisogyny, heteronormativity, and erotic ethics, as well as violent fantasies of purity and utopianism are also considered. ***Yaya Yao***'s poetry suggests that working for freedom is no waste…

NMP would like to thank its amazing copy editor for this issue: Tamara, we love you.

We would also like to officially announce that Heather Davis will be our special guest editor for our *sept/oct* issue, themed **Dirt**. This promises to be one of the alltime highlights of NMP!

Dear readers, we are still and always committed to bringing forward a fruitful and extravagant journal bimonthly.

Your NMP Editors,
Mél Hogan & M-C MacPhee

Two Poems, from Lyric Sexology

Trish Salah

distance scorns

temporarily impure as (“testes-souls”); dress you in rays
recover nerves, sleep on it
it wants to, to repeat, disappear the impure.

we specify special measures to exclude
the recurrence of such existence for mechanical fastening,
technique of a rough idea.
in a looser form: “typing-to-the-rays”

swear words the souls hung onto
kindling bundles formed of rods, sore
looser feces of fastening, insufficient defense against my attraction
dissolving my body, as more resistant
“typing-to-celestial-bodies”

an apex, clot mouthed, glass cut.

Explore the wreak

i

wake quiet, we
quiet, don't we
want to, don't you
wreak the wake.

ii.

maybe the tragedy of sex is not
what we thought.

re-visioning; you
don't say. when was?

was liberation supposed to come
from denying women shelter?

iii.

we own what we know
or, *we* don't
or we
recouping being
from the peripheral
then, but now?

iv.

women's country
now in the torsion of a violent naming [1]
but i would have loved a carnival

v.

dear Adrienne Rich,
you inspire ~~me~~
so much
you are trending on twitter, so
my student says:
also what's a hashtag, again?
also: #transmisogyny
#a complicated mourning

vi.

"are they gonna do this every time a famous
~~transphobe~~
~~radfem~~
~~secondwave~~
~~feminist~~

vii.

"you don't, re-vision
them. they are... rapey,

reconstructed
porn gazebos or
maudlin wanna
lezbees, shed shes

not women. man-
made. sing it, sister.
they wanna do us
soooo bad"

viii.

can we change what we want?
can we change what we fear?
unthink/unmake a violent cut into sex?
can you think what that means?

love unmoored and plunging shallows
hold velvet firm against the police

ix.

“if you say cissexual, or intersex or intersectional
on this web page, you’ll be banned.”

x.

vis a vis the cotton ceiling
and
compulsory heterosexuality
and the selective analysis
of the construction
of desire

xi.

dear Adrienne,
“this way of grief
is shared, unnecessary
and political.”

Endnote:

[1] (yes, michigan *still*...
body, *the floating poem*,
a phobic utopia,
that hauntmine

Trish Salah *is the author of Wanting in Arabic and the forthcoming, Lyric Sexology. Her recent writing appears in Feminist Studies, Eleven, Eleven, and Topia. And she has work forthcoming in the anthologies, Contested Imaginaries and Féminismes électriques. She is a former editor of Fuse Magazine and currently teaches in English and Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Saskatchewan.*

The Expanded Ecologies of Sarah Anne Johnson

Momoko Allard

Beginning with her summers tree planting in northern Manitoba, Sarah Anne Johnson has been using photography mixed with other media to capture and interpret the firsthand experiences of her journeys and the people and environment around her. In the most magical moments of her work, photos of real people meld into their tiny, hand-sculpted counterparts, and the contrived shadows of shoebox-sized forests take on the full depth of the true wild. In recent years, she has used photography, sculpture, drawing and performance to look back into her grandmother's trauma as a victim of the CIA's illegal MK-ULTRA experiments at McGill University. She also sailed through the Svalbard archipelago as a participant in the Arctic Circle residency program, out of which came her newest work, *Arctic Wonderland*, a series of photos manipulated through mixed-media drawing and painting. Momoko Allard recently connected with her to talk about the evolution of her work and creative process.

Momoko Allard: When I first came across the *Tree Planting Project*, sometime around 2005, it struck me as a remarkable form of subjective documentary, in the sense that you were mixing snapshot images with photos of constructed maquettes as an attempt to preserve, or retrieve, the emotional experience of a certain moment and place to a depth that would be impossible with snapshots or direct photography alone. For you, is documentary a key function of your work?

Sarah Anne Johnson: Absolutely. That was very well put. I have always felt a frustration with photography's limitations in how it depicts reality, so most of the work I do revolves around finding ways to make up for it. A photograph can show you what a place looks like, but it can't show what you learn or take away from that place. The experience doesn't end when I get back on the plane; I continue to learn and grow from it long after I'm home. I want to include all that in the work. I don't want to just show you what it looked like to be there, I want to show what I learned from it and how it changed me.

MA: Even though your work spans many mediums, including a lot of sculpture as well as drawing, you're most often recognized as a photographer. Was photography your starting point? It seems to serve as the anchor, or as the common mode of mediation in many of your projects.

SAJ: I always loved doing all kinds of art, but photography came the easiest, so in school, that is what I focused on. I was worried about becoming a jack of all trades, master of none. But I always knew, when I was through with school, that I would go back to doing a bit of everything. Now, photography is what I know the most about. It's the biggest filter in my brain that all art thoughts flow through. But some ideas aren't realized best through photographs – in which case, I'll learn whatever skills necessary to complete the idea.

MA: I love your work for its very intimate, hand-made quality. Current photography practices seem most frequently to expand into video, digital mediation and other forms of impersonal automation, whereas your building and shooting of miniature models is such a close kin to drawing. It feels fully developed as its own self-enclosed language of analogue image-making. For me, it gains its energy through its impression of fluidity and ease of motion, but I imagine that the actual pace of putting together each model is painstakingly slow. Can you tell me about your work process? And how did you first envision this? Did you dream in claymation one night?

SAJ: I started making dioramas with small sculpey figures about my grandmother in undergrad – a project that resurfaced later on, which I'm sure we'll touch on later in our conversation. Then in grad school, the program I was in was photo-based. I tried showing sculpture and drawing a couple of times

but it was dismissed. I loved making things and didn't want to stop, so instead of putting the scenes in boxes, I started taking photos of them.

I also continued to make straight photographs, but kept both kinds of pictures separate when I showed them. Generally speaking, back then, there were two camps, the takers and the makers. The takers believed that photography stopped time, thus allowing you to see things that the eye couldn't catch on it's own. The other camp was more conceptual, believing that the idea comes first, and the camera was a tool to help create or realize that idea. So by taking and making pictures I had a foot in each camp. I agreed with both sides equally, but I thought that eventually one would win out. Then I realized that each was limited in what it could do, and that to fully realize my vision I needed both. The straight photos ground the work in reality, they show you what the experience looks like in the moment; whereas the photos of the dioramas, which are based on memory, describe my thoughts and feelings about the experience.

I did dream in claymation one night. I was making some dioramas – sculptures for the Montreal Biennial. I wanted to see if the figures could exist on their own. I looked up the other artists in the show one night and discovered the work of Graeme Patterson, who made dioramas of all the iconic buildings of a small town called Woodrow in Saskatchewan. His had animatronics and video, and made mine look silly and small. I hit a wall and couldn't work. I tried to come up with another idea for the show, but the deadline was too tight. I was so depressed! Then one night, I had a dream of my sculpey figures burning down one of his houses. So I built it and included it in the show. The only way to get over my mental block was to metaphorically destroy his work. Everyone who saw the show was going to compare our work, so there was no point in pretending otherwise. It was honest, so I went with it. It's still one of my favorite pieces. I told him about it when we met. He thought it was funny.

MA: That's great! And it's really interesting to hear you talk about the educational setting you were studying in, and how pushing against its rigidity, or working through it, led you to what you're doing now.

Since you've mentioned it, let's talk about your project *House on Fire*, dealing with your grandmother's very difficult story. Starting back in your undergrad studies, it sounds like you were gestating this approach

for many years. Can you tell me about your grandmother? What was your research process like? How did your family feel about you working on this?

SAJ: I always knew I would make work about it. I started playing around with it in undergrad, but realized I didn't have the skills, technically or emotionally, to deal with it and to do it any justice. I didn't want to disrespect her memory or my mother (who is still living). In Canada, this was and still is a very big story, so I also wanted to be respectful to the families of the other victims. So I waited until I felt mature enough as an individual and as an artist before starting the work.

My mother kept all of the court transcripts and correspondences between my grandmother, my grandfather and the doctor who 'treated' her. She also kept newspaper clippings and all of the family photos. She knew that one day my brother or I would need it to write a book or something – so by that you can tell that she was very supportive. It wasn't easy for her. I asked a lot of questions and brought up a lot of old memories that she would rather not have to think about, but she did it for me.

I knew my grandmother more as a child. She passed away when I was 13. But even then I understood that she behaved differently than other grandmothers. Still, we loved each other like grandparents and grandkids do, perfectly and unconditionally. She was an amazing woman. She had a very strong sense of right and wrong. She was quite damaged after the experiments, but that didn't stop her from starting a class action lawsuit against the CIA when she found out what she'd been a part of.

MA: The pieces in *House on Fire* include many miniature sculptures of her, as well as mixed media drawings that integrate family photos. Has their circulation, through museums, galleries, and into collections, had a different meaning for you than with your other projects, which have always been personal, but not quite to this level?

SAJ: I have always tried to make work that is from my own personal perspective, but this project took it to a whole new level. It was nerve wracking in the making and in the presenting, but it was also completely rewarding. It got me thinking more about personal risk and how that is the most important

thing an artist can offer. Art is a form of communication – I'm sharing with you the pictures in my head. I can be flippant and show you what I had for breakfast or I can show you something that is emotional and hard to talk about, or maybe can't be talked about – this is what I'm continuing to strive for now. I try to make work that hits on three levels: the personal, the political and the process of whatever medium I'm working in. The personal, for me, is the hardest. I'm always struggling with how to make the work more honest, more revealing, more raw. If I'm going to go to the trouble of sharing, I want to make it worthwhile.

MA: The body of work that followed *House on Fire*, *Arctic Wonderland*, based on your arctic residency, feels more overtly political, and maybe less intimate but more far-reaching in certain ways, at least at first glance. Images of Northern landscape are politically charged to begin with, so I'm not sure if I'm just jumping to the simplest reading when I look at your series. Can you tell me about your perspective and intentions in making these images?

SAJ: After *House on Fire*, I choreographed a performance/theatre/dance piece also about my grandmother called 'Dancing with the Doctor,' which was even more emotionally charged and difficult to work on. Afterwards, I needed a break from that subject. I will come back to it – I already have something in the works – but that subject needs to be taken on carefully and slowly. The dance piece was unlike anything I'd done before. It was very emotional to work on, very insular. Towards the end, I started yearning to reconnect with the outside world and to make work that was a reaction to what was happening in the here and now.

Global warming was, at the time, the most reported news issue and something I worry a lot about. I wondered if I could find a way to make work about global warming. I know that sounds silly – it's such a big topic and so abstract – but I wanted to try to find a way to personalize it. Because really, that's the problem; it can't be seen or felt concretely, so it's hard to care enough to get motivated to do something about it. So I was trying to find a way to connect with it. I knew that dropping into an exotic landscape for such a short time could be tricky. I didn't want to make pictures as a tourist. But that is pretty much what I did. When I came home and looked through my images I thought they all sucked.

They didn't even begin to touch on my thoughts or concerns about this place. I put the photos away and let the experience digest. I was also doing a lot of research about climate change and global warming. About five months later, I pulled out the photos to look at them again. All I could see was what was missing, and then I realized I could paint it in. Once I started, a floodgate of ideas poured out.

There are some pictures that are obviously more political in content; they are dark and foreboding but also quite obvious. Worrying about the Arctic is not that original. There are other photographs however, that focus in on individuals – the cheerleading photos, for example. We look ridiculous and out of place, and way too cheery. They don't match the tone of the other photos. What I'm trying to say through this, is that even though I can see quite clearly that things in this world are going to shit, I don't think there is anything I can do to help stop it. By making work about it, I'm nothing better than a cheerleader, cheering for a cause. I brood and despair that the world is going to hell in a hand basket, but I can still in the same breath laugh it off and enjoy a good time.

MA: Then these images become about the limitations of human capacity, or even the futility, at a certain point, of art as a tool or way of working? That's something that most artists wouldn't concede.

SAJ: I don't think art is futile! However, I question its purpose obsessively. Politically, I think it's a drop in the bucket, which is better than no drop at all. It adds to the human consciousness or awareness of that issue or debate. When I was younger I wanted to believe that art could start revolutions. Now, I think that art is a part of our evolution. It's a form of communication unlike any other. Using words to describe the images in my head would abstract their meaning. You would take in those words and create your own images from them, different from mine, and there would be a barrier of understanding there. However, if I show you the pictures in my head, it's more exact. I'm really letting you in and we are really sharing something honest and true. I love going to galleries and seeing work that invites me in like that, to experience the inside of someone else's mind. It can be like a religious experience. To connect with art is to connect with people and the world around you. I don't go church to feel connected with something greater, I go to art galleries.

Momoko Allard *is a Montreal-based artist working in drawing, photography and other pictorial mediums, and an ongoing contributor to No More Potlucks. Her art and research interests all relate to better understanding how visual representation is used in its many social and cultural contexts.*

Sarah Anne Johnson *was born in 1976 in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She received her BFA from the University of Manitoba and completed her MFA at The Yale School of Art. Johnson's work has been exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions internationally. She is the recipient of numerous grants and awards and is included in several distinguished collections. Currently, she lives in Winnipeg. She is represented by Julie Saul Gallery in New York and Stephen Bulger in Toronto.*

What it's Worth

Yaya Yao

***Yaya Yao** is an artist and educator born and raised in downtown Toronto. Her writing has appeared in Contemporary Verse 2*

what it's worth
what it is is not a waste
it is
is not
a waste what
it is is not a waste
it is not a waste
what it is
is not a waste is not is
not is not
hope is not a waste. freedom

we want
hope for
is not a waste
freedom we want hope
for
is not a waste
freedom we want hope for is not a waste is not
free is not going to be won with just hope, but
cannot be won without it. freedom
freedom
is worth it
what it is what
it is not what it is
is not

what is it worth to
you to me to we
what would you trade
for
at
which market and what morning
hour, the cost

trade iodized salt from
neck and eyes as you move
bated
through the city
breath
of faint firefly, making
out her moment

when
to be seen and when not
to

13 april 2012

The Waste Landfill: Up Close and Personal

Gisèle Trudel

Garbage dumps began to appear in a more massive way alongside the demographic explosion on the margins of urban centres, shortly after the industrial revolution. The dedication of a precise location to the burying of waste begins at the same time as increased urbanization and augments in proportion to the shortened the life cycle of consumption goods and their increased packaging (De Silguy, 2009). Landfill reforms initiated after WWII led into today's technological waste management systems or waste landfills, which are very different from the open-air dumping sites of Asia and Africa that resemble the pre-1950 sites of North America and Europe..

The Waste Landfill of Lachenaie, Québec

The technological waste management system does not resemble a garbage dump anymore. Situated in Terrebonne (an ironic name, because the land is not drained properly, which makes it unfavourable to agriculture), the waste landfill of Lachenaie was first chosen because of the composition of its soil. As explained on the website of the BFI company that operates the waste landfill, the soil is composed of 15 to 20 metres of clay because it was covered by the Champlain sea for 2500 years (13 100-10 600 B.C.).[1] In this particular instance, digging through the clay causes the formation of a hydraulic trap-door as a result of the upward pressure of subterranean water, which ensures the protection of ground water. In other landfills, a geomembrane is installed to seal up the area, but in both cases, engineers, mathematicians, and land surveyors actively participate in the creation of what is called the landfill cell; a vast area can contain many of them.

600 times a day, waste is dumped at the front of the active cell in operation and flattened by compactor trucks that grind and crush it in order to remove the oxygen in its layers. Manufactured by the Terex company, the *TrashMaster TC580* is the compactor truck invented specifically for landfills to contain "more refuse in less space." Because of its weight and specific mechanism, this three-wheel truck exerts a greater and more continuous pressure on the waste, while its jagged and serrated wheels simultaneously crush and pierce everything in its path. It is as efficient as*Wall-e (Waste Allocation Load Lifter Earth-Class*), the main character in Disney-Pixar's eponymous animation film by Andrew Stanton (2008). In the movie, humans have left Earth to colonize outer space because the planet is covered in waste. *Wall-e*relentlessly continues compacting waste into gigantic structures, as an extreme example of the operation of technological waste management systems.

The waste landfill is no longer a subterranean burying but a terracing – the layers of waste create hills that can reach up to 40 metres high, and getting taller. Increased consumerism has meant that the cells Lachenaie site are much bigger than the closed ones that date back to the first years of operation. Mierle Laderman-Ukeles, a feminist artist, explains that "the life cycle of an object now is about 2 months... A landfill exists because both you and I put out a little too much trash [...] Buy, buy, buy, becomes throw out, throw out, throw out" (Laderman 1997).

From this perspective, the media installation *Metacity – Datatown* (1999),[2] a mixture of 3D animation and computer generated particle sequences created by the Dutch architect cabinet MVRDV, is indicative of consumption patterns. The premise is simple: if we lived in a self-sustaining environment, how would we manage lodging, food, energy, and waste? Behavioural choices such as vegetarianism and recycling are directly interrelated through their impact on the constructed landscape. They help to prevent the formation of the equivalent of a Mont Blanc of waste every thirty years – a timescale that highlights the physical and temporal disparities between this human construction and the geophysical formation of a mountain over millions of years. What is being built?[3]

Seemingly paradoxical, the waste landfill engenders "lives." Drains and pipes are installed to collect the leachate ("waste discharge") and landfill gases. Leachate, a mixture of rainwater, snow, and liquids already present in the site soil, is channelled and stored in cisterns until it is treated in water treatment plants. Methane gas that results from the digestion of organic matter by micro-

organisms in an anaerobic environment can supply about 2500 houses with energy over a ten-year cycle. The biogas is transformed into electricity, and the leftover gas is burned. It is transformed into carbon dioxide and steam, less damageable to the environment in terms of greenhouse gas. The waste landfill thus generates what we could call “leaks,” topological matter in the shape of liquid, gas, or invisible dispersions (called VOCs, volatile organic compounds). David Gissen’s conception of today’s so-called “green” architecture, which mostly favours the circulation of “noble” elements such as air and water, argues that architects could focus on models of lodging based on diverse natural processes, instead of trying to eliminate relations between matter and beings that make up reality. For him, this can include the contribution of dust, smoke, insects, and micro-organisms.

While the waste landfill creates lives in this way, it also constructs our present relation to waste, to what is thrown away, as situated in the meticulous and regulated management of operations on this colossal area that spans a surface as large as 45 football fields. Its processes exist in order to preserve its operation with a minimum of disruption in a hyper-controlled system, it cancels out all difference. Objects are unloaded, then ripped apart, atomized, crushed, compacted, and finally covered up with soil or clay. Falcons are let loose and almost entirely prevent the presence of gulls who would feed there. Hence, the cycle of the lack of differentiation begins anew. The waste landfill offers another homogenizing mirror of capitalism.

These landfills have a limited operating time, a direct consequence of lifestyle choices and practices. A landfill can be in operation for approximately 40 years. The site could even stay active for up to 100 years if practices changed significantly and if proper legislation was put in place for industry. Lachenaie was opened in 1968, which means that the site should have been closed down in 2008. In this respect, the recent Quebec government policy concerning the management of residual material will certainly bring about important changes to the waste landfill in the near future.[4] It could become something else, a park perhaps,.[5] But is it a process of becoming if this reality already exists in the logic of layering the waste landfill?[6] The Quebec government has granted a reprieve to the expansion of the waste landfill, pending other solutions.

New alliances with community and organisations can generate new relations for contemporary art, to associate environmental, scientific, and cultural practices. As Mierle Laderman-Ukeles explains her role as an artist in residence

at the New York Department of Sanitation and at the Fresh Kills landfill on Staten Island, “the place changes, so how we see the place changes, so we change too” (Laderman 1997).

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The long version of this essay was written in French by Gisèle Trudel and translated by Claudine Gélinas-Faucher. Trudel thanks BFI-Lachenaie for the ability to do her research there.
Photo by: Gisèle Trudel at BFI-Lachenaie.
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End Notes:
[1] http://www.jardindesglaciers.ca/cyberencyclopedie/mer-de-champlain-26.html.
[2] Maas, W. (1999). MetaCity, Datatown. The Netherlands, MVRDV**:** 10:00. See also: http://www.stroom.nl/paginas/pagina.php?pa_id=4422935 for a description of the work. “DataTown is only based upon data. It is a city that wants to be described only by information. A city that does not know any given typography, no prescribed ideology, no representation, no context. Purely huge, only data. To what implications does this city lead to? What assumptions can be identified? What ‘agenda’ would appear due to this numerical approach? ”
[3] According to the data in the *Bilan 2006 de la gestion des matières résiduelles au Québec*, “every year in Quebec, great quantities of waste are produced, close to 25 tons per minute, close to 13 million tons a year, an average of 1.69 tons per inhabitant … and it continues increasing year after year.” A disconcerting “weight ”. Another article argues that the trend is changing, See: Moreault, E. *Première historique : plus de récupération que de déchets*, Journal Le Soleil, 10 novembre 2009.
[4] According to the statement made by Line Beauchamp, the Minister of the Environment of Quebec. (2009). “Québec veut bannir l’enfouissement.” Journal Métro. Montréal, Presse canadienne.
[5] Similar to the environmental complex of St-Michel (CESM), 182 acres, situated north of Crémazie boulevard, between Papineau street and St-Michel boulevard, a former quarry and later a landfill. It has now reached a new stage and is been transformed into a cultural, athletic, and natural centre. The Botanical Garden of Montreal was also built on an former landfill. Without doubt, the beneficial effects of these types of spaces in the urban environment is desirable. In the State of New York, Fresh Kills, the largest landfill in North America, active from 1948 to 2001 and stretching over 2200 acres, will be transformed into an

enormous ecological park over the next thirty years. Mierle Laderman is artist in residence there since 1989. See: http://www.nycgovparks.org/sub_your_park/fresh_kills_park/html/fresh_kills_park.html

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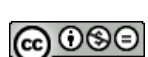
Jardin des Glaciers. http://www.jardindesglaciers.ca/cyberencyclopedie/mer-de-champlain-26.html
Freshkills Park.http://www.nycgovparks.org/sub_your_park/fresh_kills_park/html/fresh_kills_park.html

Gisèle Trudel *is an artist. In 1996 she founded Ælab, an artist research unit with Stéphane Claude, who is an electroacoustic musician and audio engineer. She is also a Professor at the École des arts visuels et médiatiques, Université du Québec à Montréal, Acting Director of HexagramUQAM, the Centre for Research/Creation in Media Arts and Technologies, and a PhD candidate in Communication Studies at Université de Montréal. Ælab's commitment to collaboration, creative dissemination, innovative use of technologies are ways of thinking and doing that try to bridge the arts and sciences. Their process-oriented investigations creatively engage art and technology as intertwined in the development of ecological awareness. Their work is presented regularly on the international art scene.* ***www.aelab.com***



Scarred Fruit/People

Frank Suerich-Gulick

J'ai commencé à faire de la récup pour des raisons d'écologie et de santé. Je voulais manger local et végétarier le plus souvent possible, mais c'est très difficile à faire pendant la majeure partie de l'année à Montréal à cause du climat. J'ai besoin de manger quelque chose de vert de temps en temps, sinon je deviens fou. En fait, j'ai tendance à devenir un peu déprimé chaque automne et à perdre un peu mon appétit. Je crois que c'est surtout lié aux journées qui raccourcissent, mais le manque d'appétit combiné à la pénurie de légumes locaux fait que je perds du poids l'hiver.

En octobre 2010 j'ai emménagé dans un nouveau logement près du marché Jean Talon. L'idée de faire de la récup m'intriguait depuis longtemps et la proximité du marché m'a poussé à enfin essayer, à plonger – littéralement – dans les poubelles du marché. Je suis devenu accroc.

Le plus grand obstacle psychologique à surmonter, c'était l'idée d'aller fouiller dans les poubelles devant les passants. Je ne sais pas si c'était une question de honte...peut-être. J'avais peur que les gens me voyant fouiller dans les poubelles trouveraient ça dégoûtant ou humiliant. J'étais assez sûr que ça ne me dégoûterait pas pour moi-même. J'avais aussi un peu peur de tomber malade, mais je savais que ce n'était pas très rationnel. Je pouvais bien évaluer ce qui était risqué en fouillant. Oui, c'était surtout la peur de ce que penseraient les gens.

J'ai découvert très rapidement que c'est vraiment excitant de fouiller dans les poubelles au marché. C'est une chasse au trésor qui nous livre toujours une trouvaille. Ça me donne une satisfaction incroyable de trouver un beau fruit mûr avec une petite tache insignifiante qui peut facilement être enlevée.

Ça m'aurait fait plaisir à n'importe quel moment de ma vie de «sauver» de beaux aliments destinés un dépotoir. Mes parents ont toujours aimé trouver des trésors dans la rue (surtout des trésors non-comestibles). La nourriture a quelque chose de sacré pour moi, donc c'est particulièrement magique de sauver de la bonne nourriture des ordures. Mais j'ai commencé à faire les poubelles du marché Jean Talon à un moment où le désir de vivre me faisait défaut : j'étais parfois si dégoûté par moi-même que je pouvais à peine m'endurer. Je sentais que j'étais tellement endommagé ou dysfonctionnel que je trouvais qu'il serait raisonnable d'arrêter de vivre, que ce ne serait pas un «gaspillage». Donc chaque fois que je sauvais un légume un peu endommagé qui pouvait devenir délicieux avec un peu d'effort, c'était un geste d'espoir pour moi-même. Si ça valait la peine de traîner un gros sac de poivrons puants chez moi, de passer une heure à faire le tri et à les découper pour en extraire une petite pille en parfait état, ça valait peut-être la peine de m'endurer un peu plus longtemps et de passer à travers la merde que je traînais en moi. Peut-être qu'il y avait assez de bons bouts en moi pour que je puisse éventuellement en extraire quelque chose de positif qui ait de la valeur, qui puisse faire du bien aux gens, être beau, tout simplement, ou qui puisse faire plaisir à quelqu'un.

Alors oui, prendre le temps de fouiller dans les poubelles, c'est écologique, ça m'économise de l'argent. Ça me permet de manger de délicieux repas de fruits et légumes variés tout l'hiver sans me culpabiliser le moindrement sur leur impact écologique. Mais quand j'ai commencé à faire de la récup, que je me suis mis à le faire de façon compulsive, je le faisais parce que ça m'aidait à survivre psychologiquement de jour en jour.

Prendre des choses dans les poubelles, c'est un geste d'espoir et aussi un peu un geste de révolte. C'est rejeter les normes qui disent que dès qu'un objet ou une personne est «endommagée», on doit s'en débarrasser. Les normes qui nous disent qu'une personne ou une chose qui exige «trop» d'effort pour donner plaisir n'en vaut pas la peine.

J'aime les gens que je rencontre au marché. Je leur pardonne même de me dire «elle» des fois alors que je voudrais qu'illes me parlent au masculin, parce que je sais qu'en fouillant dans les poubelles, illes acceptent eux ou elles aussi de porter un certain stigmate. Ce sont des gens qui acceptent d'être regardés avec inconfort ou dégoût par les passants ou par les commerçants. Ce sont

des marginaux, des freaks comme moi, comme les queers et les trans que j'ai appris à aimer depuis deux ans. Ces gens sont marginaux et illes l'assument devant tout le monde qui fait son épicerie au marché.

How dumpstering helped me come to terms with my trans identity or dumpstering as therapy

Dumpstering was a relatively safe place to socialize for me at a time where I was scared to talk to most people. Conversations while dumpstering generally centre around food. I learned to confront ambiguous stares from passers-by and hostility from shop-keepers directed at me for doing something that I felt committed to and positive about. It was good practice for confronting scepticism, rejection or discomfort from people about my transness, which was something that I did **not** feel solid and positive about at the time. It was good practice for learning to harden myself against attacks or blows that I knew were ill-founded or unintended but that still hurt me actually. Dumpstering was a drug : it made me high at a point when I was feeling very, very low for weeks at a time. It was one of the very few concrete things I felt capable of accomplishing. As a side-effect, I acquired huge amounts of great produce that I couldn't possibly consume by myself, so it obliged me to host dinner parties to feed others, it forced me to risk myself and come out of my isolation.

Dumpstering is about valuing, respecting and taking pleasure from items that someone else has decided don't have sufficient value to make them worth any effort or consideration. It's about saving items that others have labelled disgusting, distasteful and so are required to be hidden away, not touched, only dealt with by designated technicians. Items that must be disposed of, made to disappear — removed to where no one will have to think about them ever again.

Dumpstering is about resuscitating something that was abandoned for dead. It's a generative process. You find something flawed or 'broken' and you put your energy into finding a way to make it useful or beautiful or delicious again. It's about valuing things that are not perfect — flawed or used or damaged. It's also about the character that these flaws give an item: the rough edges and scratches and unpleasant parts that make it beautiful because they are proof that it has lived, produced by a natural system that is neither perfect nor perfectly controlled. It's about appreciating that food does not come from an

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peut-être la peine de m'endurer
un peu plus longtemps et de
passer à travers la merde que
je traînais en moi.

assembly line : it ripens at different rates, it gets damaged through the lengthy transportation it endures or by someone dropping it on the floor. Or it turns brown or limp because it was exposed to frost.

Overcoming disgust
I think the patterns of what disgusts or comforts us are in large part a product of our social environment, our upbringing, our cultural reality. Maybe it's also a tool for social control. So many of the things we experience 'instinctive' disgust for are appreciated as positive or highly valuable in other societies and contexts. I think as queers we understand all too well how accidental this disgust reflex is and how hurtful and destructive it can be; how most of the time the things that trigger disgust in us are not hurtful or bad in themselves, we've just been programmed to somehow think they are. I think of 'garbage' the same way. Why do we think it's disgusting?

Scarred fruit or people. Weirdos, freaks
Many of the people who dumpster are shy in a way that I find many queers to be. I perceive that they instinctively protect themselves from unpredictable blows. They're weirdos, either by choice or not. Perhaps the choice is not to be a weirdo but to just live with it, not to hide. I know that some folks dumpster by necessity. They endure stares and stupid reactions to get to their healthy food. They wear a protective shell against these blows during dumpstering expeditions. Sometimes they let the shell down to talk to other dumpsterers, or to a friendly shopkeeper.

The dumpstering community at Jean-Talon market is quite diverse. Alliances form, advice is given, good finds shared, sometimes freely, sometimes with a select few. Some people are very open about their lives, others very reserved. It's about survival but also about enjoying the food you find. Anticipatory relish. Also glee and the rush of finding perfect flowers.

Nasty shopkeepers
Est-ce que ça vaut la peine de parler de ce marchand qui est si méchant qu'il nous arrache les boîtes des mains lorsqu'on fouille dans «ses» poubelles? Je pense que oui, même si je me sens presque mal de le condamner publiquement sur ces pages. J'ai toujours de la difficulté à croire que quelqu'un puisse être aussi méchant. Peut-être est-ce parce qu'il est si obsédé par la propreté que ça le dérange autant lorsqu'on fouille dans ses poubelles. Mais

je l'ai vu tellement de fois agir de façon vraiment haineuse envers de vieilles dames qui fouillaient dans ses boîtes, alors qu'il était charmant et respectueux le lendemain avec un marchand du marché qui prenait des boîtes de choux du même tas pour nourrir ses animaux. Je ne peux pas m'expliquer sa façon d'agir, je ne le pardonne pas. Pour moi il est comme un symbole, un parfait exemple concret de la violence que la société inflige à certains individus qu'elle juge être indésirables, dégoûtants, des gens qui refusent ou sont incapables de se conformer à la norme de ce qui est acceptable, de ce qui se fait et ne se fait pas.

Je pense que ça l'enrage que des gens puissent profiter et prendre plaisir des objets dont il ne peut pas lui-même tirer profit ou plaisir, mais pour lesquels il a travaillé. Je pense que ça le choque que des gens profitent «gratuitement» de son travail. Parce que je vois bien qu'il travaille très fort, il est probablement un perfectionniste (comme moi! mais pas de la même façon). Je l'ai déjà vu en train de balayer le sol vigoureusement autour de son *container* tout de suite après le passage du camion à vidanges. Il voudrait que tout autour de son *container* soit immaculé et contrôlé. Les gens qui fouillent dans ses poubelles perturbent cet ordre. Je pense que nous représentons un combat perpétuel pour lui : nous sommes comme des rats qui reviennent sans arrêt dès qu'il a le dos tourné.

Ça me fait penser un peu aux insectes et aux micro-organismes qui jouent un rôle si essentiel dans les écosystèmes, qui décomposent les détritus et la matière organique pour la transformer en humus fécond pour les plantes. J'aimerais penser que les gens qui fouillent dans les poubelles jouent un rôle semblable, sauf qu'on n'est pas capable d'agir à une assez grande échelle pour empêcher le gaspillage colossal qui se passe dans notre société à tous les niveaux. On ne fait qu'agir sur une fraction de ce qui est gaspillé. Nous vivons dans une société qui valorise tellement l'efficacité du temps et de l'argent qu'elle gaspille des quantités ridicules de matière.

C'est une société qui jette les légumes un peu laids ou puants tout comme elle jette les personnes laides ou endommagées ou «inutiles» ou qui puent, les gens qui provoquent le dégoût ou l'inconfort.

Frank Suerich-Gulick is a trans male-ish person currently trying to finish his engineering thesis on whirlpools at hydropower intakes. He gets off on organizing events with the Radical Queer Semaine, pervers/cité and politiQ collectives. He lives in a housing coop that he helped birth over seven years – it's a bit of a social experiment. He thinks a fair amount about how to build community, about how folks can find ways to live and work together and support each other. He believes in the power of shared food to help create safer spaces and cement bonds between people. Sometimes he's a real skeptic, but he still has an irrational belief in the power of art to heal and bring magic into our lives. He plays folk music with his dad.

Gruesome Bodies and Wasted Desires

Liz Brockest

I have had the very lucky opportunity to be one half of the Fat Femme Mafia for about six years now. My feelings and politics about fat activism have continued to morph and change substantially throughout this time. However, FFM continues to be a political outlet that allows me not just to survive, but to thrive in a body that exists outside of what is deemed normatively desirable. Fat bodies are continually represented in popular media as garbage receptacles. Large vessels that represent wasted opportunities, a lack of control, and undesirability. Stereotypes attributed to the fat body continue to harm us all, and have created a culture where we fear FAT. We are living in a time of FAT panic. How do we change this? What are we so afraid of, anyway?

I move through the queer world often being identified as a Fat Femme. While this is not how I would self identify, I recognize this is often how the world fits me into the queer identity matrix. I have been thinking a lot recently about desire, both generally in relation to fat and non-normative bodies. I have been considering how fear dictates our desires and causes us to waste opportunities to flirt/touch/fuck 'othered' bodies. I have been thinking about what desire means within the context of queerness: who holds it, and the power it gives them. I have also been evaluating my own desires, what they mean, who they include and why.

I had an amazing conversation about desire recently with a really great friend of mine, who is also identified as a fat femme. We talked about what our own desires represent and are informed by and how they might be complicit in perpetuating systems of racism, ableism, classism, and patriarchy, as well as super unhealthy patterns in relationships. When I look at my own dating

history, I can note a few experiences where I have had 'situationships' with people who in many ways typify a kind of glorified hip queerness. These individuals were white, well-dressed, skinny, and androgonous/masculine presenting. The queer community with which I'm most familiar (though not all of us by any means) might identify these individuals as stereotypically/or normatively desirable. Within the hierarchy of desire in this particular Toronto queer scene, these bodies, or embodiments of queer identity, hold a lot of body privilege and power. Both my friend and I could name experiences where the normality of our dates'/partners'/lovers'/situationships' bodies made us feel at once *less* visible and *more* 'okay' as fat femmes. It soothed our own feelings of body shame, as we were being desired by those whom people deem 'normal'. I wanted to hide my body within my lover's normality. I felt like the privilege that my 'situationship's' body held allowed me to assimilate more easily in the matrix of dominant queer desirability. We also talked about how we both felt like it was necessary to hang on way too tight to these relationships, even though we were not always getting what we wanted or needed, as we felt anxious that nothing else may ever come along.

When the Fat Femme Mafia started working together, we took a very limited, linear approach to challenging fat hate and making space for our bodies. We wanted to prove our desirability by demonstrating that our bodies could do everything that skinny bodies could, despite our size. We strapped on bikinis and paraded around public parks; we choreographed dances that we performed at various queer events. Our approach to fat politics was assimilationist. As our politics changed and grew, we began to adopt a more gruesome approach, by which I mean an approach to fat politics that attempts to adopt and embody all of the gross, gluttonous, out of control stereotypes attributed to the fat.

We abandoned our bikinis for belly tops adorned with the words "I fuck Fat People." We wrote and performed songs about fucking "Fat Bitches", spouting lyrics that expressed our desire for all of the negative attributes often attributed to fat. We mimicked having sex with ice cream sundaes during performances, and let our bodies hang out in more visible, less contained, unapologetic ways.

We created spaces where we became all of the negative stereotypes attributed to fat. We did this in an effort to challenge these stereotypes, but also to

push our audiences to find desire in the ugly, in the gross and grotesque. We wanted to confront and challenge the monstrosity often attributed to the fat body by mimicking and becoming monsters. In an effort to reclaim space for our bodies, we played with and became gross stereotypes. When we reclaimed and adopted these negative attributes as our own, they began to hurt less. Playing with the gruesome allowed us to carve out opportunities to embrace the ugly, to have fun with it, and hopefully to encourage others to do so as well.

Adopting and embracing the gruesome has challenged me on a very personal level. It has pushed me to interrogate the numerous ways that I limit myself in my own desires. It has allowed me to question body normativity and body 'abnormality' in new and discursive ways. What it has also illuminated for me is how afraid we are of bodies to which we don't have enough access. Representation in popular media is a very important medium for us to learn about bodies. When media fails to represent bodies, or only represents them in limited, linear ways, the scope of our desire is confined. A gruesome approach to fat politics disrupts harmful images attached to fat bodies by creating new and challenging representations.

My thoughts on fat politics, desire, and the gruesome are evolving. However, I am aware that fear dictates many of the choices I make around my own body, and other people's bodies, in relation to desire. I am wasting my time being afraid. My hope is that we can all begin to embrace the ugly written on our bodies and in turn create space for enjoying and playing with gluttony, and things that are often deemed gross.

Photo by: Brianna Greaves

Liz Brockest *is one half of the Fat Femme Mafia, a Toronto-based performance and activist duo on a mission to spread the message that every BODY is a GOOD body. She is also a college professor, student (in Critical Disability Studies) musician, crafter and artist. She is currently working on recording an album with her band The Cry Break, and is looking forward to moving to Toronto Island for the month of June*.

Gay Marriage Hurts My Breasts

Yasmin Nair

I. Making it through

I am at the first checkpoint. I can't help feeling that I really shouldn't be there. At any moment the smoothly coiffed blonde woman with the discreet earrings and the beautifully manicured hands will look at me with a frown and say, "You're not supposed to be here. How did they let you in?"

I hold my breath, waiting. I quietly exhale with relief when she looks back up at me, ticks something off on the sheet in front of her, smiles and tells me to go through the door on my right.

Now, the second checkpoint. This is much more exposed. I am now in front of everyone else, everyone else who looks like they actually belong. We are all waiting for stage two, as personnel step up and call out our names one by one, directing us each to any one of the kiosks staffed by people in blue uniforms. I scan their faces, wondering which ones seem more or less sympathetic to me, which one is more likely to scrutinise my credentials with more or less care. I keep waiting for the ball to drop: "Ah, yes, I see, yes, well, I'm afraid you really shouldn't be here after all."

But it all goes well. I'm home free, and I can have my breasts examined.

I'm here for a mammogram. I am practically a charity case at my local health care provider, a private organization with some kind of a grant to guarantee all their female patients free yearly mammograms. It's a nice gesture, especially in a climate where unmarried, non-child-bearing women are considered expendable and useless and even procreative women are deemed useful only as bearers of children. In Arizona, lawmakers have declared that the rights of the "unborn" extend far beyond any limits of, well, science, claiming that life begins even before conception. The phrase, "before you were a twinkle in your parents' eyes" has never seemed so strange before.

The Near North Health Service Corporation is staffed by lovely people and even some decent doctors, but it habitually messes up its paperwork. This has meant that, on the one hand, it allowed me a free appointment for a lingering ear infection with an ENT specialist at Northwestern. On the other hand, it failed to file my "charity" papers on time – testifying that I would not have to pay because of my income bracket – and, as a result, the hospital sent my bill, for a service that was to be paid by NNHC, to a collection agency.

So, understandably, even though I had called NNHC ahead of time to confirm that my appointment was indeed free, I arrived that morning at the gleaming doors of The Lynn Sage Comprehensive Breast Center at Prentice Women's Hospital in Chicago with some trepidation, anxious about being turned away, marked with a scarlet P for "too fucking Poor to qualify."

Being a charity patient also meant that my appointment was scheduled for a year after I had asked for one. Apparently, charity cases need to be extra careful in watching their health. My appointment sheet came with strict instructions: I was to wear no perfume, make-up, or deodorant. Somewhere, written in invisible ink, was an additional injunction: You must guarantee that you will not actually develop any mammary irregularities for an entire year from this date.

I make it past the second checkpoint – my non-existent papers are in order. I imagine that, as they enter my name into the system, it springs up with a large pink-for-breast-cancer flag: let this poor shit pass. I am led through another door, and a nurse hands me a hospital gown with instructions to disrobe in one of the changing cubicles and to "cinch it nice and tight." She is a slender white woman, and I wonder if she's terrified of large brown breasts, in the familiar racism of Chicago, or is simply echoing the American hospital industry's fear of naked bodies in general. Perhaps both. I'm reminded of how, every single time I've had my vagina examined, the doctor in question has always decorously done so with a large cloth between the two of us, screening us both from the horrific possibility that we might see my pussy at the same time and, who knows, be overtaken by a lusty yearning for it and each other.

So here I am, waiting for a mammogram among people who are terrified of seeing my breasts out of context.

My mind wanders on Whitmanesque lines: *In my breasts, I hold multitudes*.
I find myself in a waiting room with eight other women, similarly attired in ill-fitting smocks. I try to make sure that my nipples are not erect, affirming whatever suspicions the nurse may have had about them. I pick up a copy of *Architectural Digest*, hoping that the sight of a modern glass chandelier or a mahogany credenza, circa 1950, will not be too arousing. I wonder if I should reveal that I am sexually attracted to women, if I should perhaps turn to the others and simply state it as a matter of fact. Would that make them all less or more comfortable? Was that what the nurse really saw after all, my lesbian desire threatening to erupt and engulf every single one of us?
I'm finally escorted into the exam room, and the female technician who runs the machine is incredibly friendly and profusely apologetic about the fact that we are running fifteen minutes late. I can tell she's used to dealing with wealthier, paying clients. At NNHC, I always bring my knitting to an appointment, expecting to finish my entire scarf, knowing that I might be there for more than an hour beyond my scheduled time.

The actual mammogram is painful and surprising. At one point, she has to struggle to squish my breasts under the part that presses down upon my breasts. It surprises me how pliant my breasts are, and that she is actually able to mould, prod and stretch them the way she can. My breasts, I muse, are floopy, a combination of floppy and loopy, pulled like linguine through a pasta machine. Where, I wonder, are the firm young melons of yesteryear?

I wonder what the rules are. Am I required to disclose the sad truth of my breasts to all my lovers past and future? *To those who might return, I regret to inform you that my firm melons are no longer as sumptuous. They are, alas, much floopier than you might remember them*.
I come home exhausted. I write to R that I have just had my breasts poked, but not in a fun way.

II. The absurdity of it all
At the checkpoint, I was asked if I wanted to make an appointment for next year. I said yes, feeling a kind of we-are-women-we-must-be-responsible-for-our-breasts kind of peer pressure. But the truth is that I had woken up that morning struck by the absurdity of it all and had even considered cancelling my appointment.

I knew that there was one of three diagnoses I could receive after the mammogram: nothing, benign, or malignant. None of them would make a difference to me.

I mulled over the words “benign” and “malignant,” such an affective rendering of what might happen to my body, the kind of pesonalisation that has resulted in narratives about breast cancer that render it in terms of a human drama, a battle between good and evil. The word “benign” seems so, well, benign, evoking a picture of a slightly self-satisfied tumour, sitting smugly and benignly behind a desk, neither angry nor happy, just absurdly benign. “Malignant,” on the other hand, marks an evil force I will be compelled to combat, battle with. I will be admonished that I can “lick this thing,” and not let it “conquer me.” In the elevator up to the Breast place, I shared my ride with a man and a woman. As they stepped off and began to head in the direction opposite to mine, he gave her a hug and rubbed her back; she heaved a great sigh and steadied herself. I could sense immediately what they were heading towards, I could tell the contours of their narrative.

I don’t know what I dread the most: The diagnosis or the narrative into which a diagnosis would push me. For nearly all my life, it seems, I’ve put up with the relentless pink war against breast cancer. Barbara Ehrenreich and others have written about the pinkifying and commodification of breast cancer, and the relentless corporatisaion of the condition. All of this burst into flames when the Susan Komen Breast Cancer Foundation considered defunding Planned Parenthood, the abortion provider and advocacy organisation. I wondered, as I got my appointment slip: If I am ever diagnosed with any form of breast cancer, will I be compelled to turn into one of those smiling and brave women, her bald head swathed in a pink scarf, beaming from the sides of buses shuttling through the city? Will I be compelled to mark myself as a survivor and to fight the good fight and all the rest?

All of this strikes me as exquisitely absurd for a number of reasons.

The first is that, lacking healthcare, a diagnosis of breast cancer would mean little to me other than my impending death. Without the proper resources – such as a health corporation that would even bother to file my poverty papers on time, or money to pay for medications – I would be at the mercy of the state. I know too much about what unpaid/free health care looks like in the United States and at Chicago’s notorious Cook County hospital, where the

poorest and most indigent get their “health care.” I know that I would die of bureaucratic ineptitude before I died of the cancer.

Upon receiving a diagnosis, I would simply roll over and choose to die a long lingering death without treatment of any sort. I would first call my friends R and K, who would need to be told so that they could sort through my utterly disorganized effects and my burgeoning Hello Kitty collection, and take care of my cat. I would then proceed to fundraise for six months of rent so that I could finish my book. I would find a way to painlessly kill myself before the stench of my putrefying breasts became unbearable.

If the Centers for Disease Control were to include “sexual orientation” in its breast cancer surveys, I would have to be counted as a lesbian. “Queer” is still a word that causes discomfort among well-meaning straight people who don’t want to be accused of being homophobic. At home, I Google “lesbian breast cancer” and find that the entire movement for lesbian women’s health care has already been co-opted by the gay marriage movement.

On the website of the National LGBT Cancer Network, I find a piece on breast cancer by Liz Margolies. Her words pretend to offer comfort to women suffering from the adverse effects of being lesbian in a homophobic society and seeking culturally competent health care; yet she also echoes the pervasive medicalized logic that the blame either rests with lesbians who get sick or with the sad, unfortunate fact that the poor dears cannot be married:

So far, the information we have on breast cancer in lesbians has been both limited and contradictory. The large national cancer registries and surveys do not collect data about sexual orientation, leaving lesbians embedded and invisible among this vast wealth of information. Other ethnic, geographic and racial groups have been able to use the data gleaned from these statistics to develop programs to erode the health disparities they face. They know precisely how prevalent cancer is in their communities.

Some research has been conducted that specifically addresses lesbian cancer risks and experiences, but the results have been inconsistent. In almost every case, the sample sizes have been too small for us to draw reliable conclusions.

In other words, most of the conclusions aren’t worth a damn.

But then Margolies goes on to propound precisely the most problematic of these unsound statements and hypotheses, placing the onus upon mysterious third-party research:

While we still await definitive state-of-the-art research, *some* people currently believe that lesbians have an increased risk of developing breast cancer, based on a "cluster of risk factors" theory [italics mine]. The increased risks are a result of behaviors that are a result of the stress and stigma of living with homophobia and discrimination. Each of these behaviors carries with it an increased risk of cancer. Taken together, as a cluster, they could more than double a lesbian's chance of getting cancer. Again, the data on these behaviors is mixed in its results and it's important to remember that many people with known risk factors never develop cancer.

She goes on to cite the risk factors, like cigarette smoking, alcohol abuse, and obesity. While these individually or together might in fact have an effect on an individual's health, the links between, say, obesity and actual breast cancer are tenuous at best.

It's the pregnancy link that jumps out at me. Writing about, **"**The four most-cited cancer risk factors in the research on lesbians and breast cancer risk," she writes that "lesbians are less likely to have biological children before age 30, which would offer some protection against cancer."

Pregnancy. Of course. I knew I had missed something. And, alas, my cat, no matter how hard I try, will never substitute for a child.

When this "fact" was first disclosed to straight women, the result was instant outrage in feminist circles, and while it still pops up in conservative arenas, it has mostly been debunked in legitimate medical circles and rightly dismissed as yet another way to regulate women's bodies and confine them to their child-bearing roles. And, yet, here it is, boldly offered on a site that lesbian women might peruse to find comfort and affirmation about their bodies. Here, directed at precisely the women who are least likely to conform to society's gendered demands upon them, is the nasty, biting, and utterly unprovable supposition flung in their faces: *If you didn't want breast cancer, you should have had children, you fucking freak*.

Margolies gets worse, as she develops a rationale for *why* lesbians are more likely to develop breast cancer :

To begin with, lesbians are less likely to have adequate health insurance coverage than heterosexual women, as most employers do not offer coverage for *unmarried domestic partners* [italics mine].

I live in New York City and do not have cancer. Sometimes, I imagine a lesbian who has just been diagnosed with cancer and is living in a small town in Utah or Iowa, not in one of the few cities with lesbian cancer programs… Her partner can't go to a caregiver group for lesbians. And do we really think she'll be comfortable talking about the effects that chemo has on her sex life in a roomful of men? I picture the two of them using the internet to learn more about their cancer and survivorship issues. Whenever I visit a website, I pretend I am this couple and type the word "lesbian" in the search box. More often than not, the search produces no results. Invisible still.

So there you have it. GAY MARRIAGE WOULD SAVE MY BREASTS. Having children would make breast cancer less possible. Silly, silly, me.

Such narratives about breast cancer abound everywhere, and they are echoed by various "institutes" and foundations, which purport to do studies on queer poverty but always manage, through their mysteriously frequent studies, to place the blame for all our woes on… you guessed it, marriage. It is much more rare to find centers or foundations willing to place lesbian breast cancer in its proper context: the lousy, non-existent health care in the United States that is killing more people than we care to count.

Such studies place the onus for lesbian health upon individuals and the choices they make: Stop smoking! Have children! Get married! At best, they make weak demands for inclusion: please be nicer to the lesbians who walk through your clinic's doors.

I don't deny that inclusion and expansion of categories to include lesbians/queer women are important (although I suspect that the medical industry will freeze alongside hell before it begins to think that poly/slutty/non-familial queers actually deserve care of any sort). I do think that if we are to consider people's health care needs in the larger contexts of how they live and fuck, then considering lesbian sex lives and the effects of cancer upon them is as important.

But, if any of these foundations or people like Margolies were to grow a pair of, well, firm melon-like tits and actually speak to the truth of the situation, they would admit that lesbians don't get breast cancer because they are lesbians who demonstrate characteristic lesbian behavior (i.e. they don't have children or smoke or are larger than straight women), but because they, like transgender people, poor and indigent people, and a lot of non-conforming queers who can't get jobs, let alone have the capacity to sue their employers for non-discrimination in the first place, are fucked over by a larger cultural rationale that they simply don't deserve health care – after denying them employment precisely because they are seen as people who will never fit in the workplace.

Perhaps Margolies resides in a universe where every lesbian looks and talks like Rachel Maddow, but the truth is that lesbians, and particularly gender-non-conforming lesbians – you know, the odd, butch ones we try to pretend we don't see, and I don't mean Maddow-style butch, but truck-driver butch, without the fancy glasses or the multi-million dollar salary, who can't help walking "like a dude" even in a skirt kind of butch – are discriminated against from the minute they walk through the door for an interview. Think of the lesbian you know whose hair is cut like a man's and not in a cute and sassy bob, or a lesbian who won't suck her boss's cock – not because she might not want to, but because she is incapable of even envisioning the possibility – or a lesbian who doesn't have the proper accoutrements to prove her lesbianism and acceptable family values, like a wife and child. Now ask yourself: how many of these women do you see in any positions of power, even in the hippy-dippy world of social justice organising or the non-profit industrial complex?

When Margolies imagines that couple in Utah, she is only imagining what she wants them to look like: safe, normal, cute, with perhaps a few quirks, like the couple in *The Kids Are All Right*. But I wonder what she has to say about the truly invisible, the single lesbians, the lesbians who won't try to look "normal," who don't fit her vision of normalcy, the ones who actually don't and, horrors, may not even *want* to have a partner, the lesbians who have spent decades nurturing and growing in networks of friendships and care-giving that Margolies will never recognise as legitimate, or the lesbians who prefer to live distinctly separate lives that others might consider strange and hostile (cat ladies of the world, unite!)? She and her ilk have quietly absorbed the message from the gay marriage movement in the U.S., which states, as baldly and

boldly as possible, that the primary reason for gay marriage is that it would provide health care for gays and lesbians. This leaves out millions of queers who don't want to marry or simply don't marry, for any number of reasons. In states like Massachusetts where gay marriage is now legal, you will not be allowed to share in your partner's healthcare if you *don't get married.* The logic is simple: Because you *can* get married, you *must.* This means that straight and queer couples who might prefer the relative flexibility of civil unions or domestic partnerships are left out in the cold. Even in Illinois, which only grants civil unions at this point and which proclaims how progressive it is for granting healthcare to couples in such arrangements, the state mandates that you *must* enter one in order to gain healthcare.
You want health care but not marriage or commitment? Tough titties. Get married or die.

Case in point: I refer you, once again, to my breasts. I have no partner and have been against all kinds of marriage, gay or straight, since the age of 8. If I were to die or even begin to do so, most of my friends would not be able to come and take care of me, simply because their ultra-progressive workplaces have policies in place for "partner/family leave" but none for friends, no matter how close. I can see my friend R, flying into the U.S. from Montreal, confronted by a U.S. customs officer who smirks with one eyebrow raised, "You're here to take care of… a sick friend?" Or K going to her department for leave and being told, "But you already live with a partner and S isn't sick. Whom do you need to take care of, again?"

R tells me that his solution to this proposed scenario is that he will designate me as his godmother, making me a relation of sorts. My initial response, and proof that I am climbing out of the depression into which I sometimes find myself plunging when I consider the possibility of my death is, "But wait, that will just age me!"

Gay marriage is supposed to help my breasts. The gay marriage movement, in its relentless search for rationales for what is inherently a conservative movement around "normalcy" and acceptance, often makes the case that healthcare is a primary reason to make it legal. In the process, it has created a climate where the most progressive/lefty people, gay and straight, fail to see that healthcare is an economic matter and something that should go to everyone, regardless of their marital status. At a debate on gay marriage,

where I am, yes, the party speaking against it, a woman tries to dismantle my argument with an emotional statement about her best gay friend (she is careful to identify as straight), who lived with his partner in a relationship that was better and more long-lasting than that of straight couples, but "who died because he could not get healthcare through marriage, he died because he could not marry."

I pause briefly and try to address her point as gently as I can.

What I really want to say to her is, "You're a fucking moron. I need to tell you that you're a fucking moron if you can't figure out that your friend didn't die of a lack of gay marriage but a lack of health care." I want to scream at her: "If you really watched him die, as you claim, you would see that he died from negligence and the aggravated stress of having to be treated at Cook County, where MY queer friend C once stood waiting for an appointment for 16 hours straight, on a foot so broken that his bones were sticking through the skin, but too afraid to try to find a seat or to leave for fear of losing his place in line."

The truth is that she probably understands that the health care system is broken, but that she also cannot see the profound disconnect in her own words. The truth may well be that she accompanied her friend to those endless and humiliating visits to the hospital, but that it never occurred to her that it was not her friend's gayness and his inability to marry that killed him, but the dank, stinking, hellhole of a "healthcare system" in the world's most industrialised nation, the only such nation not to provide universal health care.

When even such people cannot make said connections, is it any wonder that lesbians are now told that gay marriage will save their breasts?

III. Titty Terrorism: My Plans for the Future

My breasts may be more pliant but they are no less political.

In the event of a breast cancer diagnosis, I will let my breasts rot and putrefy into a state that few of these pink narratives, with their tidy, nervous pinkitude, ever care to discuss (what happens to a breast in the **late stages of cancer is not pretty**). I have already decided to send little bits of my cancer to all the gay marriage proponents. Although I'm not good with pain or even with discomfort, I will hack away at and chop off bits and pieces of my rotting breasts and engage in a form of titty terrorism. Instead of anthrax, I will send bits of my stinking boobs to gay marriage proponents like Evan Wolfson and the heads of the Human Rights Campaign and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and to, yes, Liz Margolies and Dr. Susan Love.

In my breasts, I hold multitudes.

This is war, baby. And my tits are the mighty soldiers.

I will take no prisoners. I will squish my floopy breasts against the windows of Lambda Legal's Freedom to Marry galas. I will use my dripping, pus-laden blood from the open sores to create a poster that says *Gay Marriage Hurts My Breasts* and march alongside those walking for "gay rights" (read: marriage or else). I will stalk and flash gay marriage activists (Dan Savage, you've been warned) on the subway and on the streets, exposing their rot and stench, allowing them to smell the potential success of their campaign. *Look*, I will say, *This is what gay marriage does for me*.

My non-diagnosis brought me as close to death as I will ever want to be. I will not go quietly into that good night. I am angry, my breasts are rotting.

In my breasts, I hold multitudes.

Yasmin Nair *lives and works in Chicago, Illinois. Her website is http://www.yasminnair.net. This article is the first in her new blog, "Gay Marriage Hurts My Breasts," about the hidden and obvious costs of the gay marriage movement.*

Peregrine Landfill: Gabrielle Théroux and the Falconry of Filth

Jordan Coulombe

In a landfill, just outside of town, birds of prey circle above pyramids of waste. Gabrielle Théroux calls one to her with a piece of meat outstretched, and the raptor grips her gloved arm with its pointed talons. The workday has come to an end and the falcon takes the flesh into its beak, sheltering itself with spread wings. Its appetite has been building from a day of chasing seagulls off its territory and Gabrielle is ready to return it to the aviary.

Eight kilometres away from the landfill is a nesting colony of 150,000 ring-billed seagulls, and they are hungry for trash. They haven't eaten much while nesting and they've become aggressive. Attracted by the field of leftovers, they come to feed at the dump, and they create their own waste as they relieve themselves on the suburban properties below.

In reaction to this migration, the residents of the area filed successive complaints, and tension began to build. After the city brought the landfill to court over the mess, a peculiar solution was found: Gabrielle, along with a few other falconers, began working with birds of prey to keep the seagulls from flocking around the site and above the nearby SUVs and swimming pools.

Gabrielle swears that you adjust to the awkward odour of rot after working at the dump for a while. It's the amount of dust she breathes in that is the main occupational hazard. That, and the risk of being swiped by trucks and garbage compactors. It's a deafening landscape between the machines, the birds and the music Gabrielle blasts from her truck to pump herself up. "I'm pretty sure I've lost hearing from my left ear," she says remorselessly.

Gabrielle and her colleagues begin training the falcons as soon as they are able to fly. “We don’t train our birds to kill seagulls. Killing them doesn’t work because it doesn’t educate the seagull. They don’t go home at night and tell the others: ‘Let’s not to go there tomorrow.’” This method of pest control is much more sympathetic than the one used at another landfill site in the region where they have a license to use a machine gun. “They kill a minimum of a 100 seagulls a day and it doesn’t even really have any effect,” Gabrielle laments.

A typical day at the dump starts at 5am, when Gabrielle weighs her falcon, Rita, to make sure she is at flying weight. “The reason they come back is because we have food and we fly them at a weight that motivates them to come eat. If they’re full they won’t come to us.” The falcons that Gabrielle uses also have a small emitter placed on their leg to help track them when they leave their aviaries. Sometimes Rita hides in the trees because she’s learned that she can count on Gabrielle using food to lure her out. Still, the falcons are more loyal than one might think. Once, a falcon couldn’t be found at the end of the day and had to be left out overnight, but the next morning she was waiting in the middle of the landfill site on a pole.

One wonders why these raptors, who are so motivated by food, don’t eat the garbage like the seagulls do. “Oh no. That can happen,” Gabrielle says. “For example, Rita’s really good but she has a thing for barbecued chicken. Her vision is so good that she can spot it out of nowhere. We used to let Rita out for hours at a time but we had to stop because we would loose sight of her and we’d always find her eating barbecued chicken somewhere.”

Gabrielle explains that birds of prey are sexually dimorphic; the female is always much larger than the male, and much more territorial as well. You can't put two females together in an aviary or they will fight. Even Gabrielle's relationship with Rita is slightly precarious. "You develop a link with the bird you work with every day. There is a confidence that develops, but nothing more. The bird will respond to a total stranger as long as they have food in their hand." Despite Rita's apparent aloofness, she did come over to Gabrielle's apartment for a sleepover one night when it was too late to take her back to the aviary. "The birds are like our kids. We love them very much."

Gabrielle and Rita don't only work at the landfill. They also provide an extremely important service at airports, where Rita is responsible for frightening away large migratory birds, such as Canada geese. The frequency of birdstrike collisions with airplanes is staggering, as are the potential losses in terms of lives and money. "Its a really serious job. That accident a couple years ago at LaGuardia airport in New York was caused by a Canada goose."

It's an absurd sort of travesty how the winged creatures that inspired us to flight have become obstructions on our own aerial pathways, slaughtered by engines and jet propellers. Yet, it's also remarkable that birds are the ones to resolve this conflict by clearing the skies for our clumsy aircrafts. In the sky, as on the landfill, birds of prey labour to circumvent the consequences of our disastrous ambitions. Above the landfill wasteland, Rita monitors the mosaic of decaying filth with precise vision, seeming almost able to unravel our human-made predicament.

Jordan Coulombe *is fascinated by beauty and filth. He has a background in sexuality studies and print culture, and likes to collect dirty books. Although he's never held a bird of prey, he was once attacked by an owl while riding his bike. He met Gabrielle Théroux in the summer of 2008 and has been full of questions ever since*.

Who Are They? Coco Riot & Elisha Lim Discuss the "They" Movement

Coco Riot & Elisha Lim

"Call Me They" is a weekly blog that Coco Riot and Elisha Lim update every Thursday with illustrations, stop motion animations, letters to newspaper editors, a talk show, a petition and every imaginable ingredient for a happy, robust trans community.

The petition was its catalyst: in 2011 Elisha was interviewed by the gay Canadian newspaper *Xtra!*, and was refused the right to use the pronoun 'they.' Elisha and Coco started a Facebook event petition for this right. To their surprise, the petition attracted 1,355 supporters from all around the world. It was the beginning of a national boycott, a satellite trans panel and a burst of trans activism rallied by Ivan Coyote, Lexi Sanfino, Rae Spoon, Alaska B, and Lucas Silvera. The blog has been established to document, celebrate, and sustain this momentum.

Elisha and Coco are visual and video artists, and so the blog mainly focuses on these media. The illustrations are usually large posters, like Coco's "El Sueño," which is a surreal self portrait in bright colours and sombre pointillism, or Elisha's "God Loves Queers," which is a series of line drawings based on Elisha's rebellious spirituality.

The stop motions are stories about growing up genderqueer, in which Coco and Elisha take turns either directing or writing. For example, "Marimacho"

is about Coco's first time passing as a boy at eight years old, and the love and support of their grandmother. The animations have been selected for numerous 2012 film festivals and screenings, including in New York, Chicago and Berlin.

"Call Me They" exhibited during the month of February at Venus Envy Ottawa, with ten paintings and illustrations, and an animation screening on opening night. All of the art is created to honour trans activism and fortify its new generation, with bright, fun, beautiful work.

Elisha Lim *is an artist and graphic novelist with a blatant agenda to promote the leadership, dignity, and sex appeal of queer and trans people of colour. Elisha has illustrated novels, wall calendars, books, and magazines with this mission, including Bitch Magazine's acclaimed "Sissy Calendar," The Illustrated Gentleman, and 100 Butches, a graphic novel of portraits and anecdotes about masculine queers. 100 Butches has earned a lot of publicity from its introduction by New York Times bestselling author Alison Bechdel, but it still accomplishes Elisha's covert plan by containing a 90% quota of racialized models and an unabashed dedication "to queers of colour." Elisha's solo shows have included the launch of Toronto's glamorous FAG Gallery, and "100% Mixed Race" at Toronto's A-Space Gallery, which is an illustrated documentary of mixed race people of colour in collaboration with Elisha's sister and Racialicious deputy editor, Thea Lim.*

Coco Riot *is a queer Spanish migrant artist who believes in art as an element of social change. Most of their work consists of drawings and explores the multiple possibilities such a "simple" medium can offer, such as single drawing panels, installations, animated films, print media, graphic novels, murals, and on-site drawing exhibitions. They use personal experience as a metaphor for social and political experience. The topics that fuel their inspiration range from queer politics, collective and personal memories, living within different languages, and the experience of migration. Their work has been shown in museums, galleries, and festivals from New York to Barcelona, in Montreal, Toronto, Berlin, Turin, Madrid, San Jose (Costa Rica), and soon in Rio de Janeiro.*

"On n'est pas conditionné à voir quelqu'un qui frotte ou gratte une boîte de métal, tu sais ?" : A Conversation with Magali Babin

Owen Chapman

Sur le Manteau By Magali Babin

My interview with prolific Montreal sound artist Magali Babin meandered river-like through various works, past and present. Babin had just finished a residency with *3e impérial* in Granby QC recording various local bodies of water, including the rivière Yamasaka and Lac Boivin, where she also set up "postes d'écoutes" for passers-by. She will be returning from May 26 – June 10 2012 to finish and present a piece composed from her recordings. This work is linked to a project she started in 2006 entitled "Bruits de Fonds" involving recording different water systems all over Quebec. We also discussed some of her collaborative work, including "Natura Sonoris" (developed with Myléna Bergeron) – performed at Oboro and the Suoni Per Popolo festival in 2009/10, and the monthly "24 Gauche" audio art evenings that she has organized since 2010 with Patrice Coulombe, presenting finished pieces along with works in progress by local and international sound artist/performers.

We met at Café Olympico on August 29, 2011 for a two-hour conversation, from which the following was excerpted.

Owen Chapman : L'aspect visuel de l'art sonore ou l'art audio pour toi, comment l'intègres-tu dans tes projets ou quelles sont tes réflexions par rapport à ça?

Magali Babin : C'est très large, hein? Par exemple, si on revient à l'exemple de Granby. C'est-à-dire que, oui, j'aurais pu faire le même poste d'étude et avoir une attitude d'artiste de performance, mais moins de gens seraient venus me parler. C'est sur! Parce que un, le dispositif de l'installation, c'est déjà – pas une barrière – mais c'est quelque chose que la personne doit approcher, puis [elle doit]s'investir pour venir parler à une autre personne, qui semble occupée à faire quelque chose, on ne sait pas trop c'est quoi. Donc déjà là, ça demande une grande volonté à quelqu'un pour venir, s'approcher et me parler. Si en plus c'est dans une attitude performative, tu viens de perdre la moitié des gens qui voulait venir te parler. À Granby, ce qui est particulier, bien là, c'était parce que je le faisais aussi en collaboration avec le 3eImpérial qui est un centre d'artiste très actif de la région. Le contexte de réalisation est en art infiltrant. L'approche et la proposition consistent à se fondre dans le paysage, à interagir avec la collectivité, l'action. Ou, l'oeuvre doit s'intégrer aux lieux de la ville, dans le quotidien des citoyens pour que les gens, puissent à aller poser des questions à l'artiste, pour créer des liens. Donc c'est pour ça que l'attitude performative à ce moment-là n'était pas pour moi… ça n'aurait pas eu sa place. Tu vois? Dans un contexte public, dans un lieu public, ce n'est pas pareil. Même moi, qui est artiste, qui connais la performance, quand je vois une artiste dans un lieu public qui est en performance, je ne vais pas aller lui parler. Je ne veux pas la déranger. C'est sur! Donc ça, c'est une chose.

L'autre chose qui est intéressante, c'est la perception visuelle qu'on a d'une oeuvre sonore, que ce soit dans une forme performative ou installative. Ça, c'est vraiment quelque chose qui est au coeur de ma pratique en performance sonore, mais aussi dans mon travail en musique improvisée, en musique composée, et cette réflexion se prolonge même dans mon travail en installations sonores. Mais parlons simplement de mon travail en performance, où je mets en scène la sonorité d'un geste, souvent sur un objet, un élément sonore particulier. L'action est très souvent minimale, mais elle va se répandre dans l'espace, dans la durée et dans l'intensité sonore. Après une performance, j'ai souvent eu des questions et des commentaires de la part des gens, qui me disaient : «est-ce qu'il fallait vraiment regarder ? Parce que moi

je me suis fermé les yeux. Est-ce qu'il fallait vraiment qu'on voie que c'était ça que tu faisais? Parce que moi, à la longue, je me suis fermé les yeux, puis je restais juste dans l'écoute». Alors que d'autres, à la longue de regarder l'action minimale et répétitive, vont être plus absorbés sur l'espèce de mantra visuel, plutôt que le son. Ou bien, c'est une combinaison des deux. J'aime vraiment faire ce genre de travail performatif, je n'en ai pas fait souvent parce que c'est plus demandant au niveau physique. Mais je trouve intéressant d'avoir ces commentaires-là, parce que dans le fond ça appartient à la personne qui reçoit l'oeuvre, qui assiste au moment. Pour moi, l'idée d'avoir des gestes minimaux, c'est pour rendre maximal le son, en fait. C'est pour ça que quand je me mets en scène dans une performance sonore, je ne suis qu'un accessoire, je suis utilisée... Je m'utilise pour le son. Pour maximaliser l'impact sonore. Pour ce genre de travail, j'ai aussi une approche assez conceptuelle, j'ai besoin de conceptualiser l'action, l'objet, le geste. Je me documente, j'écris, je m'inspire de plans, de dessins, d'images, de mots.

OC: Ça c'est en préparation?

MB: Oui. Il y a très peu d'improvisation dans ces performances-là. Je peux mentionner deux exemples de performances réalisées dans cette approche, «Sur Le Manteau», c'était une performance que j'ai été invitée à faire à la galerie B-312 et c'était à la fin de l'hiver. J'avais décidé de faire une performance avec mon manteau d'hiver – comme étant mon salut à mon manteau, avant de le ranger jusqu'au prochain hiver. Une performance pour marquer le changement de saison –l'action consistait à «mettre en scène» un geste que j'avais fait pendant trois ou quatre mois: attacher, fermer et ouvrir mon manteau. Uniquement ça. Donc, je suis arrivée devant le public habillée de mon manteau, le capuchon sur les yeux, les jambes nues donc c'était visuellement juste un long manteau noir et j'avais mis des microphones partout, et tu sais ce genre de tissus est très sonore, les frottements, le zip, les boutons pressions... Et finalement, j'ai répété ces mêmes gestes durant 35 minutes, ces mêmes gestes-là: frotter, attacher, fermer la fermeture, les boutons, et je traitais aussi les sons en direct. J'avais pratiqué ce jeu, mais il y a toujours une petite part d'improvisation parce que ce n'est pas la musique écrite. Donc, c'était ça la mise en scène et le son est devenu maximal. Avec juste la répétition des gestes très minimaux, l'espace s'est rempli d'une masse sonore intense, tu vois?

OC : Et habituelle aussi.

MB : Et habituelle. C'est ça, ça fait partie de ma démarche de reprendre un objet usuel de tous les jours et ses actions… de reprendre les gestes de la routine de vie, de notre quotidien. Il y a quelqu'un qui m'avait fait la remarque: mais est-ce qu'on a vraiment besoin de savoir que c'est un manteau?

OC : Bonne question.

MB : Dans le fond j'aurais pu être comme ça, dans le noir complet. Ça ne faisait même pas partie de mon questionnement, j'ai mis ça comme un accessoire, un nouvel instrument sur lequel je voulais jouer… C'est à peu près ça.

OC : Est-ce que je peux demander quelques précisions? Donc ça c'est vraiment la performance puisque t'es devant le monde, c'est toi l'interprète, et il y a toute une chorégraphie j'imagine.

MB : Oui, il y a une attitude, une présence aussi.

OC : Comment décrirais-tu l'attitude?

MB : C'est une présence très concentrée… il faut que tu y croies! Pour faire un truc comme ça, c'est peut-être ridicule, alors il faut vraiment que tu sois dans l'attitude… Je ne veux pas qu'on regarde mon visage, je ne suis que le manteau sonore.

OC : Je peux imaginer aussi que cette attitude est différente pour tout le monde, pour chaque pièce. Et je ne veux pas trop focaliser sur ces distinctions-là, mais je suis toujours dans un énorme questionnement par rapport à ce qu'est l'art audio, c'est très difficile à définir, et je ne veux pas avoir une définition absolue, mais est-ce que tu décrirais, ou, est-ce que tu décris «Sur le Manteau» comme une pièce d'art audio, comme une pièce musicale, ou comme une composition…

MB : C'est une performance sonore.

[Rire]

OC : Nouveau concept. Avec le reste.

MB : Ou une performance audio, aussi, ça serait pareil.

OC : Mais ce n'est pas comme un concert?

MB : Non.

OC : Pourquoi?

MB : Quand on étudie l'histoire de la performance, [on comprend que] c'est vraiment une question d'attitude, de présence physique. C'est une question d'être dans son corps, dans le moment présent; c'est un art vivant, c'est pas de la danse, pas du théâtre. Mais ton corps et ta présence c'est hyper important. En concert aussi, mais l'attitude est beaucoup moins importante. Tu peux être un musicien qui se cache derrière son ordi ou qui fume ou qui décroche et qui raccroche pendant une improvisation, par exemple. La musique n'en sera pas moins bonne, c'est moins important parce qu'à ce moment-là… c'est moins ton corps qui parle, c'est ton instrument, ta musique. Et c'est l'instrument même qui fait réagir ton corps en fait.

OC : On fait n'importe quoi qui est nécessaire pour avoir le son comme on veut, même si ça fait des gestes très difficiles au niveau physique pis, peut-être endommageant aussi. On n'est pas bien situé dans son corps, tandis qu'avec la danse il faut toujours que tu sois balancé…

MB : Et la performance je pense que c'est pareil. Même la respiration devient importante. C'est ça qui fait que les gens vont croire, vont être dans le développement de la pièce en même temps que l'artiste. C'est ce que je pense.

OC : Tu me fais réfléchir aussi, j'ai récemment présenté mon projet avec les microphones dans la glace [«The Icebreaker»] à New York à un festival surtout de danse, puis j'avais toute mon installation, tout mon équipement, mais mon affaire est assez complexe, pis c'est difficile à monter surtout parce que ce sont des morceaux de glace qui fondent très rapidement. Je n'ai pas eu beaucoup de temps pour répéter, surtout parce que le système était très complexe. Je focalisais beaucoup sur le système et sur l'équipement et arrivant sur la scène, j'ai réalisé que

l'auditoire attendait un genre de performativité, plutôt liée à la danse, tandis que moi j'étais un peu plus dans cette énergie d'un musicien qui faisait son affaire, donc c'est…

[phone ringing]

OC : Oh, c'est ton téléphone, je croyais que c'était la radio.

MB : Excuse-moi.

OC : Je vais prendre l'avantage pour vérifier que tout marche bien avec l'enregistreur.

MB : Allo?

OC : T'as dit que t'avais deux projets que tu voulais décrire…

MB : Il y avait une soirée de performance sonore que j'avais organisée avec Christoph Migone, quelqu'un qui utilise vraiment l'art sonore dans un contexte de performance, qui est très intéressant à mentionner. Le thème de ma performance était «honorable objet». J'étais habillée tout en blanc sur un mur blanc et je jouais dans un… mon instrument c'était un bol transparent dans lequel il y avait, ça s'appelle «fruits de Palms», je sais pas si tu connais ça? C'est un fruit asiatique qui se vend en conserves et ça vient dans un sirop très, très épais. C'est comme des lychees transparents dans un sirop translucide très épais. Dans mon bol sonore, j'en avais vidé plusieurs boites. Et ça, parce que c'est très gluant, très « stick », ça a une sonorité incroyable. C'est comme si tu entendais quelqu'un qui joue dans des entrailles, en même temps, c'est magnifique comme son. Je n'ai jamais rien retrouvé qui sonne comme ça. Donc, j'avais vraiment les mains dans ça et je faisais juste bouger un peu. C'était des sons organiques, mais très petits, très aigus et très vivants en même temps. C'était donc cette idée – d'être blanc sur blanc et de jouer avec quelque chose de translucide, mais d'hyper sonore. C'est une des premières performances que j'ai dû faire, en 1999 ou en 2000, qui était vraiment sur cet aspect… d'être dans l'action physique, mais aussi dans l'écoute parce que c'est aussi ça que je m'impose à ce moment-là. – l'attitude – comme un acte de foi et de concentration sur l'action qui donne à entendre. Même si ces performances-là sont vraiment écrites (c'est-à-dire : j'écris les éléments, je

sais ce que je veux faire, j'ai pratiqué les gestes un peu, je connais la matière) tout est aléatoire, parce qu'on sait pas comment ça va réagir. L'espace où je suis a souvent un grand impact sur la diffusion du son, l'acoustique du lieu, le nombre de spectateurs, la qualité du système de son sont tous des éléments qui influencent la diffusion du geste sonore spontané…Donc c'est important pour moi d'être hyper concentrée et de me laisser une petite part de surprise et une grande part de fascination et de découverte sur moment. Je suis très sensible aux sons, aux textures, aux infimes changements de fréquences et de sonorités. Dans le fond l'état dans lequel je suis vraiment, c'est l'état d'être moi-même, fascinée, absorbée dans l'écoute, et de donner à écouter aux autres.

OC : De donner à écouter aux autres.

MB : Oui.

OC : Comme cadeau ou …?

MB : Ça vient d'une autre réflexion que quelqu'un m'a faite aussi. Tu sais, je joue souvent en improvisation. Je travaille beaucoup avec des objets trouvés qui sont en métal, j'amplifie leur sonorité avec des micros contacts. Je fais juste amplifier finalement la manipulation – des gestes – j'interviens sur ces objets-là. Tous les objets sont sonores, j'ai développé une approche tactile avec eux que je nomme la géographie sonore des objets. Chaque surface explorée apporte son lot de régions, de zones que la manipulation rend sonore différemment. Le contour ou le centre d'un objet a des subtilités acoustiques très différentes et intéressantes à amplifier et à traiter. Ce qui me fascine, toujours, c'est qu'avec une gestuelle très minimale il est possible de créer une gamme incroyable de textures et de sonorités. Pis c'est ce que quelqu'un m'avait déjà dit… que c'était fascinant de me regarder toucher les objets… Parce que tu vois, mais tu es aussi dans l'écoute donc c'est vraiment presque de la kinesthésie, de donner à «voir» comme il y en a qui donnent à voir différemment, une peinture donne à voir différemment un paysage, mais moi, ce qu'on m'avait dit c'est que je donnais à entendre le son des choses. Tu vois?

OC : Oui, oui. Je vois très bien. J'aime beaucoup ça comme concept.

MB : C'est vraiment le fun, quand on m'avait dit ça, me suis dit, ouais c'est vrai !

C’est – et aussi ça fait partie de l’état de concentration – parce que vu que je suis fascinée moi-même par les découvertes sonores, ça rend fascinant le son de l’objet pour les gens… Ça fait aussi partie de ce qui est contagieux. Je pourrais être juste comme ça (fait le geste) puis m’en foutre complètement, mais comme je suis captée par ça, je vais être hyper fébrile à ne faire que ça à différents endroits sur l’objet. Et là, les gens deviennent dans l’attention que cela demande; que tel geste, telle zone ne soient vraiment pas pareils à celle-là, à une autre zone. Puis là, on est dans le très petit, dans le détail, et c’est ça qui est fabuleux.

OC : Encore, si on compare ça à un musicien qui est devant son instrument ou avec son instrument, c’est peut-être moins… on a moins tendance, comme auditoire, à vraiment observer ce qu’on écoute, sauf si on est aussi quelqu’un qui joue le même instrument.

MB : Mais aussi, je pense que visuellement, on a été conditionné à voir un guitariste qui fait ça avec ses doigts alors… On n’est pas conditionné à voir quelqu’un qui frotte ou qui gratte une boîte de métallique, tu sais? Les gens se demandent: «qu’est-ce qu’elle fait?» Quand tu parlais d’instruments, par exemple, moi je me suis créé ce que j’appelle mon instrumentarium, qui est comme ma quincaillerie, qui a toujours les mêmes objets « fétiches » avec lesquels je travaille et quand je fais de l’improvisation maintenant je pars avec mon petit paquet, ce sont mes instruments. Donc je joue avec ça comme avec une guitare ou avec un clavier…mais ce sont des objets différents: un couvercle, une boite, un pied de métal, des outils, des fouets de cuisine, et toute sorte de choses, d’objets de la vie de tous les jours, du quotidien, des choses trouvées par terre. Je les apprivoise souvent pour leur forme, pour leur texture, parce qu’il y en a qui sont rouillés, il y en a qui sont polis, pour toute la géographie qu’ils m’offrent. Tu sais? C’est comme des pays à moi avec différentes régions sonores. Je sais que tel objet a une résonance, puis l’autre n’en a pas… Donc tout ça, plus j’ai quelques effets électroniques…

OC : Comme?

MB : Je travaille beaucoup avec le Line 6. Originalement, il y a très longtemps, j'étais guitariste dans un groupe punk. Mes effets électroniques sont des effets analogiques pour guitare électrique. C'est très lo-fi. Ça fait vraiment partie de ma démarche, et encore plus maintenant. Aujourd'hui, je retourne dans les amplis à lampe, dans les vieux instruments, les trucs lo-fi total. J'aime cette chaleur, j'aime cette technologie ancienne. Ça fait partie de mon background, comment j'ai découvert la musique. Ce sont des effets de guitare qui font partie de mon petit set-up de base régulier. Je pourrais même te dire qu'à la limite, je me sens tout à fait musicienne avec ma quincaillerie. Personnellement, je peux jouer avec n'importe quel musicien, pourvu qu'il soit ouvert et sensible à la gamme des sonorités que je suis capable de créer.

Photo par: Mathilde Géromin

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Triture, performe, compose, improvise avec les bruits, le son, le son des bruits. Active dans le milieu de la scène musicale expérimentale et improvisée depuis les années 80, ***Magali Babin*** *développe un intérêt pour l'enregistrement des sons environnementaux, et de «ces sons que l'on n'entend plus, tant ils font partie de notre routine de vie». Le rapport au son ainsi que «la gestuelle des interactions sur l'objet» sont les aspects importants qui caractérisent ses compositions. On a pu entendre son travail ici et là: Mutek, Rien à voir, Suoni del popolo (Mtl), MoisMulti, Excavation sonore (Qc), send+receive (Winnipeg), Transmédiales (Berlin), Hight Zero (Usa), NewMusicFestival (Vancouver), Root Festival (Angleterre) http://www.magalibabin.com*


POLICE
COMMUNAUTÉ
URBAINE
DE MONTRÉAL

Conditions of Possibility: Police Violence as a Driver of Social Change

Evan Light

The Beginning, Last Year

Last year, my wife Joanne and I went to observe the annual March Against Police Brutality in Montréal. Moving through the city, the march was about 600 strong and reached the intersection of St-Denis and Mt-Royal. Here, the police decided to use a crowd control method called "kettling," whereby they surround a group of people, ostensibly until tempers (and bladders) boil over. Jo and I were behind the police line and were given a choice of walking back into the dozens of riot police or joining the surrounded crowd. When we asked what consequences these choices would have, the line was only repeated. Eventually, the cop I was arguing with grabbed me by the collar and threw me into the crowd. I made a police complaint, which went nowhere because I was unable to identify the man who violated my right to make an informed decision. And so we went again this year.

Impending

We arrived at 5pm on March 15, 2012 at Place Émilie-Gamelin, right by UQÀM, my university, and followed the hundreds-strong crowd for the beginning of the march. After going off for a while to check out a used bed, I returned at 7:30pm that night to retrieve my bicycle. Having no idea what had taken place over the previous hour and a half, I did a brief tour of the neighbourhood. The streets had been blocked off by police cars, but for no obvious reason. A small crowd of not quite 100 people was jeering at a group of maybe 30 police. It

seemed that things would quickly fizzle out if the cops just went home. When they launched pepper spray grenades at the small crowd, however, I decided it was time for me to split. It was then that I saw three or four vans full of police speed to the south end of the park, reminding me of what the chief of police had said in an interview the day before, that they only send in the real goons at the end. Time to head home and make supper.

Assaulted

Walking my bike up Berri, I turned to see people fleeing the park and riot cops in battle gear coming at me yelling "Bouge! Bouge! Bouge!" or "Move! Move! Move!" Seeing as I'd done nothing wrong, I decided to step aside. It was then that two cops came at me, one backhanding me at the base of my ribs with his club. What? Did this guy really just hit me? I freaked out and then calmly asked the guy with a camera next to me to zoom in on the helmet of the one who hit me. Now I had his badge number.

Moments later, everybody on the street was pushed by cops on all sides, yelling, pushing, whacking people with clubs. In the end, around 200 of us were kept kettled from 8pm until 11pm. During this time, at 8:47pm, the Montréal police tweeted that they were going to arrest us. Around 9pm, they told us officially that they were arresting us for contravention of a municipal by-law. Among us were tourists, people on their way to meet friends for supper, teenagers exiting the library, and demonstrators – all declared guilty without due process for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Nobody was ever read their rights. Over the next two hours, they took us one by one, handcuffed us with our hands behind our backs, frisked us, searched our belongings, transported us on city buses driven by city bus drivers to the Operation Centre-East at the extreme north-east end of Montréal. Here, we were again taken one by one, identified, and photographed. Told to stand against a brick wall with my hands tied behind my back, cops on each side to hold my "information sheet," while a third took pictures. And then I was told to turn around and face the wall, all while still handcuffed. I was given a ticket for $146. A bus dropped the lucky ones of us at a metro after midnight just in time for the last train. Other people were released at seemingly random spots in the city after 1am when the metro had closed.

Since I awoke in anger the following day, I've been calling media outlets and politicians, trying to speak for myself and others who are unable to for

whatever reason. For the most part, my voice has been a lonely one. Is it any surprise? How do you write down a badge number while you're being beaten or pepper-sprayed?

Removing One's Own Gag

This event took place one month into Québec's student strike. In the weeks since, the police have beaten and arrested countless individuals, both enforcing unjust laws and unjustly enforcing laws that pertain to everyday life. This week alone (April 16-22), over 300 people were arrested in student strike protests and protests against the Plan Nord. Rarely, though, are the individuals who are arrested and/or abused by the police ever asked – in the media, at least – about their experience. The result has been to create an echo chamber where the voice of authority is definitive and just.

Since I was the target of random police violence, I've realized that my voice was one of very few in the media other than the voice of authority. Clips from a CBC television interview were used in a report on *The National*, the public broadcaster's national news program. Joining me in describing what had happened were the mayor (disgusted with the violence on the part of protesters), the chief of police (proud of his officers who have a very physically demanding job), and the president of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (explaining that this is all very normal).

In the weeks since this all happened, I've only had the chance to speak with two of the people who were kettled and arrested with me. One of them, a 50-something ex-con who marches against police brutality every year because he's been a target of it repeatedly, had not previously spoken with anybody about his experience that night. His silence, and our collective silence is a problem. That said, the way police violence in Québec tends to be spoken about is a problem, too. All of us – citizens, activists, government, police – repeatedly buy into an Us vs. Them dichotomy, each side standing proudly beside their version of the truth, of justice, of what is right.

Unique Conditions for Change

With a convergence of social movements in Québec today, we have the opportunity to bring about radical social change, to use police violence against itself as a driver of social change. It is obvious that our society is demanding changes in other domains: 200,000 in the streets to support the

student movement; 35,000 for a family-oriented student movement march; 300,000 for Earth Day. We've become accustomed to speaking out about these injustices. The more we speak out about police violence, the better we will get at speaking about it. For now, though, it remains taboo. For now, we cling to a narrative where the presumed-guilty are regularly abused by a set of people who, thanks to their professional function, are of a purportedly higher ethical class. Cops versus students, cops versus activists, cops versus anarchists. We need to get beyond these tired patterns and humanize what is really going on, begin to understand each other as brothers, sisters, neighbours, children, parents, grandparents. In a democratic state, these police are my police, our police, and also our neighbours, and we should be able to do something about they way they act. We need to reconcile and repair.

This Concerns You

I think many, if not most, people ignore things like this. I know I did. Pressed with too many other responsibilities and having been active in the previous two student strikes (in 2009 and 2005), I'd decided to sit this strike out. I wanted to get out of the way before the situation got violent. I saw cops harassing people but kept going on my way, "urgent" everyday things to attend to. Not my business. Not your problem. But it is.

The Montréal police can, by law, declare any public assembly a “risk to the peace of the public domain” and proceed to arrest anybody in the vicinity for the simple crime of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. This is thanks to Montréal city by-law P-6, article 2. One not need even be a participant. How many thousands of us have been swept up in random dragnet mass arrests in the past 40 years? How many people have been whacked by a policeman’s truncheon for no good reason and have been unable to do anything about it?

Talk with your friends and family, bring the shame and fury of police violence out into the open like any other sort of abuse. If we begin to call it what it is, violent abuse rather than proper procedure, we may be able to start a real conversation about how to change things. Otherwise, they are bound to remain the same.

*Originally from the Pine Barrens of New Jersey, **Evan Light** has called Montréal chez lui since 1995. Active in community radio for close to 20 years, Evan is a PhD student in communication at the Université du Québec à Montréal where he does research on the radio spectrum and participatory democracy. His current projects are learning to fish, farm and forage and fight back.*