

no more potlucks

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Editorial

*Mél Hogan + M-C MacPhee*  
4-7

## Measure the time taken

*Anna Friz*  
8-11

## Interview de la réalisatrice Marie-Pierre Grenier du documentaire I Still Love Them (Je les aime encore)

*Virginie Jourdain*  
12-21

## The Museum of Found Objects

*Sameer Farooq & Mirjam Linschooten*  
22-43

## If the Record Could Change

*Dina Georgis & Alexis Mitchell*  
44-51

## On s'en câlisse, La loi spéciale: The Music Festival that Wasn't

*Carrie Rentschler*  
52-59

## No Tears

*Cecilia Berkovic*  
60-71

## "Listening to Ray Bradbury's Mars": A Conversation with Christof Migone

*Marc Weidenbaum*  
72-85

## 'F\*ck-ing the Record': On Year 7 of the Feminist Porn Awards

*Bobby Noble*  
86-93

## Places Where I've Fuck'd

*Vincent Chevalier*  
94-101

## A Record of "Lesbian Bedrooms": An Interview with Photographer Kyle Lasky

*NMP*  
102-111

## Stranger Than ///Friction: An Interview with Claire Kenway

*Andrea Zeffiro*  
112-129

# EDITORIAL

This is the *Record* issue.

*Record* as in:

*An official account.*

*A disk designed to be played on a phonograph.*

*To set down for preservation.*

*To make permanent.*

*To register.*

*To go on record,  
to speak off record,  
to have a good track record,  
to hold the world record...*

In this 22nd issue:

Sameer Farooq & Mirjam Linschooten showcase images from *The Museum of Found Objects: Istanbul (2010)* and *The Museum of Found Objects: Toronto (2011)*. Taking the shape of a pop up museum, this piece explores fixity, looting, dispersion and ephemerality.

Virginie Jourdain discute avec Marie-Pierre Grenier, la réalisatrice de la vidéo *I still love them (Je les aime encore)*.

Carrie Rentschler's *On s'en câlisse, La loi spéciale: The Music Festival that Wasn't* comes from an important open-wi issue of [wi: journal of mobile media](#) on the Quebec student strike (*Out of the Mouths of "Casseroles": Textes qui bougent au rythem du carré rouge*), documenting the ongoing demonstrations and the odious Bill 78. This issue was edited by: Kim Sawchuk, Owen Chapman, Alison Reiko Loader, Magda Olszanowski, and Ben Spencer.

*If the Record Could Change* is a conversation between cultural theorist Dina Georgis and video artist Alexis Mitchell. Mitchell's 2010 video *CAMP* looks at the architectural space of the camp (with a camp aesthetic) to discuss contemporary Jewish culture and political involvement.

Anna Friz showcases three audio pieces created as part of an ongoing exploration about time-keeping and recording, the perception and standardization of time, and radio: *Uncoordinated Universal Time; Wide; The Waltz of the Parking Meters* (with Eric Leonardson). Grab your headphones.

For the past three years, Vincent Chevalier kept a 'little black blog' consisting of images from his essay project *Places Where I've Fuck'd*. In his own words, this essay "examines how the act of recording his sexual history functions as a gesture in which the self is put into play through an encounter with an apparatus of disclosure."

In *'F\*ck-ing the Record': On Year 7 of the Feminist Porn Awards*, Bobby Noble encourages us to think through the feminist-ness and porn-ness of feminist porn, using the Feminist Porn Awards as site of inquiry.

Marc Weidenbaum interviews Christof Migone about his installation titled: *The Rise and Fall of the Sounds and Silence from Mars*. This is Migone's 2010 sonic excavation of Ray Bradbury's classic science fiction novel, *The Martian Chronicles*.

NMP superstar Andrea Zeffiro sits down with artist/DJ/imaginatrice Claire Kenway to discuss one of her most recent works, *////Friction*, which straddles underground electronic music and cycling cultures.

Cecelia Berkovic's presents an excerpt from her book *No Tears* created to commemorate the life of her friend and fellow artist Will Munro. A version of this book was included in the exhibition *Will Munro: History, Glamour, Magic* at the Art Gallery of York University this past winter. Keep your eyes peeled for the print run of *No Tears* which will also include haikus by past NMP contributor, Jon Davies.

NMP was very happy to have the opportunity to interview cover photographer Kyle Lasky about the photo series *Lesbian Bedrooms I and II*. Lasky's work explores gender, identity, feminism, and queerness.

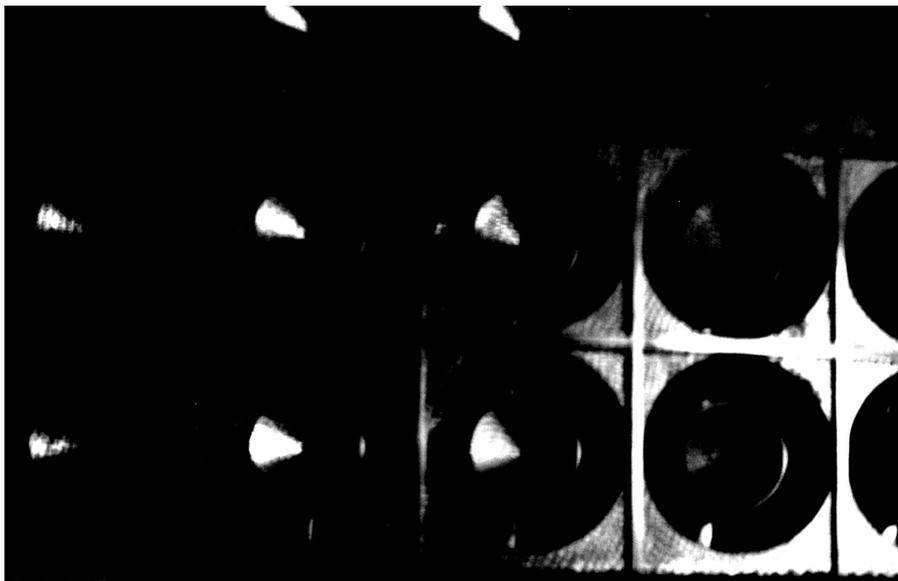
Look for Owen Chapman's final piece(s) from his series of interviews with audio/sound artists, in the last issue of NMP for 2012.

We would also like to remind you that Heather Davis will be our special guest editor for our next (sept/oct issue), themed Dirt. We're very excited.

NMP will be presenting a paper as part of the *Opening the Archives* panel at Console-ing Passion in Boston this month. The presentation will offer up a kind of media archaeology of NMP, digging into files from 2003 to the present. This excavation project is intended to both locate and trace the project's trajectory and reflect on the possibilities and limitations of looking back. ~~We'll be sure to post a link to that paper when it's done.~~ (ED note: The paper is parked here, in draft form: <http://melhogan.com/website/opening-the-archives-console-ing-passions-2012-boston>)



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ELECTRIC

# Measure The Time Taken

Anna Friz

*These three were pieces created as part of an ongoing exploration about the perception and standardization of time through time keeping and recording, and radio. They explore the continuous, irregular present, suspended and stretched through habit and drift, and measured against the Futurist dream of time overcome.*

\* These pieces are best heard on headphones \*

## **1. Uncoordinated Universal Time**

I have spent years listening to and sampling that curious device, the cesium clock (or atomic time), broadcast on shortwave radio around the world and currently the basis for coordinated universal time on all wireless and networked devices. The first time I heard it was at CiTR radio, a campus/community station in Vancouver. The news room had a shortwave radio, and one dull afternoon some of the volunteers found the cesium clock ticking away at 15,000 AM, broadcast from Hawaii. I have been sampling this clock every since. Taken together, the relentless ticking, the sometimes overlapping voices intoning the minute and the hour, and the intermittent but rigorously issued tones are an uncanny sonic artifact of mid-century modernity. Here I have taken some liberties to nudge the clock a little off base. Recorded in studio at Kunstradio Ö1, a weekly radio art program heard on the Austrian national cultural channel, December 2011; remixed May 2012.



\* These pieces are best heard on headphones \*

## 2. Wide

This piece is inspired by performer/musician Blixa Bargeld's comment that his industrial band Einstürzende Neubauten could be described as primarily playing with time. I was also thinking about Laurie Anderson's question in "Same Time Tomorrow," from her 1994 release, "Bright Red/Tightrope": "Is time long, or is it wide?" I decided to try width on for size, with the help of a sruti box with a broken reed. Recorded in studio at Kunstradio Ö1, December 2011.

## 3. The Waltz of the Parking Meters

This is an excerpt from a larger audio art piece created together with Chicago-based sound artist/musician Eric Leonardson, entitled "Dancing Walls Stir the Prairie.". I am interested in how the institutionalization of time gives rise to specific forms of metering. Of course, the time on the street is rarely synchronized in the end, as the devices, like people, tend to drift. Recorded at the free103point9 Wave Farm, spring 2007.

*Anna Friz is a Canadian sound and radio artist, and media studies scholar. Since 1998 she has created audio art and radiophonic works for international broadcast, installation, or performance in more than 15 countries. She specializes in multi-channel transmission systems for immersive installation and performance, where radio is the source, subject, and medium of the work. She also composes and designs sound for theatre, dance, and film. Recent projects include "Heart As Arena", for Dana Gingras/ Animals of Distinction, and "Road Movie", for Elle Flanders and Tamira Sawatzky/ Public Studio. Anna is currently an FQR post-doctoral fellow in the Sound department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2011-2013), and holds a Ph.D. in Communication and Culture from York University, Toronto. She is a [free103point9.org](http://free103point9.org) transmission artist.*

Website: <http://nicelittlestatic.com>



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<http://vimeo.com/35906631>

# Je les aime toujours...

## entretien avec la réalisatrice Marie-Pierre Grenier

*Virginie Jourdain*

**Virginie Jourdain: Lors du premier visionnement de ton très beau documentaire, je me souviens qu'il a fait l'unanimité dans le public, je crois qu'on ne peut pas ne pas l'aimer ton film et surtout ne pas aimer Michel. C'est vraiment cet attachement au personnage qui m'a profondément marquée. Avec toutes les contradictions possibles avec lui qui n'a rien de lisse et de politiquement correct. Ce film est-il parti d'un projet spécifique ou d'une rencontre au hasard avec Michel ?**

Marie-Pierre Grenier: D'abord, le film entier a été créé sur une période de quatre mois dans un contexte scolaire, à l'INIS. Au départ, je voulais faire un film sur les lesbiennes âgées en perte d'autonomie qui doivent effacer leur passé/présent amoureux par crainte d'exclusion (de la part du personnel et des usagers) dans les résidences pour personnes âgées. Je me suis donc lancée à la recherche de femmes prêtes à partager leur expérience à la caméra mais sans succès. C'était un peu naïf de ma part de croire que ces femmes seraient prêtes s'exposer comme ça quand certaines ne s'affichent même pas devant leur famille ou leur entourage...

À travers mes recherches, on m'a donné le contact de Michel. Il n'avait évidemment pas du tout le profil que je cherchais mais j'ai décidé de le rencontrer quand même,

en pensant qu'il me mènerait à d'autres personnes. Après avoir bu deux verres de vin en sa compagnie un dimanche matin, j'étais, si on peut dire, tombée sous le charme.

**VJ: La première scène d'ouverture résume assez bien le film en lui même, on y parle de baise et de mort à la fois, un monologue mélancolique, couché sur le lit qui a connu plus de 60 années de vices... Entouré des photos des conquêtes féminines comme un tableau de chasse. C'est là tout le paradoxe de Michel, aussi attachant qu'énervant avec son côté "j ai baisé la planète". Penses-tu que Michel est un anti-héro parfait? Lui-même considérant son parcours et sa vie avec vraisemblablement beaucoup de modestie.**

MPG: J'ai de la difficulté à considérer Michel comme un personnage donc l'idée d'anti-héro ne m'a pas vraiment traversé l'esprit. Mais en fait, avec une caméra et un brin de sensibilité, je pense que l'on peut transformer presque tout le monde en anti-héro dépendamment des facettes de la personnalité que l'on décide de montrer. On a tous un potentiel attachant et émotif mais il y a toujours des zones moins jolies, des traits dont on est moins fier. Après, c'est plus une question de dosage et surtout de respect du sujet au montage.

**VJ: C'est assez bien ficelé dans l'écriture de ton film pour arriver à passer de la baise à la simple nécessité d'être "accompagné". Loin d'être un film à simple lecture queer il parle plutôt d'un parcours de vie et du non accompagnement des trans/queer/lgbt vieillissants. Est-ce de ça dont tu voulais parler ? Quel était le message primordial ? Si tu en avais un à faire passer.**

MPG: Oui, c'était d'ailleurs la prémisse de départ du projet mais à force de discuter avec Michel, j'ai réalisé que je devais pousser le mandat du film beaucoup plus loin. Ça a d'ailleurs été assez difficile au montage de se restreindre dans les sujets abordés. J'avais une limite imposée de 13 minutes pour la durée du film mais lorsqu'on a devant nous une personne de quatre-vingt ans qui connaît un grand pan de l'histoire lgbtq québécoise, qui parle ouvertement de sexe, d'amour, de

vieillesse, qui redéfinit les genres et qui parle de la vie et de ses difficultés avec une telle lucidité, ce n'est pas évident d'arriver à faire un film qui rend honneur à toute sa complexité. La trame de fond est son amour inconditionnel pour les femmes mais par un choix stratégique des segments, j'ai essayé de faire ressortir certaines de ces pistes de réflexion. Par exemple, j'ai refusé mettre l'emphase sur le fait qu'il soit transgenre. Je voulais que le public ait à le comprendre par lui-même, question d'essayer un peu de lui faire perdre l'habitude de prendre pour acquis le genre d'une personne.

**VJ: En tant que gouine et féministe, j ai dû faire face à la terrible contradiction de devoir admettre que j'aimais ce personnage aussi "macho" soit-il. Tout d'abord parce qu'il va plus loin que les personnages de films de fiction ou documentaires lgbt/queer très didactiques pour la plupart. Et ensuite? Pourquoi tu/on l'aime tant finalement quand on regarde le film ou quand on le rencontre?**

MPG: Premièrement, je suis contente d'entendre dire que *Je les aime encore* n'est pas didactique. Il y a sûrement une place et un besoin pour ce type d'approche mais je trouve que souvent, ça ne sert pas vraiment le propos. Selon moi, que ce soit un film de fiction ou un documentaire, ça reste du cinéma. Ce que l'on cherche, c'est de toucher le public en racontant une histoire et cela s'applique aussi aux films qui comportent une thématique lgbtq. J'aurais pu décider d'avoir une approche plus académique, mais le film n'aurait sûrement pas voyagé autant hors du circuit des festivals lgbtq. Au final, suis assez contente d'avoir fait ce choix parce que le témoignage de Michel s'est rendu dans des oreilles qui n'étaient pas préalablement "converties".

Ensuite, si l'on réussit à aller au delà du côté macho, dur ou provocateur de Michel c'est grâce à sa grande sensibilité, sa vulnérabilité et malgré ce que certaines personnes peuvent croire, son respect envers les femmes. D'ailleurs dans le film, chaque fois qu'il dit quelque chose à faire dresser le poil, il se reprend aussitôt pour expliquer de manière plus sensée la raison de tels propos. Puis, il est drôle. Il n'y a

rien de mieux qu'une bonne dose d'humour cinglant pour nous faire tomber sous le charme de quelqu'un non? Et finalement, sans vouloir excuser son machisme, il faut aussi mettre en perspective que Michel est né en 1930, dans un contexte social assez différent du nôtre où les rôles d'une personne étaient clairement définis par son genre..

**VJ: Ton film montre que notre "contexte queer" ne fait pas légion, que la vie de Michel prouve que notre génération n'a pas le monopole de la subversion du genre. Se définir comme "Fucké" = ni femme, ni homme, ni lesbienne, ni trans mais "fucké.." c'est vraiment une résolution radicale. Penses-tu que l'on peut lire l'identité de Michel sous la loupe "queer ». Ou ce n'est pas du tout approprié ?**

MPG: En fait, Michel est transgenre. Ce n'est pas dit textuellement dans le film pour éviter les étiquettes mais aussi pour refléter sa tendance à jouer avec les genres de la même manière qu'il s'amuse à renommer les personnes qu'il rencontre. Par exemple, Stéphanie la camérawoman s'appelait désormais Françoise tandis que moi j'étais son Grand frère Peter. Il y a juste la preneure de son qui a gardé son vrai nom.

Mais c'est intéressant de savoir que ça ne fait que quelques années qu'il se définit en tant que transgenre. Avant d'avoir entendu ce mot à la radio, le seul terme à sa connaissance qui se rapprochait un peu de lui était "butch". J'admire beaucoup qu'une personne de son âge puisse décider de redéfinir son identité. Mais pour revenir au contexte historique de tout à l'heure (et je dis cela sous toute réserve sans un bac en gender studies sous le bras!) j'ai l'impression que dans les années '60-'70, le concept *queer* ou même *trans* au Québec n'avait pas encore vraiment sa place. C'était la première grande vague féministe et l'émancipation du mouvement lesbien. Le combat était ailleurs et il n'est pas difficile d'imaginer qu'à l'époque, il dû avoir plusieurs prises de tête avec certaines féministes plus radicales refusant d'utiliser un pronom masculin en s'adressant à lui. C'était une autre époque.

**VJ: Ton film prend pour décor un appartement québécois, avec un contexte de narration très québécois. Montréal, Québec, La Tuque... Penses-tu que le contexte québécois soit spécifique ? Connais-tu l'histoire des luttes lgbt/queer au Québec ? Penses-tu que Michel aurait pu vivre la même vie un peu partout dans le monde ?**

MPG: Un peu partout dans le monde je ne crois pas, considérant que dans plusieurs pays encore l'homosexualité peut mener jusqu'à la peine de mort... Mais je ne crois pas que ce soit particulièrement spécifique au Québec par contre. Il ne faut pas oublier que jusqu'en 1969, on envoyait les homosexuels en prison et que jusque dans les années soixante-dix, une personne ayant des relations sexuelles avec quelqu'un du même sexe risquait l'internement en psychiatrie où certains cas ont carrément subi une lobotomie. Ensuite allez essayer de leur expliquer que vous n'êtes pas nés dans le bon corps... Non, je pense que c'est plutôt grâce à la personnalité extrêmement forte de Michel qu'il a pu vivre sa vie de manière aussi "libre".

**VJ: Cette proximité régionale rend ce film encore plus virulent dans notre propre regard sur la "communauté" et notre désintérêt global pour les lgbtq vieillissant-e-s. Ça permet de tirer une sonnette d'alarme, de prendre conscience de notre abandon d'une partie de la population queer (ou pas) et de notre devoir de solidarité et de sororité. Je trouve qu'il y a une vraie forte lecture féministe de ton film avec cette conscience du matrimoine et de la nécessité de se serrer les coudes. Au delà d'une conception essentialiste (pas de sororité de femmes ni de lesbiennes ici) et d'écouter la réalité de vie de nos grands-mères-pères symboliques. Peut-on faire une lecture militante de ton film ? Ton film n'est-il pas d'ailleurs une métaphore de ce matrimoine lgbt/queer dont-il faut prendre soin ?**

MPG: Oui, bien sûr que l'on peut en faire une lecture militante si on veut. C'est certain que je trouverais bien que l'on se bouge un peu et que l'on quitte notre petite zone de confort pour essayer de recréer notre "grande famille choisie". Tout

le monde aurait avantage à tisser ces liens intergénérationnels. Ce sont quand même ces personnes qui ont brisé le silence et sont montées aux barricades les premières. Elles méritent un certain respect et une grande reconnaissance... De toute façon, je pense que chaque génération a à apprendre et à enseigner à l'autre, tous âges confondus.

**VJ: Le travelling en fauteuil à moteur nous permet de voir que tu n'as pas gardé une posture de "réalisatrice" neutre et "à côté" de son sujet. Tu t'es toi-même impliquée en tant qu' "accompagnatrice" de Michel, du moins le temps du film. C'était un parti pris de départ en amorçant ce projet ou tu t'es toi-même laissée aller à développer une amitié et un lien affectif avec Michel? Son charme légendaire a-t-il opéré sur toi sans que tu le maîtrise ?**

MPG: Haha! Non, le choix d'apparaître à l'image s'est fait en cours de route. Premièrement, je ne voulais pas le laisser seul à l'écran. C'était mon premier film et je ne me faisais pas entièrement confiance. J'avais peur qu'il soit perçu comme un animal de foire que l'on observe. Après coup, j'ai réalisé que ça n'aurait pas été nécessaire mais en même temps, cela m'a permis d'avoir des moments de complicité qui ne se seraient pas retrouvés dans le film et on aurait perdu une partie du côté charmant et drôle de Michel. En plus, ma présence est venue établir ce fameux pont générationnel qui me tenait tant à coeur.

**VJ: Avec en filigrane beaucoup d'humour et parfois un peu de lubricité, le parcours de Michel reste un parcours de combat contre l'ordre moral, l'institution du savoir (aller à l'école pour draguer les filles), l'institution de l'église (y aller en homme et faire ses confessions de coucherie au curé) et évidemment l'institution du mariage (Michel a sûrement couché avec toutes les épouses de La Tuque et d'ailleurs). Pourtant il paraît très loin d'un discours militant ou politique, est-ce par désintérêt de sa part ? Hmmm intéressant!... Parce qu'il passait tellement bien pour un homme il a fait moins de vague (?)..il a jamais revendiqué le fait d'être lesbienne, il a pas de mot pour se qualifier, il a pas appartenu à une « communauté » spécifique..parce qu'il n'y**

**en avait pas dans son temps (?)...Du coup, une autre question que j'aimerais poser à Michel c'est comment il vivrait sa vie de « fucké » dans le contexte d'aujourd'hui??? est-ce qu'il s'affilierait à un groupe en particulier ou, comme tu dit, il n'a pas d'intérêt envers le milieu lgbtq et ce qu'il défend, nous on lui prête un discours militant mais lui??**

MPG: Michel serait la meilleure personne pour répondre à cette question. Mais ce que je peux dire, c'est qu'il a fait le choix de toujours vivre sa vie de la manière dont il l'entend, sans crainte et sans remord. Si cela implique de prendre la parole en tant que lesbienne à Radio-Canada en 1977 parce qu'il n'a pas peur des représailles, il va le faire. Même chose pour *Je les aime encore*. Quand il a accepté de faire le film, il m'a dit: "si ça peut aider d'autres personnes âgées à vivre mieux avec elles-même, je vais le faire". Bien sûr, il y a aussi une part d'intérêt personnel là-dedans, qui oserait prétendre le contraire... Je ne pense pas qu'il soit tant conscient de son militantisme, mais le simple fait d'avoir vécu toute sa vie comme il l'a fait et de continuer à le faire, je considère qu'il fait définitivement sa part!

**VJ: Comment interprètes-tu sa remarque que tu as gardé au montage : « lesbienne c'est laid », est-ce pour toi générationnel ? ou de l'homophobie intégrée ?...**

MPG: Hmm, c'est difficile à dire, mais dans ce contexte-çi, il parle du mot en tant que tel. De sa sonorité. Il n'est pas entrain de juger ou de dénigrer le fait que quelqu'un soit lesbienne. Moi, c'est un extrait qui me donne toujours un petit sourire en coin pendant les projections devant public parce que, sonorement, je comprends ce qu'il veut dire... mais il y a automatiquement des réactions.

**VJ: Que reste-t-il de ton expérience de cinéaste pour ce film ? Ce projet a-t-il ouvert la voie à d'autres problématiques pour ton travail de réalisatrice ? Sur quoi travailles-tu en ce moment ?**

MPG: Oh, en deux ans, j'ai arrêté de compter le nombre de remises en questions reliées à ce projet et surtout son éventuelle suite! Car après avoir fait ce petit 13 minutes, j'en voulais évidemment plus... J'avais tellement l'impression de n'avoir qu'effleuré le sujet. Michel a encore tellement d'histoires à raconter et de réflexions à partager. J'ai donc continué le tournage pour avoir assez de matériel pour en faire un film d'une heure. Mais j'ai réalisé que n'est pas toujours facile d'étirer un projet sur une si longue période. J'ai eu le temps de retourner dans tous les sens possibles la question des limites de l'implication entre la réalisatrice et son sujet. Il y a aussi la question du financement en documentaire qui peut parfois faire mourir le projet dans l'oeuf à force d'attendre les dates de dépôt, les réponses, etc. On garde toujours contact et ce n'est pas impossible que je continue de tourner d'autres scènes avec lui. Mais après avoir grugé tous les ongles qu'il me restait sur ce projet, j'ai pris la décision de ne plus me mettre de pression et d'y aller avec le *flow*. On verra bien. Et puis pendant ce temps, entre mes contrats de conception sonore, je travaille à l'écriture de d'autres projets. Mais j'apprend lentement à ne pas parler de choses qui ne sont pas encore concrétisées donc c'est secret encore... hehe.

**VJ: En tout cas ce film ouvre un champ de réflexion sur nos propres normes de queer Montréalais-e-s confortables et bien pensant-e-s, avec nos carcans, nos prétentions de subvertir l'ordre établi et d'être libre. Je pense que le déterminisme de « fucked » reste un des meilleurs outils linguistiques entendus depuis longtemps. Ça donne envie d'aller manger du canard du Lac Brome avec ce vieux macho de Michel. On y va ?**

MPG: Merci pour ces mots justes et ces commentaires et analyses oh combien pertinentes!

Pour ce qui est de manger avec Michel, j'y vais juste si y'a du Mock Duck du Lac Brôme! Haha!

**\*La vidéo *Je les aime encore* sera présentée lors du festival de Fierté Montréal le 13 août, 2012.**

**Virginie Jourdain.** Artiste et coordonnatrice des expositions à La Centrale, centre d'artistes féministe à Montréal. Elle est aussi commissaire d'expositions abordant l'activisme culturel transpédégouine et féministe, et une des membres de la collective Dyke Rivers qui a participé jusqu'en 2009 à des projets de performances et d'expositions queer et féministes à travers l'Europe. À Montréal depuis quelques années, elle continue de privilégier la forme collective comme mode de production artistique à travers différents projets d'installations, de publications et de performances. <http://www.lacentrale.org/membre/virginie-jourdain>

**Marie-Pierre Grenier** est conceptrice sonore mais depuis toujours fascinée par le documentaire, elle entreprit des études à l'INIS. En automne 2010, son travail fut récompensé par l'attribution du prix ONF/INIS – meilleur espoir canadien en cinéma documentaire suite à la réalisation de son premier film, *Je les aime encore*.



# The Museum of Found Objects

Sameer Farooq & Mirjam Linschooten

*Left are images from Sameer Farooq & Mirjam Linschooten's **The Museum of Found Objects: Istanbul (2010)** and **The Museum of Found Objects: Toronto (2011)**.*

*The text is: **Endnotes: Annotations to the Museum of Found Objects** which was published in Sameer Farooq & Mirjam Linschooten's Toronto publication written by Haema Sivanesan curator and current Executive Director at Centre A (Vancouver International Centre for Contemporary Asian Art), and past Executive Director at SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre). The text clearly contextualizes and draws theoretical connections about and between both projects.*

**1. The Museum of Found Objects (Museum of Found Objects) is a “pop-up museum”, the idea of which is a paradox.**

**2. The Museum of Found Objects is a collection of contemporary cultural artefacts that only exists as a collection for a short period of time.**

**3. This museum does not have a fixed building or exhibition space. It is not a repository, and its contents are regularly dispersed so that the museum itself is ephemeral.**



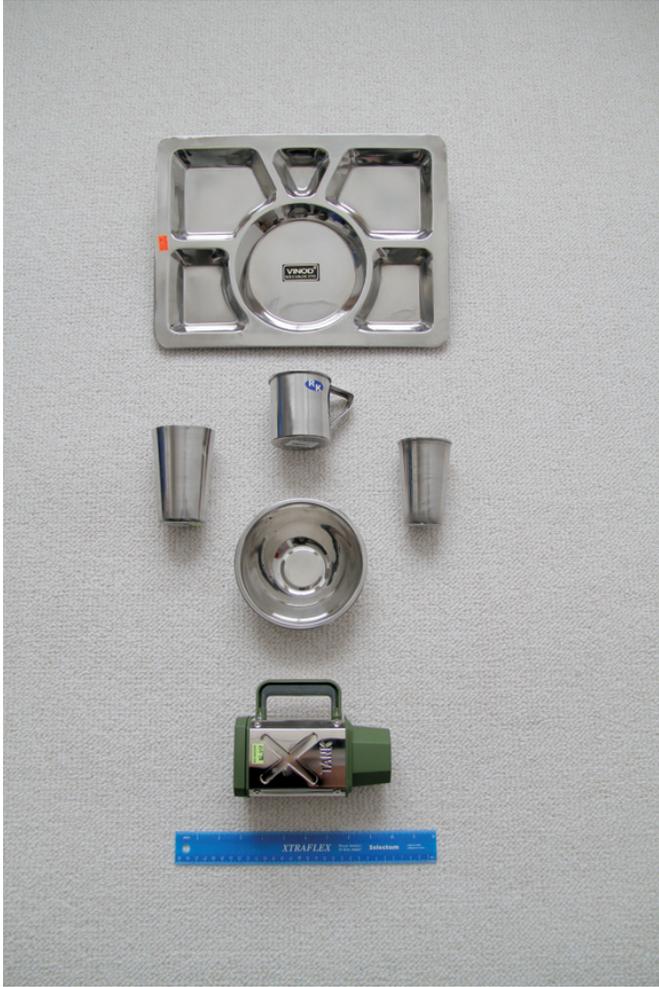
4. If a museum is generally understood as an “institution that houses and cares for [curates] a collection of artefacts and other objects of scientific, artistic, or historical importance and makes them available for public viewing...” [“Museum” – *Wikipedia*, the free encyclopedia. Accessed July 15, 2011], *The Museum of Found Objects* challenges assumptions about what constitutes the artistic or historical artefact and how their importance is defined or canonised by the historiographic, anthropological or scientific underpinnings of the museum. It reflects on history formalistically and insofar that the institution of the museum is itself a construct of a history that requires critical attention.

5. The objects in *The Museum of Found Objects* are typically ordinary objects in everyday circulation. These objects may not have a ready cultural value, or be traditionally considered as objects of aesthetic or critical contemplation. *The Museum of Found Objects* thereby examines the means by which objects acquire value.

6. *The Museum of Found Objects* is a formal setting for the display of selected everyday objects. The collections of *The Museum of Found Objects* seek to reflect on the quotidian experiences of increasingly consumerist, rapidly globalising urban societies. The collections of *The Museum of Found Objects* are not intended to be definitive, but they evoke hidden or unexpected aspects of a place or city.

7. As a series of documented collections, *The Museum of Found Objects* is an artistic intervention. It does not propose to reinvent the museum, instead it is a provocation — to both the museum and its audiences.

8. *The Museum of Found Objects* subverts the “aura” and authority of the museum setting to challenge how knowledge about culture is constructed and canonised by the institution of the museum. [“Museums were housed in palatial or temple-like structures that made the man on the street feel uncomfortable and discouraged his attendance...” Mary Alexander and Edward



Porter Alexander *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums* (Plymouth: AltaMira Press, 2008), 9.]

**9. *The Museum of Found Objects* examines the criteria by which cultural objects are ascribed a value, asking audiences to recognise that the value and meaning of objects are not fixed or static, that culture is dynamic and part of our everyday lives.** [See for example, Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), where Appadurai argues that the meaning of objects is relative and acquired through processes of social negotiation: “value ... is never an inherent property of objects but a judgement made about them by subjects”, p3. Richard Davis, *The Lives of Indian Images* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999) who demonstrates, by tracing the ‘biographies’ of objects, how the meanings of certain objects have changed over the course of history according to social, political and economic factors.]

**10. *The Museum of Found Objects* proposes a notion of the museum as a site of dynamic exchange and active participation where the objects themselves situate social and discursive exchanges.** [“By thinking of their missions as contact work — decentred and traversed by cultural and political negotiations that are out of any imagined community’s control - museums may begin to grapple with the real difficulties of dialogue, alliance, inequality and translation.” James Clifford, ed., ‘Museums as Contact Zones’ in *Routes, Travel and Translation in the Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 192.]

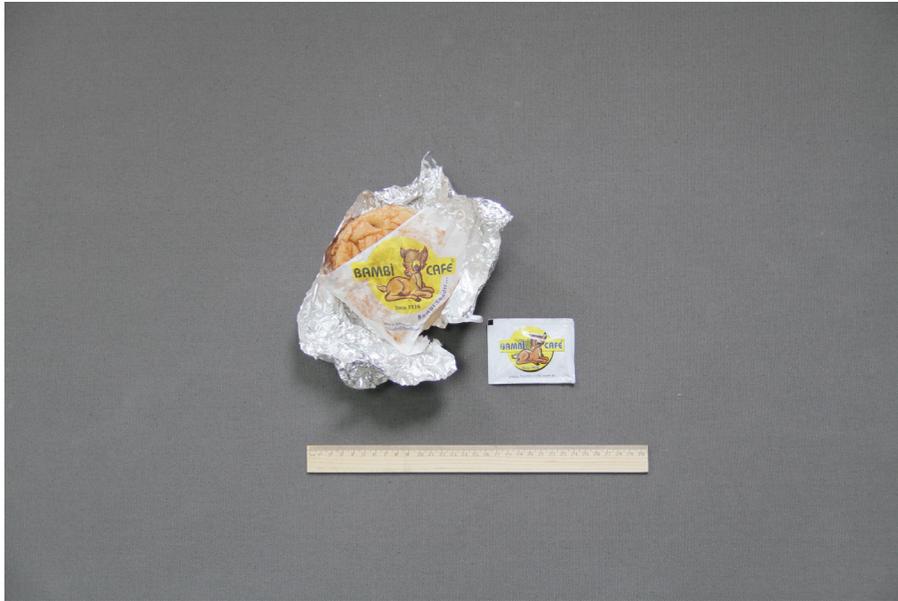
**11. *The Museum of Found Objects* proposes that a sense of wonder can emerge from our everyday experiences. This proposition owes a legacy to the French thinker Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) who theorised the notion of the quotidian as an ontological category. As well as to the Situationists who formulated a methodology of *dérive* to consciously encounter and experience the varied ambiances of the urban landscape. And to Michel de Certeau who examined the individualised experience of urban forms and mass culture. While these**



**theoretical discourses, which have ready currency amongst artists, lay the groundwork for *Museum of Found Objects*' work** [See for example Stephen Johnstone, *The Everyday*. (London and Cambridge, Massachusetts: Whitechapel and The MIT Press, 2008) or Jonathan Watkins, *Every Day* (Sydney: Biennale of Sydney, 1998)], **the project also draws out a set of problematics related to the role of museums in a post-colonial era.** [See for example, Moira G Simpson, *Making Representations: Museums in the Post-Colonial Era*, (London: Routledge, 1996).]

**12. *The Museum of Found Objects* examines and critiques the museological paradigm and the apparent authority with which it represents cultures — specifically non-western cultures that have known a history of colonisation and their problematic relationship to the authoritative, indeed colonising, framework of the museum. In this sense *The Museum of Found Objects* problematises the Eurocentricism underlying the institution of the museum, seeking to unsettle and thereby critique its colonising authority.** [“Society will no longer tolerate institutions that either in fact or in appearance serve a minority audience of the elite” Duncan F. Cameron, Director of The Brooklyn Museum quoted in Simpson, *Making Representations*, 7.]

**13. Yet *The Museum of Found Objects* seeks to restore the sense of wonder associated with nineteenth- century cabinets of curiosities (eg the *wunderkammer* or *ajajib ghar*), capturing the imagination of visitors and inspiring a sense of discovery. *The Museum of Found Objects* describes the potential of museums as being one to inspire the imagination of visitors. It critiques the didacticism of museums, and invites inventive and creative modes of knowledge exchange.** [See Stephen Greenblatt “Resonance and Wonder” in Ivan Karp and Steven Levine *Exhibiting Cultures* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 42-53. See also John Walsh, Director Emeritus, J Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, addresses this aspect of museum experience through a reading of James Elkins book, *Pictures and Tears: A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings*, in the essay “Pictures, Tears, Lights, and Seats” in *Whose Muse: Art Museums and the Public Trust*, ed. James Cuno, ed., (Princeton and Oxford, and Cambridge,



Massachusetts: Princeton University Press and Harvard University Art Museums, 2004), 77-101.]

**14. In Toronto, *The Museum of Found Objects* was presented at the Art Gallery of Ontario and was developed in response to a major blockbuster exhibition that was concurrently on view. This exhibition titled *Maharaja: The Splendour of India's Royal Courts* was co-organised by the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. It examined the history of the Indian sub-continent through some 200+ objects produced under the patronage of India's kings. Ironically, the objects were drawn in large part from British collections. Many of the works in the *Maharaja* exhibition came from the collections of the East India Company which acquired vast quantities of artefacts from the sub-continent. The East India Company's collections were housed at The India Museum (East India House) on Leadenhall Street, London until it was demolished in 1863. Much of the collection was subsequently accessioned into the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Museums.**

[Jonathan Jones provides an evocative account of the collections of the Indian Museum. See Jonathan Jones, "Fugitive Pieces" in *The Guardian*, September 25, 2003. [Accessed July 23, 2011.]

**15. The history of the museum as a public institution parallels the colonisation of India and has a long history in the sub-continent. The Indian Museum in Kolkata is the ninth oldest museum in the world and was established by the Asiatic Society, Bengal in 1814. Other early museums include: Government Museum, Chennai (1851), Bombay Natural History Museum, (1883), Lahore Museum, (1894). This history is closely associated with the colonial survey of the sub-continent, with many museums in India being a legacy of this colonial history. These museums are typically presented as repositories of archaeological and antiquarian remains. [Refer, for example, to the website of the Archaeological Survey of India] However, as Tapati Guha-Thakurta notes, museums also became co-opted into the rhetoric of Indian nationalism. Guha-Thakurta maps the emergence of this nationalism, which was closely tied to**



**the writing of an Indian art history, and which was also inherently orientalist in the sense that it was formed in response to the colonial construct of India by an English-educated Indian (Bengali) middle class elite.** [See Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *The Making of a New 'Indian' Art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal* (Cambridge University Press, 1992). and Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Post-Colonial India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).] **Thus, the collection and display of objects as a means to convey knowledge about India has a long and complex history.** [For a discussion on museum building as a modernist project in India see Kavita Singh, 'A History of Now' in *Art India* June 2010, volume XV, issue 1: 26-33.]

**16. The narrative of the *Maharaja* exhibition celebrated the opulence of India's rulers, describing art as a product of royal patronage but also showing how aesthetic power or value was determined by the structures of imperialism. Under the patronage of kings, art was a political tool that asserted status and authority. The exhibition examined a complex and pivotal period of world history, which ultimately resulted in the formation of India and Pakistan as independent nation states, a tumultuous period that brought India into its modernity. However the exhibition as a format for the presentation of this kind of history aestheticises a violent, despotic and traumatic period. Moreover, it presents an elite and Anglocentric narrative that prompts us to consider how this history is as much Britain's history as it is India's.**

**17. Additionally, presenting the *Maharaja* exhibition in Canada in turn makes assumptions about Canadian — and specifically Indo-Canadian — audiences and their relationship to this colonial history. Second generation and diasporic Indians are often estranged from a critical understanding of this history of India, as well as recent debates that have focussed on "nationalising" this history.** [See for example a discussion on the BBC website] **Their relationship to these types of exhibitions, like that of non-South Asian visitors, is largely voyeuristic.** [Voyeurism as a mode of visual consumption in the context of 'World Art' is discussed by Griselda Pollock, 'Un-Framing the Modern: Critical Space/Public



Possibility' in *Museums After Modernism: Strategies of Engagement*, ed. Griselda Pollock and Joyce Zemans, (Maldon, Massachusetts, Oxford, UK and Victoria, Australia: BlackwellPublishing, 2007, 15.]

**18. How, then, do museums manipulate notions of cultural pride and nostalgia in outreaching to culturally marginalised communities? Can museums go beyond the tokenisms of multiculturalism?**

**19. And how are “westernised” South Asians — anxious to find a sense of belonging in their adopted countries — complicit in promoting an essentialised view of culture and history?**

**20. The problem of the museum, then, is a problem of representation: who is representing whom and how? Who speaks for which community and does that community in fact relate? How do museums engage communities in constructing the narratives of history that represent them? How can museum exhibitions exhibit the contingencies of history?**

**21. *The Museum of Found Objects: Toronto (Maharaja and —)* examines the everyday contexts and experiences of the South Asian community who live in towns and cities of the GTA(Greater Toronto Area): in Brampton, Mississauga, Etobicoke, Scarborough, Markham.**

**22. The artists scoured numerous ethnic stores and malls to identify and purchase objects of aesthetic interest:**

**a plastic model of the Golden Temple, Amritsar;**

**a make-up kit in the shape of a peacock;**

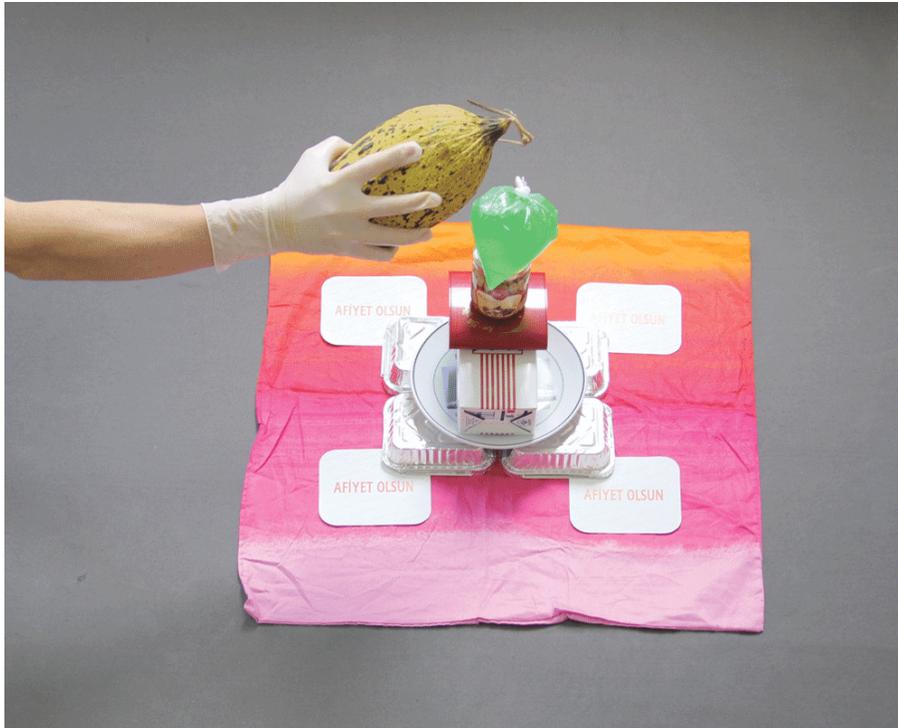
**boxes of Indian sweets (*mithai* );**

**a Tim Horton's take-away coffee cup;**

**snow boots;**

**spice tins;**

**a fountain pen;**



sandalwood soap;  
*Fair and Handsome* whitening cream;  
an ice scraper;  
tin foil roasting pans and pie plates;  
a bag of gram flour.

23. Placed on pedestals and in museum vitrines, visitors to *The Museum of Found Objects* are invited to look closely at the everyday objects on display and to reflect on their cultural value. *The Museum of Found Objects* draws on a kitsch design aesthetic and sense of humour to engage visitors. But it also develops this audience's relationship to the museum through objects that are familiar and have ready associations and meanings. The use of humour is disarming, and a constructive tool in appealing to audiences that may be intimidated by the museum setting.

24. The artists' state: "Everyday objects give us the ability to see things in a different way. They are accessible, unpretentious, and from the surface can reach deep into the hidden undercurrents of a place."

25. Everyday objects provide not only an insight into the consumer tastes and spending habits of the South Asian community in the GTA, but describe the unique character — the resourcefulness, adaptability and syncretism of this community. The objects reflect on issues of class, economic status, social aspiration and nostalgia, as well as examining the terms of globalisation and popular visual culture.

26. The selection of objects was based on a series of informal, social interactions that shaped the artists' understanding of the community. Some of this "research" was recorded in the various interpretive labels. For example a label accompanying a primary school issue woodwind recorder states, "*RM still has performance anxiety from his parents demanding that he play music in front of visiting guests at every occasion.*"



Everyday  
Everyday

Object  
Date of birth  
Size  
Material  
Price

01/04/2020  
14.10.2020  
10x10x10 cm  
plastic, 3D printer  
1.5 TL

• The name "İyi ki doğdun" is a Turkish phrase.

• The name "İyi ki doğdun" is a Turkish phrase.

EMİNE, FATMA



TUĞBA, BEYOLU

Object  
Date of birth  
Size  
Material  
Price

01/04/2020  
14.10.2020  
10x10x10 cm  
plastic, 3D printer  
1.5 TL

• The name "İyi ki doğdun" is a Turkish phrase.

• The name "İyi ki doğdun" is a Turkish phrase.

Everyday  
Everyday

Or a label related to a pair of yellow plastic bridal sandals states, *“AF tossed her sandals in the closet knowing that she would probably never wear them again. She grimaced as she remembered that IP had a red carpet walk at her wedding.”*

A display of immaculate Tupperware bears the label, *“It has been ten years and JM’s mother is still asking for her good Tupperware back.”*

Critiquing the scientific objectivity of ethnographic methodologies, *The Museum of Found Objects* uses humour to reflect on social interactions, communal aspirations and values. [“...irreverence reminds us that museums are inventions of men...” Adele Silver, Cleveland Museum of Art educator (1979), quoted in Alexander and Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, 12.] **The subjective voice used in these label texts associates the objects with specific (though anonymous) personalities, situations and social values that are readily recognisable. In this way, instead of fetishising a community through its objects, this museum positions relationships, encounters and interactions. By inviting the examination of familiar objects and situations, *The Museum of Found Objects* elevates the status of the ordinary, immigrant, working-class experience.**

**27. *The Museum of Found Objects* promotes an egalitarian notion of the museum. It asserts the presence of a community that the museum otherwise marginalises.**

**28. In presenting a critique of the museum, *The Museum of Found Objects* situates a notion of culture as agile, dynamic, and therefore responsive and malleable to changing social, political and economic demands. *The Museum of Found Objects* describes culture as a site of human and collective subjectivity — readily influenced by a range of changing fashions, tastes, aesthetic, economic and technological demands. In doing so, the *Museum of Found Objects* advocates for the museum to be a site of dynamic social and cultural engagement and exchange.**



CANTONDA PATH

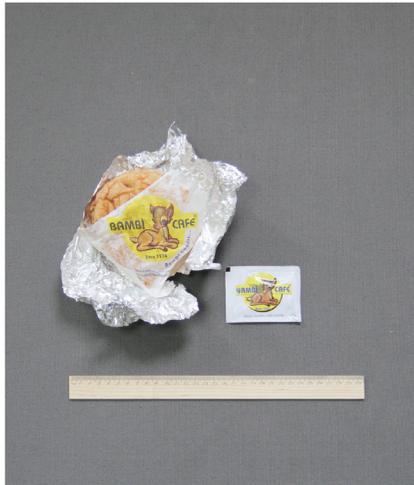
Color: **White**  
Date of birth: 02/19/2010  
Sex: **M**  
Material: **cotton**  
Size: **L (EU)**

---4---

Everyday  
Everyday  
Everyday

29. On the last day of the exhibition, visitors were invited to Loot the Museum in order to disperse the *The Museum of Found Objects* collection. Etymologically, the word loot is derived from the Hindi, *lut*, meaning to plunder or pillage. Richard Davis traces a long history and culture of looting in the sub-continent as a means of signifying political victories and enhancing the status of a ruler. In the context of conflict, or between competing rulers, looting significant objects from a palace or temple was part of a strategy of shifting the centre of power. Looting recasts the symbolic significance of objects, signifying victory in warfare and the authority of a competing ruler. [See Davis, *Lives of Indian Images*, 51-87.]

30. The invitation to loot the collection of *The Museum of Found Objects* decentres its representation of the South Asian community, marking the contingencies of such a display. The act of looting restores the meaning of the objects to the individuals who acquire them, freeing meaning from the essentialising frame of the museum. Further, the invitation to loot returns these objects to the community, as a gift. Accordingly, the significance of these objects was recast according to a system of exchanges facilitated by *The Museum of Found Objects* project.



Everyday

|              |                                   |                      |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Object       | Plastic bag                       | - 1 Piece Rabbit Cup |
| Date of find | 17.10.2010                        |                      |
| Site         | 2017/1/01                         |                      |
| Material     | Plastic, metal, ceramic and paper |                      |
| Price        | 1 TRY                             |                      |

KACIMÖZ

ÇATIĞAMBA, FAHRAH



|              |                 |     |
|--------------|-----------------|-----|
| Object       | Melon           | --- |
| Date of find | 04.10.2010      |     |
| Site         | ÇATIĞAMBA, 2010 |     |
| Material     | melon           |     |
| Price        | 1 TRY           |     |

Everyday

*The Museum of Found Objects: Istanbul* was in partnership with the Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture (Turkey). *The Museum of Found Objects: Toronto* was in partnership with SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre) and the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) (Canada), and presented as part of the AGO's *Toronto Now* series. About SAVAC: Since 1993, SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre) has been dedicated to the presentation and promotion of contemporary visual art by South Asian artists. SAVAC presents innovative programming, which critically explores issues and ideas shaping South Asian identities and experiences. SAVAC operates without a gallery space, but collaborates with various organizations locally, nationally and internationally, to produce exhibitions, screenings, online projects and artistic interventions.

About the Art Gallery of Ontario: With a permanent collection of more than 79,450 works of art, the Art Gallery of Ontario is among the most distinguished art museums in North America. In 2008, with a stunning new design by world-renowned architect Frank Gehry, the AGO opened its doors to the public amid international acclaim. *Toronto Now* spotlights local artists and offers the public an opportunity to see exciting contemporary art projects free of charge. The series inhabits the Young Gallery, a free, street-level space adjacent to Frank restaurant, facing Dundas Street.

*Sameer Farooq (Canada) and Mirjam Linschooten (France) collaborate on projects. Their work often (but not always) touches upon subjects of archiving, embedded power, the gap between language and object, advanced faking, site-specific reactions, sampling, continual reconsideration, paranoid hoarding, ordering, insider vs. outsider, class, the surface, type treatments, organization according to unidentifiable systems (and, surrealist montage procedures), reproduction and representation, the construction of meaning, the wunderkammer, newspapers, facts, ways of disseminating data into the world, fiction and non-fiction, discourse and power, digital and actual ready-mades, traces, the public, signs and the symbolic order, rewriting the present, and their work always aims to challenge hegemony and masculinist domination!*



# If the Record Could Change

*Dina Georgis & Alexis Mitchell*

*The following grows out of a conversation that began last year when Alexis Mitchell invited Dina Georgis to introduce her film *CAMP* for a Beit Zatoun event in Toronto. This event brought together the work of several artists on the topic of activism, video, and political struggle in Palestine-Israel.*

**Dina Georgis: At the event *Camping: Queer Digital Activism for Palestine* held at Beit Zatoun last year, I introduced *CAMP* with the following quote from Thomas King's *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative*: "The truth about story is that that's all we are" (2003, 32).**

**If we are the stories we tell about ourselves, about others, about our pasts; if how we narrate the events that change us is the key to what we are, who we might become and what futures are possible; if story is all that we are - then to change who we are and the world in which we share and have in common, the story must change.**

**Your film *CAMP* tells another story of Jewish history. It's a story that does not sanitize history from queerness, a story that returns to the religious myths that have shaped Jewish identity and looks for and exhumes its queer or not**

wanted content. In this rendition of Jewish history, Anne Frank rants about Jewishness, is intrigued by her growing vagina and wants to kiss her best friend Jacque, who is a girl. In this rendition of Jewish history, Jews are not always on the side of good; they are not always victims but neither are they villains. In *CAMP*, those who believe in Israel, such as your lovely grandfather, are humanized. *CAMP* wants a different Jewish story for Jewish people. It beckons the viewer to think about how if the story changed, so would Israel.

Alexis Mitchell: My goal with *CAMP* was to explore secrets. I thought that by looking to that which lies beneath the surface, the unspoken truths that haunt our contemporary cultural moments, we could learn something about why even the mention of Palestine in Jewish communities is enough to shake solid ground. I think inherent in the idea of a shared secret lies a story changer. In thinking about this, it makes sense to me why people, cultures, societies gravitate to single and fixed narratives, but I think that by troubling that *one* reading of a traditional religious tale, the *one* view we have of a young girl trapped in the horrors of a holocaust, and the *one* way to understand gender and politics in personal relationships, we allow ourselves the space to hear something new, and potentially life changing. I came at this project from such a personal place. I wanted to understand why engaging the politics of Israel-Palestine with my family was such a traumatic experience. So I resonate with what you're saying: if the stories we tell ourselves changed, the way we understand ideas of a shared history, or shared culture, change as well. *CAMP* ends with a very personal conversation between my grandfather and me as he cuts my hair. I try to have a conversation about Israel, and we don't really get to a place of understanding one another, which in the moment felt like failure. But I think what comes out of it is a meditation on politics through family structures and dynamics, and I think it's these moments that are rich with the possibility of exploring new narratives.

**DG: I'd like to pick up on the idea of how your conversation with your grandfather felt like a failure because you hadn't reached a place of understanding with one another. *CAMP* comes in three parts. *Camp #3*,**

the part that features you and your grandfather in conversation, is meant to represent the horrifying control of a concentration camp, but also its traumatic impact on survivors. Here, like in all of *CAMP*, the screen is split in two: alongside a running segment from Claude Lanzmann's nine-hour holocaust film *Shoah*, where a haircut at the barber's was used to spark a survivor's memories of Treblinka concentration camp, we see you getting your hair cut by your grandfather at his salon, something you say you haven't done in 15 years. In a caption you tell us that you figured the same approach might allow you to talk to your Zaidy about topics you have always avoided. It would seem, then, that family conflict is the painful legacy of the holocaust on you. The pressure to remain silent marks this legacy. Something very fragile and delicate is being handled and contained by not talking. Your Zaidy seems to protect the silence—he knows that talking is dangerous—and you fight the silence because its "safety" perhaps doesn't feel that safe. Your fragility, yours and his, are laid bare, as is your courage: he agrees to be in your film and you give him your hair, a piece of you (something Samson, from the old Bible, could not do for fear of losing strength). But the secret stays in the closet, because letting it out challenges the "record," which is to say the normative narratives of Jewish history, and could potentially break you and your Zaidy apart.

In my own writing, I've thought about the emotional "necessity" of bonding on shared narratives or stories, what "camp" might stand for metaphorically. In stories, we construct the terms of belonging through norms (fictions?) of what ties the group together and what sets it apart from others. Stories offer psychic consolation of pain and make survival possible, which is why it is so difficult to give them up or change them. With stories, we resist outside threat and we erect emotional and, sometimes, real walls. In the words of Jacqueline Rose (2007), groups "bond on hate." This is why we live by our stories; sometimes we even die for them. Though you and your Zaidy bond lovingly on gender, specifically on his pronounced femininity, this sadly does not give you the platform you want to open a discussion on military and

**masculine culture in Israel. In the confines of a fabricated environment or a camp of your design, i.e. the haircut in a salon, where you try to cultivate new ties with your Zaidy, it's not your queerness that must come out but your story of Israel. You want to be differently Jewish with him. But before your story has a chance to come out, he shuts it down by saying: "I know your attitude and it disturbs me." Arguably, you both anxiously recoil at this moment. An impenetrable wall that stands in between you sadly thwarts your desires. But in the space of not being able to talk, we, your viewers, come into contact with that secret in excess of what's being said. It would seem, then, that camps are not able to control everything, though they may try.**

AM: It's so interesting because at the core of my relationship with my Zaidy is a gravitation towards deviance. Where some might feel anxious about what marks them as queer to their family members, that which marks me as queer are the points at which we come together. From the outside, or on a superficial level, it seems that my Zaidy has a great deal of "acceptance" for the ways in which I'm different, for the boundaries I push within my family, and in my life in general. But there is a limit to this, and that's where the topic of Israel really shakes things up. These are the walls erected in my family, a Jewish family that actually doesn't name itself as "religious" or "political" and who has never felt confrontational enough to broach these more difficult conversations with me out of the necessity of "keeping the peace." This is one of the reasons why I chose to feature the apartheid wall in *Camp #2: necessity*. I wanted to really think about the language of necessity and by featuring the graffiti on the wall alongside the writing on the wall of Anne Frank's attic, I point to the many different ways we construct walls and boundaries in the name of "necessity."

I think you've really gotten to the essence of *CAMP* as a whole, both through the architectural "camp" schematic, but also through the narratives I chose to broach within those environments. In dealing with camp environments, I was interested in how the camp is a stand-in for various types of societies and communities.

I thought that by interrogating the spatial components of temporary, built environments, we might understand something about the worlds we inhabit. So I set up the rules and confines of each camp ironically: Autonomy are camps of choice; Necessity are camps of relief and assistance; and Control are camps that hold areas by force, in order to break them down. I then interrogated various Jewish narratives that prescribed to notions of autonomy, necessity, and control in order to understand the fallacy of these narratives and the structures that mobilize them. By choosing to explore the holiday of Purim within a structure of “autonomy,” I was interested in drawing attention to what doesn’t get talked about when we celebrate Purim. For me that meant both exposing the ending of the story, where the Jews in Persia rise up and seek revenge via a killing spree (the part of the story kept secret from me as a child), and also thinking about what happens when we label something as autonomous. Like the space of the summer camp, the holiday of Purim performs a level of freedom from the confines of societal rules and boundaries, but upholds a level of control in its inability to engage with a massive part of the story. Similarly, as you so poignantly noted, in thinking about a concentration camp as a camp of control, we find space within those confines when we recognize that rules don’t apply in what Agamben would call a “state of exception.” It’s interesting that conversations about gender and sexuality are actually a place of comfort for my Zaidy and I, and that masculinity is harder to broach than femininity is. Perhaps this is the way narratives of Jewish trauma have worked their way into my family dynamics. But what I think is at play in this section of the piece most strongly is a sense of my own vulnerability in these types of conversations. And I think vulnerability lends itself to a conversation about space as well.

**DG: I love the theme of autonomy in *CAMP*. Even though it’s the official subject matter of *Camp #1*, where you explore the religious myth of the Purim holiday taught to you in summer camp when you were a kid, I think it’s a thread woven throughout your film. Autonomy, as you say, is a kind of performance or a speech act that conceals the rules and demands of historical representation, the record, group allegiance—all of which restrain**

meaning and curtail creativity, human becoming, and social change. In all three segments of *CAMP*, discarding content underlies the historical record. Anne Frank must not be a sexual being or perversely Jewish. And so, the “necessity” of her sexual body, which persistently demands her attention, is taken out of the record. Similarly, Jewish people do not kill for “freedom,” so a religious myth is revised and excised of its troubling or queer content for the ideological interests of a political present. In *CAMP*, the human that lives in excess of social rules and group demands, arguably the principle of freedom and becoming, returns and is given room to breathe. And what was once discarded now returns as queer. We might understand “queer” conceptually as that which is socially outcast, outlawed, or foreclosed altogether. All the signifiers of (western) queerness re-write the record in fabulous outfits, glitter, and brazen nudity to mark the possibility that the story can change. Even though the ending of *CAMP* might dishearten us, what it communicates to me is that though it takes courage to revise the record with “better” stories, our courage is always undermined by the reality that we are never completely autonomous. In one way or another, we are all deeply and complexly tied to one another. Most of us fear being disowned by family or cast out by community. And I don’t think this needs to be thought in a negative light because there is something to be learned by, and something politically productive about, the idea of loving a grandfather and a people who are finding it difficult to change the story.

AM: I almost don’t want to respond, or rather, I’m rendered quite speechless by what you are saying in words; I fear I only have a visual or aesthetic language for answering. I’m inspired by the kinds of conversations that have been made possible by engaging in such a complicated approach to storytelling. So thank you for being such a big part of that.

I guess I can break the silence by revealing a lie... I never performed the Purim story at summer camp. Other Jews with similar summer camp experience have watched the video and gotten tripped up right at the beginning because they

have self-referenced the fact that Purim happens in the winter and would never be performed during the summer months. There are various sly gestures strewn throughout the piece that provide a similar effect. I think it was important for me to play with story and truth-telling for some basic reasons, feeling like I didn't want to be guilty of producing another monolithic narrative, but also knowing that I have the ability to be quite confusing, so trying not to go overboard on that front!

My Zaidy was the first person for whom I screened *CAMP* once it was done. His first question, and actually many people's first question, was "why did Chelsey have to be naked?" I never really thought about it this way, but after reading your reflections above, I guess what she represents is not just the carnivalesque tradition that Purim celebrations come out of, but a real representation of a new and queered record. In that way it makes a lot of sense to begin *CAMP* on that note, as it challenges us to be open to the ways that we may change. My Zaidy also noted that though he didn't necessarily agree with everything I was saying, he was very "proud" of me.

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<http://vimeo.com/45170527>

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**Alexis Mitchell** is a Toronto-based media artist and educator whose videos and installations have shown at festivals and in galleries throughout the world. Her work explores notions of queerness, architecture, memory, performativity, and nuanced understandings of contemporary Jewish identity and politics. Mitchell received her MFA in Film and Video Production from York University, where her thesis video, *CAMP*, won the award for Best Upcoming Director at the World Film Festival. Alongside her independent practice, Mitchell works collaboratively with other artists to produce interdisciplinary works. Collaborations include: a commissioned video project with Tori Foster for Toronto Pride entitled *Queeropolis: Toronto 1972-2008*; various multi-media projects with Sharlene Bamboat including *Border Sounds*; and a performative sound and video installation for Toronto's *Nuit Blanche 2011*. Currently, she is in production on a number of new works, including *STEALTH*, a performative video in collaboration with Chase Joynt, and *The Break*, an experimental documentary exploring gender and the singing voice. Mitchell currently works as a freelance video artist, editor, and facilitator, and is a member of *Pleasure Dome's Programming Collective*. [www.alexismitchell.com](http://www.alexismitchell.com)



# On s'en câlisse, La loi spéciale: The Music Festival that Wasn't

Carrie Rentschler

*The following piece by Carrie Rentschler was reprinted from the special open-wi issue of "wi: journal of mobile media: Out of the Mouths of 'Casseroles': Textes qui bougent au rythem du carré rouge", edited by: Kim Sawchuk, Owen Chapman, Alison Reiko Loader, Magda Olszanowski, and Ben Spencer. This issue focuses on the Quebec student strike, the ongoing remarkable demonstrations and the odious Bill 78.*

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*People produce completely different noises when the cars stop: feet and words (Henri Lefebvre Rhythmanalysis, 2004, 28).*

It may not be on the summer festival schedule, but the *manifestations casseroles* are a daily popular music festival happening on the island of Montreal. Every night at 8pm, Montreal neighborhood residents pour out of their apartment doors and hang off their balconies with wooden spoons and saucepans in hand. In Villeray, my husband and I know when it is time to grab our instruments and join in the festivities by hearing the din of people passing by, joyously clanging on their cooking implements and other percussive, wind and brass instruments such as trumpets, congas and full drum kits (set up on balconies overlooking the street), flutes, vuvuzelas, my orange maracas, and even a tuba. Drawing on powerful movement traditions that

blend musical performance and protest – from civil rights and anti-war traditions to charivaris (for the latter, see Sterne and Zemon Davis, 2012) – les manifestations casseroles constitute music making en masse. It is an experience of acting together with our neighbors on a scale bigger than the block. Neighborhood by neighborhood, city wide, people are making music and moving in rhythm together to protest a law that aims to prevent unannounced collective action. Some manifs even incorporate dance, as seen in this youtube video, which highlights the rhythm and dance moves of manifestants (see around 1:40, in particular): "[Montréal 28 Mai Manifestation des casseroles de Villeray avec rythme court vidéo.](#)"

Each night at the manifs casseroles, I wave to the neighbors and acquaintances I have come to know by protesting along side them. We nod in recognition of our shared commitment to claiming our streets and sidewalks as our own. In the city streets and sidewalks we move along everyday, we are claiming a right to express ourselves publicly and politically. We do so together, not one-by-one, in serial fashion. We are making political rhythm on a schedule, one that we have made nightly. Thousands of Montrealers and Quebeckers have been driven into the streets in outrage over the passage of Bill 78 (May 18, 2012), a law we declare an unjust limit on our rights to congregate and protest. The current protests amplify the months of popular democratic anti-tuition hike protests carried out by students in Quebec, from both francophone and anglophone universities. *Manifestants* speak many languages in my neighborhood. We come from many backgrounds. We occupy different kinds of jobs. But we all live in the same *quartier*, and we are bound in our agreement that *Loi 78* is unjust. At the corner grocer, the young woman at the cash checks in with me most days to see if I'll be at the manifs that night. Conversing in French, the owner of the dry cleaning business I use asks if I beat on my pot. I tell him I most certainly do, and that it's an important civil act, to which he responds in agreement. In practice, les manifs are not primarily about dialogue, they are about co-presence in taking over the streets. But as a result, I am talking more about the state of public culture and political engagement with my local shop merchants, store employees and my neighbors as people who are mutually engaged, as participants and witnesses, in public action that is larger than ourselves.

My participation in the manifestation casseroles has made me feel more connected to my neighbors and fellow Montrealers than anything else I have experienced in the city. This feeling is certainly not mine alone, nor is it limited to my immigrant experience. When I talk with friends, colleagues and acquaintances, they respond in remarkably similar ways, usually with a big grin on their face. Some declare “I’ve never experienced anything like this.” Others describe the experience as “incredible.” Still others comment on how peaceful the mass gatherings are, counter to many press pieces, which describe them as chaotic, mob-like, and riotous. I have not witnessed any “mob-like” behavior; quite the opposite. I’ve been witnessing people acting together in unison, and looking out for each other. At intersections, a few marchers will stand guard so that cars and other vehicles do not pass. On May 27, a local automotive business provided bottles of water to thirsty marchers – visible in [this youtube video](#) at 4:05. Marchers warn each other of potholes in the street and of approaching police. Noticing other people with pots in the metro station on the way home from a march, we strike up conversations about the night’s activities and learn more about who they are. Compared to most of my daily trips on the metro, I’ve spoken more to other passengers after an evening of casseroles than I ever do normally. The manif enable us to grasp a different rhythm to the city because, as Henri Lefebvre would describe it, “we have been grasped by it” (2004, 27). The people I have spoken with describe les manifestations casseroles as a transformative, cross-class, cross-racial, and multi-generational community building experience. I am especially moved by the multi-generational nature of these protests, and the forms of recognition people enact across age differences. On nights when the manif in Villeray turn into marches down rue St. Denis, we routinely come upon an older, grey-haired woman who stands, somewhat unsteadily, on her second floor balcony banging a small pot with a wooden spoon. As the marchers approach her, people stop banging their pots in rhythm. We all look up at her in recognition, lifting our pots and drums over our heads, banging out wild beats double time and whooping screams of support. An older woman who lives in the high rise apartment building above the metro station parks her wheelchair at the corner of Jarry and Berri to participate in the evening’s activities, paying witness, like hundreds of our other neighbors, from the sidewalk. Babies in

strollers snooze as their parents and caregivers take to the streets. Toddlers and young children gravitate to the middle of the street, perhaps in excitement over being able to safely cross and occupy the streets away from car traffic. Teenagers, it seems, stick primarily to the edges of the march, walking at a brisker pace than most of us. But mostly, we are a hodge podge of people of every age walking with purpose down the middle of a street we have claimed from traffic.

The English-language press has largely ignored the community building aspects of les manifs casseroles and the powerful collective feeling that develops through them. I would hazard a guess that most of the reports in the English-language press are written by people who are not even present at these events, let alone actively taking part. Too often press coverage refers to us as rioters or a mob, and at other times as senseless noise makers. The difference between what the press reports and what my neighbors and I experience point to the “frequent tension between received interpretation and practical experience” within emergent structures of feeling. The manifs casseroles are “experiences to which the fixed forms” of press coverage “do not speak at all” (Williams 1977, 130). As social experiences in process and “specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships” (132), the manifs are, as Kathleen Stewart describes of ordinary affects, “rooted not in fixed conditions of possibility but in the actual lines of potential that a *something* coming together calls to mind and sets in motion” (2007, 2). The manifs produce collective feeling through the co-presence of people sounding together bodies and instruments, car horns and whistles, as we move through our neighborhood streets. This feeling “pick[s] up density and texture” as it moves. The longer I march, the more collectively bound I feel to others, each night. This process of making music with others, of moving in rhythm, not on the dance floor but in the middle of major thoroughfares like rue St. Denis, Jean Talon, St. Laurent, Beaubien, Sherbrooke, Christophe Colombe, René-Lévesque and others, is an animating circuit of collectivity. I’ve never felt anything like it before because such collective feeling is unique to these and other similar conditions that social movements around the world create – like the Quebec and Chilean student movements right now.

As “literally moving things,” (Stewart, 4), then, the manifs are best grasped from a perspective on, and in, their movement. In addition to our own participation in them, video recordings shot from balconies and from the streets of protest become moving image and sound witnesses to this phenomenon. I encourage you to watch and listen to the youtube videos I have linked to above. Against press representations that dismiss the manifs as merely noise, or “deafening sound,” as Patrick Lagace of *La Presse* put it in his blog post of May 23, what you will see and hear modeled there is a collective politics of sounding in the city, neighborhood by neighborhood. Now grab your drum and join us!

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# No Tears

Cecilia Berkovic

*“No Tears” is a bookwork **that functions as a portrait** made after the death of friend and fellow artist Will Munro. (For more info on Will please see Leila Pourtavaf’s interview in NMP and Sarah Liss’ recent article in The Grid. The title refers to a lyric in a Tuxedomoon song, No Tears For the Creatures of the Night, as well as to a neon wall piece made by Munro of the same name. The pictures in this book were collected from Facebook, submitted by friends, and taken by me (Cecilia Berkovic) at Sorauren Park in Toronto in 2009, 2010 and 2011. A version of this book was included in the exhibition Will Munro: History, Glamour, Magic at the Art Gallery of York University this past winter. This is an excerpt from that book. I’m currently working on a larger print run of “No Tears” that includes haikus by Jon Davies.*

***Cecilia Berkovic** is a visual artist and graphic designer based in Toronto. Recent work includes poster projects for Nuit Blanche and Aids Action Now! She received her MFA from the Milton Avery Graduate School of Arts from Bard College in New York and sits on the board of directors at Gallery TPW. She begins teaching at Ryerson University in the Fall.*







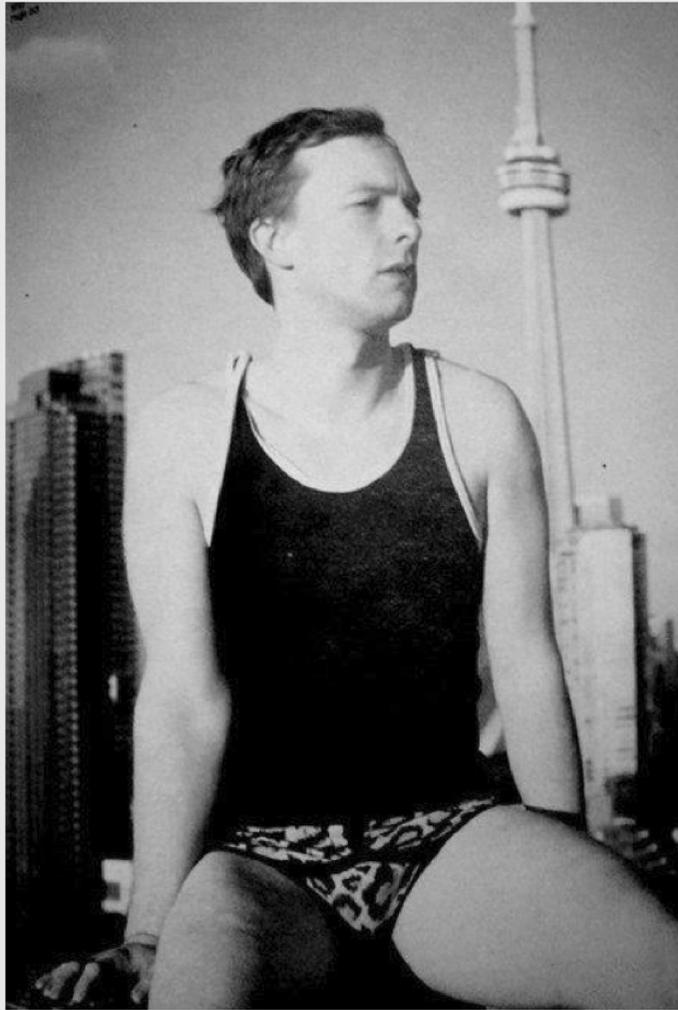
















# "Listening to Ray Bradbury's Mars": A Conversation with Christof Migone

*Marc Weidenbaum*

Toronto-based artist Christof Migone revisited Ray Bradbury's classic tale of sci-fi colonization, *The Martian Chronicles*, and came away with cascades of sound.

His work, *The Rise and Fall of the Sounds and Silences of Mars* (2010) consists of a page-by-page excavation of all sonic terms that appear in Bradbury's original text. These terms appear as columns of words, all actively dislocated from their original context. For example, early on in the original novel, we read: "a voice sang, a soft ancient voice, which told tales of when the sea was red steam" – but in Migone's version all we get: "voice sang voice." This work has appeared in various formats; in 2011 it was published as a book by Parasitic Ventures, and mounted as an outdoor installation at the Electric Eclectics festival in Meaford, Ontario. There's also a freely downloadable PDF.

Migone has a long history in sound-related art. His work playfully skirts the lines between exhibition, music, and sound poetry. With Brandon LaBelle he co-edited the anthology *Writing Aloud: The Sonics of Language* (Errant Bodies, 2001). He performed as part of the 2012 Whitney Biennial, he is a lecturer in the Department of Visual Studies at the University of Toronto, Mississauga, and is Director/Curator of the Blackwood Gallery.

In the realm of the artist's book, Migone's "Mars" suggests itself as a Spartan rendition of Tom Phillips' *Humument*, in which fissures of text serve as canvases for visual images and micro-narratives, or, of Brian Dettmer's objects that mix sculpture and collage.

Despite the piece's formal rigor, Migone's "Mars" is also quite personal in that it depicts the text as it appears in Migone's personal copy of the original Bradbury book. Because he elected to collate the sound-related terms on a page-by-page basis, the project is an elegy to the rigid paginations of physical books, something that is rapidly evaporating with the popular advent of the ebook. This concern for the book's fragility is just one of the ways in which Migone's "Mars" draws on themes from Bradbury's best-known work, *Fahrenheit 451*, the author's clairvoyant expression of anxiety about a screen-obsessed culture.

In a lengthy conversation, Migone discussed his broader sound practice, about the decision-making that led to the "Mars" project, and about the promise inherent in sound art that is itself devoid of actual sound.

This conversation occurred on the phone in spring 2012, shortly before Bradbury passed away at age 91, and it is presented here, in a lightly edited version of the original transcript.

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**Marc Weidenbaum: How did this specific book, *The Martian Chronicles* by Ray Bradbury, become the focus for your piece?**

Christof Migone: I was curating a show in Montreal and one of the artists — he makes little robots — referenced *The Martian Chronicles* in his artist statement. It seemed that it was my due diligence as a curator to research his inspiration and, also, I guess I happened to have the time, and it rekindled something I hadn't

really explored since high school: my interest for science fiction. I am not a huge connoisseur of the genre, but I was definitely a fan at the time, and I had not really kept up with it, except for J.G. Ballard, and I hadn't read all the classics, and that is definitely a classic.

**MW: At what point while reading it did the density of the sonic references occur to you?**

CM: It was at some stage through that initial (research) reading. I'm not sure at what exact page or chapter, but I started circling. Well, first I started underlining, which is what I usually do, you know, bits of interest, and moments where sound or sounds were referenced. And that wasn't even for that particular curatorial purpose, but since my field is primarily sound, the evocation and linking of this Martian landscape to these inhabitants and the way they are communicating, and Bradbury's embodiment of that through sound piqued my interest. And the more I noticed, the more my underlines became circles, and so I circled those parts, which I usually never do in books, and even just in the act of circling, it made me realize that it might not be fulfilling my own interest for a nebulous future purpose, but it was becoming a piece. It didn't quite have a form, but I knew fairly quickly that I was going to do something with it.

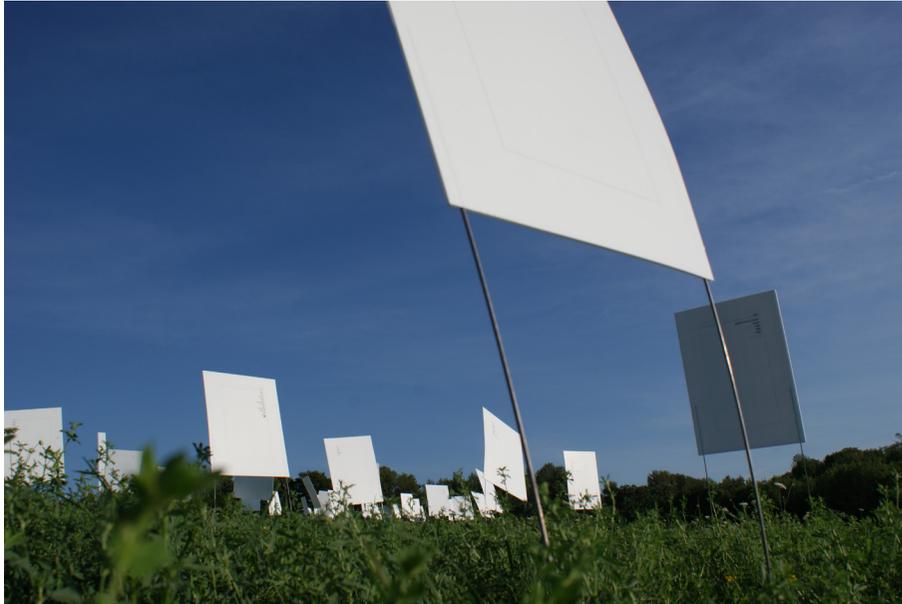
**MW: Not long ago, I happened to re-read *The Martian Chronicles*, for the first time since high school, I think, and I had forgotten how much the book is a premonition of *Fahrenheit 451*. That book ends with an intrinsically sonic depiction of cultural memory: the idea of people keeping texts alive by memorizing them, so they'll continue to be available even after the printed versions are burned. To what extent were you investigating the manner in which Bradbury explores sound as a means of sustaining a culture?**

CM: It was purely on the surface, meaning, I wasn't thinking of the intent of the author, or the repercussions of the text, but thinking just within the internal logic of the fiction; how characters are being characterized and animated within the

narrative, and the author's awareness of the aural. That was basically what I was paying attention to.

**MW: How did the outdoor installation of *Rise and Fall* come to be?**

CM: Gordon Monahan, a composer and sound artist, who lived for many years in Berlin, and now lives on a farm, north of Toronto. There he runs an annual arts festival called *Electric Eclectics*. I was invited by him to create an installation at the 2011 edition of the festival, and it coincided with the book version of this project coming out. I had been to this festival a couple times, the year before to play live, and the year before that to accompany my partner, who was doing an installation. So, I had a good sense of the place and the nature of the festival – the kind of acts that would appear and the tone of the event – and I knew that I wanted to do something with text, with signage. You have to drive up a dirt road, and you're going fairly deep into the country to end up at this place called the Funny Farm. That is an apt description of this farm; it is a surrealist place. It isn't a working farm. It's a place where two artists live, and given the space that they have at their disposal, they really concoct these magical spaces – both indoors and outdoors – and they've converted several small silos into spaces where people can do installations. My initial idea was to do a piece that would be something that the visitor to the event would come across on their way into the farm, up the dirt road. I wanted to have some kind of evocation of sound in the text in some way. Once I narrowed it down to this book, I thought that rather than have an excerpt, I wanted the whole piece to be present, and so the dirt road didn't lend itself to that. So I switched my idea to this field, which is just below the stage where people perform. You don't really see it in the images documenting the piece on my website, and there's a whole other half of the field that you also don't see, where people who are attending the festival are camping. It turned out to be a good decision because as you can see from the images, the landscape, even though it is very much of Earth, I think paradoxically, evokes the barren landscapes of Mars, mostly because they are dehumanized: it's just grass and it seems to be endless. That's a hyperbolic expansion of what's actually there, of course. Part of the way I arranged them in the



field was in a line, so once you're in amongst the signs, you can look at either end of them and you have this idea that you are in a book; the panels are all in order, so you are walking from page 1 to page 182.

**MW: Your banners in the outdoor installation bring to mind the idea of planting a flag, which is something we associate with colonization, inter-terrestrial and otherwise.**

CM: Right, right. Yeah, they obviously aren't staking ownership or territory, but at a formal level, there is that kind of placing a mark. I have always really enjoyed text pieces that are in situ; that you encounter in the city, be it Lawrence Weiner, or any artist who works primarily with text. Sometimes they allude to the history of the place, or spatial aspects of the place, but having that presence of language in the space – as opposed to a sculptural intervention or in an architectural way, or with color – the use of language brings a kind of poetics to it, which also makes me

think of traffic signs or signs that are more utilitarian. In short, I find the presence of the literary in an open space a nice contrast to how one usually engages with the literary, for instance, at home on a bedside table.

**MW: Can you talk about the title of the piece?**

CM: One of my initial ideas as I was circling these words was to reproduce their placement on the page – in a temporal way – be it a video or a computer animation, so that you would see the worlds related to sound and sounds move in different places. I tried a few versions of that but it seemed to stick too closely to the text, and it seemed a bit labored for what I wanted to do. Whenever things get a little bit too complex at a technical level, I try to resist that. I prefer works that are kept simple: economical and elegant. So even though I tried a complicated process, I stopped. But in the process of doing that I had already come up with the title, *The Rise and Fall of the Sounds and Silences from Mars*, which is riffing off of the David Bowie album [*The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*]. I like that connection between the title of that album and the connection to *The Martian Chronicles*. The [sense of a] rise and fall [within the work] became a little bit looser, but the way I arranged the words – because they're arranged in columns – you get this movement. There's more distance now from this idea of movement, but the idea is there.

**MW: There is something elegiac to the book, and the title reflects that.**

CM: Right, I see the connection to a deeper interpretation of it, but I like the literalness of the title.

**MW: On the two-page spreads in the printed version – the physical book – the words are justified right and left, which create an intense separation. What was your decision-making, typographically?**

CM: I hadn't thought of that mostly because Michael Maranda of Parasitic Ventures Press in Toronto did the typesetting. He came up with the cover, and he came up with the idea of the frame within the page. The frame is sized exactly to my own paperback copy of *The Martian Chronicles*, and he also did some research with the font and tried to approximate the font that appears in my book. I think it's a Bantam edition, and the left and right was his decision. Obviously I approved it, but we didn't have a discussion about that decision. I can see the symmetry of it, especially in relation to the page numbers, but that's as far as it goes.

**MW: You'd made a decision not to reproduce the placement of the words on the page. How did you decide on the direction you did take?**

CM: I wanted to make it systematic. This was a thought — that I could acknowledge the amount of lines, but just keep them in a column and not think of their left and right movement — but I was in a mode of thinking that, well, if I'm not going to reproduce their placement on the page, I can abstract it even further. However, I did keep their appearance in a column, so that, let's see, on page 140, the word "said" appears first and that means it's the first appearance of a word dealing with sound or sounds on that page. The next word is 'voice' on the same line in the original text, and that means they both appear on the same line in my text. Those were the basic structural devices, so that I had a system from the outset and I just applied it. I could have had a different system for every page, or every chapter, I guess. And I wanted to have some variety; the fact that one line could have more than one word if it appeared on the same line in the original book provides that variation, but aside from that, the column was the structuring rule.

**MW: Was there a page with no sound-related word on it?**

CM: Yeah, oddly enough, the very first page. I kept going back to the first page — "Can I find a word in there?" — because I was concerned some people would think it was a mistake or something. It was uncanny that it was the first page.

**MW: There are two questions I want to ask at this juncture. The first is: When did you decide to include the word 'said', which seems like it would significantly increase the ratio of words?**

CM: It came late. Basically, there was a second round of going back into the book and looking at what I had culled from it and making sure I hadn't made any mistakes. While the word 'said' clearly denotes dialogue, I initially feared that it would overwhelm my project; be too present. But I came to the decision of including 'said' during the second stage because it became obvious that it would have otherwise been a glaring omission. I had several categories in terms of selection. It could be words in a scene where sound is very clearly being engaged by the author, or words that could allude to sound but weren't necessarily intended that way in that particular place in that book. I also wanted to up the number of words selected, and since I was already abstracting the words into a different arrangement, it seemed fitting to the project to include any words that in and of themselves had sound properties. But obviously I didn't add any words.

**MW: And that would have been the second question: Do you include words that suggest sound but that don't specifically mean it? Like, if someone says: "I can hear the sounds" that includes two words - 'hear' and 'sounds' - and mean sound. But if someone says: "it sounds like you're headed north not south", that's different.**

CM: Yes, in that second case, I would include that. I like the fact that obviously those words had more than one usage.

**MW: I think the reason it's right for this project is because you're taking words that have a formal and rhetorical purpose, and you're abstracting them. So if the words already have a layer of abstraction, serving as the metaphorical rather than the literal, then those words should be included because they're primed for the exact act that you're encouraging.**

CM: Yeah, exactly.

**MW: One thing that drew me to this work was that it is sound art that doesn't include sound. We might call what you've done? "Sound art for the deaf"?**

CM: Yeah, conceptual sound, or sound art, which has a mode that is more referential to sound, rather than actual sound. As an artist who started through radio, and then transitioned to audio publications — CDs primarily, in the early 1990s — it took me quite awhile to exhibit in a space. In that transition, I was very uncomfortable with the presence of sound in a gallery, for the known factors that: galleries are reverberant spaces; in a group show, you are sometimes intruding, so you're forced to exhibit your work on headphones; the presence of bare speakers seemed to be overdone very quickly. It seemed, at least to me, that the strategy was to not take that route, but to think of ways where the presence of sound could be quite loud – quite prominent – but not in an audible way. That's a challenge that I think is still ongoing for me, and obviously, I am not the only one mining this territory. I have always enjoyed that thwarting of a sense, but still providing sensorial input to that sense, via a conceptual or intellectual route.

**MW: Another piece of yours that is sound art, yet has no sonic portion, is *As Palestine as Possible*, which you've described as a combination of work by composers Charlemagne Palestine and John Cage, along with "street protests concerning Palestine." How did that piece come about?**

CM: *As Palestine as Possible* is a very quick piece that has never been realized beyond the extent of a page on my website. But I am glad you pointed it out because it is almost as purely conceptual a piece as you could get in that it's a title that alludes to a sound piece that doesn't exist. It only exists as a title.

**MW: When you proposed the "Mars" installation for Electric Eclectic, was there any pushback? Was anyone disappointed there wasn't any actual sound?**

CM: Oh, no, not at all. Gordon Monahan, and his partner Laura Kikauka, are very open. It's a very casual, very loose context, so it was just about choosing the location, and then after that, it was carte blanche. I could do whatever I wanted.

**MW: Was copyright violation a concern for you at all?**

CM: Not at all. If anything, this is an homage to the book and brings attention to the book. To say there would be a copyright issue is like suggesting the word 'said' is copyrighted, and it seems ludicrous to go that route.

**MW: The book exists as a physical object, and there's the installation you did, and then there is also the PDF, which seems like an increasingly valuable tool for sound poets. What do you think of the PDF as a form unto itself?**

CM: I haven't seen that many instances of that. They seem to be mostly electronic versions of what would exist in print. I have seen some in which the electronic form has been used to its fullest extent in terms of some interactive aspects. I think the more exploration of any medium that is used, the better. I wouldn't value one over the other. I think it is natural that whenever a new platform is introduced, there is a kind of relishing of the new possibilities it introduces. That initial stage is often overwrought before the work settles and becomes more transparent.

**MW: There's a muscle memory to the process of looking for these words. When you were done with that part of the process, how hard was it to stop finding words in everything you read?**

CM: It keeps happening: whenever I am reading something, what I am currently writing or curating, or working on as an artist will skew my reading. I only seem to find the things I am currently thinking about, which obviously is what I am bringing into the act of reading. Sometimes I have had the opportunity to go back to a text I have read and annotated, and I see I have missed other stuff. As I go back to that text for another reason, I am finding another thread in the text, which is great. In

some cases it's frustrating, because it means I missed certain things, but I think it is normal that you will have your reading filtered by whatever is preoccupying you at the time.

**MW: This was a time-consuming process, I imagine, finding all the references in the text. How did you know you were done? How did you decide when you were done culling this text?**

CM: Well, there was that second stage, where I added the word 'said', and it was another opportunity for me to go back through it. I had my studio assistant assist me for some of it, for the sake of time, but whenever she does some work, I always check it to make sure everything has been done properly. I felt that I have been as accurate as possible. I've done other projects much more involved than this, much more prone to mistakes, where I get very anxious that someone checks that, say on page 57, I might have missed a word. Actually, I think that's fine. I might have missed a word, but it doesn't ruin the work in my view. I would be happy to hear from someone who tells me that I've made that type of mistake, in case there's ever an opportunity to revise the work and make the correction. Plus, just the knowledge that someone spent enough time to check on my work is rewarding. I think the mistake of anyone would be to dismiss the work because of a mistake. That would be silly. Getting back to your question, I am a sort of (sort of a...) perfectionist, but I am also interested in failure as a concept; as a concept that one lives with and accepts.

**Marc Weidenbaum** founded the website *Disquiet.com* in 1996. It focuses on the intersection of sound, art, and technology. He has written for *Nature*, the website of *The Atlantic*, *Boing Boing*, *Down Beat*, and numerous other publications. He has commissioned and curated sound/music projects that have featured original works by Kate Carr, Marcus Fischer, Marielle Jakobsons, John Kannenberg, Tom Moody, Steve Roden, Scanner, Roddy Shrock, Robert Thomas, Pedro Tudela, and Stephen Vitiello, among many others. He moderates the *Disquiet Junto* group at *Soundcloud.com*; there dozens of musicians respond to weekly Oulipo-style restrictive compositional projects. He's a founding partner at *i/olian*, which develops software projects that explore opportunities to play with sound. He lives in San Francisco in a neighborhood whose soundmarks include Tuesday noon civic alarms as well as persistent seasonal fog horns from the nearby bay. He also resides at [twitter.com/disquiet](https://twitter.com/disquiet).

**Christof Migone** is an artist, curator and writer. His work and research delves into language, voice, bodies, performance, intimacy, complicity, endurance. He co-edited the book and CD *Writing Aloud: The Sonics of Language* (Los Angeles: Errant Bodies Press, 2001) and his writings have been published in *Aural Cultures*, *S:ON*, *Experimental Sound & Radio*, *Musicworks*, *Radio Rethink*, *Semiotext(e)*, *Angelaki*, *Esse*, *Inter*, *Performance Research*, etc. He obtained an MFA from NSCAD in 1996 and a PhD from the Department of Performance Studies at the Tisch School of the Arts of New York University in 2007. He has released seven solo audio cds on various labels (*Avatar*, *ND*, *Alien 8*, *Locust*, *Oral*). He has curated a number of events: *Touch that Dial* (1990), *Radio Contortions* (1991), *Rappel* (1994), *Double Site* (1998), *stuttermouthface* (2002), *Disquiet* (2005), *START* (2007), *STOP* (2008), and *Should I Stay or Should I Go* (*Nuit Blanche 2010 – Zone C*), and eleven others for the Blackwood Gallery. He has performed at *Beyond Music Sound Festival* (Los Angeles), *kaaistudios* (Brussels), *Resonance FM* (London), *Nouvelles Scènes* (Dijon), *On the Air* (Innsbruck), *Ménagerie de Verre* (Paris), *Experimental Intermedia* (NYC), *Méduse* (Québec), *Images Festival* (Toronto), *Send+Receive* (Winnipeg), *Kill Your Timid Notion* (Dundee), *Victoriaville Festival*, *Oboro*, *Casa del Popolo*, *Théâtre La Chapelle*, etc. His installations have been exhibited at the *Banff Center*, *Rotterdam Film Festival*, *Gallery 101*, *Art Lab*, *eyelevelgallery*, *Forest City Gallery*, *Studio 5 Beekman*, *Mercer Union*, *CCS Bard*, *Optica*. He has collaborated with *Lynda Gaudreau*, *Martin Tétreault*, *Tammy Forsythe*, *Alexandre St-Onge*, *Michel F. Côté*, *Gregory Whitehead*, *Set Fire To Flames*, and *Fly Pan Am*. A monograph on his work, *Christof Migone – Sound Voice Perform*, was published in 2005. In 2006, the *Galerie de l'UQAM* in Montreal presented a mid-career survey of his work accompanied by a catalog and a DVD entitled *Christof Migone – Trou*. He currently lives in Toronto and is a Lecturer in the Department of Visual Studies at the University of Toronto Mississauga and the Director/Curator of the Blackwood Gallery.



# 'F\*ck-ing the Record': On Year 7 of the Feminist Porn Awards

*Bobby Noble*

Like many other masculine-identified folks, I think about sex pretty much non-stop. I'm lucky (and privileged) enough to get paid for this too. As a university researcher on a project studying the production, distribution, and consumption of feminist porn (the *Feminist Porn Archive and Research Project*), I spend a great deal of time thinking about sex by consuming feminist porn. I'm thinking too non-stop about the imagined self-evidence of both of these terms; that is, about both 'feminist' and 'porn,' about the '*feminist-ness*' of these practices but also about their '*porn-ness*.' Of course, the nature of what counts as *porn-ness* has been up for debate for as long as the category has existed. According to our genealogists, the very emergence of the 'pornographic' as category marks a complex battle over where lines should be drawn as well as in whose interests – capital or otherwise. Anyone seeking to secure a definition through content-as-criteria, then, will invariably be caught in a 'porn vs. erotica vs. bad sex vs. good sex' loop *in perpetua*. Porn is neither made nor broken in its content, and history bears this out. So too does the really stunning work of [N. Maxwell Lander](#).

Even more troubling is the nature of the work accomplished by porn's methods when hailed as *feminist*. What is it that makes anything *feminist*, especially if we are committed, as we should be, to trans-feminist practices of thinking, writing, and talking – in ways that at least try to refuse the categorical shorthand of differentiating

'feminist' porn from 'mainstream' porn by arguing that "women had a hand in the making, selling, distributing of the product" or "women's desires are featured prominently in the form. This is not at all to criticize the folks putting heart and soul into organizing the Feminist Porn Awards (FPAs), quite the contrary. The FPAs remain committed to, and exemplary of, trans-positivity and trans-literacy. Kudos and recognition earned and given. But refusing such shorthandedness might mean instead that we begin to give up the larger narrative of liberal-feminist transgression and replace it with a committed political practice of contradiction and incoherence if we want to continue to think sex in more complicated ways. Even though trans-literacies are a vital foundation of sex-positive counterpublic cultures, do we not duplicate the very conditions that work against such trans-literate spaces by continually marking as 'feminist' only those spaces that have 'women's desires' at their centre? Of course this logic begs a question that I do not want to ask, one I do not believe to be true: are 'men's desires' inherently anti-feminist? I don't believe that this is true and I don't think that the Feminist Porn Awards would agree that they are, either. But what narratives (about feminism, about porn, about gender, about bodies, and about transgression) are reproduced when feminism cannot shake off the overdetermined proximities to 'women'? I think we can do better.

Something else nags at me as I emerge on the other side of the FPAs. In full acknowledgement that the 'business' of porn often sets the terms used and the terms troubled by what might count as 'feminist' porn, I continue to wonder if this isn't, in fact, just a little bit of history repeating itself. I worry that inside the cultures of feminist porn making, the term 'feminist' is becoming synonymous with all things 'queer' and transgender. This isn't necessarily a bad thing; in fact, if this is the case, this might well be yet another interesting and successful layering of 'feminist,' one that not all of its practitioners will embrace. For the record, the FPAs are a tremendously queer and trans-positive space. This goes without saying even as it bears constant iteration. But what I continue to notice, this year more than any other, is the degree to which heterosexuality itself comes to be positioned as a productively impossible *problem* within these complex logics that also privilege particularly conventional forms of categorical crossing and binarized sex logics as their calibration of transgression.

By heterosexuality, I do not mean heteronormativity – this we want as a problem. But I do mean the depiction of gendered sex play that is taken up by bodies across the spectrum of sexes and genders, including those cis-, and including play with what I am going to risk calling cis-dick. Before I say more, let me just acknowledge the complexity of the world in which we live. Transmisogyny abounds. Trans-femininities are either fetishized or completely demonized, at times simultaneously inside and outside of feminist cultures. Trans-women bear the full brunt of misogyny, transphobias, racism, and often, feminist transphobias. Trans-men also carry the weight of being deemed not inherently real men. At the same time, at what point can we begin to develop the language of a critique of cis-squeamishness? To frame this differently: if a self-avowed feminist cis-gendered male pornstar won ‘Heartthrob of the Year’ at the Feminist Porn Awards, how differently would this make both the ‘feminist’ and the ‘porn’ of this event signify? The last two Heartthrobs have been hot and well-deserved. And I’m troubled about the winner of ‘Movie of the Year’ – a heterosexual filmmaker might be reluctant to claim a place, seemingly acknowledging instead her gratitude for winning an award at ‘your event.’ That she might well have intended a local or national event doesn’t bode any better. What kinds of non-shorthand work would ‘feminist’ do if we could acknowledge the hot porn-ness of cis-heterosexual bodies in feminist porn? And more interestingly, what happens to the distinctions a priori between ‘feminist’ and ‘mainstream’ in such a rendering? Are we not, in some important ways and for the record, forced to develop a far more nuanced and precise accounting of the kinds of ways we hope feminist sexualities and a feminist pornographics might emerge if we reorient cis-dick– and its feminist appreciators – as part of the buffet? This is something Shine Louise Houston knows beautifully well. And what of the historical record – the monuments literal, epistemological, and discursive – that such feminist pornographics might erect and/or leave behind? I am reminded of the axiomatic from Derrida’s Archive Fever on the imperative of the record, the archive, one which feminist porn workers, producers, and researchers alike would most certainly share:

“

But what narratives (about feminism, about porn, about gender, about bodies, and about transgression) are reproduced when feminism cannot shake off the overdetermined proximities to 'women'?

I think we can do better.

There is no political power without the control of the archive, if not of memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation.

Given such political, historical, and discursive stakes, there are key questions which continue to press upon feminist porn as a project of record. Foremost for me is a contradiction that hovers around the very imperative for which I advocate. Isn't the category of 'porn' itself already the *content* and *effect* of archivization processes that do not have transparency as their central logic? Isn't this why my palms get sweaty, my heart-rate skyrockets and I feel very old when I hear smart folks talk porn and authenticity *or porn as/not as art*, as if this isn't overdetermined in the way the question is framed? If we study the racialized, gendered, sexed, classed politics of this archive so naturalized that we do not see them, then isn't it already both product and classificatory system unto itself? For the record: Might we not, then, ask questions about how to work artifice (by which I mean anything achieved with the mediation of a camera) against artfulness (by which I mean constructed by a subtly hegemonic classification project that has produced the 'pornographic'), and both tautly against the authentic-as-truth-effect of biopolitics?

And second, where to house the public record of sexuality, more particularly, as archives of porn that always already gesture to an archive of an archive, given the degree to which histories repeat themselves *in* but also *as* imagined public cultures of feminist sexual transgressions? Private businesses? Universities? Online? How to record and document the need to archive? When it comes specifically to questions of how to house that record of a feminist porn counterpublic, then archival/recording fevers become blushinglly urgent in their own need. The Feminist Porn Archive and Research Project takes such blushing urgency as its *raison d'être* but only insofar as we can invert the logic, taking collection as content and porn texts as method, in order both to record the complexity of the fever to erect and, one hopes, to simultaneously render impotent the archival assemblage and its categorical imperatives in the first place. This is the shift: from thinking of *porn-as-object* to *porn-as-method* to *porn-as-deconstructive-archive*. The effect is an archivization of a

feminist *qua* feminist insistence on the right to represent that which cannot be easily thought or seen even within its own terms: the constitution, access, interpretive record and, even, for me as educator, pedagogical necessity of urgent, blushing, impatient sexual need as feminist praxis regardless of its 'orientations.' The archive as record becomes porn's public-room-of-one's own. But, whither its home in the house of capital?

It seems to me that the urge to record signals, to risk an overused concept right now, the continued avowed need to occupy these public records – these publics *as* records, forms, spaces – in order to aggressively disorient the kind of work they do. But recording this counterpublic is not simple for anyone despite the ever-persisting presence of brilliant filmmakers and their high-tech cameras, not to mention the mass of recording on smart phones at these events (what happens to all that footage?). How to retain the edge of that occupation is going to be a tricky question for the FPAs as they move toward over the next seven years; how to do this work when *success* itself – a nasty cousin to *happiness* – almost always comes around to bite one in the ass (and not in a good way)? This I don't know yet. I'm pretty sure that we do not yet have very many answers. But I'm more certain that we still haven't articulated the complex questions that we hope feminist porn can answer beyond the party, hot bodies, kick-ass shoes, and dazzling hot leather both on and off the stages. It remains vital to the project, at least seven years in, that we get these questions out, for the record. What does persist in this oversexed brain-of-no-inherent-gender is that the placing of these two terms – porn and feminist – together remains a sticky, fascinating business.

**Image Credit: N Maxwell Lander [www.maxwellander.ca](http://www.maxwellander.ca)**

**Bobby Noble** is Associate Professor of English, gender and sexuality studies at York University (Toronto). He works through cultural studies approaches on contemporary constructions of sex, sexuality, bodies, race, gender, masculinity, feminist porn as well as transgender and transsexual identities in culture and social movements. Bobby has published numerous articles and has published two monographs: *Masculinities Without Men?* (UBC Press, 2004) and *Sons of the Movement: FTMs Risking Incoherence on a Post-Queer Cultural Landscape* (Toronto, Women's Press, 2006). He is also co-editor of *The Drag King Anthology* (Haworth Press 2003). Currently, he is the principle investigator on a 3 year SSHRC funded Standard Research Grant studying feminist porn (the Feminist Porn Archive and Research Project).



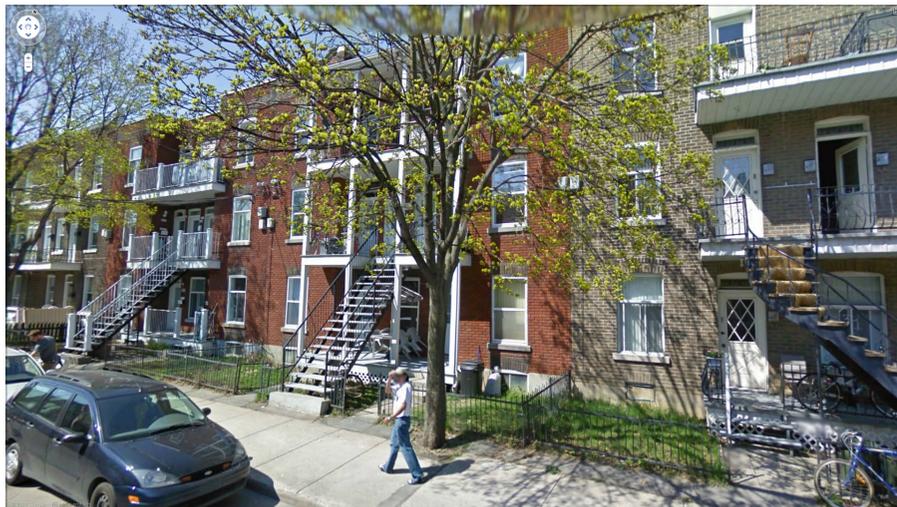
***Posted 31 3 2010: #montreal #qc #17 y/o #bttm #oral (Places Where I've Fuck'd)***

# Places Where I've Fuck'd

*Vincent Chevalier*

I grew up cruising on the edge of the internet age. My first sexual experiences were mediated through online activity. At a young age, having learned the syntax of the online cruise, I was orienting myself sexually and spatially, chatting in order to hook up with men all across Montreal. Logging onto gay chat rooms, I would advertise my desires and what I had to offer in as small an amount of text as possible: HoMa / 16 yo / 5'10" / 200lbs / 6"unc / hairy / bttm.[1] With the recent advent of social media blogging platforms such as Tumblr, cruising apps like Grindr, and search tools like Google Street View (GSV), the sexually charged links between cityscape and cyberspace became further entwined.

Over the past three years I've kept a little black blog, a Tumblr consisting of images of Places Where I've Had Sex. Using GSV, it is possible for me to virtually revisit and document these sites, no matter if they are down the street from me or on the other side of the world. The images I find are posted on the blog and labeled with hashtags, formatted to read like chat jargon, describing simple details about my encounter (age, sex acts, location). Some of the posts are made immediately after the sexual encounter takes place, while others are drawn from my memory months or years after the act. In this way, the blog is an anonymous record of my sexual history, depicting a variety of sites and sex acts.[2] This blog is neither a biography, nor is it fiction. It lies somewhere between the lived and the disclosed, the anonymous and the surveilled. It records an encounter with an unnamed other, that is in turn offered up for an encounter with the viewer, disclosed via the medium of the weblog.



**Posted 16 8 2011: #montreal #qc #27 y/o #versa #pnp #pig #pissplay  
(Places Where I've Fuck'd)**



**Posted 29 2 2012 - #vancouver #bc #28 y/o #bttm #bdsm #w/s #daddy #boi  
(Places Where I've Fuck'd)**



***Posted 20 3 2010 – #montreal #qc #21 y/o #bttm #j/o (Places Where I've Fuck'd)***

### **Disclosure 2.0**

PWIFd is an apparatus. The record exists at the point where I put my life into play and offer it up to the reader of the blog. It is here that a subject is read: the "I" of the PWIFd, the author of the blog, the cruiser, the artist, the internet user, the anonymous stranger in the dark. In this description of the project, I am drawing upon the concept of the apparatus developed by the philosopher Giorgio Agamben. According to Agamben, the apparatus is "anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions, or discourses of living beings." [3] Crucially, for Agamben, these points of capture are sites where the subject becomes visible. As such, the subject is not present in a singular position, but constituted via multiple points of encounter between the living being and apparatuses. [4] Language itself is an apparatus, but so are technologies like an archive, search engine, or chat program, physical sites like cruising grounds or bathhouses, and discursive acts such as disclosure.



***Posted 6 1 2011 - #nyc #ny #27 y/o #bttm #3some (Places Where I've Fuck'd)***

The little black book is an inconspicuous little journal that occupies the popular imagination as a tool for the sexually active individual to keep a record of his (or her) multiple partners, noting phone numbers, statistics, and impressions of encounters for a later date. With PWIFd, a publicly accessible weblog, however, this act of recording is also a disclosure. If we consider disclosure as an apparatus, an act of language in which I put myself into play, we can see how this gesture produces a subject that is not localized in a single identity position, but through a multitude of encounters that make it apparent. This subject is at once present and invisible, anonymous and highly surveilled, in every hashtag or GSV image on the blog, in every place where I've fucked. This latent presence is ultimately irreducible to any single act of disclosure, on or off the web. That is, the subject who is revealed is not static, but constantly being imagined, relocated, and updated with every encounter. My identity has always been mobile: PWIFd lays bare this connection in its concept and form.



**Posted 5 4 2010: #ottawa #on #16 y/o #oral (Places Where I've Fuck'd)**

**Notes:**

[1] I have included a glossary of important terms to help those unfamiliar with certain technologies and features of the web that I am describing.

**Hashtag:**

The hashtag (#) is a symbol used to mark a keyword or topic of a blog post. It is a user-generated and collaborative form of categorization of websites that allows for freeform association between ideas and imagery.

**Google Street View:**

A popular (and somewhat controversial) feature of Google Maps that offers users a navigable and panoramic image of the street level. These images are aggregated from visual and GPS data collected by a roving fleet of specially adapted street cars that inconspicuously travel the roadways, documenting the landscape as they pass. Google Street View was launched in the United States in May 2007, and appeared in Canada in September 2009.

**Grindr:**

A mobile phone app that taps into a device's location-based services to connect users searching for sex (or conversation) through its instant messaging service. The app launched in 2009.

**Tumblr:**

Founded in 2007, Tumblr is a microblogging and social media platform that allows users to easily and freely share blog content with each other.

[2] There are over 180 posts and counting. This project can not be considered entirely anonymous, in that I link to it on my own website, have spoken about it in the press, and am writing this article about it. However, neither my name nor any indication of my identity is mentioned anywhere on the site. As noted, all images are sourced from Google Street View and therefore do not have any indication to me having been present at the site, other than the fact that it is on PWIFd.

[3] Agamben, *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays*, 14.

[4] Agamben, *Profanations*, 72.

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**Vincent Chevalier** (b. 1983) lives and works in Montreal, Quebec. His art practice is about disclosure and its affects. Starting from a personal engagement with his content, he employs multiple processes of mediation, creating performances, videos, photographs, web art, and installations that underline an intimate distance between himself and the viewer. He has exhibited both locally and internationally, and is an active presence both online and in the cruising parks of various cities across the continent. [www.vincentchevalier.ca](http://www.vincentchevalier.ca)



# A Record of "Lesbian Bedrooms": An Interview with Photographer Kyle Lasky

NMP

*NMP interviews the amazing artist and photographer, Kyle Lasky...*

**NMP: You have said that your *Lesbian Bedrooms II* series, which examines the instability of lesbian identity, was inspired by your own shifting identity. What inspired the first series, *Lesbian Bedrooms I*?**

Kyle Lasky: I think my interest behind *Lesbian Bedrooms I* was fairly uncomplicated. At that time, I was mostly concerned with exposing the "lesbian bedroom" as nothing more than a bedroom of a lesbian. I wanted to normalize the intimacy that passed between lesbians, as well as look at the completeness of that life. After I transitioned away from a visibly lesbian appearance, I felt compelled to revisit the series. My experiences of living as male, while still identifying very much as a butch lesbian, have been so strange and conflicting, and in *Lesbian Bedrooms II*, I wanted to address some of them. I also wanted to look beyond my own trans-masculine perspective, at some of the other lesbian-identified people who might feel overlooked. A traditional notion of lesbian identity is so rooted in this idea of "women-born-women-loving-women", and for me that is a problem. For so many of us, that is a problem. My own lesbian identity is very much about a history of feminism, and a history of celebrating and identifying with women. My lesbian



identity is not so much a sexual orientation, but a political orientation. With *Lesbian Bedrooms II*, I wanted to discuss this instability, and confront viewers with images of people who may not be immediately recognized as lesbians, but are defined as such by the body of work.

**NMP: Who are the subjects in your photos? How did you reach and select them?**

KL: The subjects of my photos are mostly my friends, though I did put out an open call for *Lesbian Bedrooms II*. I am fortunate enough to be part of a really inspiring queer and art scene, and most of the people I approached about the project understood it immediately. I felt very cautious about directly asking people to participate, as I didn't want anyone to feel I was undermining or projecting something that was counter to their own identity. But when I positioned myself in the project, and explained my personal connection to a lesbian identity, people were surprisingly responsive.

**NMP: The theme of this issue is *Record*. How important do you think it is to capture lesbian subjects in personal/intimate spaces, such as the bedroom? Why a bedroom series in particular?**

KL: I am very into in the recording and archiving of lesbian life. It's a major interest of mine. I think the bedroom is sort of like a keystone in queer documentation, but I'm interested also, in the more mundane aspects of a queer experience. I think it is very important to document our experiences as we engage with different layers of identity in contemporary queer culture, so our stories can be carried on into the future.

**NMP: A lot of your work examines perceptions of gender. Whose perceptions are you focusing on?**







KL: I think it varies from piece to piece. For example, *Lesbian Bedrooms I* focuses mostly on the public's perception of (lesbian) sexuality, where as *Lesbian Bedrooms II* is much more about the intersections of personal and public gender perceptions. In *Names*, a self-portrait triptych I did in 2011, I was also concerned with these intersections.

**NMP: Do you plan on continuing this series?**

KL: I definitely plan to continue the series. In no way do I feel like I have fully captured what I set out to with *Lesbian Bedrooms II*. There is a much broader scope of people that I want to include, and whenever *Lesbian Bedrooms III* does happen, I imagine it will also be informed by my own evolving experiences in self-identification.

**NMP: You are often your own subject. Is it important for you to also record your own history alongside that of your community?**

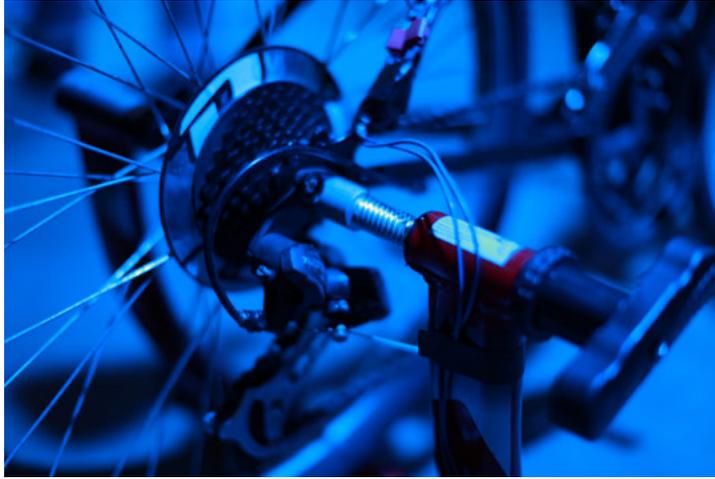
KL: When I make work about myself, that's as close I come to keeping a diary. I have so many changing feelings, and I do think it is really important to document them, so that I can better understand where I am, and how I got here. My history is important to me, and hopefully it will resonate with someone else, and it will be important to them too.

**\* More of Kyle's work can be seen at the "That's So Gay" Exhibit - curated by Sholem Krishtalka at the Gladstone Hotel from June 6 - July 29, 2012.**



*Born to an artist and a yogi, **Kyle Lasky** grew up in the redwoods on the coast of Northern California. Kyle is an American artist living in Toronto, Canada. Their work often deals with themes of gender, identity, feminism, and queerness.*

*Currently pursuing a BFA in Photography, Kyle also works in video and collage. Recent exhibitions include: *That's So Gay* at The Gladstone Hotel, *Maximum Exposure* (won Best In Show) at The Gladstone Hotel, and *Presence in Absence* (solo show) at Come As You Are. <http://www.kylelasky.com/>*



# Stranger Than ///Friction: An Interview with Claire Kenway

*Andrea Zeffiro*

*Claire Kenway is the type of person – multi-faceted and multi-talented – who inspires. In discussing one of her most recent works ///Friction, a multi-modal installation that straddles underground electronic music and cycling cultures, Claire details the personal experiences and happenstance encounters that influenced and shaped her artistic approaches and practices. Indeed, the future shines bright for this Montreal based DJ/music producer/writer/artist, and, I for one, look forward to what that future brings*

**Andrea Zeffiro: First and foremost, and before we discuss the particulars of ///Friction 2.0, I'm wondering if you could tell me a little bit about yourself, including your artistic/research interests and practices?**

Claire Kenway: Sure! I grew up out west – I was born in Edmonton, Alberta. My mum is a violinist and my dad is a mad scientist – well, an engineer, physicist, and inventor who is always pushing the capabilities of new technologies to do practical things. My mum once told me that she played music especially for me before I was even born, and when my brother David and I were little, she used to play me Ravel's piece Bolero to 'mesmerize me to sleep.' My parents split when I was still in Elementary school. I think the split happened mostly due to their strong personalities conflicting with each other, as they both dove more deeply into



their own individual modes of existence and expression. My dad quickly moved to BC part-time, and so my childhood time with him was filled with adventures and road trips along the breathtakingly beautiful stretch of highway and ocean between Edmonton and Vancouver Island. Music was everywhere, as was creativity, ingenuity, and nature. Mum blasted classical wherever we went: during breakfast, in the car, in the evenings, so my brother and I quickly learned the main passages of most famous classical pieces by composers like Bartok, Beethoven, Mozart, Chopin, Holst, Schubert, Shostakovich, and Saint-Saens. Additionally mum would play us more experimental contemporary music by artists like Steve Reich and the Kronos Quartet. Most of my early childhood music education came from listening to CBC radio and the records mum put on the record player. Around age five, I started violin lessons, but after a few years decided I hated the violin – a natural teenage rebellion against my mother that began around age 12. I quit soon after but tried my hand at bass guitar and singing before abandoning traditional instruments completely when I discovered electronic music. I heard about rave culture on CBC radio in the car with my dad one afternoon. The radio announcer was talking about music being played super loud all night long and people taking ecstasy, which made them feel happy and dance all night long. At fifteen years old, I was already a vampire at heart who loved to sleep late, so this concept appealed to me immensely. I discovered a local group called the Nexus Tribe who put on raves, and went to my first one at fifteen in an old airplane hanger. I went to several more after that, but they were always huge with three to five thousand people, and the music was progressive or trance that I never really liked. My first boyfriend Ryan introduced me to *good* electronica via Kruder and Dorfmeister's DJ kicks album, the Rebirth of Cool series, and intelligent drum'n'bass artists like Plug, Photek, and Alex Reece. I quickly fell in love with both him and the music, but left Edmonton a year and a half later to go to school and study theatre at Acadia University in a small town about an hour out of Halifax.

In my first year of University, I went to my first truly underground rave in Halifax where I experienced quality house and techno music. Soon after, I chopped off my long brown hair, bleached it, and dyed it fire engine red. In January of 2000 a

fellow actor friend invited me to a private party at a cabin in the woods. It was there that I, too, took ecstasy, and experienced the music I loved being played to a small crowd of 50 people in an environment where the DJ booth was accessible, and I could actually go up and watch the DJ up close. Intrigued by the fact that with two turntables and a mixer, a DJ could transform individual songs into a continuous DJ 'set,' I spent most of my time at the party intently positioned behind the DJ booth where I could see everything that was happening. Late that night, a pretty girl stepped up to play. Her name was Rosie. The way she mixed was delicate and perfect. I realized at that moment that I could do it too, and decided that one day I, too, would learn how to DJ.

More than a decade later, I am living in Montreal – I came here to study communication at Concordia. Though I now have a Masters in Communication, since arriving here (and after graduating), I have made all of my income as a professional artist. I do a combination of DJing, music production, freelance writing, and installation art. My research interests revolve around phenomenology, perception, sound, emotion, music, and how interactivity enhances artistic experience. While at Concordia, although I was taking communications, I quickly discovered that I excelled in and enjoyed the production courses the most. I started with the one-year diploma program where I studied sound with Andra McCartney, documentary and food ethics with Liz Miller, and film with John McKay. I fell in love with Concordia too and decided to do the Masters as well. Concordia's Media Studies program is very open-minded about the way they structure their course load; in fact, they allow for you to take up to three out of eight courses for the MA in other faculties or even other universities, provided you have permission from the professor and the head of the department. I took full advantage of this, and took three courses in Fine Arts to assist with the development of my thesis project: a course in MAX MSP with Bill Vorn, a course in the philosophy of performance taught by Sha Xin Wei, and a course in Electronics for Artists taught by Peter Flemming. Within the program itself, I managed to find a production course as well, taught by Tagny Duff, all about bio-art, where the final project for the course involved creating a piece of bio-art, rather than writing a paper. The resulting

project, called *Poisson Passion*, involving fishes' reactions to sound and how it affects their health, happiness, and behavior, yielded some very interesting results, both creatively and scientifically. Tagny invited me to be a part of Fluxmedia, and through a stroke of luck during a presentation I gave at Hexagram about the project and some desired future directions, two members of a small gallery called Les Territoires happened to be present and invited me to present an updated version of the project as a part of a gallery show with Brandon Ballangee and two other students from my class: Alison Loader and Kelly Andres. The exhibition will take place in January 2013.

For my thesis research, I created a project intended to promote cycling through art, called *Friction*, where I transformed three ordinary bicycles into musical instruments, and constructed a performance involving all three for my final presentation of the project at SAT (Societe des Arts Technologiques) in April 2011. I was fortunate enough that while I was waiting for my written thesis revisions to be handed back, in September 2011, I had the time and motivation to apply to the Canada Council for a grant to build a sound installation. My philosophy was simple: the grant was for \$20,000, so if I got it, after graduating instead of going to find a job, I could work and be a full-time artist for a year. I got the grant, so at this moment, I am working hard to design and build my third installation called *Windcatcher*, involving three musical instruments that will be played by the wind.

DJ-wise I am playing more than ever; in addition to playing at Laika every Friday for the three and a half years since I moved here, I got to play two years in a row at the infamous Pknic Electronik, and play regularly at clubs, festivals, and parties in Montreal and across Canada – I even got to DJ in Germany and Japan! I have been writing music like crazy since I graduated and just put out my first digital EP on Beatport (a site where DJs buy their music), the *Dark Kiss* EP, with an Italian record label called Lost Land Records. I have another EP coming up in not-too-long with a well-respected Montreal label as well, Pheek's Archipel – very excited for that!

## ***Badass Rhythms of the Bike***

**AZ: *///Friction 2.0* straddles two particular cultures: underground electronic music, and cycling. I can certainly think of affinities between the two; how do you view these particular cultures as working in tandem? In other words, are there parallels between the two that informed the conceptualization of the work?**

CK: I originally had this fantastical idea that with *///Friction*, I could get people who weren't originally excited about electronic music into electronic music, and people who weren't into biking but liked electronic music into bikes, but my plan didn't really pan out. I would say more of what really ended up happening is that people who were interested in either *electronic music, technology, or bikes* came out to the show for different reasons, and came together because of the bikes. This wasn't entirely a bad thing, and regardless of whether or not the audience members preferred rock'n'roll, jazz, pop, electronic, or different kinds of music, everyone seemed intrigued by how the bicycles worked to create sound, as individual instruments and as a trio.

**AZ: I wonder if you'd also like to elaborate on how *///Friction* came to fruition, or, how it evolved. Was there a particular moment or event that inspired you? Or did it come from a myriad of variables? I suppose this question is really focused on my own curiosity and interest to know more about the inspiration behind the project.**

CK: There was, as a matter of fact. It all started as a final project for another class at Concordia! It was my first summer in Montreal. Living on the Plateau, I had been taking public transit to school for a full 8 months – a process which involved taking both the metro and a bus, and took between one hour and seventy five minutes, that I hated with a passion. Nothing is worse than being squeezed like a sardine on public transit without even a place to sit, carrying heavy books and praying that the bus won't take 'extra long' on that particular ride and make me late for class!

Eventually in late spring, I discovered that one of my friends was biking all the way from the Mile-End to Loyola on a daily basis, and it only took her about 45 minutes! Soon after this discovery, I was wandering about in Park LaFontaine with a friend on a beautiful summer's day and I saw a purple bike chained to a fence with a price tag on it: for sale for \$50! I went and rang the bell, and after questioning the seller extensively about the reason for the sale, came to the conclusion that the bike was not stolen despite its ridiculously affordable price. My friend bought me the bike as a 'late birthday present' and from that day on, I started riding my bike to school. The difference in both time and pleasure transformed my experience from the drudges of public transportation hell into that of actually enjoying the ride and the fresh air and exercise it afforded me. That summer, I happened to be taking a class during the summer session of my Communication diploma program with Ken Briscoe, called Production Administration, which was all about how to get funding for a project and produce it. Our final assignment was to create a project and make a public presentation 'pitch' to the class to try to get funding... It seemed like everyone in the class was doing a production pitch for a film or TV show. I wanted to be different, and I was so much happier riding my bike than taking the bus, so I decided to do a pitch for a project involving bicycles that create energy, to promote cycling as a source of energy as well as a mode of green transportation. After the pitch, I was chatting with a friend on my rooftop terrace over a glass of wine, and she suggested it would be even cooler to make a bicycle quartet. I was seduced by the idea and determined to do it – out of school – as a part of a publicly-presented bicycle-themed event intended to showcase the musical bikes and promote cycling in general. I managed to make three prototype soundbikes in less than three months, booked the Sala Rossa, solicited funding from local bike co-ops, Dumoulin Bicylettes, and Laika, and did a party with DJs and a one-minute performance of the sound bikes, where after the performance, audience members could come try the bikes for themselves. That event was called ///Friction, and was presented in October 2009. In addition to the musical bikes, I also curated other types of artistic bikes: a bike-powered film projector, a Bixi stand turned into a drum machine trigger, a blender bike, and a sculpture made from bike parts. At the end of the event I gave a refurbished bicycle to a random audience member who

won a dance-off contest on the stage. It was a wonderful event, and that was the beginning...

### ***Welcome To My Concrete Jungle***

**AZ: *///Friction 2.0* is a project, or more appropriately, an installation, which is processual. By this I mean to imply that the project – and its final manifestation as an installation – is created in increments. Could you explain more about the process – the creation, stimulation, and transformation? What are the various project components, and how does it all come together in the installation?**

CK: Well, its funny because in my application to my Masters, I applied with the intention of doing an environmentally-themed documentary as my final project. But, after seeing my musical bikes, Liz Miller, who was at that point my supervisor, suggested I ditch the documentary idea completely and continue on with the bikes. At first I was opposed to the idea, but it grew on me, especially as I noticed people's ears perked up whenever I mentioned the project.

But yes, the project was definitely processual in that it evolved in steps – a process which in itself was further emphasized by the fact that I had never built an installation before and had no idea what I was doing! Like any pioneering project in an artist's career, it took way longer than I originally anticipated – I intended to present the full version of the project in November 2010, but when it was obvious to me that it wouldn't be ready, I pushed the date back to April 2011.

The original *///Friction* had three bikes: one involved using MAX MSP and transforming the bicycle, effectively, into a turntable-like device, where pedaling speed corresponded to the tempo of the beats; the second transformed atmospheric sounds into a mishmash of effects using Nintendo Wii-motes to wirelessly transmit data corresponding to the revolution speed of a bicycle wheel; and the third simply took the sound of a dynamo generator rubbing against a

bicycle tire and transformed it into a tone generator, producing a single tone which rises in pitch the faster you pedal. For *///Friction 2.0*, I wanted the first bike – which controlled the tempo of the music – to also control the tempo of a bike video, with the handlebars in the frame, to give a videogame-like perspective from the rider's point of view. In the original incarnation, I handed out anonymous paper surveys to find out what people did and didn't like about the musical bikes, and one complaint I got was that not all sounds in the installation were obviously bike-related, so the first step I took was to break down how I could transform the sonic elements to be all made from bike sounds.

I decided that for the rhythms I would record the sounds of a bicycle – the chains spinning, spokes turning, the sounds of different parts of a bike being hit with a drumstick, and transform those sounds into rhythms. I made a virtual pathway along which I would film, and I set out to get some real funding in place to buy electronics and pay a professional programmer to do the complicated programming to make the tempo bike – called the Electronique – into a stable and real instrument that would work every time (the first version was fickle and totally unstable). I applied for funding from Mountain Equipment Co-op, Sustainable Concordia, and DuMoulin Bicyclettes, and got all of it! Then I set out to build a team of dedicated people who would help me with various aspects of the project.

In the midst of all of this, I was invited to present the bicycles at a number of smaller community events – MEC's Festivelo, Mile-End Car Free Day, Velo-Velo cycling conference, and a symposium at the Biosphere to educate youth about energy efficiency. Amidst all of this, I was going crazy taking field recordings while I rode my bike, taking video, and researching other related types of bicycle and sound installations.

When winter came around, I decided it was time to set a date for the final presentation and settled on April. Once I got my bid in at the SAT and the date was confirmed, production went into full swing in March to get the bikes working. Owen Chapman and Kim Sawchuk, both on my supervisory team, offered me some

space in the Mobile Media Lab in the C-pod to work on my bikes. I scheduled work sessions to get the bikes functioning properly, and at home spent countless hours transforming the bike sounds and field recordings into electronic music that I now call 'bike techno.' With the assistance of my friend Marc-André, we built a website and managed to smooth the extremely shaky video I had taken from my bike, and cut it into useable sections.

A lot of the process was experimental; I (we) would try things and see what worked and what didn't, for both the technical and creative aspects. For example, I originally wanted the video to be one long shot of the bike ride from the Plateau to the Parc Jean-Drapeau, but because the ride was so bumpy and the rig for the video camera was so shaky, the video camera created unusable gaps in the video where the camera jolted too much, so we had to cut it into smaller chunks.

My collaborators – Jacques Gallant and Freida Abtan – suggested things to me that came up as we went, such as an additional modification to the Electronique where the right-hand brake lever was transformed into a switch to change between audio and video tracks. We also changed the way sound was triggered for the bicycle tone generator – called the Wazou – so that it was necessary to press down on the right-hand brake lever to create sound, rather than having sound continually produced and the brake lever acting to cut the sound. This last-minute addition was done the day of the show, and functioned to prevent overexcited pedalers from annoying the hell out of the audience by pedaling fast to create an annoying stream of loud, high-pitched sound, encouraging them instead to play the bike in single 'notes.' The Wii-One (The bike using Nintendo Wii-motes) was the only bicycle that I worked on exclusively solo, so that bike was perpetually changing as I explored different types of responsivity in relation to bicycle movements and sonic results.

The stimulation was occurring perpetually, everywhere all the time, through all aspects of creation, through my research, through artistic explorations – I went to see so many art installations and met so many artists through the creation of this project – and through discussions with other academics, artists, musicians, and cyclists about the project.

The transformation happened in ripples; every time we presented the bikes, the bikes themselves were transformed through the experience into a newer, better incarnation. I presented the bicycles a total of seven times between the original */// Friction* and *///Friction 2.0*, and in between each performance, I took a lot of time to reflect on the experience, asking how we could do it better next time, making small changes to different aspects of how the bicycles worked and how we presented them.

### ***Shed Esque Bike Sounds***

Eventually this all came together for the final incarnation at SAT, where I decided as a result of sheer observation and reflection from past events, that it would be wisest to present the bicycles as a performance first and then explain how the bicycles worked and invite audience members to hop on and try the bikes for themselves, but to do so three times throughout the evening to accommodate audience members with different schedules. I decided, based on the amount of music I had composed, that fifteen minutes would be a suitable duration for the performances, followed by a five-minute explanation by me, with forty-five minutes in between performances when audience members could get on and play the bicycles. I hired three of my DJ friends to be the ‘cyclist musicians’ and structured the evening so that after each performance – all of which were 100% improvised, featuring a different musician on each bike every time – they would play a short DJ set, so that people who wanted to enjoy a cocktail or dance to some electronic music in a separate space, would have the opportunity to do so.

In my research I discovered the work of Claire Bishop, an art historian and theorist who posits a theory of ‘activated spectatorship’ as a result of physical interaction with artworks, which I quite agree with. The theory goes as follows: if viewers look at a painting from afar, their experience is much different than if they, for example, watch a performance of musical bicycles, and later hop on the bikes and try ‘playing them’ for themselves. Bishop argues that physical engagement with artworks produces a more profound and lasting memory, as well as a more intense visceral

experience for the viewer-participants, one that lingers both in their intellectual mind and in their physical body long after the fact. I also read a lot about the phenomenology of perception, by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, which focuses on the importance of individual experience. It is for these reasons that I decided it was so important for the audience members to try the bikes after they were performed. The performance was designed to show people how the bikes worked, and the sonic result that was capable; the period afterward was intended for individual exploration and open play among viewer-participants.

From the perspective of artistic design, the project is kind of a hybrid performance-installation, rather than simply an installation, as it is meant to be performed first and then experienced, rather than simply existing as an entity in a gallery or other artistic space. In terms of sound, the sound design was inspired largely by Henri Lefebvre's *Rhythmanalysis*. LeFebvre stressed the importance of a balance among melody, harmony, and rhythm, so I strove to create that with the three bikes. The Wii-One provided the melody, the Wazou the harmony (and bass), and the Electronique provided the rhythms.

**AZ: According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, friction is defined as:**

- **The resistance that one surface or object encounters when moving over another: a lubrication system which reduces friction**
- **The action of one surface or object rubbing against another: the friction of braking**
- **Conflict or animosity caused by a clash of wills, temperaments, or opinions: a considerable amount of friction between father and son**

**Apart from my general interest as to the reasons behind naming the work /// *Friction*, I'm hoping you could also speak to how the concept relates to the work, or, how friction is encompassed by/within the work?**

CK: Well, I would say that definitions 1) and 2) are encompassed within the project in a literal way. When you pedal on a regular bicycle, it is the friction against the earth that propels the bicycle forward. When you brake, it is the friction of the

brake pads against the wheels that causes it to stop. When you pedal on a bicycle and there is a dynamo generator attached to a wheel of the bicycle, the added friction of the dynamo rubbing against the tire slows down the motion of the wheel, and in so doing, converts human energy into electrical energy.

For the project, I view *///Friction* also as a metaphor: for the friction that exists between cyclists and automobile drivers, between environmentalists and consumerists, and between those who oppose change and those who invite it.

**AZ: How do you envision future iterations of the project? On the one hand, you can take the installation component 'on the road,' and showcase sonic elements of Montreal's urban space. Are you also interested in creating versions for other cities? What is in store for *///Friction*?**

CK: I envision the project going on tour to other Canadian cities, with complimentary video segments specific to each city. Of course, the instruments could be further fine-tuned in terms of achieving greater control over sound by the bicycles, as well as adding layers of sound. But I think the most important thing about the project (besides exposing it to people who would not normally think about cycling, and encouraging new people to try cycling) is that people are inspired by it and can identify with at least one aspect of the project. For this reason I found the video to be a surprisingly important aspect of the project – one that contributed greatly to the recognition factor amongst viewer-participants. They would see the image and react as a result of recognizing the place they saw on the screen, and it would enhance their experience and enjoyment of the bikes. When they hopped on, instead of just hopping onto an art installation, suddenly that experience signified something deeper; they may imagine taking a ride through a familiar place they know or once knew. For this reason, making city-specific video segments to go with traveling versions of the project in the future is the one modification I am committed to making if the project indeed ends up going on tour. This summer, my main focus is on the design and building of my new installation, *Windcatcher*. That has pretty much all of my attention at the moment.



**AZ: Finally, given that the theme of the issue is 'Record,' I wonder if you'd like to reflect on how this theme is also channeled through the project in the literal sense of the recorded sounds and images, or perhaps, you might relate 'record' to something deeper within the conceptualization of the project.**

CK: Well obviously recording is a large part of the project, both in concept and in practice. The project is about capturing sounds from everyday life and transforming them into organized audio compositions that are then shaped into an improvised performance using bicycles. This improvisation is then *recorded* on video, transformed into another medium; a mere record of its previous state. That is the essence of what this project is all about: transforming perceptions, transforming sounds, transforming behavior. All of the sounds in the project are bicycle-related sounds that have been *recorded*. The bicycle rhythms (except for the low sine tones) are constructed entirely using recorded sounds either produced directly by a bicycle, or recorded by hitting a bicycle with a pair of drumsticks to capture the different sounds it makes when coming into contact with these objects. Recording is deeply embedded within both the practices and processes of this project. And a lucky result of the project is that I have a series of recordings that are now permanent (yet virtual) entities which will continue to exist indefinitely.



***Andrea Zeffiro** is a writer & researcher whose work intersects the political economy of emerging technologies, digital media and social justice initiatives, feminist media studies, and multidisciplinary research methods. For more: [andreazeffiro.com](http://andreazeffiro.com)*

***Claire Kenway** has a background in music and sound art stemming from the time she was in the womb. The daughter of a violinist and a mad scientist, her DNA contains a unique and special blend of creativity and academic smarts. Endlessly intrigued by the intersections between sound, space, experience, and emotion, Claire has been performing internationally as a DJ for more than a decade and since her move to Montreal in 2008 has taken her artistic endeavors to new heights exploring the realm of sound installation. Her first project, **///Friction**, involves three bicycles that produce and manipulate sounds to create a multimedia psychedelic bike ride. Her second project, **Poisson Passion**, which started as a classroom project at Concordia University, is currently being redeveloped for a gallery installation to be presented at Les Territoires in January 2013 alongside works by Brandon Ballangee, Alison Loader, and Kelly Andres. In this work, which investigates the relationship of fish responding to different sounds, in a giant-sized aquarium, fishes' movements will trigger sounds played back to the fish themselves and the human viewers of the work. For her latest project, **Windcatcher**, funded by the Canada Council for the Arts, she is designing and building three musical instruments which will be played by the wind. Additionally, Claire just released her first EP on **Lost Land Records** (Italy) in May 2012. When she is not busy creating and recording, Claire bikes enjoys the many delights of Montreal's cultural playground and writes about her experiences in the **Scout Network Blog**.*



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